

Helping Your Child with Spelling: A Parent's Guide

The new school year is here, and pretty soon your elementary school children may start bringing home weekly spelling lists to study. They may be tested on these words in school. As a parent, you may be wondering, *how can I help my children become better spellers?* Here are some things you can try at home with your children to help them learn this essential skill!

- Help your child write the spelling words on a separate piece of paper in alphabetical order.
- Have your children draw pictures for each of the spelling words. Have them write the word below the picture. Take all the pictures and create a spelling reference book over the course of the year.
- Create a word search with your child's spelling words. You can do this by making a grid of 10 squares by 10 squares, writing the spelling words in the grid, then filling up the other squares with random letters. Keep a list of your children's spelling words nearby for them to reference while doing the word search.
- Together, think of ways to remember the words. For example, *You HEAR with your EAR; He will be a FRIEND until the END; The ELEPHANT ate an ANT, that is why he has an ANT in him.* These types of memorization tricks are called *mnemonics*.
- Have your children write a story using as many of their spelling words as possible. Have them illustrate their stories.
- Make a concentration game out of the spelling words and play this game with your children.
- Dictate the words and their spellings into a tape recorder. Find moments for your children to listen to the tape - such as in the car or for a few minutes before bedtime. Or, help your children make their own tapes.
- Together, use Scrabble tiles to spell the words.
- When studying spelling, encourage your children to use the “**Look, Cover, Write, Check**” method. Take a piece of paper and fold it into four columns. Label the columns (as seen below). Have your children write the spelling list in the “Look” column. They should then **look** at each word, and **say** the letters to remember how the word looks. Next, have them cover the words by folding the “Look” column over to the “Cover” column. Have your children write the word down in the “Write” column (from memory) and then check to see if they were correct by looking at the original word. They should rewrite the word in the “Check” column. You may want to underline the letters your children originally missed with red. Do this for the entire spelling list. Even if your children spell every word incorrectly at first, praise them for their efforts and encourage them to keep trying. You want your children to stay confident during this exercise so they don't give up!



Turn the page for more spelling tips!



LOOK	COVER	WRITE	CHECK
1. beautiful 2. children 3. happy 4. school	Fold here	beatifl childrn hapy skool	beautif <u>u</u> l childr <u>e</u> n happ <u>y</u> sch <u>o</u> ol

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Spelling is just a small piece of the puzzle with regards to writing. Ways to use the spelling lists to increase vocabulary and improve grammar are:

- Have your children write the opposite (antonym) of each spelling word. Help them find the antonym if they don't know it at first.
- Have your children write a synonym (a word with a similar meaning) for each spelling word.
- Have them make the plural for each of the nouns on the list.
- Have them add prefixes (un-, in-, re-, pre-, im-, etc.) or suffixes (s, es, er, ed, est, ing, etc.) to words when possible (the new word must still be a real word.) Talk about how this changes the word, and/or its meaning. (For example, if the original spelling word is "possible" adding "im" to the word makes it "impossible" - the complete opposite in meaning.)

When children read or are read to, they develop a sense of how a story is formed (beginning, middle, end) and the details that need to be included (characters, setting, context). This helps them with their writing, and while writing, they use their knowledge of spelling in a meaningful context. So even before the spelling lists start coming home in your child's backpack, you can create a home environment that supports reading, writing, and spelling - all of which are interrelated.

- Read, read, and read some more with your kids! Try alphabet books and point out all the words on the page that begin with that letter. While reading poems and nursery rhymes, look for rhyming words and call attention to the fact that many words sound the same but have different spellings.
- Encourage your child to write every day - it can be a grocery list, an e-mail to friends and relatives, an old-fashioned letter to grandma, reminder notes for family members, or stories in a journal. Make sure there are pens/pencils and paper in the house.
- Play word games, for example, say a word and have your child think up a word that begins with the last letter of your word. (For example, you say "net" your child says, "table", you say, "elephant", etc.)
- Label household objects using note cards and tape; e.g. the word "refrigerator" stuck on the fridge, a card with the word "door" printed on it for the bedroom door, etc. It is very possible that your child's classroom has similar labels to expose your child to print. This would be easy to replicate at home.



Remember, your children will make mistakes as they learn how to spell. This is normal, and part of the learning process. Remember to offer encouragement and praise for your children's efforts!

Please Note: If you suspect your child is having an excessive amount of trouble learning to read, write, or spell, and feel that this may be due to another underlying problem such as an attention disorder or special need, consult with your child's teacher for suggestions.

Sources: The ideas for this tip sheet were compiled from various sources, including www.mumsnet.com, www.readinglady.com, and www.edbydesign.com, by the Title I Dissemination Project, 2002.