

Section 8: Spelling

Spelling is a complex process which involves many skills.

To be good spellers, children need to be able to hear the sounds in words; and know the letter(s) to spell these sounds correctly. They also need to recognise patterns in print, that is groups of letters blended to represent sounds in print.

Many words in English cannot be learned by sounding out, including some High Frequency Words such as 'could' or 'said'. These make up a high percentage of the words used to make sentences and many need to be learned by heart.

Children with literacy difficulties may have problems with working memory. They may struggle to remember information they hear, break up words for spelling or jumble the letters in words. Children need to have a correctly stored picture of a word in memory to spell words automatically. **Therefore, as soon as children begin school they need to learn about alphabetic knowledge, word patterns and understanding that words are made up of parts.**

There are strategies that can be used to help a child to remember and recall spellings. Some children learn by moving, seeing, touching and doing. It is important that spellings are taught explicitly. Some children need extra time to take in, discover spelling patterns and make connections between sounds and words.

It is important to link the learning of spelling to writing sentences which in turn helps the writing process.

Section 8.1

Foundation Stage (Age 4-6)

Spelling



Impact

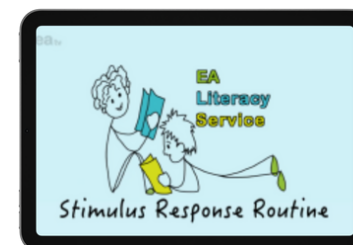
May have difficulty hearing the sounds in a spoken word

May have difficulty hearing the difference between end sounds such as /d/ or /t/ for example, writes 'cot' for 'cod'

Practical Strategies

- Introduce new letters and sounds together by using the alphabet
- **EA Guidance Video: Introduce the flashcard and flashcard routine (1:03 mins)**

- The Stimulus Response Routine can be used to consolidate new sounds. It is a multisensory and repetitive approach:
 - **EA Guidance Video: Stimulus Response Routine (1:51 mins)**
- Use sound boxes to support spellings
- Draw a box for each sound in the word and ask your child to push the counter into the box as he/she says each sound
- Ask your child questions such as:
 - “What is the sound at the start of this word?”
 - “What is the sound at the end of this word?”
 - “What is the sound in the middle of this word?”
- Use activities such as ‘Same or Different’. Tell your child 3 or 4 words and ask him/her to say if the words have the same sounds at the beginning or end: **map, mop, mat / fun, pin, ran**
- Listen for the ‘odd one out’ at the beginning or at the end, for example: **map, mop, cat, mad**



May not be able to hear or recognise vowel sounds. Spelling will be incorrect, for example, writes 'jug' for 'jog'

May struggle to identify whether two words rhyme

Practical Strategies

- Use a small mirror to look at his/her mouth when saying sounds. Practise the mouth positions for producing short vowel sounds, for example, /ě/ makes you grin, /ĩ/ drops your chin
- Ask your child to say words containing the vowels and listen to how the word sounds, for example, pat, pet, pit, pot, cat, cot, cut
- If your child mixes up the short vowel sounds use the 'elephant sentence'

- Sing/say nursery rhymes together
- Recite Nursery Rhymes to your child and leave out rhyming words, for example:
 - "Humpty Dumpty sat on a ____? Humpty Dumpty had a great ____"
- Play 'match the rhyming pictures'
- Play 'odd one out'. Ask your child to spot the word that does not rhyme, for example dog, log, cat, fog
- Share picture books of rhyming words and use online resources such as books, games, and videos for rhyme
- Using a whiteboard and whiteboard marker, ask your child to write a word that rhymes with the target word such as, fox hid in a brown __ (box)

Impact

May have difficulty counting syllables in a word

May have words or parts of words incorrectly memorised

May not recognise onset and rime patterns

Practical Strategies

- A syllable is a beat in a word that can be heard and felt (put your hand under your chin to feel it as you speak). Show your child the following strategies to detect syllables:
 - Count
 - Clap or tap
 - Jaw-drop – ask your child to put his/her hand just under, but not touching and count how many times the chin hits the hand when saying the word, e.g. mag/net

