

Teaching Strategies

A Literacy Poem

Phonics Lesson

Lisa Lenz



When I entered first grade, I wanted to read And assumed that it all might be fun. I like hearing stories (Knew some by heart!) My mom thought the battle half won.

But that was before Ms. Jackson appeared With her phonics, her rules and her charts. Worksheets came prior to books in her room -By November I began to lose heart.

In September we'd practiced our three letter words
Like CAT, BIT, TOM, CUT, BUT, and RED.

We thought that "short vowels" referred to word length
And not to their sound, as she'd said.

But by late November, we learned "silent e"
Could change anything "short" to a "long".
She asked for a reader one day; I stood up,
Thinking I couldn't go wrong.

She gave me these cards and I started out well With word family: HOME, ROME, and DOME. Then I boldly flipped back that first card to c And announced to the class it was COME.

"No dear!" sighed Ms. J., "That word isn't COMB...

COMB ends with a b you can't hear."

So I flipped the e over and put in the b,

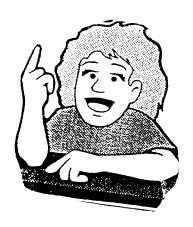
My grasp was getting less clear.

For if COMB has a "long o" and no "silent e"
And the "short u" sound is in COME,
The DOME should be spelled D-O-M-B
And D-O-M-E pronounced DUMB.

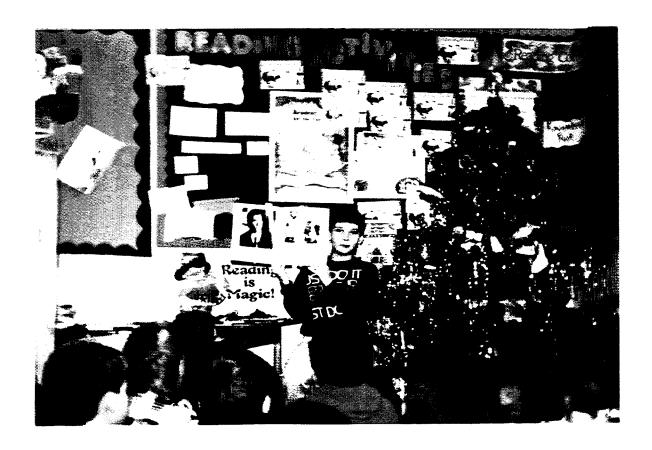
Ms. Jackson protested my little ad lib And restored "silent e" to its place. I never spoke up in her classroom again. I'd been hushed by the look on her face!

My remedial teacher now drills me
On things I'm not able to do.
We spend endless hours practicing vowel sounds
A, E, I, O, and U.

I may not be able to make sense of those rules; At school, the die has been cast ... But at home I devour books - just love to read! (At school they don't know; no one's asked!)



Lenz teaches a first and second combination grade classroom at Wilson School in West Caldwell, New Jersey.



Why English Is So Hard

Anonymous

We'll begin with box, the plural is boxes.

But the plural of ox should be oxen, not oxes.

One fowl is a goose, but two are called geese,
Yet the plural of mouse is never meese.

You may find a lone mouse, or a whole nest of mice,
But the plural of house is houses, not hice.

If the plural of man is always men,
Why shouldn't the plural of pan be called pen?

The cow in the plural may be called cows or kine,
But a bough, if repeated, is never called bine;
And the plural of vow is vows, not vine.

If I speak of a foot and you show me two feet,

And I give you a boot, would a pair be called beet?

If one is a tooth and a whole set are teeth,

Why shouldn't the plural of booth be called beeth?

If the singular's this, and the plural these,

Should the plural of kiss ever be written kese?

We speak of a brother, and also of brethren,

But though we say mother, we never say mothren.

Then the masculine pronouns are he, his, and him,

But imagine the feminine, she, shiz, and shim!

So English, I think you all will agree,

Is the funniest language you ever did see.



Spelling in the Writing Process

Children's writing can be seen as a rich source of information about what children know about spelling and the strategies they use (Scott, 1993, p. 41). Knowledge of the spelling system and the developmental stages of learning are essential. These observations form the basis for the teaching and learning experiences which foster spelling growth.

