

Spelling strategies

Phonics approaches – first steps to spelling


Phoneme-grapheme correspondence.

- Stretch the word to hear all the sounds.
- Robot talk the word (segmenting).
- Count the phonemes. Check children are hearing all the sounds.
- Write the word. Some phonemes are represented by digraphs (2 letters) or trigraphs (3 letters). Check if children are using the correct grapheme to represent each phoneme, e.g. /ai/ sound can be made using 'a-e' (cake), 'ay' (tray), 'ai' (aid), 'a' (table), 'ae' (sundae), 'ey' (prey), 'eigh' (eight) and 'ea' (break). Consider which graphemes are most likely, which look correct and where each grapheme would be found in a word, e.g. 'ay' would be used for an /ai/ sound at the end of word.
- Sound button (see below).
- Read the word and check (there are always the same number of graphemes and phonemes).

Dot, dash and count.

- Dot and dash the graphemes in the spelling words.
- Write the number of sounds in each word.

e.g.  4 graphemes.

This  is also a good opportunity to discuss unusual spellings, e.g. in the word *delay*, the /i/ sound is spelt with an e, the same as words such as enjoy and England. Creating word families can be helpful, e.g. thief, chief, belief, but not leaf.

Spot the syllable.

- Say each word in full.
- Say the word in SYLLABLE, clapping at the same time, e.g. follow would be fo/llow.
- Write the word out split into syllables

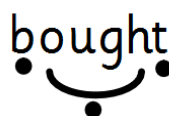
e.g. **a/ddress** **spy/ing**

Sort the grapheme.

- Tell the child the letter names of a grapheme from one of their spelling words, e.g. 'p h' in *photo*.
- The child then has to write it in the correct place in Table 1 in our attached resources. (e.g. they would write it in the /f / box)
- Repeat with another grapheme, e.g. 'y' in happy. (e.g. they would write it in the /ee/ box)

Is it tricky?

Look at a word and do the dot/dash/count activity, e.g.



Are any of the graphemes unusual, i.e. they do not appear in Table 2? Then this is a tricky word. Use one of the tricky word suggestions below to help memorise it.

Visual memory

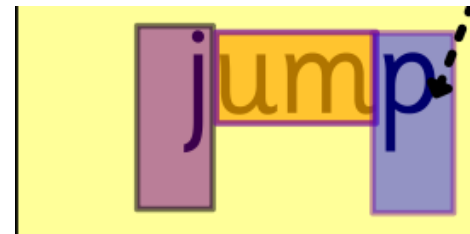
1. Circle the right one.

- Write out the words, but include wrong spellings.
- The child needs to circle the right one and explain how they know.

e.g. **escaped** **escapt**
holidays **holydays** **hollidays**

2. Colour-block and trace.

- Get the child to colour block the letters EXACTLY as THEY want – it does not need to match either the syllables or the sounds. This will show how the child actually sees the word.
- The teacher / peer can draw the shapes of three words the child is learning and get the child to identify which shape represents each word before writing in the letters on the blank shapes to spell each word.



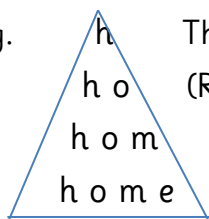
3. Naughty letters.

- Spot the 'naughty' letter in a word (the letter that is unexpected or which you often miss out of get wrong) and write the word with the 'naughty' letter bigger than the rest. You can even draw a picture for that letter, e.g. draw a face around the 'o' in people, draw a fruit for the 'i' in juicy.
- Look at the spellings written this way, then cover them, try to write the word and then look back and check.

4. Pyramid words.

- Write the word a letter at a time in a pyramid shape

e.g. h This means children repeat practicing the spelling, building up a letter at a time.
 h o (Repeat copying also works on action memory)



5. Spot a word in a word.

- Children spot words that they can spell within words that they cannot yet spell, e.g. 'a rat' in 'separate'. Children can make up a silly sentence to help them remember, e.g. There's *a rat* in *sep* – *a* – *rat* – *e*. This is further supported by saying the word in a way that emphasises the word within a word.

Sound memory

1. Say it as it sounds.

- Mispronounce a tricky word. Read the word exactly as it looks, e.g. business = 'bus – i – ness'
- Then look at how it is actually spelt to identify the unusual spelling or letter.

2. Say the letters aloud to a rhythm

- For example, M-I-S-S-I-S-S-I-P-P-I
- You can sing, rap or clap the letters to a rhythm to help memorise it.
- Saying the word / rap silently, whispering it, saying it aloud (and shouting it) can also help to memorise it.

3. Mnemonics

- Choose a tricky word with an unusual spelling, e.g. ough. Make up a word for each letter, e.g. **O**h **U** Grass **H**opper. This can be useful for some tricky words, but cannot be used all the time.

4. Tape players

- Children record themselves saying the word or spelling the word. They listen back to the word and try to write it, they then listen again and check.

Action memory

1. Tracing

- Get children to write the word very large and trace over it with their finger.
- Using your finger as an imaginary pen write the word on the child's back and get them to say the letters aloud and then say the whole word. Now try to write the word spelt correctly.

2. Repeat copying

- Write the word three times in different sizes – small, medium and large.
- Look at the spellings written this way, then cover them, try to write the word and then look back and check.

Table 1

f	l	m	n	r	s	v	z	sh	th	th	ng
b	c	d	g	j	p	qu	t	w	x	y	ch
a	e	i	o	u	ay	ee	igh	ow	oo		
oo	ar	or	air	ir	ou	oy	ire	ear	ure		

Table 2

f	l	m	n	r	s	v	z	sh	th	ng
ff	ll	mm	nn	rr	ss	ve	zz	ti		nk
ph	le	mb	kn	wr	se		s	ci		
					c		se			
					ce					

b	c	d	g	h	j	p	qu	t	w	x	y	ch
bb	k	dd	gg		g	pp		tt	wh			tch
	ck				ge							
	ch				dge							

Vowel sounds

a	e	i	o	u	ay	ee	igh	ow
	ea				<u>a-e</u>	y	<u>i-e</u>	<u>o-e</u>
					ai	ea	ie	oa
						e	i	o
							y	

oo	oo	ar	or	air	ir	ou	oy	ire	ear	ure
<u>u-e</u>			oor	are	ur	ow	oi			
ue			ore		er					
ew			aw							
			au							