

## **Reading and spelling tips for parents of developing readers**

Once your child has mastered the basic skills of reading it is time to develop their skill to be an enquiring and responsive reader.

One of the skills to continue to develop is the skill to listen and recall stories to develop their vocabulary and speaking skills.

### **Different strokes for different folks**

Read different types of books to expose your child to different types of writing. Some children, especially boys, prefer nonfiction books.

### **Teach your child some "mind tricks"**

Show your child how to summarize a story in a few sentences or how to make predictions about what might happen next. Both strategies help a child comprehend and remember.

### **Comprehension**

So now your child reads more fluently is developing expression. What next? Comprehension and understanding what they read are the next key skill. Depending on the book, age and stage your child has reached there are a range of questions you can ask to engage their interest in the book. Always ask your child to justify their answer referring back to the book. Try and develop their opinion rather than just questions to establish the story. (see attached sheets for ideas)

### **Tell family tales**

Children love to hear stories about their family. Talk about a funny thing that happened when you were young.

### **Do storytelling on the go. Talk about what you see and do**

Take turns adding to a story the two of you make up while riding in a car or bus. Try making the story funny or spooky. Talk about everyday activities to build your child's background knowledge, which is crucial to listening and reading comprehension. Keep up a running patter, for example, while cooking together, visiting somewhere new, or after watching a TV show.

### **Quick, quick**

Use new words your child has learned in lively flash card or computer drills. Sometimes these help children automatically recognize and read words, especially those that are used frequently. Sometimes having a word the children are getting stuck on in lots of different places e.g. on the fridge, on a card on the front door etc will embed the word over a few days.

## **Point out the relationship between words**

Explain how related words have similar spellings and meanings. Show how a word like knowledge, for example, relates to a word like know. Get out the dictionary or thesaurus to look at new words, alternatives and their meanings. Discuss vocabulary and improve on the author's work. Let your child see you use a dictionary. Say, "Hmm, I'm not sure what that word means... I think I'll look it up."

## **One more time with feeling**

When your child has sounded out an unfamiliar word, have him or her re-read that sentence. Often kids are so busy figuring out a word they lose the meaning of what they've just read. Do the same when punctuation and speech change the way the sentence is read. Don't be afraid to read and demonstrate the skill of expression. Overdo it, read it in different ways to demonstrate sad, happy, excited etc.

## **Get them to read another one**

Find ways to encourage your child to pick up another book. Introduce him or her to a series like Silver Street Farm by Nicola Davies or Mudpuddle Farm by Michael Morpurgo or to a second book by a favorite author, or ask the librarian for additional suggestions.

## **"Are we there yet?"**

Use the time spent in the car or bus for wordplay. Talk about how jam means something you put on toast as well as cars stuck in traffic. How many other homonyms can your child think of? When children are highly familiar with the meaning of a word, they have less difficulty reading it and using it in their writing. .

## **Be supportive**

Remind him or her that reading, writing and spelling writing involves several steps. No one does it perfectly the first time.

## **Encouraging writing and developing spelling skills**

### **Develop auditory and vocal skills.**

Good spellers are usually good readers and good speakers and vice versa. Using the school or local library helps your child develop some of these skills. Children need to use the language they will be writing to articulate ideas. Give your child the opportunity to talk with you.

### **Create a writing toolbox**

Fill a box with drawing and writing materials. Find opportunities for your child to write, such as the shopping list, thankyou notes, or birthday cards.

### **Be your child's number 1 fan**

Ask your child to read aloud what he or she has written for school. Be an enthusiastic listener.

### **Top tips for spelling**

Spelling is tricky. For words to enter the long term memory takes time and using sight, sound and touch helps develop a better memory for spelling of words.

Before your child starts to silently study his list for that day, let him pronounce each word. Children must know how to properly pronounce a word before they attempt to spell it, If their pronunciation is not correct, they will indeed spell it as they would pronounce it in their own way. (Also make sure they know what the word means and can use it or understand it when they hear it.)

