

Spelling Strategies to support children in Literacy

Literacy Service



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1. Look, Say, Trace, Cover, Write, Check

1. Look closely at the word.
2. Say the word - saying it out loud helps.
3. Say the letter names - again out loud helps
4. Trace over the letters
5. Cover the word
6. Say the letter names as you write it in joined handwriting
7. Then say the whole word out loud when finished writing
8. Now check the word with the original to see if it is right.
9. Do this at least 3 times even if you got it right first time.

2. SOS- Simultaneous Oral Spelling

1. Say the whole word - say it clearly
2. Name the letters in order.
3. Repeat until you are confident you can do it with eyes shut.
4. Say the letter names and write the word down at the same time.
5. Say the whole word.
6. Check you have written it correctly
7. Repeat.
8. Do this each day for about 6 consecutive days.

3. Tracking

This strategy is particularly useful if a child has started to develop a habit of spelling a particular spelling incorrectly.

1. Prepare a sheet similar to the one below. Hide the correct spelling among the incorrect ones.
2. Give the child a colour marker. Ask them to track a continuous line from left to right, circling all the correct spellings as they track. They can say the whole word and its letters as they circle. Alternatively, let them highlight the words with a highlighter pen.

w h e t h w h a t w a t c w t t w h a t w a t h y g s w h a t
w g a t w h I t h w h a t

4. Mapping

This has been a very useful, effective and enjoyable strategy for children. The child is effectively writing the word out several times but in a way that will make them think about the order.

1. Look at the word, for example "said"
2. Say the letter names
3. Repeat until they can be said with eyes closed.
4. Write the word, missing out *each letter in turn*. Say each letter as you write *including* the missing letter!
5. Say whole word
6. Repeat until all letters are in place, *said.....__aid, s__id, sa__d, sai__, said*

5. Mnemonics

Create a verse, rhyme or sentence to help remember a spelling. If the child creates their own mnemonic they are more likely to remember it.

Don't over use this strategy as children then can't remember the different mnemonics!

said - Snakes and insects dance

any - Ants never yawn

necessary - One collar and two sleeves

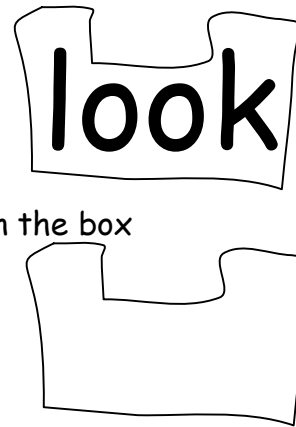
6. Syllabification.

1. Listen to the word
2. Clap or tap out the syllables as you say each one
enjoyment = en-joy-ment (3 syllables)
3. Listen to the phonemes in each syllable
4. Write all the phonemes you can hear in each syllable in joined script as a whole word
5. Check the word.
6. Don't forget to teach that every syllable **MUST** contain at least one vowel or the letter 'y'.

7. Word Shapes.

This strategy is useful to learn a group of words. This is particularly liked by children who have a strong visual learning channel.

1. Look at the word.
2. Make the word using magnetic letters. (*Smart Kids catalogue*)
3. Draw a box around the shape of the word
4. Remove the letters
5. Look at the shape.
6. Can you visualise the letters in the box?
7. What are they?
8. Check you are right by putting the letters back in the box
9. Now write the word
10. Draw a box around it
11. Does the box look like the first one?
12. Check the spelling.
13. Now try with a group of 5 different boxes. Can you recognise the word from the box shape?



8. Colour change papers and pens.

Colour change papers and pens are widely available in such places as Tesco, WH Smiths etc. Children love to practice spellings using these papers and pens and will write them out several times just to see the paper or pens change colour as they write. The colour change pens are particularly useful to encourage tracing over the correct spelling. Using them with the "Look, Say, Trace, Cover, Write, Check" strategy to encourage the tracing part of the method is effective. Gel, glitter and scented pens are also useful.

9. Words within words

1. Look at the word
2. Can you see any words hidden within the word?
There is a rat in sep~~ar~~ate
3. Say the whole word
4. Say the word again but stress the hidden word within the bigger word
5. Cover the word
6. Say and write the word in joined writing remembering the hidden word.
7. Check the word.

