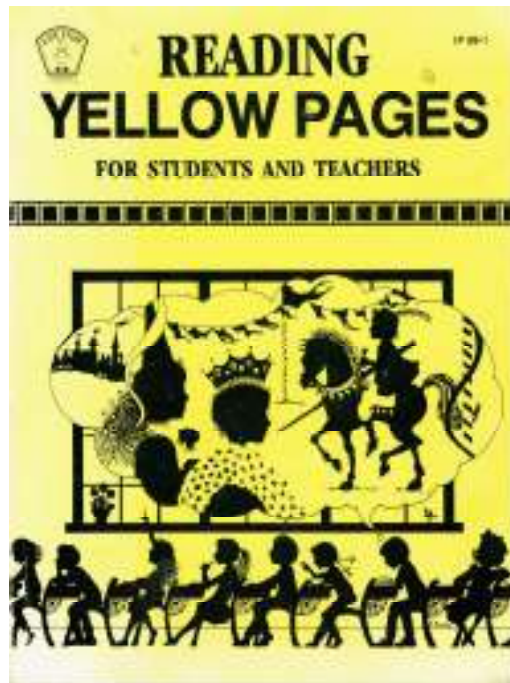


## The Story Behind Teaching Children to Spell Words

Can spelling be learned or is it a type of intrinsic intelligence? My university professors left me with the impression it was the latter. I don't think that even a single class was spent on this important topic. However, at the school where I taught, I was blessed with textbook spellers for grade six. I vaguely remembered using one myself when I was growing up. At that level, my students spent forty-five minutes weekly on word work in a textbook speller. From these lessons, I learned many spelling rules and ways of reinforcing them which I had not learned at university. Studying for the traditional Friday spelling test was included as an important part of solidifying the children's written vocabulary. In grade one, I used the Reading Yellow Pages word lists to figure out spelling rules and I also used the word lists for dictation. These word lists showed that many spelling rules focus on the placement of letter pairs within words.

