


BUILDING STRONG READERS AND SPELLERS



An Orthographic Guide for Teachers



Why Orthographic Development Matters:

What is Orthographic Development

Orthographic development refers to how students learn to recognise and spell words in their language. This learning process is detrimental in the building of a students' fluency in reading and writing.

Teaching students to link the sounds they hear to letters and recognise word patterns will ultimately strengthen their written and reading skills.

How can YOU do this?

Through focused instruction in orthography, you too can support learners of all stages (early readers, ELL, students requiring literacy intervention) in their language journey! In this brochure we will give you some tips and tricks to start your students' language adventure!

Strategies to Support Orthographic Development:

1) Teach Phoneme and Grapheme connections

- Explicitly help students understand that sounds (phonemes) are represented by letter groups (graphemes).

2) Multi-Sensory Activities

- Activities that combine visual, auditory and tactile inputs reinforce a learners' orthographic skills.

3) Provide Repeated Practice

- Try to utilise high-frequency and patterned words for regular practice to build up automatic word recognition.

4) Regularly Assess your Students' Development

- Conduct spelling inventories to determine your students' orthographic development stages and use to guide targeted instruction.





PRACTICE ACTIVITIES TO USE IN CLASS!

HERE ARE FOUR ACTIVITIES THAT ENCOURAGE ORTHOGRAPHICAL LEARNING!

1) Word Sorts:

With Word Sorts have your students' group words by vowel patterns (long/short) or affixes (ex. prefixes/suffixes)
Example: Sort words that have 'oo' - soon, moon, racoon, loon, loom...

2) Spelling Games:

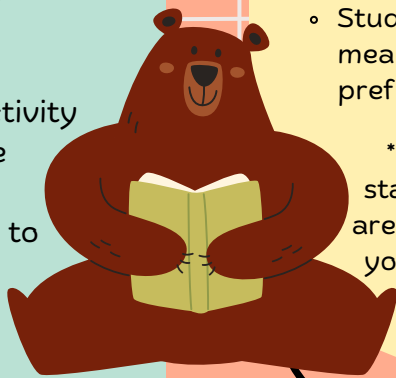
Utilise games such as Bingo, Memory Match or make your own games to practice high-frequency words.

3) Spelling Journals/ Journaling:

Have students track new words, focusing on the spelling patterns and word meanings.
Example: In daily/weekly journal sessions introduce a new word or phrase that students must use in their journalling.

4) Tactile spelling:

This is a fun hands-on learning activity where students can use things like sand, dirt, shaving cream or other textured things (velvet, paper etc.) to trace out new words.



Stages of Orthographic Development

Once you start focusing on orthographical knowledge in class your students will begin to move through several learning stages!

- **Emergent**
 - These are our pre-readers and our scribble letter writers: those with little understanding of sound-symbol correspondence
- **Letter Name-Alphabetic**
 - This is when students are now able to match letters with sounds. They will often be spelling phonetically (ex. "grat" for "great")
- **Within-Word Pattern**
 - Students start recognising common spelling patterns (ex. blends and long vowels)
- **Syllables and Affixes**
 - Students are spelling multi-syllabic words, prefixes and suffixes
- **Derivational Relations**
 - Students understand how word meanings relate through roots, prefixes and suffixes!

**** Recognising the****
stage(s) your student's are in will help you tailor your instructions to fit their needs.

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES:

1. Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction by Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, and Johnston

This work describes a developmental approach to teaching vocabulary, spelling, and phonics. It gives teachers teaching options and diagnostic tools based on students' word knowledge levels.

Connection: Aligns with the module's emphasis on developmental progression in orthographic knowledge and word study to strengthen decoding and spelling skills.

2. Reading Rockets: "Word Study: Learning Word Patterns"

This article explains how studying word patterns supports reading and spelling development, providing practical classroom strategies. It includes tips for grouping students of all ages and targeting instruction to their needs.

Connection: Supports the idea that recognizing common letter patterns boosts orthographic mapping, a key topic from the module.

3. Anna Geiger: "Orthographic Mapping | The Measured Mom Podcast"

Anna Geiger discusses practical strategies for teaching students how to anchor words permanently in memory using phoneme-grapheme correspondences and repeated exposure.

Connection: Directly reinforces module concepts around orthographic mapping and its essential role in building reading fluency and spelling accuracy.

Resources:

- Bear, Donald R., Marcia Invernizzi, Shane Templeton, and Francine Johnston. Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction. 7th ed. Boston: Pearson, 2020.
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- Neuhaus Education Center. "Spelling Inventory Tools and Methods." Neuhaus Education Center. Accessed April 26, 2025. <https://www.neuhaus.org/resources/spelling-inventories>.
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