



Making More of Spelling!

Ways to support your child at home.

How important is good spelling, really? Is it still vital in a world of typed documents, emails and autocorrect? Isn't it the quality of writing we should be worried about, rather than the spelling of the words themselves?

The truth is that, in the current educational climate, good spelling matters a great deal. The 2014 National Curriculum places great emphasis on correct spelling and, at the end of KS2, every child sits a spelling test. Good spelling is also a significant aspect of the writing curriculum at school: a child at the end of Y6 cannot be considered as writing at the national expected standard if they can't spell.

The expectation is that every child by the end of Y6 should be spelling words such as 'receive', 'solemn', and 'conscience' correctly in their writing; not mixing up words such as 'compliment' and 'complement' and 'stationery' and 'stationary'. This is a challenge for many 11-year-olds - and plenty of grown-ups for that matter, too!

Aside from the statutory requirements, learning to spell well is extremely useful if we want our children to become confident writers. If they are constantly stopping to think about how words are spelled while they write, it can interrupt their flow of thought, taking them away from what we want them to be thinking about: their choice of words and how they construct those words into sentences that communicate exactly what they want to say. If children are confident spellers, they are also more likely to make adventurous vocabulary choices, selecting the exact word to communicate their message, rather than playing it safe and using a word they already know how to spell.

Obviously, there's a lot more to being a strong writer than spelling, but anything we can do to help our children develop in this area is going to help them as they move through their education.

Here are some tips for helping children with their spelling at home:

1. Encourage children to 'have a go' at spelling a new word. Making a first attempt is good for confidence, and it can reinforce spelling patterns and help identify problem areas.
2. Make sure children remember to use their understanding of phonics as they try to spell a word. Encouraging children to break the word they want to spell into its individual sounds, followed by trying to match those sounds to the letters of the alphabet, is really important. Phonics are taught regularly at school in EYFS/KS1 and for older children it's about making sure they keep this skill fresh. Reminding children to segment 'catch' into its three sounds – 'c' 'a' 'tch' – sounds like such a basic way of supporting spelling, but practising it is important.
3. Ask children to write down the words that they need to remember how to spell. The physical act of writing the words by hand helps to anchor the spelling in children's memories and encourages them to think about the letters that represent the sounds in the word. You just don't get the same benefits if children type the words into a PC or tablet.
4. Hidden words. Write the words on your child's spelling list, hidden in a series of letters. Now that they are hidden, ask your child to find them. For example:

sfhplayknc – play
qrubitpdh – bit
nvzbikejfa – bike

Your child could circle the hidden words with coloured pens. To raise the challenge, you could set a time limit on the game. For example, how many words can you find in one minute?

5. Making silly sentences. Challenge your child to write a silly sentence, including as many of the words on their spelling list as possible. For example, your child may have to learn 'room, took, hoop, foot, book'. They could make up a silly sentence such as 'The boy took his book across the room but got his foot caught in a hoop.' Again, they could draw illustrations to go with the sentences.
6. Using a Mnemonic. A well-known mnemonic to help children remember how to spell because: **b**ig **e**lephants **c**an **a**lways **u**nderstand **s**mall **e**lephants. Make up your own silly mnemonics together to help your child remember tricky words they struggle with.
7. Remind children to read through their writing and check for spelling errors. Children need to develop a feel for whether a word looks right. They can underline words they are not sure of and then you could both check with a dictionary.
8. Over-pronunciation. For example, 'Wednesday': encourage children to say 'Wed-nes-day' as they write. There are lots of words which feature sounds that aren't always pronounced clearly (such as words ending in -ed), so asking children to over-pronounce these when spelling can also be useful (for example, teaching children to say 'hopped' or 'skipped' instead of 'jump' can be a huge help).
9. Few resources are more motivating than a highlighter pen for primary-aged children. You can focus children's attention on the tricky bits in a word by asking them to highlight them. For example, show them that receive has 'ei' in the middle and ask them to write the word, and then highlight or underline this part to help them remember.
10. Spelling bingo. Playing games that help children to recognise words on sight can really help. The more they see a word, the more familiar it becomes and the more likely they are to remember it; if they can visualise it, they are more likely to spell it correctly. Print and cut out the words your child has to learn. Draw out a bingo board and write some of the spellings in the boxes. This works best with more than one player, so see if you can rope in someone else to play. Every time your child 'gets' a spelling word, go through the spelling together and then cover it and ask them to spell it again.
11. Spelling pairs. This classic memory game is a great way to get children recognising and remembering words. Draw or print a word grid and write each spelling word in a new box. You will need to write each word twice (each in a separate box). Cut them out, making sure you have two of each spelling word. Then turn them over and mix them up, ensuring they are organised randomly. Challenge your child to turn over two pieces of paper and then read each word. Are they a pair? If not, turn them back over and repeat this until they find matching pairs. Once they have found a pair, look at the spelling together and then ask your child to spell the word without looking.