Example: \*ai says long vowel a sound and comes in the middle of words

\*ay says long vowel a sound and comes at the end of words

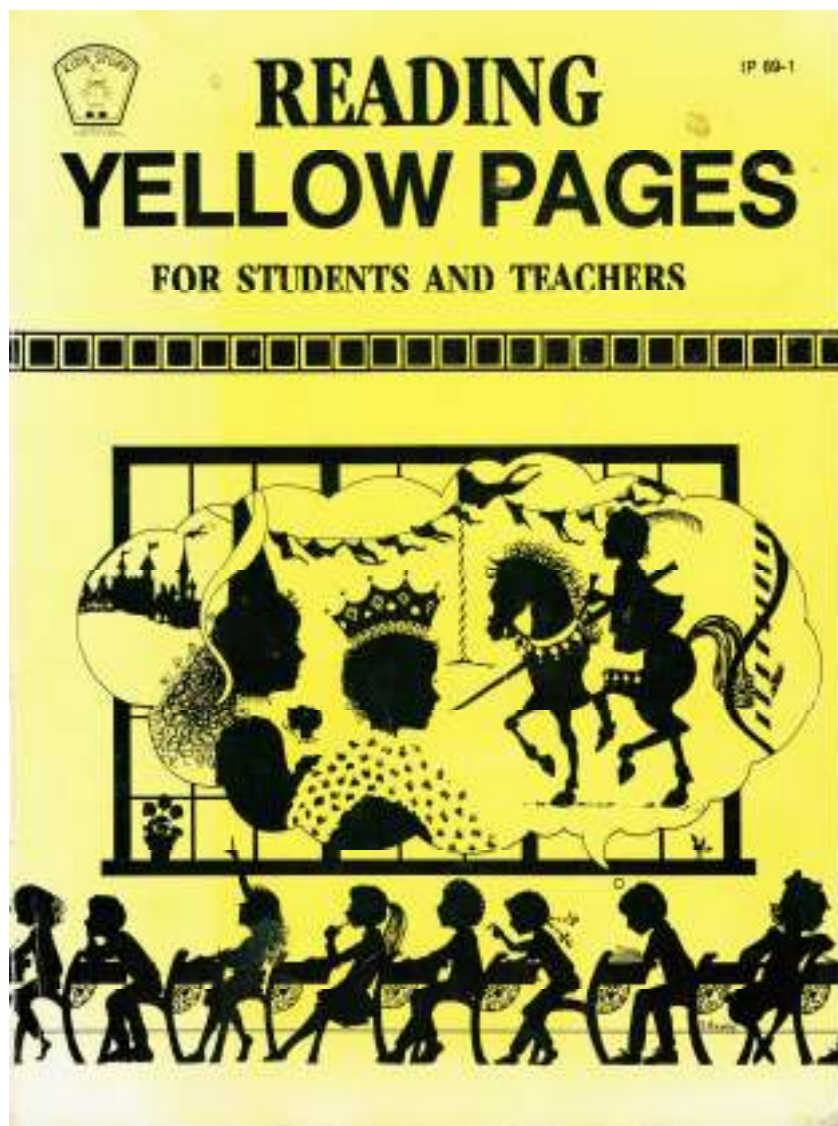


### Word Keys



- sh, ch, th, ph (f), gh (silent or f)
- wh, wr, kn, gn
- ai, ay
- oi, oy
- au, aw
- ou, ow (2 sounds), oe, oa
- ar, \_\_\_\_er (2 beat word), ir, ur, or
- ue, oo, ew, ui
- ce, ci, cy (copycat s)
- ge, gi, gy (copycat j)
- ee, ee, ea
- Y at the end of two beat words says long e sound
- ie,
- Y at the end of one beat words says long i sound
- le at the end of two beat words \_\_\_\_le
- ve comes at the end of words
- In a one beat short vowel word:
  - \_\_\_\_ck, \_\_\_\_ll, \_\_\_\_ff, \_\_\_\_ss, \_\_\_\_zz





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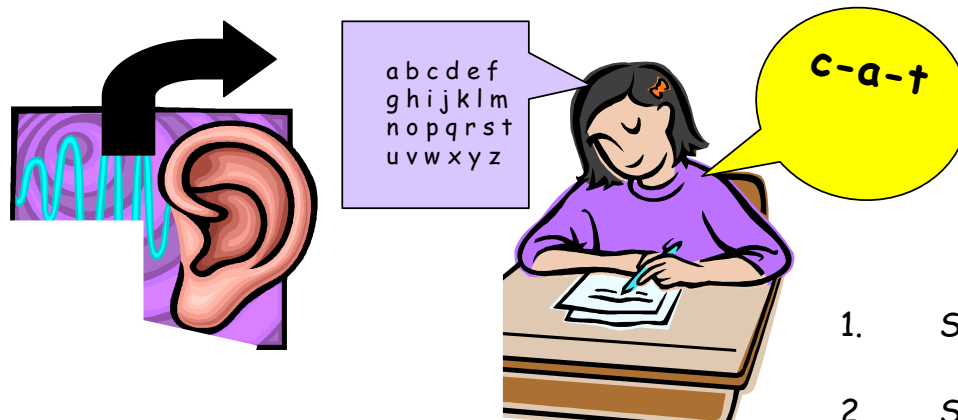
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**In grade one spelling begins with learning to spell short vowel words.**



## **Daily Spelling Practice**

### **Spelling is a powerful way to reinforce phonics.**

- **Reading** involves viewing symbols, making their sounds and blending them together.
- **Spelling** is harder because the child only hears a sound and must mentally find its matching symbol(s) from a pool of 26 letters (the alphabet) and 44 phonemes (two letter combinations such as *ch*).
- **Together** they reinforce phonetic concepts in two different ways creating strong readers and solid spellers.

#### **When dictating words:**

1. Say word clearly. e.g. bat
2. Sound word out. e.g. b-a-t  
Show the mouth position of the vowel when you sound the word out.
3. Have child say the word aloud.
4. Have child sound word out and count number of sounds on his fingers.
5. Have child make the sound of the first letter and print it. Next, child should make the sound of the second letter or vowel and print it. Then have child make the final sound and print it.
6. Continue process until all sounds have been printed and begin next word.

**It is more effective to teach and practice spelling than to test it.**

**Next, children are taught to add initial consonant blends at the beginning of short vowel words.**

## **Initial Consonant Blends**

### **Letter Slides**

bl br

cl cr

fl fr

gl gr

pl pr

scr shr sk sl sm sn

sp spl spr squ st str sw

tr tw



### **Teaching Tips:**

Make a poster of these consonant blends for students and when you dictate a word which uses a blend, tell them to find it on the poster.