10. Letter String Patterns

1. Look at the word e.g. 'stake'
2. Find words which are part of the same family with the same letter strings
st- step
steep
stop
-ake cake
make
bake
3. Say the words
4. Orally create sentences using the words
5. Cover the original target word (stake)
6. Write the word orally stressing the highlighted parts.
7. Check the word

11. Highlighter pens.

Highlighter pens are enjoyed by most children. Use them to encourage children to find their own spelling errors when they are proof reading their own work. Encourage them to check their spellings in their written work by scanning from the LAST word to the first and highlight any word that does not look right. Scanning from the last word to the first helps stop them from reading what they think they have written and helps them focus on what they have actually written. Tell them that any word they hesitate over is likely to be an error. It is always surprising how many of their own errors they can spot using this method. They can often self correct many of them unaided.

12. Spelling Buddies.

Encourage children to team up with a partner as a 'spelling buddy'. Always have a culture of 'no put downs' they are there to help and support one another. A buddy can observe and check spelling strategies applied by the other. They can 'test' one another, work together with spelling games and check each other's written work.



13. Spelling arc /magnetic letters.

1. Use an arc to place all the letters out in alphabetical order. Research has shown that the letters of the alphabet placed in an arc helps children recall alphabetical order.
2. Teach them that 'mn' are always at the top and therefore in the middle of the alphabet. Therefore words beginning with MN are in the middle of the dictionary/telephone book/index etc.
3. Place the magnetic letters out in the arc to practise order. Gradually build up the number of letters in order.
4. The area under the arc is used to practise spellings with the magnetic letters without the constraint of recalling letter formation or orientation.
5. Mats can be bought from companies such as LDA.

14. Salt Writing

Most children love this strategy.

1. Experience dictates that this is best done 1:1 with an adult or you will end up with salt all over the desk and classroom!
2. Put a thick layer of salt into a baking sheet or biscuit tin lid or similar. The salt can be coloured if desired. There are commercial coloured salts available.
3. The child looks carefully at the word.
4. Say the word
5. Say each letter name
6. Write it in joined script in the salt with a finger or pencil top.
7. Shake the tray to clear the salt and write again.
8. Children will write the same word many, many times in the salt whilst they may reluctantly write it just once with paper and pencil.
9. Sand, rice, sandpaper can also be used

15. Spelling Boxes

It is useful for specific children who find learning spellings particularly challenging. Use two brightly coloured attractive small boxes. Parents can have these at home if they wish to help. One box should be marked "Words I am learning" and the other "Words I have learnt". Encourage the child to choose about 5 words to learn. They take ownership of these words. They are written clearly and accurately on separate pieces of card and placed in the box labelled "Words I am learning" The child chooses the spelling strategy to learn each word and when they feel it is committed to memory it is moved into "Words I have learnt". Every week the box marked "Words I have learnt" is revisited, shaken and a random 3 words are pulled out and given to the parent or spelling buddy to read out. The child should, without looking, write the word quickly and automatically. If they are correctly recalled it is returned to the box. Any that are not remembered are returned to the "Words I am learning box". It is very important to ensure the child sees the process as positive. Explain that it is normal and OK not to have remembered - NOBODY should be disappointed or upset. Perhaps a different spelling strategy needs to be considered to help them recall the spelling.

16. Word lists, posters and cue prompts.

Display commonly used word lists or subject specific word lists in the classroom. Remember to add graphics to help the children know what the word says and to add interest.

Posters with cartoons and comic 'fun' always engage children.

Display cue prompts to help children recall spelling strategies.

17. NLP Spelling (Neuro-Linguistic Programming)

Children with a weak visual channel may find it difficult to visualise letters or pictures but may be able to do this with practice. For children with a strong visual channel this can become a speedy and successful method.

To demonstrate the idea of remembering visually, try this:

Ask the child what something looked like the last time he saw it – his room, a birthday cake, a present from last Christmas. Point out that in trying to remember what something looks like we look **up** to the **left**. This engages the visual part of the brain. If we hold the target word so that we have to move our eyes up to the left we will make a better connection with the correct part of our brain for remembering visually.

