

BASIC CONCEPTS

1. What is spelling?
 2. It has nothing to do with the language function of the brain.
 3. A definition of spelling:
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3. It's not possible to get something out of the brain in correct sequence that hasn't been stored in correct sequence.
4. Many children with visual problems do not store visual information sequentially; there is a spatial storage, not a sequential one.
5. Such common errors illustrate the nature of confused sequential storage:

gril

baer

thier

6. An approach to spelling which is primarily visual will not work for all children, especially those who are mildly visually disorganized.
7. Most workbooks are primarily a visual practice. Exercises such as copying the word, finding it in a maze, using it in a sentence, unscrambling the letters, etc. are primarily visual, and do not guarantee a correct sequential storage
8. Traditional methods of practicing spelling resemble the "spelling bee" and were primarily auditory in nature. No paper is involved in a spelling bee.
9. Most (not all) children tend to be more auditory in their learning style, and become more visual as they get older.
10. Auditory input is sequential in nature; you simply can't say the letters of a word all at once. Spelling a word out loud (and hearing it) requires sequential input.
11. Much spelling practice can be done verbally and auditorily.
12. One big mistake is to try to save time by correcting a spelling test for the child. It's the correcting that allows *hearing* the correct spelling information.
13. Frequency is the key to consistently correct spelling. A child may know a word but spell it wrong in composition. Repetition is essential for mastery and sublimation.
14. Spelling practice should be fun, frequent and fast.
15. Brain cells make connections through frequency, intensity, and duration of sensory input and opportunity for motor output.

HOW TO TEACH SPELLING EFFECTIVELY

Note: If you're having success in spelling, don't change a thing; but if you're not, then you must change your approach. As you change method, keep the following in mind:

1. Group words together. Word family awareness is more essential than knowing rules.
2. Learn exceptions along with rules.
3. Create or choose a short list of 10-15 words.
4. Test the child everyday, either verbally or by having him write the words.
5. If you have the child write the words, DO NOT correct the paper for the student; do it together by saying out loud the correct spelling so the child can auditorily check the sequence of letters against what he has written.
6. Develop an incentive system.
7. Do the same test everyday, until the child can get 100% twice in a row. Test all 15 words even if the child got 14 of them correct the day before. Repetition builds mastery and certainty.
8. Verbally review words from previous lists frequently.
9. Add to your spelling lists words that the child has misspelled in his writing or from vocabulary; make it as relevant and applicable as possible.
10. Study Greek and Latin word roots. (First grade isn't too young to start.)

NOTES REGARDING SPELLING AND ENGLISH COMPOSITION:

1. Many children who don't like to write are afraid because of low spelling skills. Consequently they will balk at writing and also intentionally use only the simplest words.
2. When you do ask children to write (e.g. do "English composition"), don't simultaneously require them to spell perfectly. Options include:
 - Be your child's "human dictionary."
 - Get your son or daughter an electronic thesaurus.
 - "Edit" your child's writing, but understand what "editing" is.
3. Keep lists of useful words posted on the wall (commonly used, adverbs, strong verbs, quality adjectives, etc.). Although it would be a visual activity to see the words on the wall and copy them into a story or report, it will be at least a little better than nothing.
4. Be enthusiastic about what your child produces; build up a "bank account" with positive comments so that corrections are not so devastating.