

Why Daily Spelling Practice

In the past five years, I've had the privilege of meeting thousands of teachers who use Daily Grammar Practice in their classrooms. Every day teachers tell me that their students finally understand grammar and are able to apply grammar concepts in their own writing. *Now*, these teachers say wistfully, *if we could only figure out how to teach kids to spell!*

Always one to embrace a challenge, I set out to do just that. I studied other approaches and read the existing research. I experimented with, tested, and revised different methods. Today I humbly place before you Daily Spelling Practice. It teaches kids to spell by focusing on sound keys, addressing prefixes and suffixes, working with syllables, and providing practice with spelling confusables and rule-breaking memory words. Students work with these skills on a daily basis as they see how the concepts build one upon another.

With the availability of spell checking computer software, many people no longer see the need to learn spelling. However, we don't do all our writing on the computer (thank goodness). And even when we do write on the computer, we can't depend on our spell checkers because of the huge number of "spelling confusables" in our language. In case you haven't seen it before, here's the poem "Ode to the Spell Checker" as a case in point:

Eye halve a spelling chequer
It came with my pea sea
It plainly marques four my revue
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word
And weight four it two say
Weather eye am wrong oar write
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid
It nose bee fore two long
And eye can put the error rite
Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it
I am shore your pleased two no
Its letter perfect awl the weigh
My chequer tolled me sew.

Arthur On Gnome

Even if spell checkers were infallible, there are many times when they're not available such as on standardized tests and in handwritten assignments. Kids who aren't confident spellers are more hesitant to put words on paper. We all know that we shouldn't worry about spelling when we're composing a rough draft, but the reality is that "difficult" words slow us down and interrupt our flow of ideas.

So why are Americans such poor spellers? Partly, it's due to the fact that there are so many different ways to write the same sounds. You've probably seen the T-shirt that says "hookt on foniks werkt fer

mee." I believe in phonics, but if all words could be spelled phonetically, our jobs would be much easier! We teach kids "creative" and phonetic spelling at an early age--primarily so that they're not slowed down in their flow of ideas--but beyond that, teachers disagree on what to do next.

Most teachers (and published spelling programs) provide students with lists of words to memorize. We all know that the majority of those words don't ever make it to long-term memory. Students "learn" them for the spelling test and then promptly forget them. I tried one approach that presented words grouped by theme, which didn't help at all. Another method grouped words by sound families, which was helpful but didn't go far enough. Some people want spelling lessons that students can do at the computer. Daily Spelling Practice is not a computer approach for two reasons. First, most of us don't all have computer access for all students every day, and second, the physical act of writing words helps students to remember them.

Many people argue that the only way to learn to spell is to be a prolific reader. I'm sure you know plenty of people who read constantly but can't spell their way out of a bad novel. Why do some readers become good spellers while others spell creatively all their lives? Those who are not visual learners don't remember how to spell words they only occasionally see in print, and even those who are visual learners aren't always particularly observant of spelling. They just want to enjoy a good story!

How Daily Spelling Practice Works

Daily Spelling Practice is divided into four levels. Each level includes 25 different keys, numerous "adding on" rules dealing with affixes and syllables, 25 different spelling confusables, five interspersed review weeks, and a pretest/posttest. Before beginning the lessons in Level 1 of Daily Spelling Practice, students must know the sound of each individual letter and should have some reading experience. If students meet these prerequisites, you can start Level 1 as early as the second grade and finish the series at the end of the fifth grade. However, it is perfectly acceptable to begin later--even as late as fifth or sixth grade--as long as everyone in your school uses the same book at the same grade level. **Because Daily Spelling Practice builds from beginning to end, students need all four levels to gain a complete understanding of spelling.**

In order to be successful spellers, students **MUST** meet several requirements:

1. They must learn and practice the keys presented in Daily Spelling Practice. These keys literally unlock the secrets of spelling.
2. They must read and notice the keys while they are reading. I call this "key awareness." Learning to spot the keys in new words will help students figure out how to spell nearly any word.
3. They must be able to break words into syllables, something they'll practice periodically in Daily Spelling Practice.
4. They must pronounce words carefully.
5. They must engage in writing on a daily basis, including free writing or writing for fun.

