

# Teaching Spelling and Phonics

A Handbook for Parents

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## Why children need to learn to spell correctly?

- Poor spelling creates a bad impression - it's one of the first things a reader notices
- Examiners, teachers, prospective employers, often place a lot of weight on spelling
- Anxiety about spelling inhibits a child's writing, especially their choice of words
- Even in these days of word processors there are still times when we need to write

## What children need to do and learn to improve their spelling:

- Develop an interest in words
- Have fun learning how to spell words in lots of different ways
- Feel safe about trying new words, not just words they're sure about
- Learn about the way words are built up using syllables
- Know about the basic spelling patterns of English
- Have a range of memorizing strategies
- Explore the meanings of words
- Understand prefixes and suffixes
- Write for their own enjoyment, without the fear that they will be criticized
- Read for pleasure

## Useful memorising strategies

When you come across a new word ALWAYS use the LOOK - THINK - COVER - WRITE - CHECK method to memorize it.

**LOOK** carefully at the new word. How can you break it into smaller bits? Do any of the smaller bits remind you of the patterns of letters from other words?

**THINK** about the parts of the words, which might cause problems - double letters for instance, or a vowel that isn't pronounced as you would expect.

**COVER** the word and close your eyes. Try to see it in your mind's eye.

**WRITE** the word down without looking back.

**CHECK** to see if you're right. If not, look carefully at where you went wrong and try again.

### More Hot Tips

\* Whenever you have to copy a new word from the whiteboard, from a book, or from the dictionary, always try to write the whole word in one go. Don't keep looking back after every few letters.

\* Try finger-writing: while you're THINKing about the word, pretend to write it with your finger, on your desk or on your hand.

Mnemonics are useful for particularly tricky words, or for key spelling patterns:

- Ould – **Oh, you,** lucky **duck** (should, could, would)
- Ound – **Oh you** naughty **duck** (ground, found)
- Laugh – **Laugh At Ugly Goat Hair**
- Because – **Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants**
- Island – an island **is land** surrounded by water
- Necessary – 1 collar and 2 sleeves are **necessary**
- Piece – a **piece** of **pie**
- Parliament – **Liam** went to the Houses of **parliament**
- Separate – there is **a rat** in **separate**
- Secretary – a good **secretary** can keep a **secret**
- Terrible – **Ribs** feel **terrible**
- Business – going by **bus** is good **business**
- Rhythm – **rhythm** helps your two hips move
- Accommodation – **2** cats, **2** mice, **1** dog - **accommodation**
- Soldier – **soldiers** sometimes **die** in battle
- Quiet – keep **quiet** about my **diet**
- Guitar – I only play **guitar** when I'm drinking **fruit juice**

By the end of Reception, your child should be aiming to spell

(and read) all of these words:

Why not check that your child can spell these words and let them colour in the bricks on the wall if they are successful?

a	an	as	at	if	In
is	it	of	off	on	can
dad	had	back	and	get	big
him	his	not	got	up	mum
but	put	will	that	this	then
them	with	see	for	now	down

look	too	the	to	I	no
go	into	he	she	we	me
be	was	you	they	all	are
my	her				
<i>...and for those looking for a challenge:</i>					
went	it's	from	children	just	help
said	have	like	so	do	some
come	were	there	little	one	when
out	what				

For the words they cannot spell, why not turn these words into flash cards and place them around the house for your child to spell regularly?