It is in the editing stage that there is a focus on assessing the mechanics of writing and addressing those needs through mini lessons.

Spelling should be viewed as a courtesy to the reader. Therefore it is important that students use standard spelling when publishing their work.

Proofreading Hints for Teachers

- 1. The teacher demonstrates the editing process.
- 2. The teacher uses "post it" notes with comments such as there are five spelling errors in paragraph three.
- 3. Once students have self edited and peer edited, the teacher can become the final editor.

Proofreading involves standardizing spelling and punctuation. It is done as a courtesy to the reader.

(from Living Language. Writing and Representing, Carleton Board of Education, 1994)

Proofreading Tips for Students

Here are some tips that may help your students become better proofreaders.

- Try not to proofread your piece of writing immediately after you have written it. Your attention will still be focused on meaning rather than the spelling. Wait until the next day.
- **Read your work out loud.** You may notice errors when you read your words to another person.
- Use a ruler beneath the line you are proofreading to keep track of each line.
- Proofread from the bottom of the page to the top or from right to left. This will force you to focus on specific words rather than the meaning of the passage.
- Switch papers with a friend. It is often easier to proofread someone else's work.
- The first time you proofread a draft, put a mark beside any word you think may be spelled incorrectly. Trust your feelings. If you think a word "doesn't look right", there is a good chance it is misspelled.
- When you find a word you think is misspelled, try writing it in a different (way. Does this version look better?
- Be aware of the type of errors you make most often. Go through your work looking for each of these errors in turn.
- Keep a dictionary beside you as you proofread.

(from Sharing the Secrets by Scott, R., Gage, 1993)

- Identify the words that cause you trouble. Include those in your personal dictionary.
- Proofread for one item at a time. Focus on spelling, not all the language skills.
- Take a coloured pencil and underline, circle, or put "sp" on all errors. The "give it a try" sheet will be useful here.
- Identify homophones such as "there" and check to see if they are used properly.

Take responsibility for your own errors and bring them to standard spelling.

Page 20

EFLAPOS

Did you know that???

Studies have shown that children already know how to spell 65% of the words in spelling books even before they study them, so that they're learning at most only about five to seven new words a week anyway.

(from You Kan Red This! by Wilde, S., Heinemann, 1992)

Guidelines for Spelling Lessons (Word Study)

- Engage students in the fascination of words and language.
- Keep instruction time short.
- Have the spelling period once or twice a week.
- Choose only one spelling concept as a focus of your lesson (i.e., a suffix, rhyming pattern, or dictionary skill). It does not have to be part of a word list. You may deal with only one word, you may have a short list of sight words or you may build a category with several words. It is the concept you are teaching.
- Limit words to a spelling context (i.e., a spelling pattern, a meaning link or derivation).
- Choose words and concepts needed in students' writing.
- Focus on investigation and problem solving.
- Spelling test should not be the goal of spelling learning.
- Have students apply newly learned concepts when reading and writing.

Adapted from: Spelling Instruction That Makes Sense, by Phenix, Jo and Scott-Dunne, D., Pembroke Publishers, 1991

The goal of spelling instruction is the promotion of effective written communication.

Mini-Lessons

Mini-lessons are short sessions that arise out of the teacher's observation of students' needs. They involve direct instruction with student interaction and participation. They can be used with the whole class, small groups or individuals.

Classroom Portrait #1

Teaching "ED" Endings

Mrs. Thompson observed from the children's daily writing that many students were having difficulty with the 'ed' ending. She selected an appropriate section from a novel they had been reading as a model. Using the overhead projector they read and re-read the section to find words that told what the characters did in the past.

As they listed the words they discussed their common features. Mrs. Thompson pointed out that past tense verbs often end in "ed".

The list was displayed and the children continued to add similar words as they found them in their reading and writing.

Variation

The teacher could also have used samples of the children's writing as a model.



