

Written strategies for practising spellings

Phonological Knowledge

This is simply knowing the phonemes (sounds) and understanding how to represent them as graphemes (letters). Using Spelling Shed, students will be systematically taught the different graphemes for each phoneme.

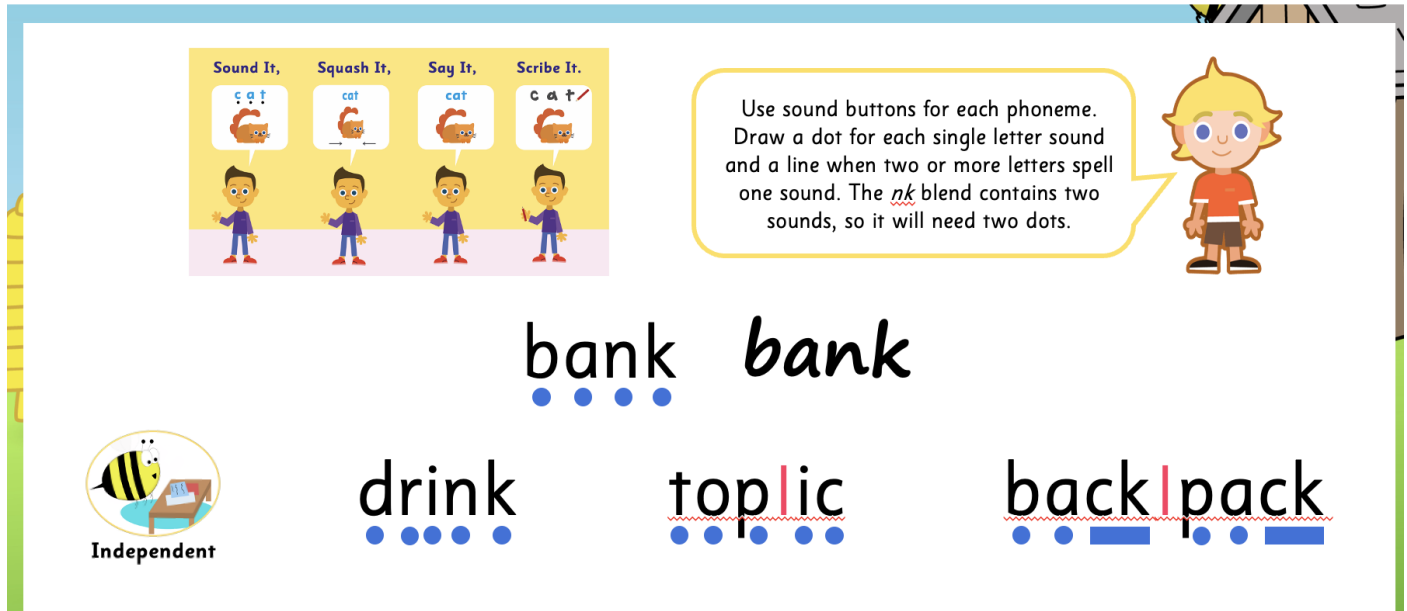


Sound It, Squash It, Say It, Scribe It

Can you sound out the word *bank* and write it?
Can you add the sound buttons underneath?



2.8



Sound It, Squash It, Say It, Scribe It.

Use sound buttons for each phoneme. Draw a dot for each single letter sound and a line when two or more letters spell one sound. The *nk* blend contains two sounds, so it will need two dots.

bank bank

Independent

drink topic backpack

Orthographic Knowledge

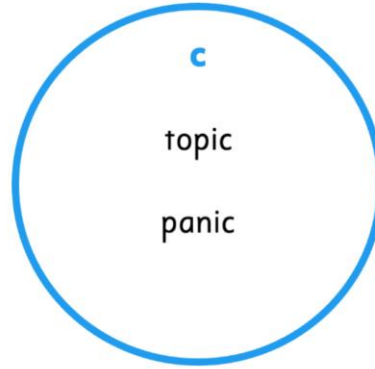
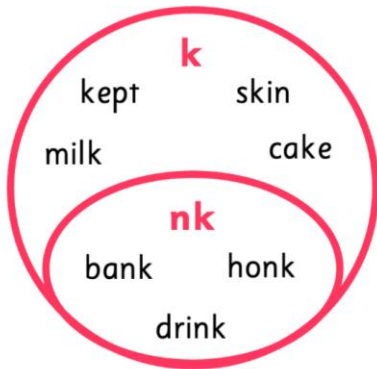
“Ortho” meaning “correct” and “graph” meaning “to do with writing”. Orthography is the spelling system of a language. It is the patterns the language can use.

“Alongside phonological knowledge, students must have orthographic knowledge, that is, understanding which letter sequences are both possible and plausible in English.” Adoniou (2024, p. 146)

Let's take “drip” as an example. It can't be spelled “dd” with /d/ because “dd” is most often in the middle of words or before a suffix. It would never be at the beginning of a word.

“Orthographic mapping is the cognitive process by which readers associate speech sounds with written letters (phoneme-grapheme associations) in a written word to store it for immediate retrieval “on sight”.” Mather & Jaffe (2021, p. 15-16)

Do you notice any patterns for where the nk occurs in words?



The *nk* blend only appears at the end of a base word. The other /k/ sounds can appear anywhere in a word.



As it is a cognitive process, it is not something you can directly teach; however, you can use methods that support orthographic mapping. This might include breaking down words in different ways: sound buttons, Elkonin boxes or syllables, and looking at the positional best fit of words. Teaching morphemes and word origins helps students understand the meaning of words at a deeper level, which helps them connect to and recognize unfamiliar words. This means that explicit and systematic spelling instruction can increase vocabulary acquisition.

