

Helping your Child with Spelling

Annie Fisher

Literacy Consultant, Somerset Local Authority

01823 355695

Introduction for Parents

This booklet is intended to give you information about the approaches used in our school to help children to become effective spellers. As with all aspects of the curriculum, children learn best when parents provide active encouragement and support. Parents are also able to extend what happens in school and help children apply their learning to the world beyond the classroom. All children are different and the development of spelling will vary with individuals. The booklet explains the general expectations for children as they move from the Foundation Stage through to Year 6.

Some points to bear in mind:

Children learn best through play - spelling activities are best seen as 'playing with words'.

Children who learn lots of nursery rhymes generally read well.

Good spellers are usually good speakers and good readers - children need to be listened to, read to and read with.

Spelling is about spotting patterns and generalising - it would be impossible to learn to spell each word separately! Seeing patterns, making analogies and generalising are key skills, which is why sorting activities with words are particularly helpful.

Being able to spell is not an indicator of intelligence or overall writing ability, but being able to spell accurately is socially important and probably does improve our 'life chances'.

Spelling is a thinking process rather than a rote learning process. If you can explain **why** a word is spelt in a particular way, you will probably remember how to spell it.

Many children find computers highly motivating. Some useful websites are referenced which may be useful.

Children will enjoy spelling if it feels like fun and if they feel good about themselves as spellers. We need, therefore, to be playful and positive in

our approach - noticing and praising what children **can** do as well as helping them to correct their mistakes. We hope that this booklet will provide you with some starting points for spelling activities, which you can develop in your own creative ways!

Helping Your Child to Spell - Foundation Stage

At this very early stage, children will benefit most from 'playing' with sounds and words - tuning in to the sounds around them and tuning in to speech. The focus of teaching in pre-school settings and in early days in the reception class will be on developing the aural skills children will need to enable them to tackle phonics and spelling. Children will be encouraged to:

enjoy rhyming and rhythmic activities
distinguish between different sounds
develop an awareness of rhyme, rhythm and alliteration
hear and say the initial sounds in words

Once these early skills are secure, children will move on to:

hearing and saying the initial, middle and final sounds in CVC words
(ie consonant/vowel/consonant, eg mop, cat, tap)

linking sounds to letters

developing the skills of

segmenting to help them spell (eg sounding out tap as t a p), and

blending to help them read (eg t a p says tap)

Children will also begin to recognise a range of common (or 'high frequency') words and will be able to spell some of them. Some of these words, eg mum, am, in, cat, at, got, are words that they will be able to 'sound out'; others they will learn as 'sight words', eg the, said, they, was.

You can help by:

saying and singing lots of nursery rhymes, action rhymes, jingles, nonsense rhymes and songs together

moving to songs and music together

listening together to sounds in the environment and talking about them

looking at books together - showing that you are reading the print

reading bedtime stories

developing your child's finger dexterity, which will help with handwriting, eg helping to peg out washing, playing with Lego

providing opportunities to paint, finger paint, use pencils and crayons

and then by:

playing 'I Spy' - initially, this is best done with a limited range of objects, eg objects on the dinner table or around the bath (any object in the room' can be too much to choose from)

tidying up (eg toys, laundry, dinner table) and grouping objects according to letter sound at the beginning of the word

(eg lorry, Lego pepper, plate shirt, shoes)

reading alphabet books and learning to say the alphabet

shopping together - cut out the names of items from packaging at home for children to match and put in the shopping basket, eg weetabix

labelling objects in the house using post-its

(eg window, door, chair, table, bed) - give your child matching post-its and see if they can match their labels to yours (use lower case print)

saying a string of rhyming words with an 'odd one out'

(eg wish, fish, dog, dish)

saying a string of words beginning or ending with the same sounds including an odd one out

(eg shoe, shell, shop, bag, shed) or tap gop mop map buzz

Helping Your Child to Spell - Key Stage 1

Throughout Key Stage 1 children will benefit from rhyming and rhythmic activities, listening games and musical activities. Many will already be able to read and spell simple words with three phonemes (ie sounds) such as big, man, log, pet, mug as well as some high frequency (ie common) words such as my, I the, was, and, is, go, went.

Throughout key stage one they will:

secure their confidence with the spelling of 'consonant/vowel/consonant' words (big, man, pet etc)

understand and use the terms 'vowel' and 'consonant'

move on to read and spell words beginning and ending with consonant clusters, eg stop stick, flag, flash, plug, drip, tent, bump, sand, list

progress to reading and spelling words containing 'long' vowel sounds such as moon, train, steep, farm, speak

come to understand that the same sound can be represented in different ways, eg mean, green, mummy, thief

come to understand that the same letter pattern may represent different sounds, eg beat, bread

continue to use the skill of 'phoneme counting' as a key spelling strategy (eg in the word crash there are 4 phonemes or sounds c - r - a - sh)

develop the skill of syllable counting to 'chunk' and spell longer words and compound words, eg sudd-en-ly, week- end

extend their range of high frequency (common words) eg once, friend, children, ask

begin to investigate the rules for making plurals, eg girl, girls, box, boxes, city, cities

begin to investigate rules for adding 'ing' or 'ed', eg stop, stopping, stopped, hope, hoping hoped

begin to investigate common prefixes and suffixes, eg unhappy, disagree, careful, carefully

