



HOW TO TEACH SPELLING

TO TEENS WITH OTHER VISUAL
FOCUSES AND DYSGRAPHIA

**ACTIVITIES AND
PRINCIPLES**
ELT UNIVERSITY

WORD STUDY PRINCIPLE

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English is different from Russian in spelling system and, therefore, in teaching spelling. There is no use of rules and orthograms, and we need to explain this to the students. What we need to do next is to inform them, that instead of learning a lot of rules they will have to pay attention to spelling of every single word at the moment when they first learn the word.

Word study is a technique of teaching spelling integrated into vocabulary presentation, and it works within MFP paradigm of vocabulary learning (Meaning=> Form=> Pronunciation). Form has to be reinforced as well as pronunciation. What ways?

- Look through the new words and underline clusters which pupils are likely to make mistakes in.
- Write new words in (your copybooks, space on a page in your books, etc.) - the ones you often see in your life/city/friends - in red colour, the ones you have never seen yourself - in blue colour. VAR: Classify into Count/Uncount, ones you like/dislike, etc.
- Tap a word with a pencil against the table so that your partner could guess it. Let them write options, check. Repeat until they get it.

THE PROBLEM IS WITH THE FAMILIAR WORDS?

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DICTATIONS. One of the most common ways to work on spelling. Statistically, regular (2 times per week) dictations result in positive changes in 2 months. Not that you need to dictate every word they need to spell all right. Dictations just fix their attention on spelling as a habit. Boring? See the assortment of fun dictation activities on the 3rd page.

READING

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Reading improves spelling much more powerfully than we expect, both aloud and silently. Just, if it is an obvious necessity, set the right focuses and finish a reading activity with a spelling-reinforcement task.

- Teach them to see dangerous spots. Ask to highlight letters that can cause problems in red, those which are obvious - in green.
- Elicit frequently seen clusters. Work with a set of words with these clusters (-er, -ght, -ia-, -ll-, -rr-, etc.).
- Ask them to write texts (e.g. stories) with words containing a particular letter/cluster as a post-reading task.
- Ask them to choose phrases from a text and compose dictations for peers. Then let them dictate, then check each other's works.

DICTATIONS

- Dictation Player. S-s in pairs. One student is the 'reader' and the other is the 'writer'. T. stands in the middle of the classroom with the text they want to dictate. On the floor in front of T., there are 5 media control symbols: stop, pause, play, fast forward and rewind. S-s run to you, stand on the 'play' symbol and you begin to read the text. When the students have remembered the first sentence, they stand on 'pause', run back and tell their partner who writes the sentence down. Readers are not allowed to write anything down. When the S-s have finished, go through the text together as a class and have the students check for grammar or spelling mistakes.
- Tell S-s that you are going to dictate a text to them three times. The first time you read the text, have S-s work alone and listen for the general gist, writing down only keywords. The second time, have the students turn the keywords into phrases. The third time you dictate the text, the students try to write complete sentences. Next, divide the students into teams of four. The students then work together to come up with the complete text. When the teams have reconstructed the text, have them write their sentences on the board. Award one point for each correct sentence. The team with the most points wins. DON't forget to check the spelling on the board.
- Stick numbered questions about your target text in different places outside the classroom. Divide S-s into pairs. S1 is the 'reader' and the other is the 'writer'. Give each pair a copy of the text. The reader runs to question number one, remembers it, goes back and tells the writer. The writer listens and writes the question down. Then the writer finds the answer and reads it to the reader, the latter writes it down. Then S-s check the ideas and spelling against the text together. This process is repeated until all the questions have been answered correctly. The first pair of students to finish wins.
- Stick a text on a wall outside the classroom. Divide S-s into pairs. S1 is the 'reader' and the other is the 'writer'. The readers run to the text, read a sentence or two, remember it, run back and tell their writer. The writer listens and writes down what the reader says. Halfway through have the students swap roles. While S-s are doing the dictation, write some questions based on the text on the board. When a pair has completed the text, check for any spelling or grammar mistakes. If the text is correct, have the pair sit down and answer the questions about the text. If the text is wrong, S-s carry on with the dictation.

ADAPTED FROM (C) [HTTPS://WWW.TEACH-THIS.COM/IDEAS/DICTATIONS](https://www.teach-this.com/ideas/dictations)

GO TO THE BOOKS

4/

There are series of books on understanding and teaching English spelling. Some give us theory and strategies, others - practical ideas and activities.

- *Understanding and Teaching English Spelling: A Strategic Guide* by Brown, A. provides with the following approaches on teaching spelling, and you may use what works with your students:

Morphological strategy (compose wordlists with particular morphemes);

Etymological strategy (sorting word according to the same origin);

Analogical strategy (words put together are spelled according to the same spelling pattern. THIS works with my students better);

Visual strategy (learning by rote, because the spelling of certain words is impossible to reason, and the option is just to remember).

- *The Spelling Teacher's Lesson-a-day* by Fry, B.E. provides us with a ready-made spelling activities: the textbook is full of printable activities. In case spelling is a sore point in a group or with an individual student, do 15 minutes of this book prioritised per lesson.
- *Spelling Step Series* (2006) is aimed at gradual teaching spelling starting with lower levels.

OTHER TIPS

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- Compare students' results in spellchecks with their previous results, not with other students' results in a group. The tempo in teaching spelling is particularly different, and the effect comes not at the same moment.
- Take turns practising writing by hand, spelling words out loud and practising kinesthetic markers of letters, sounds and clusters.
- Sometimes it's worth explaining mnemonic techniques (namely, when a student keeps making mistakes in one and the same word or situation). Then spend the time and invent a system which leads them to memorising a particular order of letters etc.
- Liven up any work with spelling. Make it interactive and connect it with handmade as often as possible.
- Integrate spelling into any other activity (Grammar, Vocabulary exercises, Reading and, by all means, Writing).
- Have them write on the board.
- Play 'Write and distract', having S1 write and other S-s ask S1 questions and try to distract their friend from writing. Then change the writer and, when the text is done, have S-s check the text together.
- Play 'Write in circle', exchanging papers, not only continuing texts, but also checking previous text parts, correcting spelling mistakes.