



T U T O R S ' T I P S

Helping Adults With Spelling

While rote learning has a key role in making us good spellers, these skills are equally important:



Visual

Have a go at spelling the word. Does it look right?



Auditory

Sound it out.



Motor

Write the word down.



Intellectual

Think of parts of the word you may know, eg. prefixes, suffixes, root words.

Some Useful Strategies for Helping Adults Improve Spelling

Develop editing (spelling, punctuation, grammar) and proof reading skills (the final check before publishing). Students should pick up and correct their own errors, using the tutor as a back stop.



Use clear handwriting.



Use the LOOK, SAY, COVER, WRITE AND CHECK method to learn new words.

Eg. **LOOK** at the word, noting the shape and special features
SAY the word, pronouncing each syllable
COVER the word when ready to test memory
WRITE the word without copying it
CHECK to see it has been written correctly - if not, start again



Understand how words are formed.

Be aware of likely letter patterns, sequences and combinations. eg. use word families, syllables, prefixes or suffixes, or root words to build knowledge.



Learn word meanings and origins.



Introduce spelling words in context - relate to reading or writing.

Don't use published lists of words unless they relate directly to the student's need for writing.



Focus on small amounts of information at any one time.





Learn no more than 5 - 10 new words at a time.



Understand letter and sound correspondence.



Use memory aids (mnemonics) for "hard to remember" words.

These are most effective when worked out by the student.
eg. here, there and where are all place names, stationery includes envelopes, a piece of pie



Exaggerate pronunciation.

eg. Wed / nes / day Feb / ru / ary



Underline or highlight the hard or unusual part of the word.



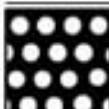
Find small words within big words.

Eg. important im / port / ant



Use rules effectively.

There are over 200 spelling rules. Many are generalisations rather than rules. If complex and unreliable, ask yourself if the rule is worthwhile learning.



Understand regular patterns before looking at the irregular.



Understand how to break words into syllables.

eg. ex / pe / ri / ence, qual / i / fic / a / tion



Be willing to take an educated guess about how a word may be spelt.



Keep a personal spelling dictionary of commonly needed words that are often misspelt.

Use these as a basis for writing sentences, Cloze exercises, games and activities.



Know how to use a dictionary.

Choose a dictionary that suits the ability of the student. Understand alphabetical order, use of headwords, pronunciation, meanings and word origins.



Be aware of some terminology

eg. vowel, consonant, digraph, syllable, prefix, suffix, singular, plural.

References:

Haas, S., *When There's No Magic Formula*, ALBE Launceston.

Adult Literacy & Basic Skills Unit, *The Starter Pack*, London

DEVET Adult Literacy Services Bureau, *Adult Literacy Tutor Training Kit, Book 6*

Recommended Spelling Text Books

Solve Your Spelling Problems

Helping Adults to Spell

The Spelling Pack

Teaching Spelling

Improve Your Spelling

Handling Spelling

The Art of Spelling

Spelling Made Easy

Complete Guide to Spelling - a New Approach

Computer Programs available through

Phonics Alive 3 Advanced Software

Personal Best Speller - Old Way New Way

M. Morris

C. Moorhouse

M. Torbe

Davis

Dykes & Thomas

E. Smelt

PITMAN

ALBSU

ALBSU

PENGUIN

HEINEMANN

HALE & IREMONGER

LONGMAN & CHESHIRE

RAMWARE

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Use the student's writing to identify the spelling problems. Understanding why the mistake is occurring is the key to planning the spelling program.

Spelling the word as it sounds

Mixing up sounds

Leaving out letters

Confusing similar words

Confusing homonyms

Leaving the end off words

Does not know the rule

Understanding word origin (silent letter)

Getting the letters out of order

Incorrect pronunciation leading to wrong spelling of sound

Using American spelling

Confusing punctuation rules

The last three years have been sutch a stran. We sold our house to buy our own busness. Little did I know then what was ahead off us. My husband flew to France to set things up. To meat the owners of the company who we were importing from. He arrive home and we started to launch a new product. It has been so difficult moveing into a new area. We had douts about it succeeding. We treid to tell them the product go's twice as far. It has taken us three years and now we are juss seeing the results of our hard labor.



Some strategies for this writer may be:

Incorrectly Spelt Word	Strategy
stran (strain)	Explore sounds. eg. long and short "a" sounds strain, pain, main, train, gain, rain, drain ran, pan, fan, man, ban, can, tan
sutch (such)	Draw around the shape of the word, using lower case letters. <i>sutch</i> Look, say, cover, write and check method.
meat (meet)	Write the words "meat" and "meet" in sentences to clarify the meaning. Use in Cloze exercises.
dout (doubt)	Discuss that the Latin root of "doubt" is "dubitare" to understand why the silent 'b' is retained in the English word.
treid (tried)	Learn the "i before e" rule. Look, say, cover, write and check method.
juss (just)	Pronounce the word clearly, emphasizing the "t" sound. Develop rhyming word family to consolidate the pattern. eg. just, rust, must, bust
labor (labour)	Explain that the American spelling of some words is often different from ours. In many cases both versions are acceptable, but this is not always so. Discuss the use of "Labor Party".
go's (goes)	Understand the use of the apostrophe. Look, say, cover, write and check method.
moveing (moving)	Learn the rule for adding suffixes to root words that end in "silent e".
arrive (arrived)	Encourage proof reading skills to pick up careless errors.
off (of)	Use "of" and "off" in sentences to clarify the different use.
busness (business)	Break into syllables. eg. bus / i / ness Exaggerate the pronunciation.

Teaching spelling to adults is very different from teaching children. At primary school, children build their spelling knowledge and vocabulary in a structured, orderly way. Adults, on the other hand, usually have to be taught to identify their spelling problems, before they can fill in the gaps in their knowledge. This often involves "unlearning" incorrect spelling or even rules that have been misunderstood. This is why improving an adult's spelling can often be a messy, time-consuming business. Nevertheless, a well-balanced spelling program can certainly improve an adult's ability to spell correctly, and this will greatly increase their confidence and make them more interested in writing.

It is important to keep in mind that a poor speller can often communicate well, express ideas clearly and can even write with style. Often, the main problem with the writing is for the reader to understand readily what is meant. So, use the content to praise the student's efforts at writing, before looking at spelling mistakes.

If there are many spelling errors in a piece of writing, it may be more beneficial to focus on a few rather than correct everything at once. Too many corrections will not only confuse the student, but will make them feel that the job ahead is overwhelming! You can explain why to your student in an open way. Don't try to pretend the mistakes are not there. Just say something like, "I have noticed there is a pattern to some of the mistakes you have made in this writing. We will take a few weeks to work through these problem areas, and today we will look at how words can change when endings are added."

It is very frustrating for poor spellers to write because they must constantly look words up in the dictionary, or think of an alternative word that is easier to spell. Many adults avoid writing altogether because they are afraid of being embarrassed if they make a spelling mistake. This is a problem that must be overcome, because to be a good speller you MUST write. Writing and remembering how words look is ESSENTIAL! If the writer knows how to spell well, they will write with greater fluency and enjoyment.