Each student will need either a Daily Spelling Practice workbook (sample on page 9) OR a notebook in which they can copy their lessons each day. They'll need one page for each week. If you don't use workbooks, you will spend extra time writing the daily assignments on the board or overhead (unless you get the optional overhead transparencies), and students will spend extra time writing out assignments in their notebooks. Although Daily Spelling Practice is easier to use with workbooks, it can be equally effective without them. Either way, you might consider getting the transparencies (sample on page 10) to make going over the lessons a little more convenient.

Before utilizing Daily Spelling Practice in your classroom, you need to acknowledge that learning to spell, like anything else, is a process. There may be words that you've always included on your first spelling list of the year that Daily Spelling Practice doesn't address until weeks--or even years--later. Just remember, there's a method to my madness. Words are presented at specific times as part of a series of building blocks. Because learning to spell is a process, it doesn't happen overnight. You must be patient. **If you teach students how to *spell a word*, they'll spell it correctly on Friday. If you teach them how to *spell*, they'll spell every word correctly every day!**

Daily Spelling Practice is organized into five lessons per week--one for each day--because research has shown that daily practice is the most effective way to move information to long-term memory. Additionally, this format coordinates well with Daily Grammar Practice and Daily Reading Practice. (For information about these two programs, visit www.dgppublishing.com.)

Before beginning the first lesson, give students the pretest/posttest provided on page 7. Then follow the daily lessons as described below.

Monday

Go over the week's key with your students. Pronounce it for them, stressing the underlined part of the word. Allow students to pronounce it as well. If you're not using workbooks, have students write the key word in their notebooks, underlining the appropriate letter(s). I recommend posting the key in a prominent place in the classroom and referring to it all week long. When you or your students notice somewhere (such as in a science book) a word that uses the week's key or offers an exception to it, point out the word to promote key awareness. At the end of the week, move the key to a special bulletin board or other area where all of the learned keys remain posted throughout the year.

Next, call out the target words for the week and have students write them in their workbooks or their notebooks. Remind them to try their best, but it's okay if they spell a target word wrong on Monday. Walk around the room while students are working to check their progress. When they're finished spelling all of the target words, write them on the board or overhead or invite students to do so. Students should then correct any words that they spelled incorrectly.

Students should then write new words using the week's key. For example, Key #1 is *hat*. The target words are *bat*, *rat*, *pan*, *dad*, and *map*. A student could choose to write *cat* as one of his or her new words. When students are finished, ask them to share some of their new words. Write them on the board or overhead or invite students to write them themselves. Correct any that are spelled wrong. Inevitably, a student will find an exception to the key (such as *caf* rather than *calf*). Avoid confusing students and letting these exceptions fluster you. Just say something like, "This is a word that doesn't work with this week's key. We'll learn about this word a different week." Then write the word correctly over to the side.

Finally, write the week's memory word on the board or point it out in the students' workbooks. Memory words may present an exception to the week's key, or they may present a word that utilizes the key but is otherwise difficult to spell. Some memory words include a mnemonic strategy as well. If students don't know the meaning of the memory word, talk about it as a class or encourage them to look up the word in a dictionary. Students should write the memory word three times in their workbooks or notebooks. It's a good idea to refer to the word as often as possible throughout the week.

Note that, while some spelling programs require students to memorize the most frequently used words in our language (such as *the*, *of*, and *you*), I see no need for students to "study" those words. Their

everyday reading and writing will be so saturated with those words that they WILL eventually learn them without help. Instead, Daily Spelling Practice provides building blocks for helping students spell all types of words.

Tuesday

On Tuesday, students are asked to "add on" to their target words. Here they learn a prefix or suffix, or they practice putting individual syllables together to create longer words. Go over the "adding on" rule with your students. If you're not using workbooks, students should write the rule in their notebooks. Then students should complete the "adding on" assignment. Go over these new words on the board when students are finished. Be sure students know what the new words mean.

Sometimes students are asked to write their own words using the week's "adding on" rule. Again, write these new words on the board and be sure they are all spelled correctly.

