



Guidelines for Parents

- A single answer to all children's spelling problems does not exist
- Early identification of spelling difficulties is essential for maximum progress
- A good mark on a weekly spelling test is not always an indication of a child's spelling ability. Look at your child's written sentences and creative writing. This will provide you with the necessary information to judge your child's true spelling ability
- If you are anxious about your child's ability to spell, do not make this evident to them. Accept your child's difficulty and try to make small steps towards assisting them to improve their spelling.
- If you are concerned about your child's spelling, make an appointment to discuss this with the class teacher. They will be able to advise you on how best to help your child at home
- Find out what spelling strategy is in use in the classroom and how best to implement the same strategy at home
- It is important to relax and to make each spelling session at home fun. If you find yourself becoming frustrated, it is best to take a break for a while
- Spelling activities should be written, when working with your child at home
- Begin with common words. These are what your child should master first.
- It takes time to develop your child's long-term memory for retention of spellings.
- Emphasise the importance of looking at words intently to see their letters, shapes and patterns
- Use recall cards and plastic magnetic letters to improve your child's visual memory. Visual discrimination can be assisted by using 'Spot the Difference' activities. All activities in spelling should be game/fun based. Always begin left-to-right, chunk letters together, look for letter patterns or words within words, when studying words.
- To develop visual sequential memory, put some simple items/toys in a row; ask your child to look at the order; mix up the pieces and then ask your child to put them back in the same order. Start with 3 items and increase this number when your child is ready for it.

- Study prefixes, suffixes, compound words, common endings etc. Use newspapers and a highlighter pen and Ask your child to highlight any word with a prefix etc. on an old newspaper
- The meaning of confusing words (their/there) must be clearly understand. Spend some time working on this
- Praise your child's efforts even if the overall spelling contains errors

How parents can help children to improve spelling

Pre-Communicative & Pre-Phonetic Stages

- Read, sing and recite nursery rhymes with your child
- Go through the alphabet in turns eg. Child says a, parent says b, child continues with c etc.
- Block the letters of the alphabet in turns eg. parent begins with ab, child continues with cd, parent says ef etc.
- Play alphabet games such as ; I-spy
- Purchase a set of magnetic letters for home
- Encourage your child to experiment with pencils, crayons, pens or markers. Ask them to 'Take a crayon for a walk' on a piece of paper
- Encourage your child to draw lines from top to bottom and anticlockwise circles
- Look at how your child begins to hold a pencil. Model the correct grip for the child and encourage them to use it whenever they use a pencil
- Understand the differences between left- and right-handed children with regard to pencil grip, position of paper and posture
- Ask the teacher if cursive (joined) writing is being used in class
- Emphasise that words always start from left to right.

Phonetic Stage

- If your child is struggling with spelling, a list of core words should be the primary focus
- Have a short spelling session at home every day
- Use the same spelling strategy at home as the child is using in class
- Emphasise letter patterns and words within words

Transitional & Competent Stages

- When working on spellings at home, be aware of your child's attention span and do not continue past this threshold
- Be consistent in attending to spelling work. Spend 10 mins a night, 5 nights a week. Once or twice a week is of little value
- Always re-enforce the spelling strategy in use in class
- Learning lists of spellings does very little to help a child who is struggling with spelling
- Do not overload your child with too many words to learn at one time
- Focus especially on the words which will be used most in your child's writing
- Play a spelling game together and make sure to do some spelling activity daily
- Point out similarities in words regardless of sound eg. our, tour, journal etc.
- Do not ask your child to call out spellings. Ensure that they are written from memory and never copied
- The child should keep a dictionary of tricky words in a copy or notebook. These words can be removed when mastered
- Display the tricky words using signs, magnetic letters etc.
- Tricky words should be revised continually
- Do not call out spellings for your child. If they need a spelling when writing, ask him/her write down the bits they know, leave a space for other letters and continue with their writing. Return to the word when the writing has been completed. Spellings should not interfere with what the child wants to write.
- Be positive with corrections. Praise what is right
- Correcting spellings should not be a copying exercise. Writing out a word 5/6 times has little value in the long term. It is much better to write the word once from memory and check it to see if it is correct. If it is not correct, highlight the part that is wrong. The child should trace over this and rewrite again
- Keep supporting and praising effort
- Reading and spelling are two separate skills. Therefore, a child will not learn to spell just by reading books