**Some further spelling strategies**

## Word Lists

The use of word lists can be a successful strategy for many learners with dyslexia with dyslexia.

* Word lists can be a general list of words composed from words commonly used by children at certain ages.
* They can also be in the form of specific lists which focus on the child’s own particular spelling difficulties. One of the points to be aware of with dyslexic children is that often the spelling pattern of dyslexic children is inconsistent, therefore words not included in a list because they have been able to spell them may still be spelt wrong in some other situations such as in tests, where it may be necessary to write at speed.
* Some common words for year 2 pupils are shown below.

 *I and the a to my was is it went in there he*

*on said they one she day we home with dad*

*so of me like had were at go going*

It is estimated these words occupy 30% of the words used by Year 2 pupils.

* It is usually easier for children to learn words in context so it would be useful to have a sentence next to the word which would provide a clue to its meaning as well as its spelling properties. In relation to the spelling properties the parts of the word that are usually mis- pelt by the student can also be highlighted. This means it can be individualised for each child.
* Ideally a range of approaches and strategies should be used as the same approach may not be effective for all children with dyslexia.
* Children with dyslexia will show a lot of inconsistencies before they acquire automaticity in spelling a particular word. Automaticity can be acquired though using the word in as many different forms as possible, in different subjects and different contexts.
* Games for spelling can be useful and these can be developed by the teacher and commercially available games can be used.

Games should focus on onset and rime, vowel and consonant recognition as well as rhyming, matching pictures and sound and visual discrimination.

* **Look, Cover, Write, Check** is a well established strategy for spelling. Look – this involves active engagement of the writer looking closely at the word with the intention of reproducing it. It is suggested that sometimes tracing at the look stage which utilises the kinesthetic memory can result in a stronger memory trace and enhance the chances of the child with specific difficulties remembering the visual features of the word.
* Saying the letters at this initial stage can also help to reinforce the memory trace for the word. It is also important that the look stage is not skipped or rushed through before the child has had an opportunity to develop visual strategies to help memorise the visual features. Such strategies can include making visual analogies of the word and recognising the visual features and similarities of the letters and the word to other words or acknowledging the distinctive features. For example in the word ‘window’ there are a number of visual aspects which could help with memory such as the first and last letter being the same and the distinctiveness of the letter ‘w’. At this stage it is also possible to draw attention to words within words such as the word ‘tent’ in ‘attention’ and ‘ask’ in ‘basket’.
* Cover – this involves the visual memory –this takes practice and some children can adapt to this better than others. This type of activity lends itself very well to a game and this can be motivating for children. Visual memory can of course be practiced with a range of visual games and games and activities involving visual discrimination. For example Crossbow educational produce a wide range of games such as ‘Rummyword’, ‘Breakdown’ and ‘Funfish’ all of which can help provide practice in visual activities which can have a spin-off for spelling. Additionally mnemonics as well as game-type activities can be used as an aid for visual memory.
* Write – this is an important stage as it provides the kinesthetic practice. Many practitioners suggest that at this stage cursive handwriting should be encouraged. In fact it has been suggested that there is a link between clear cursive writing and good spelling.
* Check – this provides the learner with some responsibility for his/her own spelling. It is important to reduce the dependency on the teacher as soon as possible and to promote the activity of self-correction.

While ‘look, cover’ write and check’ as a strategy can be very successful for many children it does place demands on memory and particularly visual memory – it is important therefore to ensure that it is suitable for the individual child and that other strategies are also considered.

* Simultaneous Oral Spelling developed by Lynette Bradley has shown that rhyming is a particularly useful form of categorisation for developing spelling skills and that practice in sound categorisation through nursery rhymes and rhyming word games in early language play helps spelling. Many children have problems remembering ‘chunks’, such as ‘igh’ in ‘sight’, and ‘fight’. If children cannot do this, then every word will be unique. Irregular words can also be learnt using the multisensory techniques.

