

## WHY TEACH SPELLING?

**The purpose** of learning to spell is to write and write and write some more without having to stop and check the dictionary every few minutes. Remember, a computer program's spell check is no help if the word being checked is a correct spelling of a real word: *there* used for *their*, for example. When the typed spelling is phonetic but doesn't resemble a real spelling, there may not be any choices for the correction, either. So, despite the increase in use of computers, students will still have a future that, at the very least, requires spelling skills in order to fill out forms by hand and to write notes and messages.

“**Natural**” spellers usually need less practice in order to remember a word, but still need practice adding prefixes and suffixes in order to increase their understanding of word meaning. Allow “natural” spellers to move through the spelling lists at a pace suitable to their ability, adding words misspelled in their compositions, and focusing on building skills listed at the end of the word lists. Practice adding prefixes and suffixes, noting how they change a word, aids in the understanding of new words. Use of the words in the Latin and Greek sections will also **boost vocabulary development**.

**Students struggling** with spelling often try to memorize each word letter by letter. Seen as a random series of letters, it is not surprising that retention of the new word is short lived. *These students can become “natural” spellers with help.* In any area of difficulty, as many senses as possible should be used by the student. Therefore, this spelling program provides lists with sight and sound patterns in common and offers practical suggestions for including touch when a word proves especially troublesome.

## TEACHING SPELLING



**Choose a group of words** and give the student an oral or written pretest to eliminate any already mastered. Those mastered should be used when adding prefixes and suffixes.

**Word lists for each grade are already organized by a sight/sound pattern** to aid long-term retention. A pattern that the student can **SEE and HEAR** is noted at the top of most lists. This reduces the confusion experienced when several words contain a different spelling of the same sound. For example, few, too, blue, and through all share the sound /oo/. By separating those words and placing each on a list with other words

that have the same spelling of /oo/, the student can later recall a word by linking it to one he can spell—“Oh, yeah, that was on the list with blue—I spell it t-r-u-e.”

Because pronunciations may vary slightly, any word on a sight/sound list may be moved if the teacher finds it better suits a different pattern. For example some pronounce again with the *ai* as a long sounding *a*, while others say *uh/gen/*.

Other words are organized **by category**, which, again, can provide a memory link. Struggling students should take any especially troublesome word from its category and combine it with another word with a common sight/sound pattern, as needed. Those listed in the category “Words for Review” have also been added to sight/sound lists at various grade levels since they are commonly misspelled words requiring extra practice. Words listed as **sight words** are included as common words which require special focus.



**Have the student** use the method described in “**How to Study a Word**” during practice. This is especially necessary for any words that do not follow common patterns or rules.

**Point out that every word should be learned by saying it in syllables and focusing on the spelling of each syllable.** First or second grade students can clap to the sound of the two syllable words listed. From third grade on have students write each word in syllables until saying and spelling each syllable has become a habit.

**Words that are misspelled** on compositions even after study, or those that are already identified as “Words for Review,” may require special attention. Have the student write the word on an index card, or a paper kept for this special list, highlighting the trouble spot with a highlighter or writing it in a different color [ **w h e n** ]. The student should then practice spelling the word by looking at it, then closing his eyes and spelling it, OR, by writing the word with his finger on his arm or leg or in a tray of corn meal (adding the sense of touch) *while looking at the word* and saying each syllable and letter.



**Require NEAT handwriting** of each word and all spelling assignments. Careless penmanship can cause confusion of the spelling and can sometimes indicate a careless effort and lack of concentration.



**Assign activities** suited to the needs of the student for daily practice with the spelling words. Retention is best when a student concentrates in small, frequent doses. Therefore, spelling words are usually assigned at the beginning of the

week, followed by short (15-30 minute) daily assignments and a final test at the end of the week.

Students should **add prefixes and suffixes** to words on each list in order to build skill with rules. Meanings of prefixes and suffixes should be taught at the same time, increasing vocabulary.

**When providing practice with rules**, encourage the student to recognize their usefulness.

Do NOT give exceptions to the rule until the student has had a chance to apply the rule to a number of words. If exceptions are introduced too quickly he is likely to decide rules aren't really helpful—"after all, there are exceptions. . .why bother to remember the rule." And once again he's back to bad habits—trying to memorize a series of random letters.

Encourage each student to use the words in letters, compositions, conversations, or in any other situation that will help him remember the spellings and word meanings.



**Dictate entire sentences** during testing to provide a meaningful context for the word. Unless students have great difficulty with handwriting, the entire sentence should be written.

This provides a more realistic test of memory since the goal is to increase a student's ability to spell words correctly in written work—where he must compose entire sentences.

Use words in your sentences from past lists and from the "Words by Category" lists to provide extra practice. Check for proper use of capitals and punctuation according to the rules already discussed and practiced. Make a note of any difficulties in these areas that may require extra review.

**Keep a list of any misspelled words** from the test and from written work to add to future lists for additional practice.