

Effective Spelling Strategies

Good spellers use a variety of strategies for spelling. These strategies fall into four main categories—phonetic, rule-based, visual, and morphemic.

Phonetic Spelling Strategies

The first strategy that should be taught to beginning spellers is to listen for each sound in a word and to represent each sound with a letter or combination of letters. The sound of /ă/ is spelled with the letter a and the sound of /n/ is spelled with the letter n, so your child will be able to accurately represent the individual sounds he hears in the word and write the word *an*. Segmenting (stretching out the sounds) words is a great way for students to practice this strategy.

Take the word *brush*, for example. If your child can identify the individual sounds and knows the phonograms b, r, u, and sh, he will be able to spell the word easily. Hundreds of words can be written correctly simply by applying this phonetic spelling strategy.

Rule-Based Spelling Strategies

Beginning spellers will soon recognize, however, that there are often several possible spellings for the same sound—the sound of /j/ can be spelled j, g or dge, for example—and that's when knowing some rules will come in handy! There are many reliable rules and generalizations in English spelling that will help students make the correct choices in their own writing. For example, knowing the rules regarding the use of c and k and knowing that the sound of /ch/ is usually spelled tch after a short vowel helps us write the word *kitchen*.

Visual Spelling Strategies

Does the word look right? Good spellers often try spelling a word several ways to see which way looks correct. Reading and being read to helps children build their visual memory of words related to that particular concept. Visual memory is important when it comes to correctly using homophones, too, like *pray* and *prey* or *tale* and *tail*. Extensive reading and word games will also help your student build visual memory.

Morphemic Spelling Strategies

Morphemic strategies are based on the knowledge of how the meaning of a word influences its spelling. Many words have Greek and Latin roots and other words are based on other derivatives. Children must learn how to add prefixes and suffixes to base words, and how to form compound words and abbreviations. Morphemic strategies enable good spellers to spell harder words.

As spellers become more competent, they will usually use a combination of all four strategies in their writing. Most people don't even realize that they are using these approaches to spelling—with practice, the strategies become automatic and are employed on a subconscious level.

Five guidelines for learning to spell

Practice makes permanent

Did somebody tell you practice made perfect? That's only if you're practicing it right. Each time you spell a word wrong, you're 'practicing' the wrong spelling. So, if you're not sure how to spell the word, find out, *then* practice that spelling. Keep an ongoing notebook of words, so you've got your own personal dictionary and you can see your progress. Start small, though!

Don't try to learn all the words at once

Even if you learn them all in one sitting, practice them a few at a time. Find out what works best for you — it may be one or two words or as many as three or four. Then, add another word to your list, or start on different ones. Each time you learn another word, go back and practice the ones you learned before it, because, after all, *practice makes permanent*.

Review, and review some more!

If you already know some of the words on your list, practice them once or twice each before you start tackling the ones you don't know yet. It's a good confidence booster (and besides, *practice makes permanent*).

Practice spelling as if you expect to spell those words right when you're writing

There's more to learning to spell than passing a spelling test. There are lots of ways to get from guessing to knowing what to write down on a test, AND spelling words right when you're writing sentences and paragraphs. You want to train your hands to write the correct letters in the right order when you think a certain word. Use the "six ways to practice spelling" listed here.

Use the words you've practiced

That's the point to learning them, anyway. Have a list of words you're learning handy, in a notebook, and you can look them up to make sure you're spelling them right. Besides, using them is practicing them, and *practice...you know...makes permanent.*

ways to practice spelling

Reverse chaining by letter

- Say the word. Then write it, saying each letter (be enthusiastic and expressive)

W - O - R - D

- Skip a line and say it and write it again — minus the last letter. Say the last letter, but don't write it.

W - O - R - _____

- Skip a line and say it and write it again — minus the last two letters. Say them, but don't write them.

W - O - ____ _____

- Do that until you're only writing one letter.
- Go back to the top. Read the word, then spell it out loud.
- Fold the page over so you can't see the whole word. Say the word, spell it, and add that last letter.
- Fold the page back again. Say the word, spell it, and add the last two letters.
- Keep going until you spell the whole word.
- GO BACK AND CHECK — make sure you didn't leave out a letter.

Reverse chaining by syllable

This is harder, for longer words.