You can help by:

continuing to say and sing lots of nursery rhymes, action rhymes, jingles, nonsense rhymes and songs together

reading bedtime stories and poetry

playing 'I Spy' - words 'beginning with' and, when ready, words 'ending with'

helping your child to say the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year

shopping together - write a shopping list and ask your child to help you find the items in the supermarket

providing magnetic letters for the fridge door or a magnetic board

providing and helping with a simple dictionary

providing different writing materials and paper

providing 'real' purposes for your child to write, eg writing shopping lists, 'to do' lists, thank you letters, messages, household labels

sorting objects (eg jars of herbs and spices) into alphabetical order

making up sets of paired words on card and playing 'pairs' using the words your child is currently learning

writing the words your child is learning on cards or post-its and sorting the words in as many different ways as you can think of

talking to your child about the words he/she is learning to spell at school and discussing some good ways of remembering the words

praising attempts at spelling - pointing out the correct letters first

exploring bbc.co.uk - Words and Pictures, Magic Key and Little Animals

Helping Your Child to Spell - Lower Key Stage 2

In years 3 and 4, most children will:

understand and use the terms 'letter', 'vowel', 'consonant', 'phoneme', syllable, prefix and suffix

read and spell words containing 'long' vowel sounds such as dream, thief, bright, flair

understand that the same sound can be represented in different ways, eg mean, green, mummy, thief

come to understand that the same letter pattern may represent different sounds, eg beat, bread

continue to use the skill of 'phoneme counting' as a key spelling strategy for spelling unknown shorter words (eg in the word crash there are 4 phonemes or sounds c - r - a - sh)

use the skill of syllable counting to 'chunk' and spell longer words and compound words, eg suddenly, unimportant, weekend, blackbird, churchyard

extend their range of high frequency (common words), eg their, again, having, couldn't

investigate the rules for making plurals, eg girl, girls, box, boxes, city, cities

investigate rules for adding 'ing' or 'ed', eg stop, stopping, stopped, hope, hoping hoped

investigate common prefixes and suffixes, eg un-, dis-, re-, pre-, -ful. -ly

learn how the apostrophe is used for omission (don't) or possession (the dog's dinner)

learn to use dictionaries and ICT spell-checkers

learn to proof read their writing - checking words if they don't 'look right'

You can help by:

continuing to read and share books together including jingles, nonsense rhymes and poetry

helping your child to say and spell the alphabet, days of the week, months of the year

playing Scrabble, 'Hangman'; doing word-puzzles, word-searches and simple crosswords together

providing 'real' purposes for your child to write, eg writing shopping lists, 'to do' lists, thank you letters, household labels

providing 'real' purposes for using knowledge of alphabetic order, eg looking up a telephone number, finding a book in the library

sorting objects (eg jars of herbs and spices) into alphabetical order

making up sets of paired words on card and playing 'pairs' using the words your child is currently learning

writing the words your child is learning on cards or post-its and sorting the words in as many different ways as you can think of

helping your child to learn spellings by 'playing' with the words as much as possible, eg cutting words up to make word jigsaws, writing a word in pencil and going over the tricky part in colour, making tricky words out of plasticene or playdough, writing the words with your eyes shut, looking for shorter words inside a longer word

talking to your child about the words he/she is learning to spell at school and discussing some good ways of remembering the words

encouraging breaking words into syllables, eg Wed - nes - day

praising successful attempts at spelling - praise the correctly spelt letters and discuss ways of remembering the 'tricky bit'

showing how to try out alternative spellings and checking to see which looks right

encouraging the 'look, say, cover, write, check' strategy to learn spellings

providing a dictionary and illustrated thesaurus - give support with using these

using the 'Spellits' activities on the BBC website bbc.co.uk

Helping Your Child to Spell - Upper Key Stage 2

In years 5 and 6 most children will:

understand and use the terms letter, vowel, consonant, phoneme syllable, prefix and suffix

use independent spelling strategies, eg breaking words into syllables, using known prefixes, suffixes and letter strings, using known spelling rules, checking that spellings 'look right', using dictionaries and spell checkers

take personal responsibility for learning their own commonly misspelt words using strategies that they find helpful

secure the correct spelling of high frequency (common words), eg their, through

transform words, eg changing tenses (ing ed); negation (un, im) making comparisons (er est); changing verbs to nouns and vice-versa (dictate/ dictation, decoration/decorate)

use the apostrophe accurately for omission (don't) or possession (the cat's whiskers)

extend their knowledge of prefixes and suffixes (aero- aqua- micro-, -scope)

research the derivation of words and learn how to use an etymological dictionary

You can help by:

talking with your child about the books/newspapers/magazines you are each reading

talking to your child about the words he/she is learning to spell at school and discussing some good ways of remembering the words

identifying the 'root' word in a longer word, eg musician, musical

demonstrating an interest in words - talking about the meanings and possible derivations of words

playing Scrabble, 'Hangman'; doing word-puzzles, word-searches and crosswords together

investigating spelling websites, eg puzzle maker from discoveryschool.com, spellits from bbc.co.uk, wordsmyth.net, wordcentral.com

providing an adult dictionary, thesaurus, spell-checker

making up 'word webs' together, eg

microphone

microchip

telephone

telescope

microscope

television

stethoscope

revision

visionary