

# Effective Spelling Strategies

Marie Rippel

Most good spellers aren't born; they are made.

Good spellers are simply those people who learn the most effective spelling strategies and apply them on a routine basis. If your student masters effective spelling strategies, she masters spelling altogether.

There are four categories of spelling strategies: phonetic, rule-based, visual and morphemic. A successful and effective spelling program uses all four strategies while helping your student become a better speller.

## Phonetic Spelling Strategies

When a student listens for each sound in a word and then attempts to represent those sounds with a letter or letter combination, he's using a phonetic spelling strategy. You teach this spelling strategy by teaching the basic phonograms alongside the basic spelling rules.

## Rule-Based Spelling Strategies

It isn't efficient or effective to spell with phonograms only. The second type of spelling strategy includes recognizing the rules and generalizations of the language. For example, if the student knows that the "ch" sound is spelled "tch" when it follows a short vowel, the student has a better chance of spelling the word "kitchen" correctly.

## Visual Spelling Strategies

Word banks that focus on a single concept, such as the "j" sound spelled as "dge," help the student remember words related to that concept. Visual memory strategies also come into play when dealing with homophones. Extensive reading and word games are two of the best ways to help a student develop visual spelling strategies.

## Morphemic Spelling Strategies

Morphemic strategies are based on the knowledge of how the meaning of a word influences its spelling. A spelling program that teaches morphemic spelling strategies may teach Greek and Latin roots, how to add prefixes and suffixes to base words, and how to form compound words and abbreviations.

As spellers grow and mature, they become more competent at using these effective spelling strategies. Eventually, the strategies become automatic, and the student employs them on a subconscious level.

## Other Spelling Strategies

Many spelling programs rely only on visual strategies, such as looking at a word list or repetitive writing. Others rely only on phonetic strategies, which work well at the beginning level but don't hold out through the learning cycle.

It is best to provide a balanced approach to spelling strategies. In addition to the four main spelling strategies, teach a number of other useful strategies, including:

- How to look up words in an electronic spell-checker or dictionary to verify spelling.
- How to be on the lookout for unfamiliar words and how to retain that spelling.
- How to identify which words are "troublemakers" and recognize the tricky parts.
- Applying a limited number of mnemonic devices.
- How to build a personal resource list of words the student tends to misspell.

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### **Biographical Information**

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*Marie Rippel is the author of the All About Spelling series. For more information on how to teach your student the most effective spelling strategies, check out [All About Spelling](#).*