- Say the word. Then write it, saying each letter (be enthusiastic and expressive)

S-E-P-A-R-A-T-E

- Skip a line and say it and write it again — minus the last syllable. Say the last syllable and spell it out loud, but don't write it.

S-E-P-A-_____

- Continue until you aren't writing anything — but still say the spelling out loud.
- Go back to the top. Read the word, then spell it out loud.
- Fold the page over so you can't see the whole word. Say the word, spell it, and add the last syllable.
- Fold the page back again. Say the word, spell it, and add the last two syllables.
- Continue until you spell the whole word.
- GO BACK AND CHECK — make sure you didn't leave out any letters.

Highlighting the hard parts

Some words, like separate, are only hard in some parts. You might be getting these right on a test — but always spelling them WRONG when you write, frustrating you and your teachers to no end. And since practice makes permanent, every time you practice it wrong you're making it more likely you'll write it wrong the next time. Here's something to help you focus on the troublesome part.

This is also a good technique for learning rules and patterns. If you want to learn a bunch of IE words — that "I before E" rule that so many people find so hard to use — this is a good way to do it.

Get different color pens or pencils or markers, and index cards. Write the words vividly, boldly on the cards — and make the 'hard part' a different color than the rest... maybe with stripes on the letters. Make a mental picture of that card, read the word aloud and spell it aloud, and change the way you say the "hard part," maybe saying it louder, maybe putting on a British accent. So, you'd write:

sepArate believe □relieve grieve achieve

When you write the whole word, think about the hard part, what it looks like or sounds like. So, while you're writing "separate," you might be thinking "sep-AY-rate" and/or visualizing that bold, red A.

Again, the keys here are to NOT overwhelm your brain — don't try to learn 5 words at a time like this unless you've got an amazing visual memory. Better to do one word 5 times — and start spelling it right in your writing.

Use a recorder to test yourself, and to practice using words

Read the words — be sure you're pronouncing them right — into a tape recorder. Record it like it's a spelling test: word, example sentence, word. For example, you'd say "Separate. Put the papers in separate piles. Separate. Spelled s - e - p - a - r - a - t - e." Play it back — and try to say the spelling before the tape plays it.

Practice using the words in short phrases

If separate is the word, see if you can think of 5 *different* phrases with the word and write them out. Let's see... separate rooms, separate cars, separate houses, *A Separate Peace*, separate the pages. Or, try to use 20 of your words in the same story. Get silly — have fun with the words!

More Spelling Strategies

CHUNKING

It's simple ! If you can't spell a word this is one way to use.

What you do is, you spell it out in bits and break the word up into smaller parts.

FOR EXAMPLE :

In - ter - net be - cause tech - no - lo - gy

It makes words easier to spell and to remember how to spell them. You should try it.

CHIN DROPS

To work out where to split up words, place two fingers underneath your chin and say the word that you want to spell slowly. Get a pen and a piece and every time your chin drops when you say it, it is a part of the word (a syllable) and this will help you to spell hard words.

Mnemonics (say NEM- ON -IX)

Mnemonics are brain tricks that will help you to remember your words. Here are some mnemonics for you to use.

1 - PIEce of PIE

2 - There is a LIE in beLIEve

3 - Where ever there's a Q there is U too.

4 - BECAUSE - Bunnies Eat Carrots And Uncle Sam's Eggs

5 - WEDNESDAY - WED - NES - DAY

6 - FRIEND - Fri the End

7 - KNIFE - k - nif -e

8 - Was - Wally and Sam

9 - Website - Where the spider sits

10 - Teacher - There is an ACHE in every teacher.

Words within words is when you find little words inside big words. It's just great. Remembering the little words will help to remember the big words.

Here's some examples

father - fat, her, he

believe - be, lie, eve

football - foot,, all, ball

forget - for, or, get, forge

hotdog - hot, do, dog

See how many new words you can find within the word INFORMATION...there are heaps.

WHAT TO DO IF YOU CAN'T SPELL A WORD

There are lots of things that you can do if you cannot spell a word. Here are some things you could try

- Ask a teacher or a friend
- Write out as much of the word as you can
- Break it up into chunks or syllables using using chindrops
- Write out the word in lots of different ways and then see which one looks right.
- Try to look it up in a dictionary
- Refer to any charts or lists of words that you may have around the room.