

SPELL SMART™

*A Spelling Resource Book
for Classroom Teachers*

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| The Purpose of This Resource Book | 5 |
| Spelling Goals | 5 |
| Spelling Quotations | 6 |
| Spelling Research | 7 |
| Research Time Line | 8 |
| Spelling Recommendations Based on the Research | 10 |
| <i>Instant Spelling Words for Writing</i> —A Research-Based Spelling Program | 12 |
| Bibliography of Spelling Research | 14 |
| Bibliography of Spelling Resources for the Nineties | 18 |
| Questions Teachers Ask | 19 |
| Background and Research Questions | 20 |
| Questions About Setting Up a Spelling Program | 22 |
| Questions About Supporting the Spelling Program | 25 |
| Spelling Helps | 27 |
| Spelling Generalizations | 28 |
| Word-Study Procedure | 29 |
| Word Frequency/Spelling Accuracy | 30 |
| Developmental Stages of Spelling | 31 |
| The 100 Most Commonly Misspelled Words | 32 |
| Impediments to Spelling | 33 |
| Writing Long-Vowel Sounds | 34 |
| Writing Short-Vowel Sounds | 35 |
| Words with Silent Letters | 36 |
| Irregular Spellings | 37 |
| Unreliable Patterns | 38 |
| Contractions | 39 |
| Homophones—Words with the Same Sounds | 40 |
| Confusing Words | 42 |
| Clipped Words | 43 |
| Blend Words | 44 |
| Acronyms | 44 |
| English—American or British? | 45 |
| Multicultural Words | 46 |
| Words from People’s Names | 48 |

TABLE OF CONTENTS *(continued)*

| | |
|---|----|
| Spelling Activities | 49 |
| Ideas to Use with Contractions | 50 |
| Ideas to Use with Homophones | 50 |
| Ideas to Use with Confusing Words, Clipped Words, Blend Words, and Acronyms | 52 |
| Ideas to Use with Multicultural Words | 53 |
| Ideas to Use with Multiple-Meaning Words | 54 |
| Ideas to Use with Antonyms | 55 |
| Ideas for Literature and Thinking | 56 |
| Spelling Games | 57 |
| Evaluation | 63 |
| Evaluating Student Spelling Ability | 64 |
| Teacher Evaluation Form | 65 |
| The Parent Connection | 67 |
| Ways to Inform and Involve Parents | 68 |
| Parent Letters | 69 |
| Reproducible Spelling Activities for Classroom Use | 73 |

THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESOURCE BOOK

Many books and articles have been written about spelling over the years, and much of this written material has been based on research and practices that span the twentieth century. For some unknown reason, however, spelling practices based on the research have not reached the number of classroom teachers that they should have. In many cases, spelling is being taught as it was taught when present-day teachers were students themselves. Or, spelling is being ignored because some teachers feel that spelling will take care of itself. For today's students, these approaches are unfortunate. The purpose of *SpellSmart™* is to convey the research findings and effective spelling practices to many more classroom teachers so that spelling instruction will be approached from a firm knowledge base, and spelling ability will be viewed as an important tool for improving everyday writing.

Note: This resource book occasionally cites *Instant Spelling Words for Writing*, an eight-level spelling series published by Curriculum Associates, as a model for spelling instruction.

SPELLING GOALS

The following spelling goals are designed to meet the needs of student writers through the nineties and the turn of the century. Consider these goals as guidelines to help you establish your school's or district's spelling curriculum for the coming years. The goals for spelling instruction in today's classrooms should be as follows:

- to help students meet the phonetic, visual, semantic, and historical demands of expert spelling
- to recognize that spelling is a developmental process and inventive spelling is a natural step in the process
- to develop in student writers a mastery of high-use words, the words they need most often in writing
- to provide daily writing opportunities across the curriculum to build the writer's spelling word bank
- to introduce students to strategies that lead to spelling success
- to teach spelling and proofreading skills within the writing process
- to develop spelling consciousness in young writers
- to integrate spelling with listening, speaking, reading, writing, and thinking

SPELLING COUNTS ALL DAY, EVERY DAY!

The following recommendations are based on a careful review of the research and should be a part of every comprehensive spelling program.