Word Lists

The goal of any spelling program must be to "produce independent writers who are competent spellers" (Routman, 1994, p. 240). In order to accomplish this goal, spelling should be fully integrated into daily reading and writing experiences. This well-balanced language program must include a variety of teaching and learning strategies. Word lists can be one part of this balanced spelling program. Commercial spelling texts from the past focused heavily on isolated spelling exercises and rote memorization. Many teachers have voiced concern with this narrow approach. Some of these include:

- Little evidence of transfer from spelling tests and exercises to personal writing.
- Focus has been on 100% accuracy rather than assessing growth.
- Children who were unable to achieve perfection as spellers, often developed negative attitudes as writers.
- Too much time spent on rote memorization, and drill activities, took away from reading and writing activities.

"However, when patterns of difficulty in spelling emerge from children's writing, or when the teacher challenges children to see new patterns among words to help enlarge their repertoire of words, lists for focused study may be useful" (Experiencing Language, Department of Education, 1991, p. 129).

Word lists should come from a variety of sources:

- words children misspell
- words children ask for
- words the teacher knows children need
- words relevant to a topic or theme



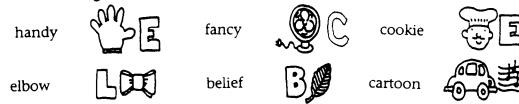
Word lists should be connected in a meaningful way to everyday reading and writing activities.



Ways of Using Word Lists

1. Integrating lists to reading and writing activities

- a. Relate to Poetry (i.e., when teaching suffix "able" use Shel Silversteins Twistable Turnable Man (see Appendix F)
- b. Cloze passages
- c. Search newspapers, personal writing, books, etc. to discover patterns, rules
- d. Rebus writing



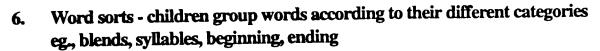
2. Discovering patterns in words

3. Applying the rules

- a. Word explosion
- b. Rhyming words
- c. Word families
- d. Word webs





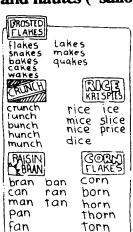


- 7. Word origins astronaut from Greek action ("star") and nautes ("sailor")
- 8. Games using computer software
- 9. Cooperative learning strategies

10. Wall charts

- theme words
- spelling demons
- word explosion
- commonly misspelled words
- rules/patterns
- topic of interest





"The goal of any spelling program is to have children be successful spellers in the context of real writing experiences, consequently, focused spelling should always encompass more than the test-study-test technique" (Experiencing Language, Department of Education, 1991).

Classroom Portrait #2

Weekly Spelling Tests

In Cathy Lasell's multi-age fourth/fifth-grade classroom, the children select spelling words from their own writing lists of high-frequency words and content words. Each child keeps his or her words in a spelling notebook. The children list 15 words they need to learn to spell. They also carry over words they didn't learn to spell during the previous test. Cathy gives them considerable guidance during the first few months of school and frequently models how to select words that are at their level of spelling ability. She helps students examine their own writing to determine which words are frequently misspelled and then encourages them to add these to their lists. She also helps them to select words from word lists. She teaches her children that they rarely use words in their writing that they do not use comfortably in their speaking vocabularies.

Over several days, the children compile their lists and study the words with their spelling partners. Partners check the words for feedback. Then Cathy checks them as well, to assure accuracy. Then her students restudy their misspelled words and are later retested. When the children in Cathy's class check one another's papers, they circle the letters or letter clusters within a word that need work. Because these children have responsibility for their own learning, they take pride in their spelling and help one another with strategies for improvement.

(from Spelling and Phonics in a Whole Language Classroom, Powell, D., and Hornsby, D. Scholastic, 1993)



Classroom Portrait #3

Word Study Lesson

It's Monday morning in Mrs. Bryants class and the discussion is focused on this weeks spelling words and the related reading/writing activities. The list is composed of words from the children's personal writing, theme study, words that follow a pattern and words which the children frequently ask for. A discussion is generated on why the words were chosen, patterns emerging from the lists, and the origins of some of the words. The children work in groups of four with chart paper, to apply the rules and find other words to extend the list. The poem associated with the lists is read silently, shared with a partner and discussed as a whole group. This week's writing activity is a cloze passage which they write and give to another child to complete. Some of these related reading and writing activities are ongoing throughout the week.