It has been shown in this chapter that phonological aspects are important in the development of reading and spelling skills. This seems to have considerable importance, particularly for dyslexic children who do not automatically relate the sounds to the visual images of print. Exercises in phonological awareness are therefore of great importance, not just to assist with reading but also to help with spelling, by allowing children to learn and understand sound patterns and to recognise how these are transposed into print

The procedure suggested by Bradley for Simultaneous Oral Spelling is shown below:

* Have the word written correctly, or made with the letters.
* Say the word.
* Write the word, spelling out each letter as it is written, using cursive script.
* The child needs to –see each letter–hear its name –receive kinesthetic feedback through the movement of the arm and throat muscles.
* Check to see if the word is correct.
* Cover up the word and repeat the process. Continue to practice the word in this way, three times a day, for one week. By this time the word should be committed to memory. However, only one word will have been learned.
* This final step involves the categorisation of the word with other words which sound and look alike. So if the word that has been learned is ‘round’ the student is then shown that s/he can also spell ‘ground’ ‘pound’ ‘found’ ‘mound’ ‘sound’ ‘around’ ‘bound’‘grounded’ ‘pounding’ etc. That is s/he has learned six, eight, or more words for the effort of one. *(Reproduced by kind permission of Lynette Bradley) (Personal Communication, 1994)*

### Spelling in context approaches - these involves the children identifying their own spelling errors and then proceed to underline these or use some other ‘code’. Topping in fact suggests actually drawing a line through the misspelling as it helps to visually reinforce the wrong spelling.

### **Cued Spelling -** The cued spelling technique shares the same principles as paired reading and other peer tutoring developments (Topping personal correspondence).

### The technique comprises ten steps for learning and spelling, four points to remember and two reviews. The points to remember help to consolidate the learning and the two reviews involve a daily and a weekly review. In the daily review the speller writes all the words for the day and checks them – the wrong words are then noted and the learner goes through the ten steps again for these words.

### The speller adopts the same procedure for the weekly review and identifies the wrong words. Discussion would then take place on the best approach for the learner to tackle the wrongly spelt words.

### If the learner writes a word inaccurately he/she is encouraged to delete the word from memory by erasing it or boldly scoring it out. This can be particularly useful if the learner has a strong visual memory and the image of the incorrect word may remain and be recalled at some future point.

The cued spelling technique is highly interactive but aims to encourage ‘self-managed’ learning. The technique attempts to eliminate the fear of failure through the use of prompt correction procedures. As in paired reading, modelling and praise are integral to the application of cued spelling. According to Topping seven year old children have been successfully trained in its use in about one hour, substantial progress can be made on norm-referenced spelling tests, and improvements have been found in error rate and qualitative indicators in continuous free writing.

##### Spelling Materials

**The ACE spelling dictionary (Moseley 1995) -** this dictionary is specifically aimed at dyslexic children and can provide them with an easy and independent means of finding words at speed. Initially students have to be taught how to use the dictionary but there are many examples where teachers have indicated that this can be done in around three lessons. Additionally there are activities that accompany the dictionary –Ace Spelling Activities. These consist of photocopiable worksheets with spelling activities based on the use of syllables, discriminating between different parts of speech and other activities linked to the ACE spelling dictionary. It also includes advise on the use of common word lists.

## Catchwords

This set of books can be useful for observing the progression from the semi-phonetic to phonetic to the transition stage in spelling. The first book provides examples of rhyming activities and subsequent books in the series highlight word building and common letter patterns. The series also contains suggestions on developing a whole school spelling policy, a comprehensive word bank and guidance for involving parents.

##### Photocopiable Resources

There are a number of photocopiable resources for spelling usually in ring bound files which can be easily accessed by the teacher. These include;

* Exercise your spelling (Hodder and Stoughton)
* Early steps to literacy (Kickstart Publications)
* Folens spelling file (Folens)
* High Frequency Spelling Fun (Timesavers)
* Limericks, Laughs and Vowel Digraphs (Crossbow Educational)
* Rime Time (Crossbow Educational)
* Sound Beginnings (LDA)
* Spell it out (Hilda King Educational Services)
* Spelling Rules OK (Chalkface Publications)
* Thrass spelling book ( Collins Educational)
* Wordsnakes (Crossbow Educational)
* Crackerspell (Jordanhill Publications

All these photocopiable activities would be useful for children with dyslexia as they can be used and developed in a multisensory way and because they are photocopiable can be used repetitively interspersed with other activities therefore promoting overlearning.