By the end of Year 2 (KS1), your child should be aiming to spell (and read) all of these words:

Why not check that your child can spell these words and let them colour in the bricks on the wall if they are successful?

don't	old	I'm	by	time	house
about	your	day	made	came	make
here	saw	very	put	oh	their
people	Mr	Mrs	looked	called	asked
could	water	away	good	want	over
how	did	man	going	where	would
or	took	school	think	home	who
didn't	ran	know	bear	can't	again
cat	long	things	new	after	wanted
eat	everyone	our	two	has	yes
take	thought	dog	well	find	more
I'll	round	tree	magic	shouted	us
other	food	fox	through	way	been
stop	must	red	door	right	sea
these	began	boy	animals	never	next
first	work	lots	need	that's	baby
fish	gave	mouse	something	bed	may
still	found	live	say	soon	night
narrator	small	car	couldn't	three	head
king	town	I've	around	every	garden
fast	only	many	laughed	let's	much
suddenly	told	another	great	why	cried
keep	room	last	jumped	because	even
am	before	gran	clothes	tell	key
fun	place	mother	sat	boat	window
sleep	feet	morning	queen	each	book
its	green	different	let	girl	which
inside	run	any	under	hat	snow
air	trees	bad	tea	top	eyes
fell	friends	box	dark	grandad	there's
looking	end	than	best	better	hot

# Key spelling patterns

Children need to be taught useful spelling patterns and rules. One good technique is to begin by giving children a list of words to sort. Then ask them to look carefully at how they sorted the words, and see if they can spot the spelling rule. Finish by explaining the rule, giving further words, and see if the children can use the rule to sort the words more quickly.

Home spellings should usually follow a pattern based on what the children have been working on in school so that it is easier for you to help your child to learn their spellings.

## The Importance of Syllables in Spelling

All good spellers are skilful at breaking words up into syllables.

care-ful

hos-pit-al

u-ni-ver-si-ty

Breaking a word into syllables makes it easier to deal with one small bit at a time.

## Prefixes as an aid to spelling

A prefix is a group of letters placed at the start of a root word to change its meaning. Some complicated words are less difficult to spell if you are familiar with prefixes.

Here are some common examples in the following list:

PREFIX	MEANING	EXAMPLES
anti-	against or opposite to	anticlockwise, antibiotic
auto-	self	autobiography, automat
dis-	not, or away	dissimilar, disconnect
in-	not	insane, inhuman
il-	not	illogical, illegal
im-	not	immature, improbable
ir-	not	irrelevant, irregular
inter-	between	international, intermarry
mis-	wrong	misunderstand, misspell
post-	after	postnatal, postscript
pre-	before	prenatal, prehistoric
pro-	for, or forward	propose, pro-British
re-	again, or back	rewrite, reconsider
sub-	under	submarine, substandard
super-	above	supervisor, superhuman
trans-	across	transport, transplant
un-	not, or in reverse	unfinished, unarmed

## Suffixes - their importance in spelling

A suffix is simply an ending that's added to a base word to form a new word.

A key thing to know about a suffix is whether it starts with a consonant or a vowel.

### Adding a suffix to "magic e" words

When you add a consonant suffix the base word doesn't change.

When you add a vowel suffix, drop the silent e. Remember to drop the e when adding a vowel suffix. (Note that y is regarded as a vowel suffix, so laze + y = lazy)

Base word	+consonant suffix	Base word	+vowel suffix
hope	hopeless	note	notable
state	statement	calculate	calculation
spite	spiteful	reserve	reservation
late	lately	late	latest
extreme	extremely	expense	expensive

### Adding suffixes to words ending -ce and -ge

There are exceptions to the above "magic e" rule – which is why it's probably better to call it a pattern rather than a rule.

Here's the main one:

Where the base word ends in -ce or -ge, then you keep the silent e before -able and -ous. So:

enforce + able	=	enforceable
notice + able	=	noticeable
service + able	=	serviceable
courage + ous	=	courageous
outrage + ous	=	outrageous

## When should you doubling consonants when adding a suffix?

Luckily there's a very useful pattern to help us.

If the base word has:

one syllable

one short vowel

one consonant at the end

you double the final consonant when you add a vowel suffix

bed + ing	= bedding,	flat + est	= flattest
fun + y	= funny	hot + er	= hotter

If the base word has:

one syllable

one short vowel

one consonant at the end

you keep the base word the same when you add a consonant suffix

bag + ful = bagful, wet + ness = wetness

## Suffixes and Stressed Syllables

If the stress is on the first syllable the base word doesn't change:

**Profit** - profitable    **Enter** - entered    **Order** - ordering

If the stress is on the last syllable, **double** the final consonant before adding a vowel suffix.