The children are then given a pretest to determine which words they need to concentrate on learning during the coming week. During the pretest the teacher or volunteer calls the correct spelling of the word. The children put a dot under each letter as it is called, focusing on the number of letters correct and noticing any errors. They correct the error and concentrate on these spelling words to study. During the week the children will be given opportunities to practice their words through games in the spelling centre, as well as on the computer. On Friday a spelling test is given. Emphasis will be placed on how many the students have correct. The teacher focuses on growth over time, rather than 100% accuracy. All words are added to their personal dictionaries. Words that are not spelled accurately are starred in their personal dictionary. These stored words can form a personal list to be studied.



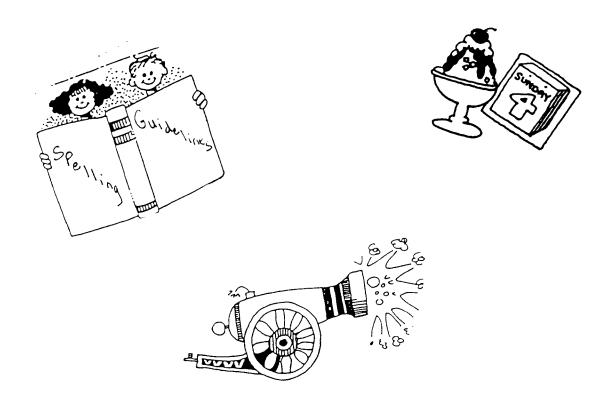
Patterns in Spelling

Sounds/Visual/Meaning Strategies

Learning to spell ought to be taught from the perspective that our language reflects patterns in

- how it sounds
 the sounds heard in words are matched in particular letters (e.g., pay, game)
- how it looks

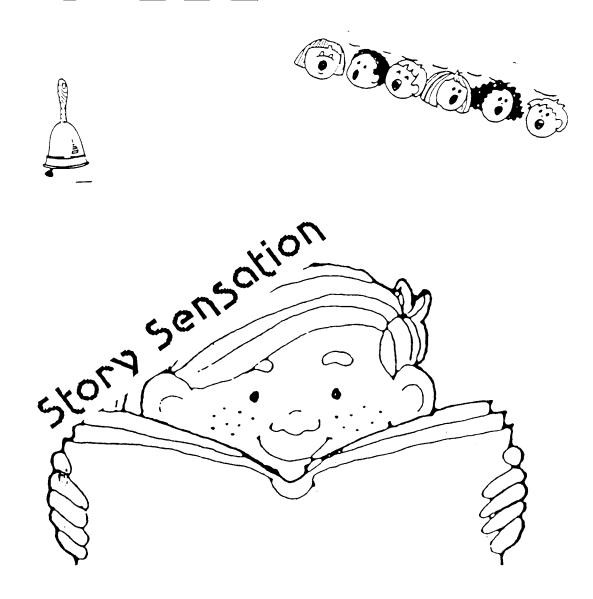
 the features of words can give clues to its spelling (e.g., pencil)
- what it means
 the meaning of base words, homophones, prefixes, suffixes, and word origins helped to build the language (e.g., tooth, toothless)



Strategies Based on Sound

Encouraging students to use the following strategies will prove beneficial.

- say/write each sound (e.g., f/ee/t)
- say/write each smaller units (e.g., trans-por-ta-tion)
- pronounce words clearly (e.g., pumpkin, escape)
- say/write the sound of the word families (e.g., ai pain, main, mail, rail; and land, sand, band)



Visual Strategies

Visual strategies help the brain store and then to recall spellings previously encountered. They are particularly useful with words or parts of words that can't be spelled phonetically.

Word shapes

Children are encouraged to examine the shape of the words.







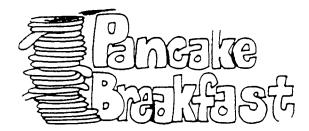
Puzzles or games could be made inviting children to put letters together to spell words.

Fill in the blanks

When conferencing with students about necessary spelling corrections, the teacher emphasizes the correct letters the student used in each word. The correct letters are written down and blanks are included for the letters missed. The student is encouraged to add the missing letters, thus drawing on their visual memory. Conversations about these words may be helpful. They can also be included in the students' personal dictionary.