**Then, children learn how to spell long vowel words with silent e and two vowels together.**

•blast\_\_\_\_\_

•teen \_\_\_\_\_

•sails \_\_\_\_\_

•strap\_\_\_\_\_

•bake \_\_\_\_\_

•goat \_\_\_\_\_

•mole \_\_\_\_\_

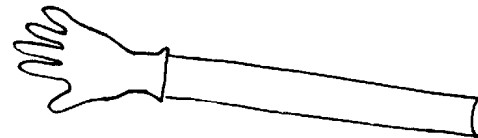
•read \_\_\_\_\_

•stack \_\_\_\_\_

## Teaching Tips:

Start dictation by informing students which type of word they will be spelling. This helps them select the correct strategy to use.

- regular vowel word (short vowel)
- bumper word (long vowel ending in silent e)
- mouse word (long vowel with 2 vowels together)



## Examples:

1. We will now spell a bumper word. The word is "hope".
2. We will now spell a mouse word. The word is "faith".
3. We will now spell a regular vowel word. The word is "God".



## Children also learn to spell words with digraphs and diphthongs.

One day I thought of how to adapt a reading strategy to my spelling lessons. At the beginning of the reading lessons, I regularly sounded out new words incorrectly with my mouse puppet, Timothy. The children had great fun correcting him. This strategy was the inspiration behind creating a spelling exercise which required students to find and fix the teacher's spelling mistakes. Ten words contained practice applying ten different rules! As a regular part of our weekly routines, it proved to be a wonderfully effective way of helping children internalize and apply spelling rules. A second outcome which occurred was that it became easier for children in the writing process to find their own spelling errors and edit them. They were used to looking for mistakes and fixing them!



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### Fixing Misspelled Words

- Children quite enjoy finding a teacher's mistakes. This activity capitalizes on that fact. Students are given a list of words misspelled by the teacher.
- The teacher dictates one word at a time and students search it for errors.
- Locating and fixing the errors, requires students to apply their phonetic spelling rules instead of reciting them. Application is an effective way to build mastery of the rules.
- A second advantage of this activity, is that students can review and apply ten rules with only ten words!

1. rac = rack
2. whi = why
3. rayn = rain
4. drau = draw
5. boi = boy
6. coyl = coil
7. pawse = pause
8. broo = brew
9. plai = play
10. liv = live



**Learning to spell sight words by memory is a daily process.**



### **Two more Tips:**

1. Select ten sight words, misspell them and have students correct them by locating the correct spelling in the sight word dictionary.

**Example:**

thu =	the
mi =	my
thay =	they
becuz =	because

2. Dictate a spelling list of ten words from the sight word dictionary (see next page). Ask students to locate the words on the dictionary and copy them down.

# Sight Word Dictionary

<b>A</b>	about are	after around	again at	all ate	always as	am ask	an away	and	any
<b>B</b>	back better by	be big	beautiful black	beauty blue	been both	because bring	before but	best brown	buy
<b>C</b>	call	came	can	carry	clean	come	cold	could	cut
<b>D</b>	did	didn't	do	does	done	don't	down	draw	drink
<b>E</b>	eat	eight	enough	every	everybody	everything	everyone		
<b>F</b>	fall full	fast funny	find	first	five	fly	for	found	four
<b>G</b>	gave	get	give	go	goes	going	good	got	grow
<b>H</b>	had him	has his	have hold	he hot	help how	her hurt	here	herself	
<b>I</b>	if	in	into	is	it	its	itself		
<b>J</b>	jump	just	kind	knew	know	live	long	look	
<b>K</b>	keep	kept	light	like	little	much	must	my	
<b>L</b>	laugh	let	many	may	me				
<b>M</b>	made	make	no	not	now				
<b>N</b>	never	new							
<b>O</b>	of our	off out	old own	on	once	one	only	open	or
<b>P</b>	pick	play	please	pretty	pull	put			
<b>Q</b>	queen	quiet	quiet	quieter	quite	round	run		
<b>R</b>	ran	read	red	ride	right				
<b>S</b>	said sit	saw six	say sleep	see small	seven so	shall some	she soon	show stop	sing
<b>T</b>	take then to	tell their today	ten there too	than these together	thank they try	thank-you think two	that this	the those	them three
<b>U</b>	under	up	upon	us	use				
<b>V</b>	very								
<b>W</b>	walk were wish	want what with	warm when without	was where work	wash which would	we white write	well who	we'll why	went will
<b>Y</b>	yellow	yes	you	your	you're				
<b>Z</b>	zip	zipper	zoo						



# Children learn to spell rhyming words with the Word Families poster.

## Teaching Tip:

Make a poster of these rhyming word families for students and when you dictate a word which uses a word family tell them to find it on the poster before spelling it.