12. Play it back. Record your child spelling out each word on your smartphone or tablet. When you practice them, ask your child to write down each spelling word and then play their own voice reading it back to them. It's amazing how much this amuses and motivates them.
13. Race against the clock. If your child is competitive, see if you can motivate them by introducing an element of challenge to the world of practising spellings. Using your stopwatch on your phone, time your child as you call out the spelling words and they write them. Make a note of their time and score and then on the following day, challenge them to smash their personal best.
14. In Key Stage 2 at Mowden children are learning their spellings using morpheme grids.

Session 1		
after awk back for to	ward toward	ly s
<p>Etymology The suffix -ward is used to express direction, from the Old English <i>-weard</i> meaning 'turn'. forward = for + ward from Old English <i>forewearde</i> where fore- means 'before, in front of'. awkward = awk + ward where the morpheme awk means 'turned the wrong way', from Old Norse <i>afugr</i>.</p> <p>Prefixes and suffixes This unit focuses on the suffix -ward. Teach children to look at meanings of the root and the suffix to work out the meaning of the word. Review/introduce the meaning of affixes and repeat when introducing the morpheme grid and when discussing word meanings.</p>		
<p>Phonological rules As you build word sums, model and explain these rules where you apply them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The ar in ward changes to be pronounced as a neutral sound when -ward is a suffix, as the stress falls on the vowel in the preceding morpheme. <p>Word sums and word class awk + ward = awkward <i>adjective</i> for + ward + s = forwards <i>adverb</i> to + ward + s = towards <i>preposition</i> after + ward + s = afterwards <i>adverb</i> awk + ward + ly = awkwardly <i>adverb</i> back + ward = backward <i>adjective or adverb</i> back + ward + s = backwards <i>adverb</i> for + ward = forward <i>adjective or adverb</i> to + ward = toward <i>preposition</i></p>		

This helps children to understand the etymology (the study of the origin of words and the way in which their meanings have changed throughout history) of words and look for patterns in these. They look at prefixes and suffixes. They are also taught common spelling rules.

Finally, remember that learning to spell is a gradual process and children need to go through this at their own pace. Children learn best at home when they enjoy what they are doing so try to keep spelling activities fun and lively.

Information about Spelling Curriculum

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a7ccc06ed915d63cc65ce61/English_Appendix_1_-_Spelling.pdf

Common Exception Words/Spelling word lists

Year 1: https://cdn.oxfordowl.co.uk/2019/08/29/13/48/38/98b01b1e-5cd2-47f6-a592-f97cebd0b777/CommonExceptionWords_Y1.pdf

Year 2: https://cdn.oxfordowl.co.uk/2019/08/29/13/50/37/10bf76a2-c1dd-42e6-88af-0686acd91609/CommonExceptionWords_Y2.pdf

Year 3&4: https://cdn.oxfordowl.co.uk/2019/08/29/13/54/08/76f1443d-9b6d-4030-be0d-25fcfef01438/SpellingWordList_Y3-4.pdf

Year 5&6: https://cdn.oxfordowl.co.uk/2019/08/29/13/56/09/5a42eb6a-f57f-4dc4-a66e-bd4c5e27e4b7/SpellingWordList_Y5-6.pdf