Child's Attempt	Assisted to Complete	Standard Spelling
riten	_rit_en	written
chilrin	chil_r_n	children
desided	de_ided	decided





Give it a Try Sheets

When students are unsure how to spell a word or have identified a misspelled work in their writing they should "Give It A Try". This strategy involves children making several attempts to spell the word correctly. When the teacher conferences with the student the "Give It A Try" sheets can be used to encourage the child towards standard spelling. Keeping these sheets with the writing folder can help the teacher assess the student's growth and can help identify words for a personal word list. Some suggestions a teacher can make to guide the thinking processes are:

- Dot the letters that are correct (e.g., seels seals)
- Refer to the print in the classroom, such as language stories, charts, labels, etc.
- Have students think of a similar word they know how to spell. For example if s/he writes frme for frame, suggest s/he think of the word same.
- Have students refer to a book that contains the word.
- Tell the students that there are letters missing and then ask them to tell you where they may go.
- If the students are able to use a dictionary refer them to it.

(Adapted from Jo-Ann Parry and David Hornsby, Write On: A Conference Approach to Writing. Heinemann, 1988)

GIVE IT A TRY			
Words from Writing	1st Try	2nd Try	Standard Spelling
whent	whint	wint	went

	GIVE IT A TRY			
Words from Writing	1st Try	2nd Try	Standard Spelling	
			•	
		·		
	:			

Strategies Based on Meaning

Words are not just made up of individual letters. Some letters are combined into meaningful parts known as:

- prefixes
- suffixes

When root or base words are examined as in word webs, prefixes and suffixes should be discussed in light of how they alter the meaning of the base word. The predict-ability of how prefixes and suffixes operate makes it a very worthwhile part of instruction.

Activity

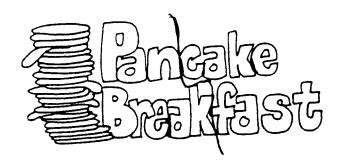
Write a variety of prefixes, base words, and suffixes on separate cards. Use a different colour for each group and ask the students to combine them to form new words (e.g., inter - nation - al).

- Knowing the origins of words can also help unlock the puzzles of the English language. When the class is discussing a particular stem or engaged in creating word webs the teacher can offer or invite students to find out the word's origin (e.g., Latin stem - vac (empty) - vacate, vacuum, evacuate; Greek stem - phone (sound, voice) - microphone, telephone, phonograph)

[See Appendix D for Latin and Greek stems].

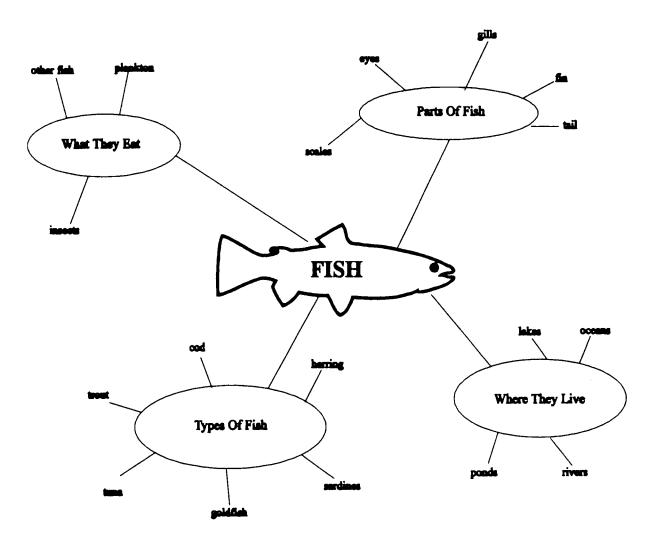
Compound words also carry meaning in and of themselves or an individual words.

