

# Talking Matters

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 Helping your child to reach their potential



## Goal: Remembering how to spell words

To develop strategies to remember how to spell words.

Children with dyslexia or spelling based difficulties often have trouble remembering spellings that they have 'learned'. They tend to forget the spelling of the word and attempt many different types of spelling for the same word. Children with spelling difficulties can learn a list of words for a spelling test however forget the spelling as soon as they are presented with a new set of words. They continue this process without consolidating their spelling skills.



**Strategies to teach spelling:** Prior to teaching a child with difficulties to spell, ensure they are able to recognise the sounds in the words. If they are unable to do this, refer to the handout for children with reading difficulties.

Ensure you target the correct set of words for your child's skill level:

- **Selecting target words:** Work from easy to more difficult phonic patterns e.g.
  - 1) Three letter words in consonant + vowel + consonant pattern: hot, jam, mud, top.
  - 2) Four letter words where two letters must 'slide' together: flag, best.
  - 3) Four letter words where two consonants make a new sound: chat, thin, when.
  - 4) Four letter words where the vowel and a consonant make a new sound: fowl, warm, corn.
  - 5) Four letter words with a final 'e': mice, date, kite, made.
  - 6) Three and four letter words where two vowels make a new sound: rain, out, loud, meat.
  - 7) Silent letters: knee, gnaw, know.
  - 8) Five letter words where three letters slid together: strap, scrum, strip, squid.
  - 9) Five to six letter words where four letters make a new sound: fight, dough, nation.
  - 10) Longer words that combine two or more of the above patterns: jumper, beach, sprawl, tribe.
  - 11) Prefixes, suffixes and compound words: predict, disagree, truthfully.

Once you have selected your target words start the following activities, sort the words into 'regularly' and 'irregularly' spelt words. Regular words sound how they look such as "cat", "frog". Irregular words cannot be sounded out such as "was" and "people".

For regularly spelt words use the following activities:

- **Building a word:** Provide an alphabet strip with letter and a picture prompt to help link the sound with the letter. Build a word using plastic letters. Have the child sound out the word several times, then scramble up the letters and have the child put the word back together. Encourage your child to sound out the letters as they go.

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Information adapted from: Hannell, C. (2003). *Dyslexia action plans for successful learning*.  
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- **Split the words up:** When introducing the new words emphasize the ‘parts’ of the words e.g. “sp-ell-ing” and when you are teaching words focus on teaching ‘blends’ of sounds and keep the rest of the word to a minimum e.g. if you are focusing on ‘sh’, use words such as ‘ship’ ‘shin’ ‘shop’ don’t use longer words such as ‘shouted’.
- **Specifically teach rules:** Teach spelling rules which can be applied to help with accurate spelling, such as ‘ch’, by saying “a ‘c’ and a ‘h’ make the ‘ch’ sound so when you hear a word with this sound you need to write a ‘c’ and a ‘h’”.
- **Nonsense words:** Use ‘made up’ words, this will mean they have to detect the sounds in the words in order to spell them e.g. ‘smeg’ rather than rely on memory.

For irregularly spelt words use the following activities:

- **Rainbow writing:** Write a word in large clear print and get your child to write it time and time again.
- **Desk dictionary:** Make a list of words the child can stick on their desk that they use regularly but have difficulty spelling.
- **Multisensory practice:** Encourage the child to say the letters as they write them down, physically writing or typing the words creates a motor memory of how we write a particular word.
- **Look- Copy- Cover- Write –Check routine:** Look at the word and talk about the patterns which occur in the word. Encourage your child to say the letters as they write them down. Cover the word and talk to the child about remembering what the word looked like. Write down the word and say the letters as they write them, and finally check the spelling.
- **Old way – new way:** teach ‘old way, new way’ look at the way your child spells a word and teach them the difference of the actual spelling. Say “In the old way you used ‘h’, in the new way you leave this ‘h’ out”.
- **Provide context:** Practice spelling the words correctly in context. Construct a series of short sentences, each containing a target spelling word. To begin with provide the child with the written example so the child can refer to it as they write. Once they have mastered this, provide sentences with the target word missing.

At this point your child has developed sight reading of these words play games such as word lotto, word snap, flash cards and matching games to develop automatic recall of the words.



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