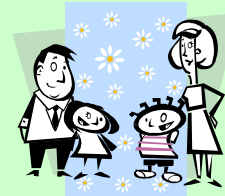
Example:

1. Spell the word "kind". It is part of the word family "ind" .

## Word Families

- **Word families** are rhyming words which share an ending.
- **Example:** bay, day, hay, lay, may, pay, ray, say, stay, stray, way
- These words are like family members sharing the same last name.
  - **Teaching Tip**
- Make a poster like the one shown on the right and display it where children can refer to it easily.
- This poster empowers children to decode many new words and spell them correctly.

## Word Families



able	ace	age	all
ang	ank	atch	ar
ay	edge	ice	ight
ild	ind	ing	ink
ir	old	onk	ood
ook	ore	ung	unk

## Another Story Behind Teaching Children to Spell Words

When I was ten or eleven years old our family had a very important visitor. My mom's beloved oldest sister came to see us—all the way from Japan! It was the first time I can remember meeting her. She was the principal of a school for missionary kids in Japan and she was every bit as wonderful as my Mom described. Her stories were incredible and her love for children bubbled over as she took an interest in us all. I will never forget the gift she brought me! It was a pencil box which came all the way from Japan. (It looked similar to the one shown here.)

Many years passed and my aunt returned to Canada. During the second or third year I was teaching grade one, she brought me a book of hers. It was called Blended Sight and Sound by Anna Ingham. The book was very old. It was one of those rare moments when I felt the generation gap. I would have liked a workshop to walk me through the teaching framework or to have had my aunt share her understanding of the material, but since she was still working fulltime I had neither. One evening I sat down and briefly leafed through the book which I returned to her afterwards. Happily, I discovered my grasp of spelling rules corroborated. I also remember seeing the "gh" letters called the ghost letters and the idea of calling words which break phonics rules jail words. I wrote down the title thinking at some point I might borrow the book back, but time passed and I did not need it. Later, I referenced it at the back of Smart Start in Language Arts as corroboration for the spelling rules. It was also referenced for calling "gh" the ghost letters and for referencing words which break phonics rules as jail words.

My aunt is in heaven now, but I still think back on the thoughtfulness and love she showed me throughout my life.



## A Personal Reflection (plus a Teaching Tip for Posters)

Two or three years after leaving my teaching position, the principal called and requested a reading workshop for the grade one teachers because their staff numbers had increased. Subsequently, they purchased copies of Smart Start in Language Arts for their teachers and the program was implemented.

After that workshop, one of the grade one teachers, Margaret Bouma, showed me how to present letter keys using lines instead of words. Example: \_\_\_\_ew (this means ew says oo at the end of words). This idea was later included in the teaching tips for making posters with spelling rules. I updated the program in 2009, and the vice principal of the school called to order a copy of the updated program. A year or so later, the school continued to grow and required another copy of the program which I was able to send at no charge.

Fifteen or more years passed, and in 2017 I suffered an undiagnosed illness which put me into a coma. I was airlifted by STARS ambulance to a hospital. My husband and daughters were told that I would not live out the night. Incredibly, the Lord Jesus delivered me and I recovered. After this event, I began to reflect on all His goodness to me. It is a wonderful thing to recount the blessings of the Lord in my life. It is also a blessing to share my books in hopes that many children and families will find learning to read and write a joyful experience!

*JoAnne Moore*



Smart Start in Language Arts book cover from 1998 pictures our oldest daughter, Kara Moore, when she was just six years old. When I updated the program in 2009, my sister thought we should update the cover. She took a picture of her son who was at the perfect age. Kara took the photo of my nephew and designed a new book cover with her graphic arts software.

This year we have decided to use this original photo on our updated programs as a show of respect to Kara for all she has contributed to the book company. Her ongoing contributions include sharing writing samples, designing covers, taking photos, editing my writing and book binding. Thanks Kara! Love, Mom