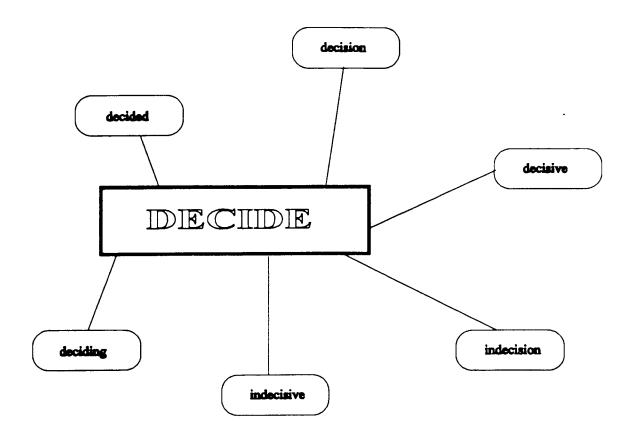
upstairs	up	stairs
doghouse	dog	house
outdoors	out	doors



Word Webs

Word webs are created with the teacher and the students brainstorming and grouping words. They are made visible so words can be added to them and expanded on. Here are some examples of word webs.

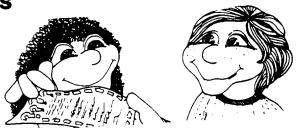




Students can brainstorm all the words that come from a root word noting any changes from the original base word. A dictionary may come in handy for this activity.



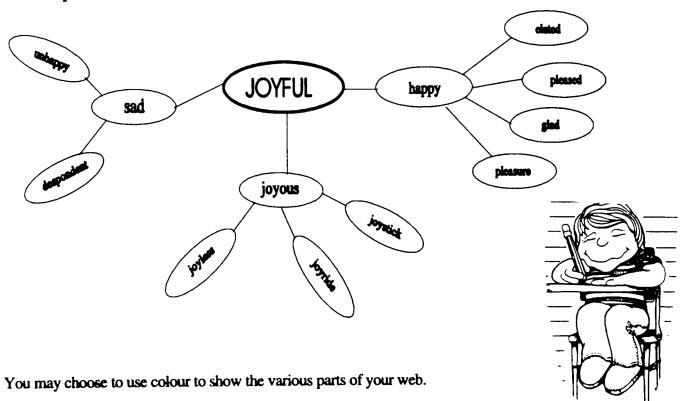
Word Webs



Activity

Select ten words to web. Place each word in a centre. Web each one by adding lines and words to show synonyms, antonyms, and other word associations your mind can make.

Example:



Share your webs with another student. Are there any branches of your webs that you need to explain?

Variation:

Choose a partner and make a game of word webs. Fill in everything except your central words. Challenge each other to fill in the centres.

(Used with permission from *Reading - A Novel Approach*, Janie Szabos, Good Apple Inc., Box 299, Carthad, II. 62321-0299.)

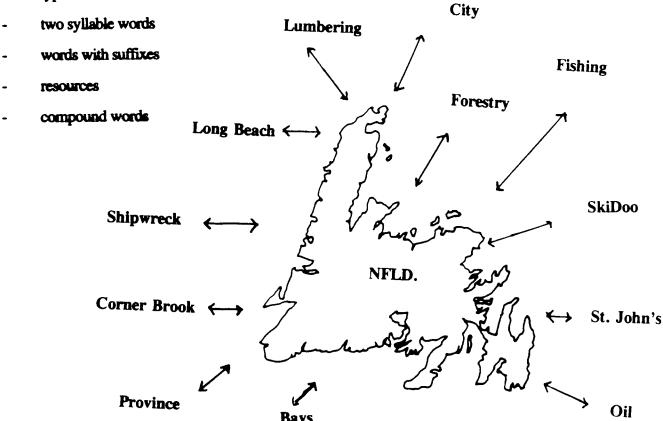
Word Sorts

Word sorts occur when children group words according to rules or categories. It is a cooperative learning activity that help students see patterns of sound, structure, and meaning. It is easy to adapt into integrated units.

Activity

Each group is presented with words written on a card and are asked to sort the words according to categories. It can be shared with a large group and the students have to guess how they sorted their words. The map could be sorted in ways such as:

- names of cities
- types of communities (cities, towns, villages)



Standard spelling is the consequence of writing and reading, not to access to it. (from, Invitations, by Routman, R., Irwin, 1991).

CATEGORY

List here twelve words from your reading section.	1 6 9
	cate gory
	707

Think of a way to fit all twelve words into categories you select. Use a variety of categories. Try to be unique!

