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SPELLING DEMONS

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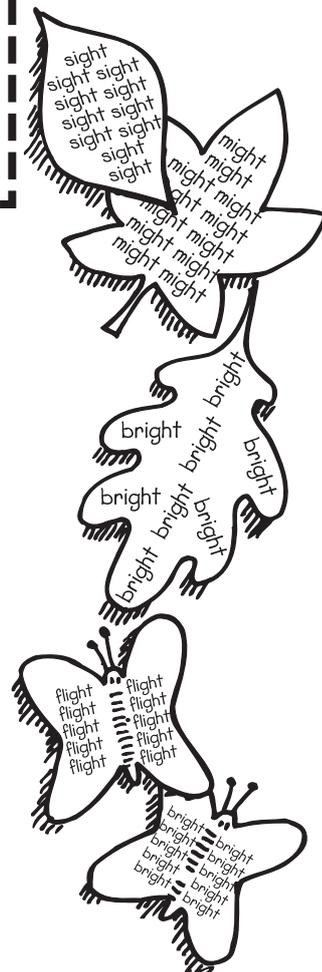
Introduction

- There isn't enough time.
- The children just want to use spell-checking programs on their computers.
- Our curriculum is whole-language based.
- It should be taught in the lower years.

All of these are common laments when it comes to the subject of teaching spelling in the middle years. But spelling is important! In fact, it could be viewed as the foundation for all other forms of communication. Spelling is not just an isolated subject. Students must use spelling in every subject area. In addition, a firm knowledge of spelling can help promote reading ability. And once children understand word families, patterns, prefixes and suffixes, they are more able to grasp word analysis. As confidence in working with words increases, student confidence in other areas will grow as well.

While computer spell-checking programs are helpful, they are not foolproof. Spelling is still a very necessary skill. For example, spell-checkers will not let students know that they typed 'wood' when they meant to write 'would'. It also doesn't alert users to a change in one or two letters; imagine spelling the word 'invisible' when you wanted to say 'invincible'. The computer does not pick up subtle differences, such as that between 'dessert' and 'desert'. And even if the program does point out an error, it may make suggestions for replacement but may not provide the user with the correct spelling of the original word.

Whole-language curriculums do not exclude the teaching of spelling; spelling needs to be integrated into the program. Students gradually must become more responsible for using correctly spelt words in their writing. Spelling should always count on the final copy of a written assignment. And even if your program frowns on using spelling lists, you can still use activities to promote spelling skills and insist on the transference of those skills to other English activities.



Learning to spell well takes practice. It cannot be taught by rote memory alone. Even if a child receives an outstanding mark on a spelling test, they may not have truly mastered the spelling of those words. Correctly spelt words will not simply show up on children's papers if they have not learned some of the basic spelling and phonetic rules. A knowledge of those rules will help students make the right decision when they are faced with spelling choices. In addition, putting the rules into action will help build students' visual memory of words. Providing a combination of rules and practice will help build confident and accurate spellers.

The English language is complex and confusing, and it takes time to master it. In the early years, students need to gain a strong phonetic knowledge for simple spelling. As they progress through the middle years, they can handle more complex spelling concepts. Each year students should be given more techniques with which to cope with our demanding language.

This book contains a wide variety of activities to help you teach spelling without going crazy. It is divided into the following sections:

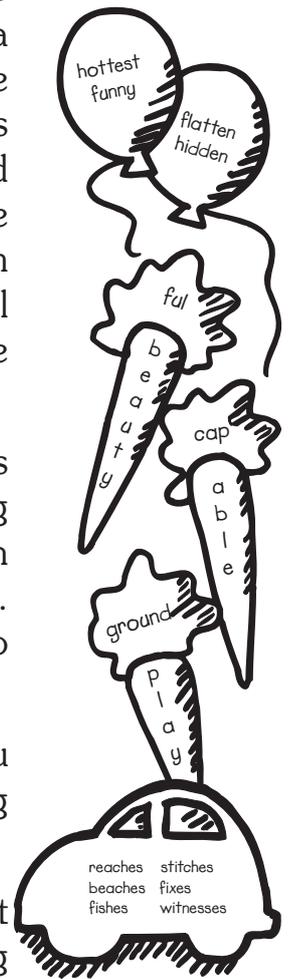
The Diverse Classroom – This section contains information about how to focus on students' learning styles, tips about individualising programs and adaptive techniques for dealing with special needs.

Classroom Management – In this section you'll find classroom management techniques, how to develop spelling bulletin boards and suggestions for weekly plans. You'll also find helpful hints to assist you in understanding why your students are misspelling words.

General Activities – The activities include a wide array of spelling lessons that can be used with almost any existing list of words. The activities strive to incorporate all three learning styles (see next page) and include many environment-friendly projects.

Topic-Specific Activities – Here you'll find activities and word lists related to specific concepts, such as spelling rules, prefixes and suffixes and homophones.

Spelling Demons – This part of the book provides techniques for coping with these fiends, plus a list of commonly misspelt words and spelling demons.



GENERAL SPELLING STRATEGIES

There are several techniques that can help every child become a better speller. Teach your class these strategies and guide particular students to techniques that will assist them the most.

1. **Pronounce the word clearly before trying to spell it.**

Some children will need to say the word aloud each time. Other students will get in the habit of saying the word several times in their mind before writing it.

2. **Use mnemonic (memory) devices.**

A few mnemonic devices appear in lessons throughout this book. These include old standards, such as *i before e except after c*; mispronouncing a word so that a silent letter is not missed, as in *no TICE able*; and thinking of little stories to help remember a difficult spelling, such as *mnemonic: begins with an m just like memory*.

3. **Learn some simple rules, but don't try to make every word fit a rule.**

Children will become frustrated by exceptions if they try to make every word work with a given rule, but it is worthwhile to have them study some of the broad generalities in spelling (see 'Topic-Specific Activities').

4. **Increase visual memory – picture the word in your mind.**

This is a key to better spelling. Use games and practice to increase students' visual memory.