Wednesday

On Wednesday, students examine a set of spelling confusables, including a definition of each and a sentence using each one correctly. Each week's spelling confusables relate to the week's key or to the week's "adding on" activity. Some of the spelling confusables include mnemonic strategies. Begin by discussing these spelling confusables as a class. Students who are not using workbooks should write the definitions and sample sentences in their notebooks.

Next, write Wednesday's cloze sentences on the board or point them out in the student workbooks. Have students choose the correct word to fill in each blank. Review as a class. Finally, students should write their own sentences using the week's spelling confusables. If younger students aren't able to generate their own sentences, begin by writing them together as a class or by writing your own sentences for them to copy. With practice, even beginning writers will be able to create their own sentences.

Thursday

On Thursday, students are given sets of words and are asked to underline the ones that are spelled correctly. Students will see words that use the week's "adding on" rule, words from previous weeks, and words that use the week's key (but not target words). Target words will appear on the Friday assessment, but they're not practiced daily because the idea is not to memorize the words. I've said it before, but it's worth repeating: If you teach students how to *spell a word*, they'll spell it correctly on Friday. If you teach them how to *spell*, they'll spell every word correctly every day!

Next, students are directed to search their workbook page for words that use the week's key and to circle them. Most of these words will be found in the Wednesday sample sentences and cloze sentences. Students not using workbooks can search their notebook pages (or even an excerpt from another source) instead. Make a list of these words on the board.

Friday

On Friday, you will assess students on the week's key, target words, memory word, "adding on" rule, and spelling confusable. I hesitate to call this assessment a spelling test because the term brings to mind the practice of memorizing words for a test and then forgetting them before sunrise the next day. I recommend that you not even ask students to "study" for this assessment. That way, you'll see what they've truly learned as opposed to what they've memorized for the moment. In fact, I even go a step further and include some words other than the target words--but words that still follow the key--for the assessment. After all, with the exception of the memory words, you really should be assessing the students' understanding of a concept rather than their knowledge of individual words.

Review Weeks

After every fifth key, students are provided with a cumulative review. Reviews in Book 4 may even include concepts from Book 1! Review activities are similar to those found in the regular weeks.

Finish your year by giving the pretest/posttest again to be sure students have mastered the concepts and are ready to move on to the next level.

Daily Spelling Practice

Scope and Sequence

LEVEL 1		
Key	Memory Word	Spelling Confusables
1. <u>h</u> at	laugh	then than
2. <u>t</u> en	friend	led lead
3. <u>w</u> in	women	it's its
4. <u>h</u> ot	yacht	sun son
5. <u>n</u> ut	surprise	some sum
6. <u>s</u> ame	separate	pail pale
7. <u>m</u> ine	definitely	quiet quite
8. <u>h</u> ome	soldier	loose lose
9. <u>l</u> ove	environment	won one
10. <u>c</u> ute	vacuum	due do
11. <u>p</u> lan	plagiarism	plain plane
12. <u>g</u> lad	glimpse	angle angel
13. <u>f</u> lag	fluoride	flower flour
14. <u>c</u> rab	crystal	creek creak
15. <u>s</u> eem	people	meat meet
16. <u>s</u> ing	beginning	mourning morning
17. <u>t</u> his	rhythm	their there they're
18. <u>t</u> hin	thumb	through threw
19. <u>p</u> ool	nuisance	chose choose
20. <u>b</u> ook	could	would wood
21. <u>t</u> ree	tragedy	troop troupe
22. <u>d</u> rip	drawer	drier dryer
23. <u>b</u> lame	blizzard	blew blue
24. <u>b</u> room	bruise	breath breathe
25. <u>g</u> reen	grammar	great grate
LEVEL 2		
Key	Memory Word	Spelling Confusables
26. <u>p</u> ride	probably	principal principle
27. <u>f</u> rog	refrigerator	sell sale
28. <u>p</u> ack	breakfast	attack attic
29. <u>s</u> peed	spaghetti	sphere spear
30. <u>s</u> wim	sword	sweet sweat suite
31. <u>b</u> ark	embarrass	alter altar
32. <u>h</u> er	colonel	desert dessert
33. <u>s</u> ir	souvenir	pair pear
34. <u>m</u> ore	opportunity	miner minor
35. <u>t</u> urn	temperature	further farther
36. <u>s</u> tar	apostrophe	past passed
37. <u>s</u> kin	schedule	lessen lesson