Ask the child to take a “photograph” of the word with the “camera” in his “mind’s eye.” He can test this by closing his eyes to find out if he can still “see” the word. Allow him to take as long as it takes to remember his image,

Ask the child to keep his eyes closed and to look at the “photograph” of his word.

1. Ask him to spell out the word using letter names.
2. How many letters can you see?
3. What are the first/last two letters? 2nd and 4th? First and last?
4. Are there any tall/small/double letters? How many? What are they?
5. What colour have you made your word? If there are any tricky letter combinations ask him to change the colours of these letters or make them shine/sparkle.
6. If the word is a homonym ask the child to superimpose the word onto a picture e.g. **meat** on a leg of lamb or sausage.
7. Now ask him to spell out the word backwards. He will only be able to do this if he has constructed a visual image of the word. If accurate have him open his eyes and immediately write the word down saying each letter aloud. This connects all three memories of the word – auditory, visual and kinaesthetic – providing a multi-sensory experience.
8. If any errors are made during questioning allow him to look again at the word and use his camera.

(Note: This can also be useful for building a sight vocabulary of high frequency words.)

18. Spelling Conventions

Many “rules”/ conventions can be confusing and there always seem to be exceptions. However, some are useful for example:

1. A “v” sound at the end of a word is always **ve**. -
give, love, engrave

2. Double l, f, s and z after a single vowel at the end of one syllable words.

e.g. belll, tosss, huffff, buzzzz.

3. **q** never stands by itself - always followed by **u**.

4. Regular plural nouns are made by adding **s**.

Form plurals of words with "hissing endings"

by adding **es** - **after s, x, z, sh, ch, ss**.

e.g. buses, foxes, buzzes, bushes, churches, bosses.

5. Words ending in **f** or **fe** usually change the **f** to **v** before adding **es** to make them plural;

knife - knives, loaf - loaves.

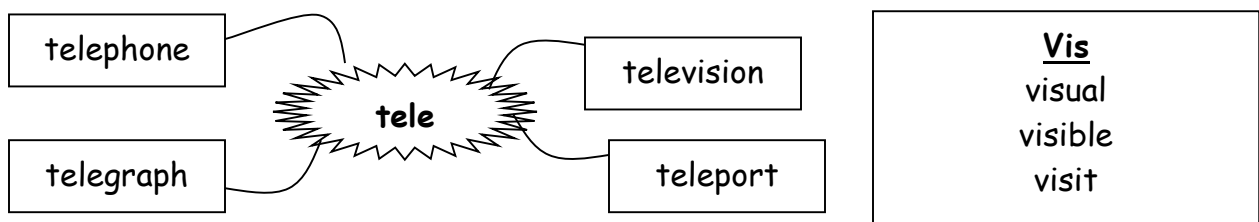
6. Irregular plurals are;

man - men
child - children
mouse - mice
tooth - teeth
sheep - sheeps

woman - women
foot - feet
goose - geese
deer - deer

19. Word web

Link words in a web with others with similar letter strings.



20. Quick dictation

For this to be successful for dyslexic children, they need to be confident that all attempts at words will be valued. Mistakes made by all children need to be seen as interesting, with discussion as to why the mistake was made and what can be learned from it. Calling mistakes 'learning steps' helps this.

Have two or three sentences linked to current words being studied by the class, in order of difficulty. Dictate the same sentences on several occasions. Children write on individual whiteboards.

Start with the easiest one. Children can attempt all sentences if they want or only do the first one, which they then illustrate while dictation continues.

Children mark their own work using the sentences displayed on the flipchart or a photocopy.

Encourage children to make up a sentence, using their spelling words, that can be dictated to the class.

21. Word stairs

Choose one of your spelling words. Write the first letter. Underneath it write the first two letters, underneath that write the first three letters, and so on. Draw steps round it.

t
th
the
ther
there

t				
t	h			
t	h	e		
t	h	e	r	
t	h	e	r	e

c
co
com
come