- Games to strengthen your child's memory can help:
 - **EA Guidance Video: Listening Memory (3:01mins)**



- Present word patterns to your child, beginning with cvc 'a' words - cat, fat, mat
- Practise working with cvc words - changing the medial vowel, e.g. pin, tin, bin, lot, pot, got, sun, bun, run

May struggle to remember letter sounds

May struggle to remember what a letter looks like

May find it difficult to match letters to sound and chooses incorrect letters, for example, 'sed' for 'said'

Cannot tell if a spelling looks right

Practical Strategies

- Ensure your child can read and write all 26 letters of the alphabet, letter name, sounds and letter formation:
 - **EA Guidance Video: Working Memory (2:33 mins)**
- Spelling is visual. Your child must know what the word he/she is trying to spell looks like, because for many words in English we choose the correct letters from a range of choices, for example, 'cat' not 'kat', 'said' not 'sed'
- Use multisensory approaches when revising a new sound and engage all the senses – seeing, hearing and doing/moving
- Follow a daily flashcard routine for overlearning letter names and sounds
- Use the Handwriting Routine to practise letter formation. Joined up writing can help:
 - **EA Guidance Video: Handwriting Routine (2:27 mins)**
- Use the Stimulus Response Routine to practise new sounds:
 - **EA Guidance Video: Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS) (4:39 mins)**
 - **Teacher Guidance: Simultaneous Oral Spelling Instructions | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**

Impact

May write the letters in words in the wrong order, e.g. 'siad' instead of 'said'

May find it difficult to hold more than 2 sounds in memory and then blend these letters together to make a word

May spell the same words incorrectly over and over and often avoids spelling more difficult words

Slow recall of spelling of High Frequency Words (HFWs)

Practical Strategies

- Develop the child's 'sight' (visual) memory through routines with the alphabet arc:
 - **EA Guidance Video: Visual Sequential Memory (2:20 mins)**

- Use word families (onset and rime). If a child knows how to spell one word, for example, 'cat' he/she can build a family of 'at' words, which will make it easier for a child to store in his/her long-term memory - 'cat,' 'sat,' 'rat,' 'bat'
- The onsets and rimes can be changed to spell new words, for example, 'lip' to 'clip,' 'bud' to 'thud'

- Continually over-learn and re-visit HFWs. Give repeated exposure to and plenty of practice writing HFWs
- The Look, Visualise, Say, Cover, Write and Check (LVSCWC) strategy strengthens the visual (seeing), movement and hearing memory (saying the letter names aloud)
- Mnemonics will help with some HFW's, e.g. 'said' and 'because':
 - **Printable Resource: Spelling Mnemonics | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**
 - **HFW and Heart words organised phonetically.**
 - **EA Guidance Video: Heart words and Irregular HFWs (8:03 mins)**

May confuse **b/d, p/q**

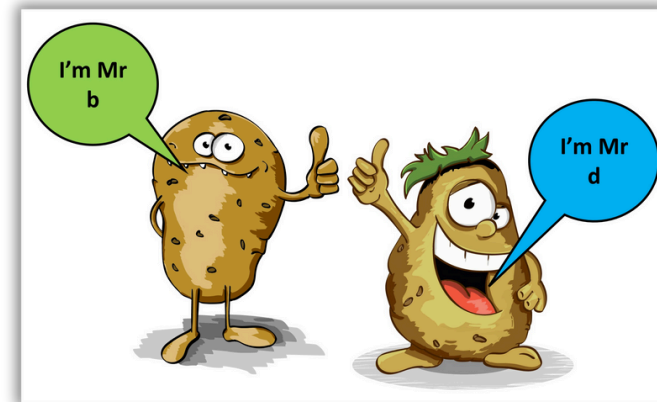
Slow to complete written and spelling tasks