38. <u>shop</u>	physician	shoot chute
39. <u>chop</u>	stomach	chili chilly
40. <u>queen</u>	acquire	queue cue
41. <u>fly</u>	oxygen	by bye buy
42. <u>party</u>	every	all ready already
43. <u>say</u>	ballet	way weigh
44. <u>key</u>	necessary	prey pray
45. <u>boy</u>	buoyant	boy buoy
46. <u>boat</u>	broad	road rode
47. <u>low</u>	tomorrow	tow toe
48. <u>cow</u>	toward	aloud allowed
49. <u>few</u>	jewelry	to too two
50. <u>slow</u>	muscle	sleigh slay

LEVEL 3

Key	Memory Word	Spelling Confusables
51. <u>clown</u>	classic	cloths clothes
52. <u>when</u>	whistle	whose who's
53. <u>snail</u>	maintenance	sail sale
54. <u>yawn</u>	awkward	paws pause
55. <u>wage</u>	vegetable	message massage
56. <u>neat</u>	beautiful	seam seem
57. <u>bread</u>	treasure	read red
58. <u>phone</u>	pamphlet	phase faze
59. <u>wren</u>	wrestle	write right
60. <u>knee</u>	knowledge	knew new
61. <u>end</u>	calendar	band banned
62. <u>fair</u>	questionnaire	air err heir
63. <u>share</u>	guarantee	where ware wear
64. <u>bear</u>	beard	bear bare
65. <u>year</u>	nuclear	hear here
66. <u>tent</u>	interesting	compliment complement
67. <u>boil</u>	tortoise	roil royal
68. <u>fault</u>	restaurant	haul hall
69. <u>out</u>	announce	hour our
70. <u>patch</u>	sandwich	witch which
71. <u>sink</u>	recommend	assent ascent
72. <u>wrong</u>	copyright	ring wring
73. <u>help</u>	chalk	personal personnel
74. <u>through</u>	thorough	bough bow
75. <u>light</u>	license	night knight

LEVEL 4

Key	Memory Word	Spelling Confusables
76. <u>score</u>	minuscule	conscience conscious
77. <u>science</u>	scissors	scent cent sent
78. <u>chord</u>	chaos	chord cord
79. <u>tongue</u>	guess	moral morale
80. <u>find</u>	island	isle aisle

81. <u>soar</u>	occasion	board bored
82. <u>pour</u>	behavior	your you're
83. <u>chief</u>	mischievous	peace piece
84. <u>receive</u>	leisure	beside besides
85. <u>house</u>	anonymous	coarse course
86. <u>guide</u>	genuine	suit soot
87. <u>radio</u>	nursery	illusion allusion
88. <u>edge</u>	privilege	college collage
89. <u>slant</u>	brilliant	confident confidant
90. <u>agent</u>	commitment	patients patience
91. <u>letter</u>	committee	affect effect
92. <u>exit</u>	exercise	extent extant
93. <u>exclaim</u>	etcetera	except accept
94. <u>gnat</u>	pneumonia	foreword forward
95. <u>hyphen</u>	hypocrite	stationary stationery
96. <u>ocean</u>	especially	council counsel
97. <u>proceed</u>	success	incite insight
98. <u>caught</u>	accident	taught taut
99. <u>algae</u>	medieval	rote wrote
100. <u>bottle</u>	parallel	capital capitol

Key #5: nut

Monday

1. Fill in the missing letters as your teacher calls out each target word.

_____ u _____ _____ u _____ _____ u _____ _____ u _____ _____ u _____

2. Make your own words by putting letters in the blanks.

_____ u _____ _____ u _____ _____ u _____

3. This week's memory word is *surprise*. Write *surprise* three times.

(Hint: Surprise has a surprise *r* inside!)

Tuesday

Adding on: When a one-syllable word ends in (or is made only of) consonant-vowel-consonant, double the last letter before you add a suffix that starts with a vowel (nap + ing = napping).

1. Use this rule to add *ing* to three of your target words.

2. Make your own *ing* words using Key #1, #2, #3, #4, or #5.

_____ing _____ing _____ing

Wednesday

Some is an amount. (I put *some* water in the cup.)

