

## 'How Can I Help?'

### Spelling Strategies for Parents

Children can find writing a real challenge. They need encouragement, support and praise for their efforts. You can best support your child by:

- encouraging them to write on every possible occasion, praising their efforts and, importantly, letting them see you writing whenever possible;
- playing word games with them, for example, I Spy, Scrabble, Boggle, Bananagrams, wordsearches, crosswords etc;
- pointing to interesting or new words as you read to your child (without interrupting the flow of the story);
- composing emails together.

Most of us, even if we consider ourselves to be good spellers, make spelling mistakes at some point. What is important is that we know what to do when we get stuck and we know how to correct our mistakes.

There are a number of aspects to consider with spelling, and many methods, strategies and games you can use to help encourage and support your children in becoming confident and accurate spellers.

#### Spelling arc/magnetic letters



Use an arc to place all the letters out in alphabetical order. It is easier to view an alphabet as a whole in an arc. Teach that 'mn' is always at the top in the middle of the alphabet. Words beginning with m and n are therefore found in the middle of the dictionary/telephone book/index etc. Place the magnetic letters out in the arc to practise order. Gradually build up the number of letters in order. The area under the arc is used to practise spellings with the magnetic letters without the constraint of recalling letter formation or orientation

## Sounding out

Try breaking the word into its phonemes, and sounding it out 'robotically': **c-a-t**, **sh-e-ll** etc. Many words, however, cannot be sounded out as simply, so other strategies will be more useful.

## Chunking by syllables

Divide the word into chunks, and then say each chunk while writing the word. For example, **remember** can be chunked into **re | mem | ber** and then blended back together.

## Mnemonics and words within words

A mnemonic is simply a memory trick to remember something. This may be using a letter string, rhyme, visual image or even a song to help spell a word. You can also find words within words.

- there is **a rat** in **separate**
- **big elephants can always understand small elephants**
- **accommodation** – two **cats**, two **mice** and a **dog**
- going by **bus** is good **business**



If a child creates their own mnemonic, they are more likely to remember it!

## Word families

Make links between the words and their **roots**, for example:

- **sign**, **signature**, **signal**.
- **create**, **creator**, **creative**

Challenge your child to find as many words as they can with the same root.

### Using a dictionary

It is vital that children become familiar with dictionaries as soon as they are able.

- choose a random word, and race your child to find it in a dictionary (you will need two copies!)
- give your child the meaning of a word. Can they find the correct word and use it in a sentence?
- challenge your child to give you the **word class** (noun, verb, adjective etc.) of a word.

### Tracking

Prepare a sheet similar to the one below. Hide correct spellings amongst incorrect ones. Give your child a highlighter pen and ask them to **track** the line from left to right, find all the correct spellings and **highlight** them.

w h e t h w h a t w l a t c w t t  
w a t h y g s w h a t w g a t w  
h a t l t h a w w h e t h w a h t  
a w w a t w h a t w y w h a t g  
s w h a t l w h a t g w h t a w t  
l w h e t h w a t w w h a t a t c  
h w h t a w h a t t l h t g w a t i  
etc

w h e t h **w h a t** w l a t c w t t  
w a t h y g s **w h a t** w g a t w  
h a t l t h a w w h e t h w a h t  
a w w a t **w h a t** w y w h a t g  
s **w h a t** l **w h a t** g w h t a w t  
l w h e t h w a t w **w h a t** a t c  
h w h t a **w h a t** t l h t g w a t i  
etc

### Word shapes

This strategy is particularly liked by children who have a strong visual learning style, especially when learning groups of words.

Look at the word and make it with either magnetic or wooden letters.



Draw the outline around the shape of the word, and remove the letters. Can your child remember the letters of the word simply by

looking at the shape?

### **Tactile writing**

You don't always need a pen and paper to practise spellings! All you need is a tray (to contain the mess!) and choose from any suitable product in which your child can trace letters:

- sand
- shaving foam
- beads
- glitter and sequins
- 'gloop' (cornflour and water)

You could also use string, playdoh, unifix cubes, glow-sticks, pipe cleaners etc. to physically form the letters.

On a sunny day, you could even use water pistols to squirt water on the wall/ground outside!

### **Singing while you spell**

This is reportedly one of the most popular methods used by contestants at American Spelling Bees. Simply say or sing the letters out loud, forming a melody and rhythm. Your child could use a song by their favourite singer as inspiration! This melody should then imprint in your child's memory; if they forget a spelling they will still remember how the word's rhythm and sound, which will serve as a prompt.