The child may work at a slower pace than his/her peers

May take longer to complete homework activities

Practical Strategies

- The strategies below will provide a memory prompt on direction of confusing letters, such as 'b' and 'd' or 'p' and 'q':
 - **Printable Resources: Letter Orientation Prompt | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**



- Talk to the teacher if you are concerned with your child's homework
- Allow your child to practise spellings in a different format, for example, on a whiteboard
- Provide regular practice and repetition - overlearning helps your child to remember the words

Section 8.2

Primary Stage (Age 7-11)

Spelling



May confuse letter names and sounds and may forget the letters needed to spell a word

Your child may over-rely on sounding out spellings

Practical Strategies

- The alphabet arc can be used to support child's working memory as he/she learns the letter names/sounds:
 - **Teacher Guidance: Alphabet Arc Activities | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**
 - Practise letter/sound matching daily with a flashcard card routine
 - Working Memory Routine:
 - **EA Guidance Video: Working Memory (2:33 mins)**
 - Demonstrate how the letter is formed using the Handwriting Routine:
 - **EA Guidance Video: Handwriting Routine (2:27 mins)**
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- Incorrect spelling should be corrected early, as it is important that this does not become the child's permanent way of spelling the word
 - Break phonics work into smaller, manageable chunks and consolidate:
 - Consonant blends - /fl/, /gl/, /cl/
 - Consonant digraphs - /sh/, /ch/, /th/
 - End blends - /mp/, /nd/, /nt/, /nch/, /nk/
 - Vowel-consonant digraphs - /ar/, or/, /er/

Impact

Your child may over-rely on sounding out spellings

May forget the first sounds when blending words

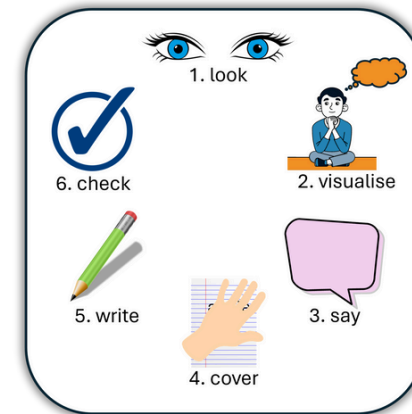
May find it difficult to spell longer words

May mix up the order of letters within words, for example, 'hlep' for 'help'

Practical Strategies

- Revise word families, with similar sounds which have the same spelling pattern for example, 'car,' 'bar,' 'star' or 'new,' 'few,' 'stew'

- Provide overlearning of new words - use Look, Visualise, Say, Cover, Write, Check (LVSCWC) strategy:
 - **Printable Resource: Multisensory Spelling Activities - Visual Focus**



- Rules are easier to remember than hundreds of individual spellings for example:
 - /ay/ is commonly found at the end of words such as, 'play,' 'tray'
 - /ai/ is commonly found at the beginning or in the middle of words, such as, 'aid,' 'train,' 'sail'
 - **Teacher Guidance: Spelling Rules | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**

Impact

May be able to learn for a weekly spelling test but has forgotten them by the following week

May struggle with either the short vowel sound or long vowel sound

May struggle to choose the correct pattern of long vowel sound, for example, 'bowt,' 'boat,' 'bote'

Practical Strategies

- Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS) Routine is a multisensory approach to learning spelling that involves writing and naming letters at the same time (writing a word in cursive/joined up writing creates a unique muscle memory and makes remembering the word more automatic):
 - **Teacher Guidance: Simultaneous Oral Spelling Instructions | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**
 - **EA Guidance Video: Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS) (4:39 mins)**

- The short vowel sound is easier to hear in cvc words, for example, 'pin,' 'pan,' 'pot,' 'pet,' 'cat,' 'cut'
- Magic 'e' words are helpful to explain what is meant by a long vowel sound - where the vowel says its name for example:
 - 'hat' changes to 'hate,' 'cub' changes to 'cube'

