

Spelling Helps Part 1

So your children are progressing through Rocket Phonics, enjoying reading (hooray!) and improving quickly. That's wonderful! And depending on their ages, you're thinking about what's next: other parts of the language arts curriculum - like spelling.

Spelling. The very word can strike fear in the hearts of strong men - and women. For the same reasons that reading English is so challenging, spelling is, too.

Spelling English defies our logic and can frustrate our children (and us, too) to tears. But help is available, right in this week's bonus. This week we'll talk about how learning style affects learning spelling; and we'll introduce you to an amazing technique proven to improve spelling.

Over the next two weeks we'll also introduce three approaches to spelling, and give you ideas of what to consider as you look for a good spelling program. We'll look briefly at history to see why English spelling is the way it is, and what that means for your spelling program. Then we'll introduce you to several helpful spelling programs.

Learning style affects how we learn to spell

Part of a child's framework is his or her learning style. A learning style is simply the learner's preference on how he likes to receive and process information. To keep it simple we will discuss three learning styles - auditory, visual and kinesthetic. (There are other researchers who expand this to seven.) Of course, we all use all three learning styles whenever we learn or retrieve any information - we just tend to learn more easily using one style or another.

Auditory learners, often called left-brained, learn best through listening. They often do well in language arts and social studies. Lecture and oral review work fine for them. Auditory learners enjoy audiotapes and oral spelling, but often will spell a word correctly orally, and misspell the same word when they write it.

Visual learners, often called right-brained, learn best through seeing. They do well in math, art and the sciences. Pictures describing the concepts work well for them. They tend to be the best spellers, particularly the visual learners whose second strongest learning style is auditory.

Kinesthetic learners learn best through moving. They do well in sports, PE, mechanics and engineering. Often they are misdiagnosed as having Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). They are best taught in a Montessori-style environment, and often have the most difficulty learning to read and spell.

If you don't yet know your child's learning style, go to: <http://www.howtolearn.com/>. Once there, click on Get Your Free Learning Style Inventory.

Here is an important point about learning spelling (or any material). Spelling, like reading, is a visual activity; it involves being able to retrieve a stored visual image of the word. So it is important that the practice and learning activity your child does (input) matches the activity he will perform (output). In other words, if you want your child to use correct spelling in his writing, part of the learning practice and instruction needs to involve his correctly spelling the word in written form.

Later in this supplement we will introduce a proven method with great success in helping children become great spellers. You will see the technique we will give involves all three learning styles, and that works best. But you and your child will benefit if you want to slightly modify this technique based on your child's learning style. Here is how learning style can affect your usage of this method:

Visual: Your child may quickly and easily picture words, and may need less time practicing any given word. We'll show you a way to tell if your child has a clear visual image of his spelling word.

Auditory: Your child may enjoy talking about the word: does it have any double letters? Is there a pattern? Your child may easily recall, and benefit from, statements you make about the word, such as "There is 'a rat' in *separate*." Also, you can use lots of words when you teach your auditory child, as opposed to your kinesthetic child.

Kinesthetic: Your child may get confused if you use lots of words in your instruction. Keep your words to a minimum with your kinesthetic child.

Super Spelling Technique

This technique is presented in brief here, but is adapted from the strategy given in much more detail at the website of learning specialist Pat Wyman

M.A.: <https://www.howtolearn.com/products>. This strategy is also in Pat's e-book, *Amazing Grades*, also available through www.howtolearn.com. This book has tools you and your child can use to improve ease and speed of learning, recall and attitudes towards learning.

Before you begin the steps of this tool, find the part of his brain your child uses for his visual memory storage. You can do this by asking him several questions that involve visual recall. Ask him several questions like this: What did you wear yesterday? What does your dog (or friend's pet) look like, in detail? What does your friend's room look like? As your child answers you will notice his eyes consistently move up and to either the left or right. Whichever side it is, that side is your child's visual memory storage side.

Step 1. Child prints the spelling word on a strip of colored paper (he picks his favorite color). He uses different colored markers to write any letters that are not phonetic. He decorates the word to make its unique or troublesome parts stand out.

Step 2. Child stands and holds word up above eye level and to the side of his visual memory storage. He says the word out loud. With his other hand, and saying each letter aloud, child traces the letters several times: with his finger, with a pencil, and, especially for kinesthetic learners, with his nose! Here's how: Write the word extra large on a sheet of newsprint and tape it on the wall, above your child's height. Have your child imagine he is tracing the word with his nose. Demonstrate for your child, exaggerating your movement to ensure your whole body moves as you "spell" the word. During the tracing, be sure the child holds the word card up above eye level.

Step 3: Encourage your child to talk about the word. Notice double letters, words within words. Chant the letters of a word in a song, rhyme or rhythm. Remember learning M-i-s-s-i-s-s-i-p-p-i? Pronounce phonetically every letter in the word. *Wed-nes-day*. Say a memorable sentence about the word: There's a *rat* in *separate*. The *principal* is our *pal*. Simply talk about the word: *rhythm* has *rh*, and *y*; then *th*, and *m*.

Step 4: Have your child take a mental picture of the word and put it on an imaginary spelling screen in his mind (movie screen, TV screen, computer screen).

Step 5: Put down the card. Ask your child to look up to the spelling screen in his mind and write the word on a piece of paper.

Step 6: If the word is correct, praise your child. Let him know he has a tool that will help him be a super speller. If the word is not correctly spelled, say, "Let's give your eyes another look." Child decorates part of word misspelled, and talks about the letters. Child holds card above eye level again and to his visual storage side, and makes a new snapshot of it.

You can tell if your child has a clear image of the word by removing the card, and asking your child to look at the word on his spelling screen. As he looks at it, ask him what is the last letter of the word. Then ask what is the second last letter, and so on. **Never say to your child, "Spell the word backwards" -- that takes him out of the visual side of the brain!** Then when he has spelled the word, ask him to spell it the regular way, first to last letter, so he is left with the memory of spelling in correct order.

By the way, researchers (and experience) have demonstrated that this technique of looking up and to a side helps beautifully with children who consistently make errors with letter and word reversals.

Happy Spelling!