

Activities for parents to support the learning of spellings

Almost impossible we know - but try not to let spellings become a battle! Just add it in to the daily routine. Pick the best time that works for you and your child eg: just after breakfast, before dishing the tea, in their bedrooms before lights out, in the bath. Soon the children will just accept this is what happens at this time! It is best to practise spellings daily so they gradually sink in. Even if they appear to know them on the first attempt - keep practising them.

New notebook: a simple thing like a special spellings notebook - where they can practise writing their words is a real motivation to some children.

Coloured pens/pencils: Write them in different pens / colours. Chalks outside - bath crayons in the bath - alphabet spaghetti on their dinner plate - magnetic letters on the fridge - sticks in the mud.....

Tricky bits: highlight the tricky bits of the word - write them in a different colour so they stand out and are more noticeable. Once copied correctly, stick them on the wall next to their bed so they must say them at night / in the morning. Make and decorate a word poster.

Patterns: Talk about the spelling pattern / rule. Write that in a different colour.

Spot the word: Challenge your child to find the words on their list in other places around them, for example:

- in a favourite reading book
- on a road sign
- on a sign, notice or poster
- in a magazine, newspaper, at the shops, comic or leaflet
- on television
- on the side of a cereal box

Look-Say-Cover-Write-Check:

- **look** at the new word very closely, spotting the shape of the word, the order of the letters, any smaller words contained within a larger word, familiar letter patterns, etc
- **say** the word quietly to themselves while they look at it
- **cover** the word or fold the paper back so that the word cannot be seen
- **write** the word from memory
- **uncover** the word and *check* to see if they are right

If they are wrong, your child can repeat the process. Encourage your child to use this method at home as well as at school.

Mnemonics: Mnemonics are silly sentences that your child can make up and then learn to remind them of how to spell a difficult word. Eg:

- Because - Big Elephants Can Always Use Sticky Envelopes.
- Necessary/successful - if your child can't remember how many Cs or Ss to use, remember this saying: One collar and two socks are necessary but you will need two collars and two socks to be successful.
- 'No English word can end in 'j'. This is a rule you must obey.'

Make up mnemonics then they could draw pictures to go with them.

Finding words within words: spot smaller words within them. This can be made even more helpful by making up a short sentence to help your child remember the spelling. For example

- address: add-ress - you must add your address
- secretary: secret-ary - a secretary keeps secrets
- island: is-land - an island is land surrounded by water

Word snap: Help your child to write each of the words on their spelling list on to a small piece of coloured card or paper. Make two sets of the words. Play snap or pairs. Set a time challenge - how many pairs can you find in 1 minute?

Word search: use the spelling list to make a homemade word search. Or they can make one for you to find. They are still practising looking and writing the words!

'Shannon's Game': Use the words on your child's spelling list to play 'Shannon's Game' which is a more focused version of the game 'Hangman'.

Without telling your child which one, choose one of the words on the list. Draw dashes onto a piece of paper, one dash for every letter in the word (to make it easier for some children you can write the first letter on). Your child then has to guess the next letter - without looking at their list. If they are correct you write in the next letter. If they are incorrect, you draw the first part of the Hangman. Your child has to guess the whole word, letter by letter in the right order, before you complete the drawing.

Dictionary challenge: Challenge your child to find all of their words in the dictionary. Use a picture dictionary for younger children and a junior dictionary for older children. You can vary the challenge by

- setting a time limit - use a timer on a watch or an egg timer
- having a race between yourself and your child - who can find each word the fastest?
- asking your child to write out the dictionary meaning of their word.

Spelling number plates: This game can be played when you are out in the car. Ask your child to take a copy of their spelling list on the journey. Check that their words have been spelt correctly. During your journey, your child has to spot the letters in their words on passing number plates. As they see each letter, they cross it out in their words. They have finished when they have crossed through all of the letters. Two or more people could play this game. Share the words between them. In this version, the first person to have crossed out all their letters is the winner. (This game won't work for words that contain I, O or Z which don't appear on British number plates.)

Syllabification: Split the words into parts, called syllables. Every syllable must have a vowel in it. You can check how many syllables a word has by clapping it out. Here are some examples.

- four-teen • when-e-ver
- tea-cher • card-i-gan

Drawing a line under each syllable or highlighting each syllable in a different colour.

Spelling Test: Once your child has worked on their list give them a short spelling test. Ask them each word, one at a time. Say the word, repeat it in a short sentence and then say the word again. Allow your child time to write it down. Repeat this for each word.

When your child has finished, check the spellings together. If they have struggled - instead of marking the whole word right or wrong, mark each letter. This gives them much more satisfaction and confidence.

We'd be really interested in your feedback on favourite games and activities for practising spellings - so please let us know how you get on. Finally, always praise your child for what they have written and the effort they have put in!

Happy Spelling!

From the Year 3 Team!