Category	Word Members

*Challenge: With a partner, share lists and try to guess the headings for your words.

Used with permission from: *Reading: A Novel Approach* by Janie Szabas. Good Apple Inc., Box 299, Carthage, IL 62321-0299, 1984.

WORD LINKS	
Using a list of about ten words from this week's reading section, form word links for each word, showing other thoughts and ideas you associate with each.	
Vocabulary words:	
Word links:	
Example: Shirry patent involve	P
Myent	
(glossy) paint brush	

Used with permission from: Reading: A Novel Approach by Janie Szabas. Good Apple Inc., Box 299, Carthage, IL 62321-0299, 1984.

Spelling Rules

As all writers of English are aware, the inconsistencies within our language make the learning of rules very difficult. In fact, Frank Smith says, "The rules of spelling can be numbered in the hundreds and still carry only a fifty percent probability of being correct for any particular word" (Smith, Frank. *Joining the Literacy Club*, Heinemann, 1988, p. 18).

The following list of rules does offer some consistency and therefore worthy of discussion. They are not meant to be taught in isolation but rather within the context of language activities. Charts of such rules filled with student-found examples could be useful in your classroom.



Silent e

- Words ending in silent e drop e before a suffix beginning with a vowel (e.g., make + ing = making).
- Words ending in silent e do not drop e before a suffix beginning with a consonant (e.g., state + ment = statement).



. Doubling final consonant 1

- Words ending in a consonant after a single vowel double the final consonant before a suffix beginning with a vowel (e.g., set + ing = setting; refer + ed = referred).
- Do not double a final consonant before a suffix beginning with a consonant (e.g., weight + less = weightless).

c. Doubling final consonant 2

- In words of more than one syllable, if the accent is on the final syllable, and that syllable fits the other conditions of Doubling Rule 1, the final consonant is doubled (e.g., compel = compelling).

d. Change y to i rule

- If a word ends in y preceded by a consonant, the y always changes to i except if followed by ing. (e.g., spy + ed = spied; noisy + ly = noisily; spy + ing = spying).

e. Plurals

- Nouns ending in s, x, z, ch, or sh form the plural by adding es to the singular forms (e.g., gas = gases; tax = taxes; church = churches; wish = wishes; lynx = lynxes; buzz = buzzes).

f. After a short vowel, put t before ch

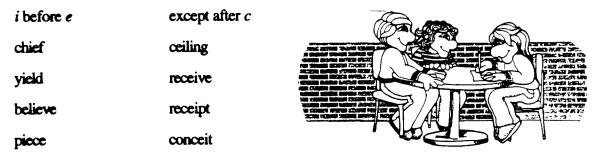
- (e.g., catch, fetch, ditch, Dutch, match, hutch, hatch).

N.B. The only exceptions for one syllable words are much, such, rich, and which.

When extended to words of more than one syllable, there are more exceptions - ostrich, attach, duchess, bachelor's, sandwich

The advantage for children knowing this rule is that they are far more likely to be correct if they use *tch* after a short vowel than if they use *ch*. This kind of predictability in a language full of exceptions is comforting.

g. i before e except after c - whenever it rhymes with me!



There are a few exceptions (e.g., seize, protein, their, Sheila).

N.B. Depending on pronunciation, either and neither can be exceptions.

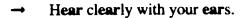
h. Suffix tion

- If a "shun" sound occurs, never write sh except in fashion and cushion. The other possible ways to write "shun" are sion, sian, cian, cion, cean. However, 85% of these words end in tion. Therefore, if in doubt, tion is your best guess.

Mnemonic Devices

When helping children develop as spellers, we ought to be offering every trick in the book. Mnemonic devices are just that. The following may be useful.

- → I'll be your friend 'til the end.
- → A piece of pie.
- → The principal is you pal.
- → I like my juice with ice.
- → A secretary can keep a secret.
- → Dessert has two s's because you want two helpings.



- → U and I can build a house.
- → Age is advantageous.
- → A beach is by the sea; a beech is a tree.
- → Dinner has two n's because you want two helpings.
- \rightarrow An island is land.
- → An ant is a very small insect found in a very large elephant.
- → February is a cold month so it has br in it.
- → Quiet as ET hiding in the cupboard.
- → Associate here and there.







