

REVOLUTIONIZING LEARNING

The Case Against Traditional Spelling Lists

The Research & Why

Research confirms that spelling enhances young children's ability to read and write. However, as students get older, the continued teaching of appropriate spelling practices (the rules of spelling; studying the meaning of roots, prefixes, and suffixes; families of related words; the historical development of the English language; and words' language of origin) could provide them with significant benefits (Moats, 2005).

- Scan QR Code for Article: [Where Have All the Spelling List Gone?](#)

"...spelling is a visible record of language processing. It is language written down. If we know how to look at a child's spelling, we can tell what a child understands about speech sounds, about how we use letters to represent those and, as it turns out, anything that is going to cause trouble with a child's reading will show up even more dramatically in the child's spelling and writing. (Moats, 2014)



Evolution of Teaching

Many teachers may be unfamiliar with recent research on effective spelling instruction. Because of this knowledge gap, many teachers are not systematically and explicitly teaching spelling (Frisby & Wang, 2018).

Many teachers administer spelling tests to their students out of obligation; however, for spelling lists to inform instruction, they must go beyond rote memorization.

- Scan QR Code for Article:
 - [Best Practices in Spelling Instruction: A Research Summary](#)

Newer research, however, has shown that spelling is not an exclusive process of rote memorization (Reed, 2012; Schlagal, 2007; Templeton & Morris, 2000). As Heald-Taylor (1998) points out, "Learning to spell is a complex, intricate cognitive and linguistic process rather than one of rote memorization" (p. 405), a belief that challenges the traditional spelling curriculum's emphasis on visual memorization. Students do not learn spelling words in isolation; instead, they use prior knowledge and understandings to help make decisions and form concepts about how to spell new words (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2012; Frith, 1980; Invernizzi, Bloodgood, & Abouzeid, 1997). [Putman, 2017]

- Scan QR Code for Article:
 - [Using Research To Make Informed Decisions About The Spelling Curriculum](#)



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Research-Based Practice



When looking at students' spelling, it is essential to go beyond their mastery of the weekly word list. This is an opportunity to dig a little deeper and evaluate students' understanding of sounds and patterns (Llanes, 2018). The following are eight research-based practices for spelling instruction (Joshi, Treiman, Carreker, & Moats, 2008-2009) that improve spelling skills:



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- Frequent, distributed practice around a pattern/skill, not rote memorization.
- Word lists that are organized around spelling patterns that can be offered as "example" lists of the spelling pattern to practice.
- Tasks that require careful analysis of both speech and print; students should be thinking about the word structure, syllables, sound-symbol correspondence, and meaningful parts.
- Practicing irregular words, words that do not follow regular predictable patterns.
- Using syllables to "chunk" longer words into easier parts with an understanding of the six syllable types.
- Using words in meaningful sentences. Sentence dictation is a great practice of using words in a meaningful way. Practicing using the Dictation Routine from Wonders is an effective way to model spelling.
- Word Sorting - sorting words is an engaging and hands-on opportunity to discover spelling patterns
- Proofreading practice - surprisingly proofreading practice is one of the best ways to practice spelling in context and apply skills that have been previously taught.

Practice at Home without a Spelling List

- **Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check Routine:** In the CCSD ELA core curriculum, Wonders 2023 by McGraw-Hill, teachers use the following routine to practice words with the spelling pattern. Follow these same steps at home for practice:
 - 1. Look- Students look at the word.
 - 2. Say- Students read the word aloud.
 - 3. Cover- Students cover the word and say the word aloud, sounding out each phoneme in the word.
 - 4. Write- Students write the word without looking at the original.
 - 5. Check- Students check against the original. Parents or siblings can check their work.
- **Word Hunts:** Have students search texts (newspapers, magazines, books, store ads, etc.) to find words that have the same patterns they have been studying.
- **Word Sorting** - sorting words is a great hands-on opportunity to study spelling patterns. Come up with words that match the pattern for the week and find ways to sort those words into different categories.
- **Proofreading practice** - Create some sentences with words that represent the weekly pattern that are written incorrectly, and spelled wrong, and have students proofread.
- **Word Study Games:** Almost any card game can be adapted for word study.
 - **"Go Fish" Card Game:** Using example spelling pattern words, create some cards, students match cards with similar spelling patterns. The student with the most pairs wins.
 - **Concentration:** Provide a set of word cards with duplicates of each spelling word. Have students shuffle the cards and place them face-side down in rows. Students take turns turning over pairs of cards to find two words that match. The student with the most cards wins.
 - **Board Game:** For each space on the board, write a word with a spelling pattern students have studied. The first player draws from a stack of pre-created spelling words cards. The player reads the words and moves to the first square containing a word with the same spelling pattern.