

Spelling Games and Investigations



Describe the Word

Use this activity to help children spell high-frequency words, cross-curricular words and common errors.

Resources:

Set of word cards and blank strips of card and small whiteboards (for writing sentences)

Activity:

Select a word; 'Take it apart and put it back together'

- Choose a word card and write it on your whiteboard
- Say the word out loud to your friend and clap the syllables – underline these on your whiteboard
- Count the phonemes and hold up the correct number of fingers
- Draw in the sound buttons

- Spot any other features – note and highlight these parts of the word, e.g. prefixes, suffixes, root words
- Put all the findings together in a sentence
- This word has syllables, Phonemes and
- Write your sentence on a strip of card

- Try describing a word using syllables, phonemes, prefixes, suffixes, root words and meaning
- Share your word with the whole group or the whole class.
- Can they guess your word?

Word Sort

Use this activity to sort words into their different spelling patterns.

Resources:

Word cards with words you are investigating.

Activity:

- Select a word and read it out
- Underline the part of the word being investigated
- Explain to your friend what it is you are investigating
- Find other words that follow the same pattern or rule and place them together in a column.
- When you have used all the words for that pattern start a new column for a different pattern.
- If you have any words left that do not fit into your columns put them in a 'problem pile'. Discuss how they differ and how you will be able to remember them.
- Make up a label for each column which explains what the words have in common.
- Can you think of any new words for each column?

Guess My Word

Use this activity to investigate and explain the rules for how words are spelt.

Resources:

Lists of words that have the same rule and one or two exceptions.

Clues (descriptions) for each word displayed around the room e.g. 'The root word has three phonemes. The ing is added after the doubling the final g'. (begging)

Activity:

- Discuss the rules that have been taught in the whole-class session.
- Look at your list of words.
- Choose a word.
- Look at the clues around the room.
- Match each clue with each word on your list.

Add Race

Use this activity to investigate adding endings (suffixes).

Resources:

- A card divided into numbered columns.
- Word cards.
- Endings cards (suffixes).
- Rules for adding the suffix.

Activity:

- Discuss the rules that were investigated in the whole class session
- Explain to your group that this is a game to see which column fills up first
- Shuffle the words and place them face down on the desk
- First person chooses a card, shows it to the group, reads it and puts it (orally) into a sentence to show its meaning.
- Everyone write the word on a white board.
- Put the word into a column on the card and tell the group what type of words will go into the column.
- The second person picks up a word and places it in a column.
- When all the words have been placed the column with the most words is the winner.
- Discuss and decide on a label for each column to explain the rules/pattern of the words.

Phoneme Frame

Use this activity to investigate the number of phonemes in a word.

Resources:

A five or six phoneme frame.

A set of word cards in a bag; (e.g. verbs ending in ed).

A bingo card for each child with a selection of the words shown.

This can be a random selection, or each card could contain words obeying the same rule or pattern.

Activity:

- Discuss the rules that were investigated in the shared session.
- Place all the words face down on the table.
- First person picks up a word and reads it to the group.
- Each child writes the word on the phoneme frame with one phoneme in each box.
- The word is given to the child who has the word on their card who places it over the top of the matching word.
- The game continues until one child's card is complete.

Have You Spotted It?

Use this activity to identify focus words in a text and to understand their function.

Resources:

- A card for each child with the focus word or word-part; e.g. 'ed', 'es', 'ies', 'ves', 'ible', 'able' endings;
- A text containing the focus word or word-parts.

Activity:

- Discuss the rules/words that were investigated in the shared session.
- Read through the text and highlight the focus words.
- Count how many you have highlighted and compare with the other children in the group.
- Look at each word and think about the job it is doing in the sentence.
- Each group member to write a sentence beginning 'The words with are
- Read through the text again and think of alternative words with the same focus and check that the sentence still makes sense.

Find your Team

Use this activity for recognising 'family groups' when looking at spelling patterns, sorting words into sets or finding related words.

Resources:

- 'Captain' cards – prompts for a particular spelling pattern – one to hold and one to stick on the captain's back. e.g. a three-captain game:
- two different consonants before 'le' e.g. candle
- a double consonant before 'le' e.g. bottle
- one consonant before 'le' e.g. beetle
- Sets of words that fit the captains' prompts.

