

Tips for Spelling

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-The first tip that can improve spelling is to have your student sound out words that follow the sound symbol associations of English. For example, a word like 'dog' /d-o-g/ can be sounded out by a student, whereas a word like 'of' /u-v/ can not. Have them sound out the word, then write the letters they think matches what they say. Finally, have them read what they wrote to see if it matches the word they wanted to spell. This process will help them to slow down for accuracy and self-correct their mistakes. Students tend to rush and begin writing before they have processed the word itself. They also rarely go back to check their work.

-The next tip is to know the expectancies of the English language, as well as the exceptions. There are certain concepts that aid us in correct spelling. For example, knowing a rule such as how to make a word plural (adding 's' or 'es') or past tense (adding 'ed') can eliminate frustration when spelling.

-Next, try and practice common concepts or patterns. This could be a rule such as making words past tense, a common blend of sounds (ex. stall, fall, call), or an exception to the rule that does not play fair (ex. could, would, should).

-Keep a running list of words that are challenging for your student and continue to practice them in mini-spelling quizzes. Give them a plus or minus for getting the word right or wrong. After they have correctly spelled the word five times in a row, it can 'graduate' and be crossed off the list.

-Have them visualize any words they miss when spelling. This is a process that helps them to create a neural imprint of the word in their visual memory so they can accurately identify and spell it later. Have them write the word in the air with their finger while saying the name for each letter they write. The student should be watching their finger and writing the letters neatly about 4-6 inches high.

-Encourage your student to break bigger words down into syllables or practice chunk spelling. Before they begin spelling a multisyllable word, they sound out the syllables in the word. Then they write each syllable separately. For example, they would spell the word 'convention', con – ven – tion. This will help them match the number of syllables in a word, which is a common spelling mistake.

- Have them practice common prefixes and suffixes. The suffix 'tion' is not only very common, but it also does not sound like it's spelled (shun). Have your student practice these common parts of words so longer words become less challenging. For example, a word like 'inconsistently' would be challenging for a student to spell one sound at a time, but if they take

it one syllable at a time and they know the affixes 'in,' 'con,' 'ent,' and 'ly,' then they already know how to spell 80% of the word.

-It is always helpful to practice high frequency or commonly misspelled word lists. Pulling challenging words from this type of list will aid in your student's spelling confidence.

-If all else fails, build a mnemonic trick to help remember the word. For example, 'never believe a lie,' or "an island is land surrounded by water." These types of tricks can be helpful for words that are continually challenging for students.

-Finally, it is helpful to remember that good readers turn into good spellers and writers. The more your student is reading and being exposed to written language, the more natural and consistent their spelling will become.