

Different ways of learning how to spell words

Highlight the hard bit

Frequently, there will be one part of a word that trips up your child each time. Look at the word together and highlight the part that they find particularly tricky. For example:

Night Separate Was Receive Weird

What Two Friend Said Cheap

Or there may be two parts that need attention

Once you've completed the highlighting together, get them to write out the word again without looking.

This time they'll be more focused on getting that tricky bit right, and will be able to remember how it looks.

Make the spelling stick

If one or two parts of a particular word just don't seem to 'sink in' by simply highlighting them, try to think of other ways to help them stick. These are most useful when they are constructed with the child rather than given to them by an adult as they are more likely to remember them For example:

- With weird, people often get the i and e confused. Help by saying **we** are **weird**, so your child remembers that **we** is the first part of the word.
- For the double s in dessert: desserts are both sweet and sugary.

Break it down

Try breaking down polysyllabic words to make each syllable easier to remember. Even Reception will be doing this at school. Help them decipher how many 'beats' or syllables there are in a word by clapping the word together, one clap per syllable.

So, for **two-syllable** words...

Danger Dan / ger

Windmill Wind / mill

Option Op / tion

And for **three-syllable** words...

Relation Re / la / tion

Beautiful Beau / ti / ful

It may help to segment the words into a chart like this:

Syllable 1 Syllable 2 Syllable 3

Re

la

tion

Read it, copy it, write it, check it OR Look, cover, write, check

After your child has read and copied the word twice, fold the paper over so they can't see what they've written and ask them to have a go at writing the word unaided. They should be able to recall the spelling without looking. They can then check back to see if they have spelt it correctly.

Create pictures in your mind

If you can conjure up a visual image, what you're trying to remember (in this case spellings!) may come more readily. For example, if your child is learning 'bank' but writing 'banc', help them remember it's a 'K' by saying, "I kicked my legs into the bank". If they're writing 'cat' as 'kat' remind them it's a 'C' by saying, "The cat likes to curl up and go to sleep". Encourage your child to invent their own ways of remembering words; if they have thought up the image themselves, it will be a more powerful tool.

Say it as it's spelt

Use the children's phonic knowledge to help them to learn how to spell words.

To remember **double s**, really stress and extend the sound: fussysssss.

To remember **double z**, again stress and extend it: buzzzzzzzz.

Same for **double e**: seeeeeeeeem.

Make it an acrostic

Sometimes, visualising a difficult word in a different way can suddenly make it stick. Create a phrase from each letter of a word and turn it into an acrostic, which can be easier to remember than the word itself. Try these, or have your child make up their own!

Because:

Big

Elephants

Can

Always

Understand

Small

Elephants

In the palm of your hands

If your child is a kinaesthetic learner (in other words they learn best through doing), ask them to write each letter of the word into the palm of their hand or onto their leg with their finger. With enough repetitions, they'll remember how the word felt to write (this is known as muscle memory).

Sing the word

Simply learn the word by saying or singing the letters out loud, developing a melody. This melody should then imprint in your child's memory; if they forget a spelling they will still remember how the words sound, which will serve as a prompt.

Write it!

Children can write the word in many different ways, the most obvious being a pencil and paper. But can they use a different colour pen for each letter, write it in paint, draw it with their finger in shaving foam, use a paintbrush and water to paint it on the garden wall or path etc.

Focusing on the spelling of a small amount of words at a time before learning new ones will enable the children to learn them quicker than trying to learn twenty different spellings in one go.