Activity:

- Appoint captains to search for the rest of their team.
- Give each captain a prompt card and stick a copy to their back.
- Give a word card to each child and ask them to read it and look at it carefully.
- Say 'Go'.
- The captains look for their team members whilst the players look for their captains.
- Award two points for each correct word in each team and announce the winning team.

Make the Team

Use this activity for recognising 'family groups' when looking at spelling patterns, sorting words into sets or finding related words. (Rummy)

Resources:

- Sets of cards for each 'family group' spelling pattern.e.g. le candle bottle people

Activity:

- Discuss the rules/words that were investigated in the shared session.
- Spread the cards out face upwards and sort them into their 'families';
- Discuss the reasons for the way you have sorted the words; How would you describe them without actually saying the word?
- Shuffle the word cards and give five to each player; any left over cards are placed in a pile, face-down
- Make a fan of your cards so that no one else can see them and begin to sort them into teams. If you have three cards of the same team place them face-up on the table and explain why you have grouped them together
- The youngest player picks up a card from the pack on the table. If they now have three cards of the same team they place them face-up on the table.
- The next player picks up a card from the pile on the table and if they have made a team of three, they place it face-up on the table
- The game ends when one player has no cards left.

Clap and Count

Use this activity for spelling compound words, words with prefixes and other multisyllabic words.

Resources:

- Word cards; each card showing one word.

Activity:

- Discuss the rules/words that were investigated in the shared session.
- Shuffle the word cards and place them in one pile face-down on the table.
- Each child takes a turn to take the top card from the pile; they read it aloud and then place it face down in front of them.
- The rest of the group clap the syllables, draw lines for each syllable and write the letters on each line (e.g. Wed nes day / e qui lat er al)
- When all the cards have been turned over, each child checks their spellings, getting one mark for the correct number of syllables and one mark for each syllable spelt correctly.
- Add up the marks to see who has won!

Joining Words

Use this activity to explore compound words and words containing prefixes.

Resources:

A 5 x 5 grid, marked A to E along the bottom and 1 to 5 up the side with prefixes written in some grids and root words in other grids or both parts of a compound word written in different grids; e.g.

Activity:

- Discuss the rules/words that were investigated in the shared session.
- One child should give a grid reference for part of a compound word or prefix and read out the word.
- Another child should give a grid reference for the other part of the word.
- Both children should write down the new compound or prefix word.
- This game can be played with the words written on cards and matched together on the table instead of on a grid.

Spot the Difference

Use this activity to investigate spelling of elided words; (contractions).

Resources:

- Sets of about 20 pairs of word cards; one with the complete words and one with the elided word; e.g. can not and can't;

Activity:

- Discuss the rules/words that were investigated in the shared session.
- Place all the cards face-down on the table; the first player turns over two cards. If they are a pair, the complete words and the elided word, the player keeps the pair and has another go.
- If they are not a pair they are turned face down and left on the table.
- Play continues until all the words have been paired.
- The winner is the player with the most cards.
- The players should then group the cards by the letter that is missing in the elided words.
- Which letter is the one most often replaced by the apostrophe?

Words in words

Use this activity to investigate prefixes and suffixes.

Resources:

- Word cards with root words and words with prefixes and suffixes added.
e.g. happy unhappy happiness lone alone lonely sense nonsense sensibly
definite indefinite indefinitely

Activity:

- Discuss the rules/words that were investigated in the shared session.
- Sort the cards into families of the root word and ones with prefixes and suffixes.
- Look at the words and discuss how the meaning of each one has been changed when a prefix or suffix has been added.
- Write down each word and its meaning.
- Does the spelling of any roots words have to change when adding a prefix or suffix is added?
- Write down any other words you know with the same prefix or suffix.

Memory Game

Aim of activity: To develop familiarity with different strategies for memorising high frequency/cross curricular words.

Resources:

- Make a folded A4 card for each memory strategy. See strategy cards. Write the name of the strategy on the outside and the explanation on the inside.
- The mnemonic strategy should be on a different colour card (only use for emergencies!).
- Make a large set of word cards.