Personal Dictionaries

Once students have discovered the standard spelling of a word, the word can be placed in their personalized dictionary or file boxes. If using a file box, alphabetizing can also be taught. The words they are expected to spell and any other troublesome words can also be added. Words from their *Give It a Try* sheet that have been spelled correctly can also be placed in this dictionary. It provides a great reference for their daily writing. Some teachers may find a personal thesaurus useful. The words can be written on file cards and placed in a file box, or on blank sheets of paper and stapled in a booklet.



Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning is a strategy where students of mixed ability and/or backgrounds work together to achieve a task. There is a gradual shift in ownership from the teacher to the students towards the goal of self-directed learning. Here are a couple of examples of how you can use cooperative learning strategies to enhance spelling growth.

1. Think-Pair-Share

- The teacher posts a list of words from their writing, theme study and/or words the children ask for.
- She then asks them to individually think of the rule or pattern in the words and then have them share their ideas with their partners.
- After discussing, the students are encouraged to generate other words to which the rule may apply.
- They share their insights with another pair or with the whole class.



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2. Graffiti

A focus for spelling is written in the centre of several pieces of chart paper. It is usually a statement that can lead to brainstormed responses.

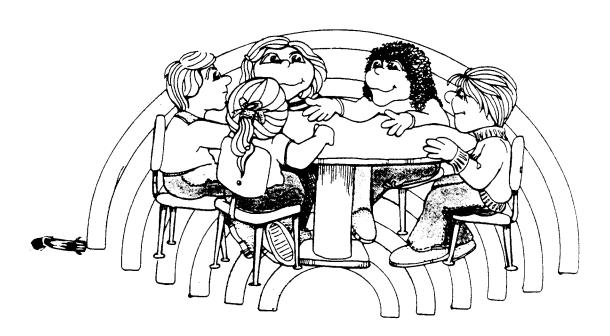
Sample Questions:

What do good spellers do?

What do you do when you don't know how to spell a word?

What are some resources in the classroom that may help you with spelling?

- Each group is given approximately three to five minutes to write their individual responses.
- Then the papers are passed to the next group where responses are made (trying not to read the first group's responses).
- Keep the pace fast. It keeps moving until each group has responded to each of the focus questions.
- The charts are returned to the original groups and they prepare a brief summary of the peer data collected.



3. Numbered Heads Together

- Students are heterogeneously placed in groups of four.
- Each student is numbered 1-4.
- The teacher asks each group to brainstorm for all the proofreading strategies they can think of for spelling.
- Then they put their heads together and agree on the best strategies. After the students have worked cooperatively to ensure that everybody in the group has a response, the teacher calls a number: "Number 2's, what is your answer?"
- Each member contributes, learns from each other, and is accountable for an answer.

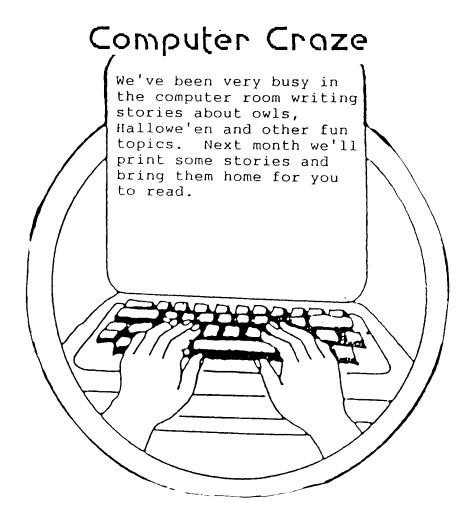




Computer

Computers can be a tool to assist children with their spelling. The use of word processing within a writing program can be useful. Spell check is a valuable aid but cannot replace the editing process. There are commercial programs that can help students with their spelling.

Teachers need to be cautious when reviewing and selecting programs in order to meet the needs of the students in their class.



A useful resource is the Childrens' Writing and Publishing Centre. Other popular programs used by teachers are

- X Word - Spell It 3

- Magic Spells (Learning Co.) - Spell Dodger

Wheel of Fortune