No change if a consonant suffix is added.

**Begin** - beginning    **Equip** - equipped    **Regret** - regretful    **Commit** - commitment

## Adding a suffix to words ending y

There are two important patterns to learn:

\* If the word ends in a vowel +y, the base word doesn't change:

delay + ed = delayed

employ + ment = employment

\* If the word ends in a consonant +y, when you add any suffix except -ing, then change the y to i:

reply + ed = replied

busy + ness = business

pity + ful = pitiful  
but reply + ing = replying

## Spelling words ending ic and ick

Same sound but two spellings. However there is a simple way to spot the difference.

The words with only one syllable end in -ick.

The words having more than one syllable end in -ic.

There are only a few exceptions to this pattern and these usually happen where two words are joined together as in homesick and candlestick.

## Words ending -er, -or, and -ar

There are lots of words in English which end with the -er sound. But when you listen to these words you can't be sure whether the sound is made by -er, -or or -ar.

There's no easy rule but there are a few helpful word patterns:

- There are more than ten times as many words ending with -er than -or and -ar together. So, if you guess -er then there's a good chance that you'll be right!
- Verbs ending in a silent e usually change to nouns by ending -er:  
dive/diver wade/wader write/writer avenge/avenger
- -er is also the most common way of ending a word for someone carrying out an action:

Action	Person carrying out the action
reporting	reporter
playing	player
fighting	fighter

- -or is used when the base word ends in -ate, -ct, -it :

calculate	calculator	create	creator
contract	contractor	reflect	reflector
visit	visitor	exhibit	exhibitor

- There is no especially useful pattern to recognise words that end in -ar except to say that many of them finish with -lar:  
regular popular similar pillar  
But other than that it's just a matter of memorizing the -ar words as you come across them. Mispronouncing the ending so that it rhymes with the -ar- in market is a handy memory trick.

## Words ending ical, icle and acle



word. For example they could ask 'What is the first letter?' 'What is the last letter?' 'How many letters are there?' etc. You could also do this using sparklers (with an adult nearby!) around bonfire night.

#### **4) Media Search:**

Using a newspaper or magazine you have 15 minutes to look for your spelling words. Circle them in different coloured crayon. Which of your spelling words was used the most times?

#### **5) Shaving Cream Practice:**

An easy way to clean those dirty tables is to finger paint on them with shaving cream. Squirt some on the table (with your parents permission and supervision!) and then practice spelling your words by writing them with your finger in the shaving cream.

#### **6) Salt Box Spelling:**

Ask your parents pour salt into a shallow box or tray (about 3cm deep) and then practice writing your spellings in it with your finger.

#### **7) Scrabble Spelling:**

Find the letters you need to spell your words and then mix them up in the bag. Get your parents to time you unscrambling your letters. For extra maths practice you could find out the value of each of your words!

#### **8) Pyramid Power:**

Sort your words into a list from easiest to hardest. Write the easiest word at the top of the page near the middle. Write the next easiest word twice underneath. Write the third word three times underneath again until you have built your pyramid

#### **9) Ransom Note:**

Cut the letters needed to for your words from a newspaper or magazine and glue them down to spell the words.

#### **10) Spell It With Beans:**

Use Lima beans (or any dried beans or lentils) to spell out your words. If you glue them onto separate pieces of card then you made a great set of flash cards to practice with for the rest of the week.

#### **11) Pipe Cleaners Or Tooth Picks:**

These are just a couple of suggestions of things you could use to create your spelling words.

#### **12) Tasty Words:**

Just like above but this time try and find tasty things to spell your words with, like raisins. Then when you spell them right you get to eat them!

