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# Literacyhow

*Empower teaching excellence.*

## January Newsletter



At Literacy How we believe that literacy is the key to opportunity and that **every** child has the right to read. We also believe that teachers, not programs or products, teach students to read, write and spell, and we are committed to supporting teachers as they learn to translate the science of reading in their classrooms.

Our monthly newsletters provide an opportunity to share some of the research and tools we believe will be helpful to teachers in their classrooms throughout

the school year. Last month's newsletter focused on Phonics and this month we will dive more deeply into **Spelling**.

Spelling, also referred to as encoding, is reciprocal to decoding. Spelling turns speech into writing (i.e., speech-to-print). In order to spell, we must first hear the individual sounds in a word, and then write the letter(s) that represent the sounds. When reading, we go from print to speech.

As Rebecca Treiman (2018) states, “Although children learn about spelling to some extent as they encounter words while reading, this is not usually enough to make them good spellers. Children need systematic spelling instruction to learn how the writing system works and not just memorize how words are spelled.”

### **SHOULD I GIVE MY STUDENTS A WEEKLY SPELLING TEST?**

While it's valuable to assess students' mastery of spelling patterns, weekly spelling tests are often misused for this purpose. Many teachers and parents report that students do well on spelling tests, but soon forget the words, as reflected in their written work. These students didn't master the spelling; they simply memorized the words for the test. Spelling is a connection-forming process—that is, sounds are linked to the spelling (orthographic) pattern, both of which are linked to the word's meaning. As these three linguistic connections are made and solidified, students are well on their way to becoming fluent readers and spellers.

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## **Videos**

### **Spelling with -tion**

In this video, grade 3 students spell multi-syllabic words ending with the suffix -tion. The Literacy How Mentor scaffolds students' spelling by reviewing the syllable types.



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## Tips and ideas

### **Teacher Tip: Sequence sounds**

When teaching the spelling patterns, follow the same developmental sequence used for decoding instruction. Teach short vowel sounds, for example, before introducing long vowel sounds, which are more variable. Short vowels are the most transparent (regular) sounds to spell.

### **Teacher Tip: Decode, Encode**

Teach spelling and decoding together. After teaching a phonetic element for decoding, have students practice reading the pattern in text, then dictate some of those same words to practice encoding. Include a sentence or two to give students practice writing the words in context. Dictations can also serve as an informal assessment to determine their mastery of the patterns that you have previously taught.

## **Teacher Tip: Promote spelling accountability**

Hold students accountable for spelling words correctly in their written work. Many teachers do not penalize students for misspellings in their writing. If you have explicitly taught the spelling pattern, students should be expected to spell the words accurately. If not, they will continue to spell the words incorrectly.

## **Teacher Tip: ELLS and invented spelling**

For English Language Learners, use invented spelling as a window to the perception of English sounds. For example, even if a Spanish-speaking child has not received Spanish letter/sound instruction, there may still be a phonemic influence of Spanish on English spelling ([Raynolds & Uhry, 2010](#)).

## **Principal Tip: Success beyond spelling tests**

As mentioned before, discourage teachers from using weekly spelling tests as an instructional practice. Instead, encourage them to follow the teacher tips above.

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## **Something to read**

### **Read more to learn more!**

Berninger, V.W. & Fayol, M. (2008). [Why spelling is important and how to teach it effectively](#). *Encyclopedia of Language and Literacy Development* (pp. 1-13). London, ON: Canadian Language and Literacy Research Network

Joshi, R. M., Treiman, R., Carreker, S., & Moats, L. C. (2008). [How words](#)

[cast their spell](#). *American Educator*, 32(4), 6-16.

Moats, L. [How spelling supports reading](#). (Winter 2005-2006). *American Educator*, 29 (4), 12-43.

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## Resources

For further research and activities, you can purchase our **Phonemic Awareness & Phonics** professional series book. Phonemic awareness and phonics—the two domains of literacy development essential for automatic word reading—are covered in *Phonemic Awareness and Phonics: Knowledge to Practice*. Related, but different, both domains are required for children to successfully learn to decode. Phonemic awareness, the realization that spoken words are made up of individual speech sounds (phonemes), provides the foundation for students to learn phonics. Phonics, the knowledge that these speech sounds are represented by letters (graphemes), provides the content and skill to access 85% of the words they need to read and spell. Empowered with this content and skills, beginning readers can acquire the code-breaking ability they need to unlock the printed word to become skilled readers.

**Purchase Phonemic Awareness & Phonics on Amazon**

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