1. Spelling words of highest frequency in writing should be the words studied by students. (See Word Frequency/Spelling Accuracy on page 30.)
2. Spelling words should be presented in list form, rather than in sentence or paragraph form.
3. Utilization of a pretest is a must. Each student then studies those words that are shown to be difficult for him or her.
4. The self-corrected test procedure, under the direction of the teacher, is the single most important factor in learning to spell. The self-corrected test procedure is appropriate for all ages and abilities. (See question 14 and the response on page 23.)
5. A systematic, easy-to-use word-study procedure is essential for student mastery of difficult words. The word-study procedure should involve visual, auditory, and kinesthetic modalities. (See Word-Study Procedure on page 29.)
6. A concise spelling program of between 12 to 15 minutes a day, five days a week, is sufficient to maintain and improve spelling ability.
7. The test-study-test method is superior to the study-test method when working with most spellers.
8. Attempts to teach spelling by phonic rules are questionable. (See Unreliable Patterns on page 38.)
9. Learning to spell a word involves the student's forming a correct visual image of the whole word. The presentation of words in syllables has no advantage over whole-word presentation.
10. Drawing attention to the "hard spots" of a word has no value in improving spelling ability. Children learn words as whole units, not as individual parts. A hard spot for one student is not necessarily a hard spot for another.
11. Since spelling words should be words that are already known and used in reading by the students, it is not necessary to spend time on word meanings.
12. Spelling lists derived from grade-level subject areas are of little value in increasing spelling proficiency.
13. Frequent opportunities to use spelling words in everyday writing contribute significantly to the maintenance of spelling ability.
14. The major contribution of spelling games is the stimulation of student interest. The activities should supplement systematic instruction.
15. Children should *not* be required to make repeated writings of words without intervening attempts at recall. The practice of having a child copy a word several times in quick succession has no value in spelling.
16. Invented spellings play an important role in spelling development; once a word has been introduced and practiced, however, the student should be expected to use the standard spelling of the word.
17. There are very few rules that provide students with concrete spelling direction. Emphasis must be on teaching the student to learn the ways that words are spelled and not on any one approach or way to spell a speech sound. Rules are best left to student discovery. When students discover a rule, they should also uncover the exceptions.

18. Students who appear to be deficient in spelling ability deserve special recognition. Immediate and careful remediation is imperative. It is important to isolate the cause of the spelling problem. Often, the problem lies with one or more of the following: lack of interest, poor proofreading skills, meager writing ability, lack of direction concerning what words to study, dawdling, lack of a method for attacking a word, or improper self-correction practices.

19. Pupil interest is crucial to spelling improvement. The development of a positive attitude toward spelling is key to actual improvement. Replacing a positive attitude with grades or competition with others detracts from genuine spelling growth. At the same time, mere pride in spelling alone is no substitute for efficient and meaningful writing opportunities. Accuracy in spelling is most likely the result of “overlearning,” which fixes the word image in the student’s mind.

20. Oral spelling lessons, such as spelling bees, should not occur frequently. Spelling ability is defined as the ability to write a word rather than to spell it aloud. (See New Bee activity on page 58.)

Name _____

Date _____

Close-Call Words

Directions: Some pairs of words can easily be confused. Avoid these “close calls” by carefully choosing the correct word for each sentence below. Then create your own sentence using the other word. Study the sample in the box.

all ready/already

The children are all ready to leave.

Have you already eaten lunch?

1. *accept/except*

Everyone is going, _____ Maria.

2. *advice/advise*

When I have a problem, I ask my parents for _____.

3. *anyway/any way*

The cat will use _____ it can to catch a mouse.

4. *desert/dessert*

I love chocolate ice cream for _____.

5. *of/off*

Please take some _____ the salad.

6. *quiet/quite*

Remember to wear a cap because it is _____ sunny.

7. *than/then*

We ate lunch, and _____ we went out for recess.

8. *thorough/through*

Do a _____ check of your math work.

Challenge: Pair up with another student. Take turns reading aloud the sentences you wrote. Did you and your partner use the other word correctly in each sentence?

Terrible Twenty Game

A Spelling Game of Troublesome Homophones for Two Players

How to Set Up the Game: Make sure you have a set of Terrible Twenty Word Cards, a set of Terrible Twenty Sentence Cards, a copy of the Terrible Twenty Game Board, a die to roll, and two game pieces to move along the board. Working with your partner, cut out the word cards and the sentence cards. Spread out the word cards, placing them faceup so that both of you can see each card. Stack the sentence cards into a pile and place them facedown on the game board, as marked.

How to Play the Game: Player 1 rolls the die and moves ahead that many spaces. Player 2 takes the top sentence card and reads it aloud to Player 1. Player 1 listens carefully and then selects the matching word card. If correct, Player 1 moves ahead one space. If incorrect, Player 1 must move back one space. Play continues until a player reaches the Winner's Circle.

Terrible Twenty Word Cards

buy

by

hear

here

its

it's

know

no

their

there

(continues)

Terrible Twenty Word Cards *(continued)*

they're

theirs

there's

to

too

two

who's

whose

your

you're

Terrible Twenty Sentence Cards

| | |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Buy me some bread. | I know the answer! |
| We walked by their house. | The answer is no. |
| Hear the train! | Their dog is huge. |
| We are here to stay. | Let's go there now. |
| The dog hurt its paw. | They're late again. |

(continues)

Terrible Twenty Sentence Cards (*continued*)

| | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| It's sunny today. | There's not enough time. |
| The car is theirs. | We walked to the store. |
| Can we come, too? | Two apples are left. |
| Who's the best speller? | Whose bag is this? |
| You're so smart! | Please bring your hat. |

Terrible Twenty Game Board