#### **13) Design A Word:**

Pick one word and write it in bubble letters. Colour in each letter in a different pattern. Write it in rainbow colours, e.g. p a i n t

#### **14) Sign Your Word:**

Practice spelling your words by signing each letter.



**15) Water wash:**

Use a paintbrush and water to write your words outside on concrete or pavements. You could also use chalk to do the same thing!

**16) ABC Order:**

Write your words out in alphabetical order. Then write them in reverse alphabetical order.

**17) Story Time:**

Write a short story using all your words. Don't forget to check your punctuation!

**18) Simple Sentence:**

Write a sentence for each of your words. Remember each sentence must start with a capital letter and end with a full stop. Could you write a sentence that includes more than one, or even all of your words.

**19) Colourful Words:**

Use two different coloured pens to write your words. One to write the consonants and one to write the vowels. Do this a couple of times then write the whole word in one colour.

**20) Memory Game:**

Make pairs of word cards. Turn them all over and mix them up. flip over two cards, if they match you get to keep them, if not you have to turn them over again. Try and match all the pairs.

**21) Finger Tracing:**

Use your finger to spell out each of your words on your mum or dad's back. Then it's their turn to write the words on your back for you to feel and spell.

**22) Spelling Steps:**

Write your words as if they were steps, adding one letter each time. (It's much easier doing this on squared paper)

**23) Scrambled Words:**

Write your words then write them again with all the letters mixed up.

**24) X-Words:**

Find two of your spelling words with the same letter in and write them so they criss cross.

**25) Ambidextrous:**

Swap your pen into the hand that you don't normally write with. Now try writing out your spellings with that hand.

**26) Telephone Words:**

Translate your words into numbers from the telephone keypad.

**27) Secret Agent:**

Write out the alphabet, then give each letter a different number from 1 to 26. (a = 1, b = 2, c = 3 etc.) Now you can spell out your words in secret code.

**28) Missing Letters:**

Ask your mum or dad to write out one of your words loads of times on piece of paper, but each time they have to miss out a letter or two. Then you have to fill in the missing letters. After you have checked them all try it again with another word.

**29) Listen Carefully:**

Ask your parents to spell out one of your words then you have to say what the word is they've spelt out.

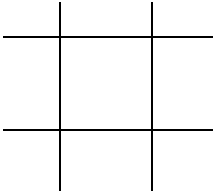
**30) Acrostic:**

Use words that start with each letter in you spelling word. Your more likely to remember it if it makes sense.

**Games you might have played before...!**

\*V A K refers to the child's preferred learning style where: V =  
Visual (learns from seeing)

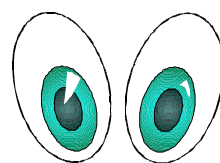
**A = Auditory (learns from hearing) K =  
Kinaesthetic (learns from doing)**

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>TIC-TAC-TOE</b></p> <p>This game is similar to noughts and crosses but with key words. With two players, each person picks a word that is the most complex in the list and then cover it up. In each space, the child writes the word. They must make a row of three to win.</p> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <p>This encourages children to focus upon words which they find problematic and practise spelling them in a meaningful challenge.</p> <p><b>V K</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>SAND, PAPER and PAINT</b></p> <p>Using sand, children write with their finger their spellings. This can also be used alongside look, say, cover, write and check. Children can use paint on paper in the same way and write their words with a paint brush or finger instead.</p> <p>This activity reinforces letter shape and common patterns of letters</p> <p><b>V K</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>I SPY WITH MY LITTLE EYE...</b></p> <p>This activity can be used with any child and focuses upon either the first letter of the word (as in the traditional game) or, more complicated, picking a specific pattern for the children to think of e.g. "I spy with my little eye, a word containing –ea- together" Peach? Etc.</p> <p>This game supports children in listening to spelling patterns and thinking of words which would fit the pattern.</p> <p><b>A</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>COUNTDOWN/CONUNDRUMS</b></p> <p>The board game can be purchased but this is easy enough to set up yourself at home. From 2 packs of randomly selected vowels and consonants, pick 8 letters in total and beat the clock (you choose the time limit... but no more than 3 mins!) to create the longest correctly spelled word.</p> <p>Jumble up a known word to see if your child can solve the conundrum.</p> <p><b>V K</b></p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>NUMBERPLATES</b></p> <p>A game similar to COUNTDOWN. On a car journey, observe the number plates of cars:</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><b>DG72 TRC</b></p> <p>The aim of the game is to take the group of three letters and keeping them in that order, make the longest word possible. From this number plate you could make the following words:</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Track Trace Terrific Tracing</p> <p>This game encourages children to think about words, and may even be able to extend an existing word by adding a prefix or suffix.</p> <p><b>V A</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>...AND THE OBVIOUS ONES...</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">HANGMAN JUNIOR SCRABBLE BOGGLE LOTTO WORD SNAP</p> <p><b>V A K</b></p>

