

## Pupil information sheet: How to improve my spelling

### Writing and spelling

It is hard to remember what you want to write when you also have to think about how to spell the words. If you stop to sort out the spelling, you forget what you want to say. It can be better to get on with the writing and go back to check the spellings later. If you don't have time to check the spellings, your teacher will understand, mark your work for content and ask you to practise a few words.

Some pupils get so worried about spelling that they don't write much and no one knows that they have good ideas and that they understand things. Sometimes it helps to write down the first letters of the word and draw a small line after the letters. Then go back and complete the word later.

Computer spell-checks are useful. There are programmes that immediately underline a misspelt word. But if you stop to correct the spelling, you can forget what you wanted to say. It can be easier to keep on writing and correct the spelling later.

There are times when you know that your spelling is not quite right but you don't know how to get it right. When going over your writing, use a pencil or highlighter pen to mark the words that you want to check. Then find out how to spell the words.

### Learning how to spell words

Good spelling programmes will have taught you to:

- Use word families you already know such as *night*, *fight*, *bright* in order to spell *light*.
- Notice beginnings and endings around the same word. For example: *helper*, *helpful*, *unhelpful*, *helpless*, *helping* are all based on the word '*help*'.
- Look for words within words such as: cupboard (cup-board), handbag (hand-bag), raspberry (rasp-berry), seaside (sea-side), seashell (sea-shell), sandcastle (sand-castle), football (foot-ball).
- Say longer words in syllables before you write them: Saturday (sat-ur-day), lemonade (lem-on-ade), hospital (hosp-i-tal), management (man-age-ment), Manchester (man-chest-er), United (u-ni-ted), Liverpool (liv-er-pool), environment (en-vi-ron-ment), telephone (tel-e-phone).

### Look-say-cover-write-check

Your knowledge about word families and word patterns will help your spelling. To practise particular words, follow this *look-say-cover-write-check* strategy:

- Copy the word from a correct model.
- Look at it and say it.
- Cover it up so you can't see it.
- Try to write it.
- Check whether you got it right.
- If not, look at the correct model again and say the word.

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- Look closely at the 'tricky' bits that need more practice. How can you remember them?
- Cover the word.
- Write it again.
- Check.
- Keep practising until you have spelt the word correctly three times.

When you look at the word and say it, you can also trace over the word with your finger and say the name of each letter as you trace it. This way of practising has been called a multi-sensory approach: you use your eyes, ears and handwriting to fix the word in your memory.

### Choosing words from your own writing

Choose the words you want to learn from your own writing. It is important to practise only a few words at a time. Five or six are quite enough, maybe even less. Make sure you have the correct spelling. Then follow the *look-say-cover-write-check* strategy for each word.

### Working with a spelling partner

You can check in pairs whether you have learnt to spell the words. Each of you has your own list of words to learn. When you think you have learnt them, take turns to dictate the list to each other and check how many are correct.

### Keeping a record

How can you check which words you have learnt and which need more practice? In a notebook draw four columns (see the example on the next page). List any words you have chosen to learn in the first column. Put a tick in the second column (Practising) to show which words you are practising. Put a tick in the third column (Learnt) when a friend has tested you and you've got the word right. Put a tick in the fourth column (Remembered) when a friend has tested you again some ten days later and you have remembered how to spell the word correctly.

If you don't get the word quite right, you need to practise some more. Put another tick for that word under the second column (Practising) to show that you are working on the word again and need to have it checked later.

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There are often lists of key words in subjects such as history or science. Show your teacher your system of practising so that you can agree on a manageable number of words to learn.

Words to learn	Practising	Learnt	Remembered
<i>sandwich</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>football</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>family</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>hospital</i>	✓	✓	✓
<i>telephone</i>	✓	✓	
<i>quickly</i>	✓	✓	
<i>night</i>	✓		
<i>light</i>	✓		
<i>suddenly</i>			
<i>queen</i>			
<i>knowledge</i>			
<i>beginning</i>			
<i>because</i>			
<i>environment</i>			
...and other words that you have chosen to learn. But only choose a few words at a time to practise.			