- Discuss where patterns of vowels are most likely found in a word:
 - /ay/ is commonly found at the end of words such as, 'play', 'tray'
 - /ai/ is commonly found at the beginning or in the middle of words, such as, 'aid', 'train', 'sail'
- **EA Guidance Video: Simultaneous Oral Spelling (SOS) (4:39 mins)**
- **Teacher Guidance: Simultaneous Oral Spelling Instructions | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**

May have difficulty breaking words into syllables

A child may struggle to complete spelling homework with different letter choices for the same sound, for example, /oe/ and /ow/ can have the same sound, so is 'snow' spelled 'snow' or 'snoe?'

Practical Strategies

- Orally count syllables in 1/2/3/4 syllable words
- Revise syllable types and use colour to highlight the syllables, for example, bat/man:
 - **EA Cognition & Learning - Literacy Newsletter Issue 9: Phonics**
- Encourage the child to spell longer words by writing one syllable at a time. Each syllable must have at least one vowel
- Explain the rules for breaking words into syllables, for example, 'ho/tel', 'pi/lot', 'pa/per'

- Speak to your child's teacher about possibly reducing the multiple variations of sounds and only working on one or two choices at a time
- Prompt cards are helpful if your child is completing a written homework:
 - Target sounds
 - Alphabet strips
 - HFWs (High Frequency Words)
 - Topic word
- Use mnemonics to remember words he/she finds difficult to spell. Creating his/her own will make the mnemonic easier to remember:
 - **Printable Resource: Spelling Mnemonics | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**

Impact

Your child confuses letters such as 'b,' 'd,' 'p,' 'q'

May not recognise prefixes and suffixes in a word

May not recognise suffixes such as 'ed' and may spell 'jumped' as 'jumpt,' 'banged' as 'bangd' or 'lifted' as 'liftid'

May find it difficult to break longer words into manageable chunks such as syllables, root words, prefix and suffix

Practical Strategies

- Use a memory prompt on direction of letters:
 - **Printable Resources: Letter Orientation Prompt | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**

- Explore the plural rules adding the word ending '-s' and '-es'
- Help the child to identify 'root' words and to build longer words by adding prefixes and suffixes and know that the spelling of prefixes and suffixes remain the same, for example, 'dis + agree + able'
- Practise breaking simple words into root word and suffix
- Find and read words in short sentences or passages that contain the suffixes learned
- Explain how the prefix 'un-' means 'not' and when it is added to the base word it creates a new word often meaning the opposite to the original word, for example,
 - unwrap
 - unhappy
 - untie
 - unwell
 - untidy
- **Teacher Guidance: Spelling Rules | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**

May have limited vocabulary knowledge

May have difficulties with spelling homophones (words that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings, for example, their/there/they're)

Practical Strategies

- Discuss the meaning of words. This can help the child think of other words similar in meaning and discover the connection, for example, 'twin' and 'twice'
- Have fun learning the origin of the days of the week:
 - **Teacher Guidance: Days of the Week Etymology | SEND Plan**
 - **Printable Resource: Days of the Week Activity | SEND Plan**
- Encourage the child to identify words that he/she thinks are compound words, for example, how many words can you hear when you say "starfish"?
- Studying of the origin of words can be particularly helpful when exploring prefixes and suffixes, for example, 'anti' is a Greek word meaning 'against' or 'opposite'



- Use a silly sentence, 'their huge elephant is red' for 'their' could help remind the child that 'their' is used for belonging
- Homophones should not be learned together. Make sure that the sounds, spelling and meaning of one is secure before introducing another, for example, their/there, were/where

Impact

May not be able to spell words he/she reads every day, for example, 'could'

May have difficulty spelling High Frequency Words (HFWs)

