



There are many ways to recall correct spelling. Here are just a few. Parents can share these strategies with their children and let them know which ones they use. Different learners will rely on different strategies for successful spelling. **We spell better when we have a range of spelling strategies to choose from.**

Children who struggle to spell correctly need to know that you need to **pick the right strategy for each word.** *'The tricks don't work the same on all words.'* If a child is selecting a strategy (instead of guessing) make sure you give encouragement for the approach even if the result was not correct. **Show them** some words where their selected strategy *would* work before returning to the word at hand and helping them select a strategy that works for that word.

Here are the strategies in no particular order:

1. Spell like it sounds

Students need to be invited to explore and experiment with spelling unknown words. Students use this strategy when they attempt to write words by breaking words into sounds they hear and saying them aloud as they write a word. They need to be reassured that taking risks with “getting it right” is an important step towards becoming a competent speller. It is important that encouragement to use invented spelling is accompanied with the explicit teaching of letter combinations that make the same sound (e.g. *f* and *ph*.)

2. Spell it by pattern

In this strategy teachers teach the patterns for the sounds (*ee* as in *bee, see, feet; dr* as in *drop, drink; tr* as in *tree, trap*) and build word families. Teaching patterns extends well into the primary years and includes silent letter patterns, prefixes, suffixes, and compound words. Knowledge of patterns means that students can learn to spell more than one word at a time.

3. Spell it by rule/generalisation

Teachers can work with their students to develop rules/generalisations as students have enough knowledge to have formed the concept before defining the generalisation. For example, forming the generalisation “when adding *ing* to words that end in *y* then leave the *y* and add the *ing*” would happen after students’ writing was showing evidence of inconsistency when adding the *ing*. Knowledge of the rule can be a useful reference in case of doubt.

4. Spell it by analogy

When students use this strategy they use another known word to help them write an unknown e.g., *end/bend, candle/handle, light/fright*. Research also indicates that students taught to use analogy when learning about common word parts (*ug, on, at, ent, ate, ight*) improve their spelling at all year levels. Teachers should explicitly teach students how to make use of analogy to spell a new word.

5. Spell it by chunking

When students chunk words they break them into smaller pieces (not necessarily syllables) so that they are easily remembered e.g., Feb-ru-ary, in-ter-net, tech-no-lo-gy, Wed-nes-day. Students can find small words inside longer words e.g., add-it-i-on, s-tip-u-late. You may notice when saying these words out loud that they differ from how the word is spoken (try Wed-nes-day vs how it is said: wensday). Students can store the word in their head as the chunked version to use for spelling and the spoken version to use for speech.

6. Spell it by copying from a secondary source

It is important that students learn how to use resources such as a dictionary, atlas, or reference book, to check the spelling of a word new to them, or a subject specific word. Parents can demonstrate how to look up a word. Parents could get two dictionaries and can have a race with their child to find the word. The dictionary also explains the system used to define each word usually at the front. Dictionaries also show the other words formed from the same stem. E.g. *vary* and *variation*, *various*, *variety*.

7. Spell it from memory

The aim of teaching spelling is to increase the number of words that a student can retrieve from memory (automaticity). Parents can help children with their spelling lists by checking they know how to memorise. One technique is to 1. Look and say the word aloud, 2. cover the word up and spell it out loud, 3. look at the word and check you were right, 4. cover the word again and write the word, 5. check and correct if necessary. Repeat. This technique can be pretty boring. Consider breaking this activity up using post-it notes spread through the house, or writing on the back of flashcards.

8. Spell it using mnemonics (a short memorable story)

Mnemonics is a device that is used to help students to remember the spelling of words. You can make up a story to go with a word. e.g.:

- ocean: use the first letter of each word – only cat's eyes are narrow
- separate: There was farmer named Sep and one day his wife saw a rat. She yelled SEP a rat-E
- hear/here: You HEAR with your EAR.

9. Sing your words in the shower

If you have a clear shower screen you write the words on a list, stick it to the outside but facing in to the shower and sing the spelling to any tune you like. When the screen mists up you can finger-write the words out.

10. Finger write the words on the body

Sit down with your child and after looking at the week's spelling words, play a game. Spell a word out on your child's back with your finger and ask him to say each letter as you write. Work up to saying the whole word after you write it. The brain remembers things better if it uses different parts of the brain while learning.

Some sections of this resource are adapted by Tamara Playne (Tamara's Tuition) 2014 from Spelling: from beginnings to proficiency, Consultative Draft August 2011
[www.decs.sa.gov.au/literacy/Chapter 3](http://www.decs.sa.gov.au/literacy/Chapter%203)

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