

4 Easy Steps

How to use the School Start Spelling Case to help your child learn their weekly list of school spelling words.

First of all, and most importantly, you don't need to learn the entire list in one night. Rather, just spend 20 minutes each night until your child is spelling their list words correctly and confidently.

Step One

Dictate the words from your child's spelling list, and let them write the word onto the whiteboard. If your child is spelling words correctly, simply stay on step one. When your child spells a word incorrectly, move on to step two.

Step Two

Use the magnetic letters to help your child learn how to spell the word correctly by choosing one of the five activities that use the magnetic letters from your case.

Step Three

Once your child has completed the activity, ask them to write the word on the whiteboard using the marker. If they make an error, no problem, they can erase the word and try again until they're able to spell the word correctly. Whiteboards make it easy to try again!

Step Four

Continue dictating the words from your child's spelling list (step one) until your child is able to correctly spell all the words from their list.

Activity One

Hearing sounds in words

This activity allows your child to focus on hearing all the sounds in a word, in the correct order.

To begin:

- a** Place all the letters in the word randomly onto the whiteboard. For example, you might put the letters for 'drink' randomly onto the board like this:

n d r i k

- b** Ask your child to say the word and listen carefully for each sound. Rearrange the magnetic letters to make the correct spelling:

d r i n k

Repeat this process until your child is confidently hearing all the sounds in the word.

Tip: Many words have unusual letter patterns. For example, in the word 'want', the letter 'a' makes the /o/ sound. In this situation explain that the letter 'a' is making an /o/ sound and then refer to other words that are the same, like, 'was', 'wallet' and 'what'.

Activity Two

Breaking words into syllables

This activity helps your child to spell longer words by writing them one syllable at a time. For example, you can break 'yesterday' into three syllables: Yes-ter-day.

Syllables

Words are made up of one or more syllables and every syllable contains a vowel letter (a, e, i, o, u). The letter 'y' is a semi-vowel because it can act as both a vowel and a consonant.

Ask your child to:

- a** Make their word with magnetic letters. For example:

t e a c h e r

- b** Hold the back of their hand under their chin (palm facing the ground) and say the word. Every time their chin drops to touch their hand, they have pronounced a syllable. The reason for this is because every syllable contains a vowel letter and when we say the vowel sounds, we open our mouth.
- c** Divide the word into syllables by separating the magnetic letters.
For example:

t e a c h e r

- d** Mix up the magnetic letters and make the word again, focusing on one syllable at a time.

Activity Three

Making connections between words according to a common sound

This activity helps your child to break words into sounds and to learn common letter patterns that make sounds. For example, the letter pattern 'ph' makes the /f/ sound in the words 'phone', 'photo' and 'dolphin'.

Ask your child to:

- a Make the word with magnetic letters. For example:

c h a i r

- b Split the word into sounds. Using the example 'chair', there are five letters, but only two sounds, which are 'ch' and 'air'.

c h a i r

- c Choose one of the letter patterns in the word to make a new word with the same sound. For example, using the 'air' letter pattern, change 'chair' to 'hair', then 'hair' to 'stair', then 'stair' to 'fair' and so on.

s t a i r h a i r f a i r

Tip: Your child might have a list of words with a common letter pattern, like: *sight, light, bright, night*. In this situation, before dictating the list of words to your child (step one), make the focus letter pattern 'igh' with magnetic letters, and place it at the top of the board for your child to refer to.

Alternatively, your child might have a list of words with several letter patterns that make the same sound. For example, the following words all have the long /o/ sound: *home, stone, toast, float, snow and flow*. Use the magnetic letters to make each letter pattern for the long /o/ sound ('o-e', 'ow' and 'oa') and place them at the top of the board for your child to refer to.

Activity Four

Breaking words into meaningful parts

This activity will teach your child that a word's meaning can be changed by adding prefixes and suffixes; which are meaningful parts of a word.

Prefix

A prefix is a letter or letters placed before a word (or root word) that changes the meaning of the word, while creating a completely new word. For example, when the prefix 'un' is added to the word 'happy', it creates the new word, 'unhappy'.

Suffix

A suffix is a letter or letters placed at the end of a word (or root word) that changes the meaning of the word, and creates a new word. For example, when the suffix 'ful' is added to the word 'help', the new word is 'helpful'.

Your School Start Spelling Case contains brown prefix blocks, and blue and black suffix blocks. There is also one blank block for adding other types of prefixes and suffixes of your choosing.

If your child is learning a word where a prefix or suffix can be added, ask them to:

- a** Make the word with magnetic letters. For example, 'help'.
- b** Add a prefix or suffix block to change the word's meaning.

For example, add the suffix 'ful' to make 'helpful'.

Depending on their ability, they can add both a prefix and suffix to one word. For example, 'unhelpful'.

un h e l p ful

Activity Five

Mix and make

This activity helps your child to memorise the correct spelling of commonly used words that are tricky to spell.

To begin:

- a Show your child what the word looks like by writing it on the whiteboard. For example:

their

- b Ask your child to make the word with magnetic letters underneath your writing.

t h e i r

- c Now, ask your child to erase your writing. Using the example above, they'd rub out the word 'their'.
- d Mix up the magnetic letters and ask your child to make the word again. Repeat this step until your child has memorised the correct spelling of the word.



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Note: if you want further information on spelling strategies, the School Start Handbook explains spelling strategies in more detail.