Please also see the following posters for further ideas...

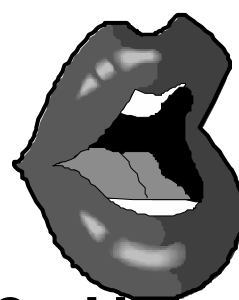
# SUS

**S**tudy the word



**U**nderline the difficult

part(s)



**S**ay the word carefully

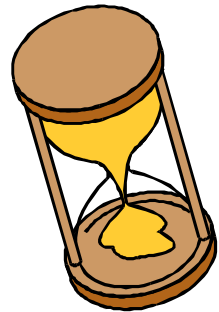
# “Writing the word”

- On someone’s back
- On your desk (large)
- With your eyes

# Speed Writing



*How often can you write  
the word correctly in one  
minute?*



# Mnemonics

*Making up a “**story**” to help spell a word*

**w**as – **w**as **a**untie **s**ad?



## Syllables/Chunks

*Breaking the words into  
parts / clapping the  
sounds*



*going*

*go/ing*

*running*

*run/ning*

*returned*

*re turn ed*

**Look for small  
words**

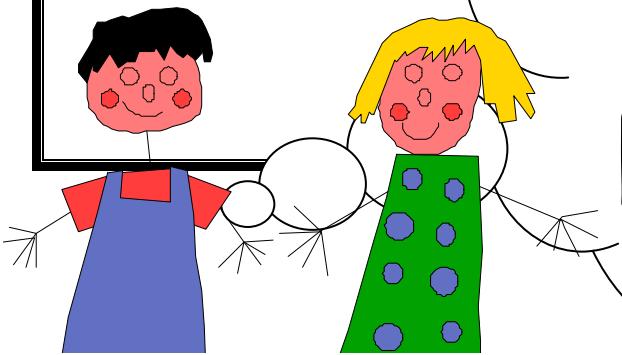
**inside** the word

**about** - a, out, bout

**teacher** – tea, each, her,  
ache

Be **positive**

We shall  
try our  
best





Words that look  
the same

Think

back is like ...  
pack and sack

Use of colours

Use a different colour for each letter.

Odd one out

- Work with others
- From a list of three words, think of reasons why each word is different:

going          green          big

**Different sizes of  
letters**

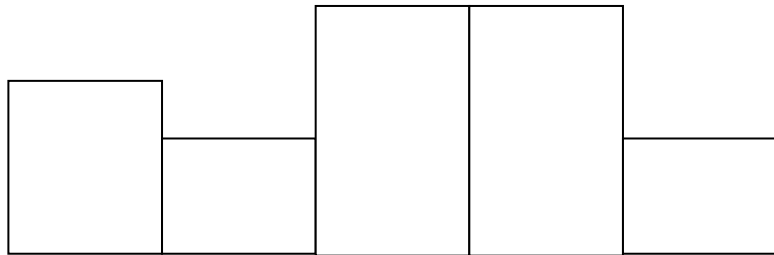
woman – WoMaN

returning - ReTuRnInG

Shapes of words

**Draw** the shape of the  
word

table



Making **words**  
with **letters**

- Put all the letters in an arc
- Listen to word
- Place letters in boxes

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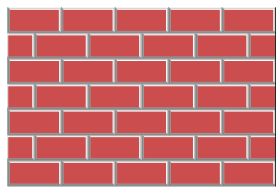
In sand