Don't tackle an entire spelling list in one sitting. Take one-third for example, each evening, to work on with your child. Break the practice into small units. Try fifteen minutes of review when he gets home; 10 minutes before tea; 5 minutes after tea. Shorter periods given frequently are more effective than one massive review-which is also exhausting and frustrating.

Sometimes words on a spelling list can be "clustered" into similarities. For example, you might try attempting all of the five-letter words one day, all the words beginning with consonants the next day, all the words beginning with blends the next day. This kind of grouping will help your child to perceive similarities and differences in the words, and, hence, develop his recall.

After your child has studied, let's say five words, in any of the ways described, spell the words to him, in random order, and have him name the word you spelled.

## **Look, say, cover, write, check.**

To start studying, a child should look at the word, pronounce it, spell it orally as he looks at it, cover it with his hand, and then attempt to spell it or, as he traces it on your kitchen table, letter by letter.

## **Chunking**

Break the word into chunk or syllables. Look at each bit carefully and pay special attention to the bit or bits you find “tricky”

e.g. im port ant important.

## **Colour coding**

Write out the word in larger letters. Write the tricky bit in a different colour to highlight the tricky part. Good for visual memory.

## **Spot the word “inside” the word**

Look for the word or words you already know within the new word.

e.g. **hand**            **you**ng

## **Say what you see!**

Practise saying the word the way it is written to remind yourself of the unusual spelling

e.g. Wed nes day k nife

## **Move it! Act it!**

Put movement into learning words. Have your child clap for each letter or take a step for each letter as he spells the word orally. This will help ” lock in” the correct sequence of letters, as well as develop full recall for the word.

Say the letters outloud like a chant or song spell the word then say it. Group the letters like a rhyme

e.g. Sat - ur - day SATURDAY!

## **Write it!**

Try writing the word to put the letter pattern into you hand memory.

## **Role play and games**

Listening skills do help spelling. “What letter does ‘chart, end with?” What letter does ‘piano’ begin with?” Play these games just for a few moments before supper, or after breakfast to develop your child’s ability to hear sounds in words.

Rhyming words is another game that can build spelling skills. “Can you think of a word that rhymes with fill?” As your child says hill, Bill, till, and so on, write them down. He’ll soon notice, himself, that they have identical endings.

Using letter cards cut up the words into letters. Un-jumble the letters to make a word. How quickly can they do it?

Form the word from the letter cards. Close your eyes. Remove a letter. Can your child say which letter is missing?

Find the wrong word. Write a short sentence for your child. Tell him that there is one word spelled incorrectly. Ask him to see if he can find it. To begin, make it a rather obviously misspelled word. Leave a letter out, or add an extra letter to a word. Ask him to first read the sentence, then to circle the misspelled word. Then make sure you erase it and write it correctly.

Let your child play teacher. Let him teach you the words he is learning to spell. Spell them orally to him. Let him correct you. Then have him dictate to you and you write them. Have previous words in an envelope or box and do a lucky dip for a couple of words from previous lists to see if they really are in that long term memory.

## **Final thoughts**

Helping your child at home with spelling requires patience and a non-school setting. Don’t try to be a teacher. Be a parent who teaches. Your child wants to please you-he wants your honest, sincere praise. Keep the activities short-and fun, and do them regularly, with variety.

## **‘Appy days’**

Below are some recommended apps to use with your child to make reading and spelling fun, interactive and accessible for all:

- Funimal phonics (simple recognition of phonemes)
- Funimal phonics pairs (simple recognition of phonemes matching to where they are heard in words)
- Twinkl phonics (phase 1-5 – discuss with your child’s teacher which phase would best suit your child’s needs).

- HFW – high frequency words (allows your child to learn tricky words in small manageable groups)
- Interactive books (Oxford Reading tree, Thomas the tank etc – there are lots of interactive texts which are downloadable and bring to life texts for reluctant readers)
- Mr Thorne does phonics: Letters and sounds for iPads (a teacher away from school to assist your child with segmenting, blending and spelling patterns).

Good luck. Please let me know via your class teacher of any successes!

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