Morphological and Etymological Knowledge

“Visual memory is dramatically better when meaning can be attached to the to-be-remembered pattern.” Bowers & Bowers (2017, p.132)

Morphology and etymology are important aspects of language that can significantly aid in learning to spell correctly.

Understanding Word Structure: Morphology

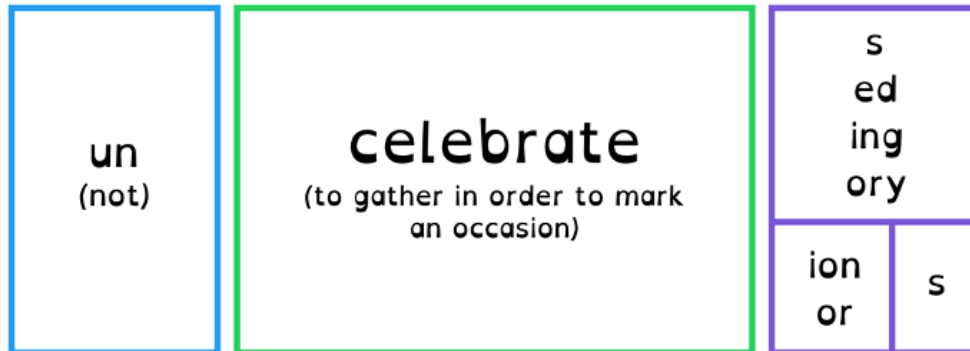
Morphology deals with the structure of words and how they are formed from smaller units called morphemes (the smallest units of meaning). Understanding morphology helps children break down words into meaningful parts, such as prefixes, suffixes, and root words. Knowing common prefixes and suffixes can provide clues about the meaning of a word and its spelling. For example, the prefix "un-" often indicates negation (e.g., unhappy,) and recognizing this can help in spelling related words.



Prefix

Base Word

Suffix



Can you make another word for 'party'?

Identifying Word Origins: Etymology

Etymology is the study of the history and origins of words. Knowing the origin of a word often provides insight into its spelling and meaning; e.g., "ch" can be pronounced as /k/ in words such as choir, school, and stomach. Words that pronounce "ch" as /k/ are often Greek in origin. Words with similar roots or bases often have similar spellings. For instance, if you know that "bene-" means "good" or "well" (as in "beneficial"), you can apply this knowledge to spell and understand other words with the same prefix, such as "benefit" or "benevolent."

Learning morphology and etymology enhances vocabulary. As students become familiar with root and base words, prefixes, and suffixes, they can more easily recognize and learn new words.



Etymology extravagance



From the Medieval Latin extravagari meaning to 'wander outside or beyond'.



The meaning 'excessive, extreme, exceeding reasonable limits' was first recorded in the 1590s.



The meaning of being 'wasteful, lavish, exceeding prudence in expenditure' is from 1711.



extravagance



From the Latin extra meaning 'outside of'.

From the Latin vagari meaning 'to wander or roam'.



So, if you are being 'extravagant', you are 'wandering outside' of what is considered reasonable.



Memorized Words (Lexical Store)

“In order to spell well, children need to learn how to strategically use knowledge about phonology, orthography, morphology, and etymology. It is also a visual activity that involves the laying down and retrieval of visual representations of words and word parts in the memory.” Oakley & Fellowes (2016, p.1)

Research shows that visual memory is dramatically better when meaning can be attached to the to-be-remembered pattern. As spellers, we build up a mental lexicon. This is a bank of words we have committed to our visual memory and can spell almost automatically.

Effective spelling instruction teaches strategies that support spelling skills. Often, we rely heavily on visual memory for spelling, but there is much more to it than that. Word study directly teaches the linguistic skills that contribute not only to effective spelling but also to reading and further literacy skills such as spoken language.

Look, say, cover, write, check

This is probably the most common strategy used to learn spellings.

Look: first look at the whole word carefully and if there is one part of the word that is difficult, look at that part in more detail.

Say: say the word as you look at it, using different ways of pronouncing it if that will make it more memorable.

Cover: cover the word.

Write: write the word from memory, saying the word as you do so.

Check: Have you got it right? If yes, try writing it again and again! If not, start again – look, say, cover, write, check.

Segmentation strategy

The splitting of a word into its constituent phonemes in the correct order to support spelling.

Quickwrite

Writing the words linked to the teaching focus with speed and fluency. The aim is to write as many words as possible within a time constraint. Pupils can write words provided by the teacher or generate their own examples. For example, in two minutes write as many words as possible with the /i:/ phoneme. This can be turned into a variety of competitive games including working in teams and developing relay race approaches.

Drawing around the word to show the shape

Draw around the words making a clear distinction in size where there are ascenders and descenders. Look carefully at the shape of the word and the letters in each box. Now try to write the word making sure that you get the same shape.

Drawing an image around the word

This strategy is all about making a word memorable. It links to meaning to try to make the spelling noticeable.

You can't use this method as your main method of learning spellings, but it might work on those that are just a little more difficult to remember.



Words without vowels

This strategy is useful where the vowel choices are the challenge in the words. Write the words without the vowels and pupils have to choose the correct grapheme to put in the space. For example, for the word field: f - - ld

Pyramid words

This method of learning words forces you to think of each letter separately. You can then reverse the process so that you end up with a diamond.

p
py
pyr
pyra
pyram
pyrami
pyramid

Other methods

- Rainbow writing. Using coloured pencils in different ways can help to make parts of words memorable. You could highlight the tricky parts of the word or write the tricky part in a different colour. You could also write each letter in a different colour, or write the word in red, then overlay in orange, yellow and so on.
- Making up memorable 'silly sentences' containing the word
- Saying the word in a funny way – for example, pronouncing the 'silent' letters in a word
- Clapping and counting to identify the syllables in a word.