- or using different materials (paint)



- different textures  
(sandpaper)

# Visualising



- Look at your word
- “Throw” it at the wall

- Can you still “see” it?
- Spell it aloud

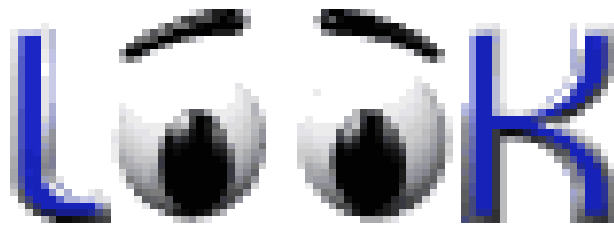
Writing the  
word in fancy  
letters

- Bubble writing
- Cursive
- Italics

Use a **spelling**  
**rule**

- “i” before “e” except after “c”
- change the “y” to “i” and add “es”

Look-



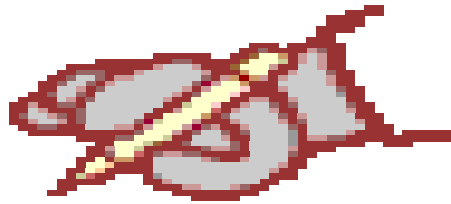
Say-



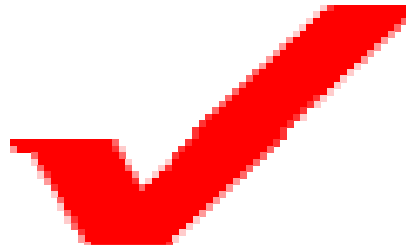
Cover-



Write-



Check-



# Using post-its



- place post-its in suitable places at eye level

# Recording your own voice

- say the word
- spell the word
- listen
- echo



# Three Times

Write the word 3 times  
in **different** colours

**three**    **three**    **three**

# Pyramid Writing

Write your word in the  
shape of a pyramid

w

wa

was

## Consonant Circles

a ○ e ○ i ○

Write the word then  
circle all the consonants.

Blue vowels

a e i o u

Write the word then go  
over each vowel in blue  
because

Words without  
vowels

b \_ c \_ \_ s \_

Write each word with a line  
instead of each vowel.  
Go back later and fill in the  
missing vowels

## Websites

Online games, videos and apps for children

<http://www.phonicsplay.co.uk/>

Great games – can link to Letters and Sounds, select letters used in each game (some games only available through subscription but many are free!

[www.starfall.com](http://www.starfall.com)

Phonic games and phonic stories

<http://www.mrthorne.com/>

Great site with loads of video clips – lots of apps for iPad and iPhones too!

<http://www.ictgames.com/literacy.html>

Great range of phonics games, mainly Reception and Key Stage 1

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/ks1bitesize/literacy/>

Great range of phonics games, mainly Reception and Key Stage 1

[www.spellingcity.com](http://www.spellingcity.com)

Requires registration but many features are available without purchase.

Customers can pay to upgrade and access the full portfolio of activities offered by this American site.

<http://www.timesspellingbee.co.uk/Training/Default.aspx>

A whole site full of practice games for all levels.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/spellits/index.shtml>

A series of spelling activities taking place within the context of mystery solving, adventures and challenges.

<http://www.learner.org/interactives/spelling/index.html>

An American site but provides good SATs-style practice for spelling within dictation passages (just like the Y6 SATs test!)

### Spelling Apps

Most apps by Mr Thorne are really good, but especially the Spellbook app.