Practical Strategies

- Neuro Linguistic Programming (NLP) is used for irregular words and may be best used with a child with a good memory for things he/she sees
- Strategies for learning to spell High Frequency Words:
 - The Look, Visualise, Say, Cover, Write, Check strategy helps the child to learn High Frequency Words
 - Your child could use mnemonics to remember words he/she finds difficult to spell. Creating his/her own will make the mnemonic easier to remember
 - **Printable Resource: Spelling Mnemonics | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**

Some



Some oranges might explode

Section 8.3

Post Primary Stage (Age 11+)

Spelling



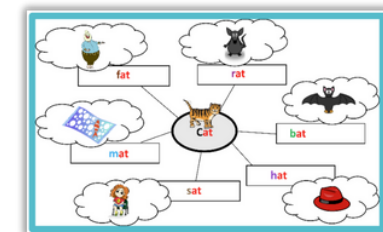
May choose the incorrect sequence of sounds or letter pattern for example, writing 'falq' for 'flag'

May spell a word based on sounds, for example, 'becos' for 'because'

Unsure of essential spelling rules

Practical Strategies

- Drawing attention to word patterns may be helpful, for example, 'trap' becomes two units: 'tr' (onset) and 'ap' (rime)
- Having an 'anchor word' for a spelling pattern may help your child to automatically recall other words that follow that pattern. For example, if your child can spell 'night', he/she can use this as an 'anchor word' to spell, 'light,' 'fright,' 'tight'
 - **Printable Resource: Anchor Words | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**
- Spelling rules can be helpful to guide your child when choosing the correct way to spell words from the options. For example, 'ay' and 'ai' both spell the same sound, but 'ay' is commonly found at the end of words and 'ai' in the middle, as in 'play' and 'train'
- Use mnemonics/visual tricks for words that do not 'sound out'. Use a picture hook of an island and say, "an 'island' **is land** surrounded by water." Allow the child to create his/her own versions for tricky words:
 - **Printable Resource: Spelling Mnemonics | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**
 - **Printable Resource: Post Primary Mnemonics (Subject Specific) | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**



Difficulty breaking words into syllables to help spelling

May overuse simple language as he/she is unsure of more complex words

Practical Strategies

- It is helpful to know how to segment words into syllables:
 - Chunking is a useful strategy to support spelling
 - Use colour to highlight the syllables of words such as: re-pro-duc-tive
- Revise prefix and suffix rules
- Draw attention to parts of words from Latin or Greek that are widely used in English, such as:
 - 'graph' (meaning written down or printed) as in autograph, photograph and telegraph
 - 'photo' (meaning light) in the words photograph, photosensitivity and photosynthesis, which can help with spelling these words
- Draw attention to root words, for example, 'joy' and demonstrate how the word meaning changes as we add prefixes or suffixes, for example, 'enjoy' and 'joyful'
- **Teacher Guidance: Days of the Week Etymology | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**
- **Printable Resource: Days of the Week Activity | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**
- **Teacher Guidance: Science Root Words | Literacy Inclusion Toolkit**

Impact

May overuse simple language as he/she is unsure of more complex words (continued)

Your child may be unsure of homophones and their meanings (words that sound the same but have different spellings and different meaning, such as **here** and **hear**)

Practical Strategies

- Look, Visualise, Say, Cover, Write and Check (LVSCWC) is a strategy for learning spellings
- Visualising a word in your mind can be useful
- The child can learn to make generalisations by asking questions such as:
 - What does the word mean?
 - Do I know the meaning of any of the parts of the word?
 - Is the word a compound word? (made from two smaller words)
 - Can I see a little word? For example, 'tidy' with something added before it, 'untidy' (prefix)
 - Is something added after it, 'tidiness' (suffix)
 - Is something added before and after the word? For example, 'untidiness' (prefix and suffix)

- Homophones and commonly confused words such as, 'advice' and 'advise' or 'practice' and 'practise' can be written on flash cards with images and strategies beside them
- Your child could create a set of homophones he/she commonly misuses/misspells

