

Helping Your Child with Spelling

Children can find writing a real challenge; they need encouragement, support and praise for their efforts. You can best support them by encouraging them to write on every possible occasion, praising their efforts and, importantly, by letting them see you writing whenever possible. You can play word games with them (e.g. I spy, Find the word puzzles), you can also discuss interesting or new words.

Most of us, even if we consider ourselves to be good spellers, make spelling mistakes at some point. What is important is that we know what to do when we get stuck and we know how to correct our mistakes. At school, our children learn the rules, conventions and spelling strategies needed to become confident at spelling.

Here are some of the strategies that will help your child become a confident and accurate speller:

- Sounding words out: breaking the word down into phonemes (e.g. c-a-t, sh-e-ll) Many words cannot be sounded out so other strategies are needed;
- Using the Look, say, cover, write, check strategy: look at the word and say it out loud, then cover it, write it and check to see if it is correct. If not, highlight or underline the incorrect part and repeat the process;
- Dividing the word into syllables, say each syllable as they write the word (e.g. re-mem-ber);
- Using mnemonics as an aid to memorising a tricky word (e.g. people: **p**eople **e**at **o**range **p**eel **l**ike **e**lephants; could: **O** **U** lucky duck);
- Finding words within words (e.g. a rat in separate);
- Making links between the meaning of words and their spelling (e.g. sign, signal, signature) - this strategy is used at a later stage than others;
- Using a dictionary as soon as they know how to.

Encourage your child to have a go at spelling words they are unsure of. This will give them the opportunity to try out spelling strategies and to find those that they find useful. You can help them to use the strategies outlined above and praise their efforts.