Activity:

- Introduce the activity by explaining that in addition to knowing how a word is constructed we may need additional aids to memory.
- Show children the memory card and tell them that it contains four good ideas for helping them to remember spellings and one emergency idea (in case nothing else works!).
- Select one of the word cards, stick it on the board and read it together.
- Ask two children to come and pick out one memory card each. Read the cards through (explaining in more detail if the children are not familiar with the activity).
- Divide the class in two and allocate a memory card to each half. They have a few minutes to try using this strategy to learn the target word.
- Cover the original word and ask all the children to try spelling it. They hold up their whiteboards when you say 'Show me'. Check the number of accurate spellings on each side.
- Was one strategy more useful than another for this word?
- Repeat this process with two further cards and a different word.
- Compare the outcome and comment on how useful each strategy was.
- Finally, display the memory card with the mnemonic. Explain that, although they might know some mnemonics that they find useful, it would get very confusing to remember lots for all sorts of different words. Reserve its use as a 'last resort'.

Independent work: Choose the best memory trick to remember a word

Preparation:

- Each pair will need a list of the five strategies and differentiated word lists.
- Children work in pairs.
- They read the words from the list and decide which of the memory cards would best help them to remember that word.
- Children write the word beside the memory card.
- They then take time to use the different memory cards to learn the words on the list, recording where necessary, e.g. recording a word sum, writing down analogous words, practising handwriting, etc.
- Provide a 5-minute warning when children will move from learning to testing. They take it in turns to read out a word, cover it and then both have a go at spelling it correctly.

Plenary:

- Let different pairs of children with the same word lists compare how they sorted the words on their list. How successful were they in spelling the words accurately? Did they find any strategies particularly useful?
- As a class, discuss any discrepancies between how children chose to sort their words. Establish that there is not necessarily a 'best way' to learn each word. Children must find a way that is successful for them.
- Ask each child to choose one word from the list and write it, with a note about their 'memory idea', in their spelling journal. Challenge them to learn this word. When they do independent writing they can expect to see an improvement in the spelling of this word.

Find the 'tricky bit'

Aim of activity: For children to develop the skill of spelling as they write by identifying the tricky bit in a word that they have tried.

Whole-class work: Exploring different tricky bits

Preparation: A list of high frequency/cross-curricular words.

- Introduce the activity, explaining to the children that the goal is to improve their spelling of certain words by being able to identify and check the tricky bit.
- Dictate the first word for the children to write on their whiteboards and ask them to underline any bit in the word they find difficult.
- Ask them to hold up their boards.
- Ask individual children to explain what they identified as the tricky bit and why.
- Copy some of their versions of the word, including the correct spelling, onto the class whiteboard and discuss the tricky bits in the word.
- Talk about the mis-spelt words and why the error was made, e.g. it may be phonetically plausible, the spelling and pronunciation are not the same, etc.
- Focus on the correct spelling by covering or rubbing out the others and underline the tricky bit, explaining why it can catch you out as you are writing.
- Agree a way of recalling the word for the future. (see Strategies)
- Cover the word. Ask the children to say the word and to try spelling the word again on their whiteboards. Remind them to think carefully about the tricky bit.
- Ask them to hold up their boards again and compare the word to the original. Ask them to reflect on their progress – have they spelt it correctly this time? Do they understand why they made an error? Do they have a strategy for remembering the spelling?
- Repeat for other words on the word list.

Independent work: Tricky bit game

Preparation:

- Prepare between 6 and 10 cards for each group, differentiated according to the experience of the group.
- In groups of three or four, children have a pack of word cards face down.
- The first child takes the top card, reads the word aloud and places the card face down on the table.
- All the children (including the first child) write the word on their whiteboard and underline the bit they find tricky.
- The reader of the word turns the card over and all compare their versions. They identify those children who have the correct spelling and all decide how they will remember to spell the word in the future.
- The game continues with another child reading the next word in the pile.

Plenary

- Discuss how this activity has helped the children develop their spelling skills and how they will be able to check that their spelling is improving.
- Display the word list and ask each child to select one of the words used in the session – ideally one that often ‘trips them up’ when they are writing.
- Write it in their spelling journal, underline the tricky bit and think of their strategy for remembering it.
- When they do independent writing they can expect to see an improvement in the spelling of this word.