Sum is what you get when you add numbers together. (The *sum* of two and two is four.)

1. Write the correct word (*some* or *sum*) in each blank.

_____ kids were running at the park. We had fun figuring out the _____ of two and ten.

2. Write your own sentence with *some* and your own sentence with *sum*.

Thursday

1. In each pair, underline the word that is spelled correctly.

fun/fen hunt/hont sune/sun peting/petting yoht/yacht laped/lapped tens/tenz

2. Search this page for words that use Key #5. Circle any that you find.

Friday

Check Yourself: On a separate sheet of paper, correctly spell each word that your teacher calls out.

Key #41: fly

Monday

1. Fill in the missing letters as your teacher calls out each target word.

_____y _____y _____y _____y

2. Make your own words by putting letters in the blanks.

_____y _____y

3. This week's memory word is *oxygen*. Write *oxygen* three times.

Tuesday

Adding on: When a word ends with a consonant and a *y*, change the *y* to *i* before you add a suffix that does **not** start with an *i*. For suffixes that **do** start with *i*, keep the *y*. (Example: funny + est = funniest)
Use this rule to spell each word correctly.

add *ing* to pry: _____ add *ed* to pry: _____

add *er* to tacky: _____ add *ness* to tacky: _____
(Watch out: There are a few exceptions such as *dryness*, *dryly*, *shyness*, and *shyly*.)

Wednesday

By is a preposition with meanings such as near or past. (Please stay *by* the door.)

Buy means to purchase. (Did that guy *buy* some dessert?)

Bye is short for goodbye. It also refers to advancing uncontested in a tournament. (Tyler waved *bye*.)

1. Write the correct word (*by*, *buy*, or *bye*) in each blank.

Our team had a _____ in round one. Clean the pig sty _____ noon. Bryson wants to _____ a new tricycle.

2. Write your own sentences with *by*, *buy*, and *bye*.

Thursday

1. In each pair, underline the word that is spelled correctly.

acquire/aquire quacks/quackes crazyest/craziest brushes/brushes stomach/stomach could/coold

2. Search this page for words that use Key #41. Circle any that you find.

Friday

Check Yourself: On a separate sheet of paper, correctly spell each word that your teacher calls out.

Key #71: nk

Monday

1. Fill in the missing letters as your teacher calls out each target word.

_____nk _____nk _____nk _____nk _____nk

2. Make your own words using Key #71.

3. This week's memory word is *recommend*. Write *recommend* three times.

Tuesday

Adding on: The suffix *ize* means to make.

1. Add *ize* to the following base words to make new words. You may have to alter the base word according to previous adding-on rules. Pronounce each word and figure out what it means.

final: _____ public: _____ fertile: _____

memory: _____ familiar: _____ idol: _____

2. Write your own words using the suffix *ize*: _____

Wednesday

Assent is agreement. (I give my *assent* even though the idea stinks.)

Ascent is an upward slope or movement upward. (The chipmunk made a quick *ascent* up the hill.)

1. Write the correct word (*assent* or *ascent*) in each blank.

We will now begin our _____ up the mountain. The Queen gave her royal _____.

2. Write your own sentence with *assent* and your own sentence with *ascent*.

Thursday

1. In each pair, underline the word that is spelled correctly.

notarize/notaryize sanwich/sandwich restraut/restaurant latch/lach such/sutch dents/dentes

2. Search this page for words that use Key #71. Circle any that you find.

Friday

Check Yourself: On a separate sheet of paper, correctly spell each word that your teacher calls out.

Key #88: edge

Monday

1. Fill in the missing letters as your teacher calls out each target word.

_____dge _____dge _____dge _____dge _____dge

2. Make your own words using Key #88.

(Watch out: Exceptions to this key include *college*, *sacrilege*, and *privilege*.)

3. This week's memory word is *privilege*. Write *privilege* three times.

Tuesday

Adding on: When adding a suffix to a word that ends in a vowel followed by *ge* or *ce*, always keep the final *e*. Exceptions include *gracious*, *malicious*, *spacious*, and *prestigious*. Use this rule to spell each of the following words correctly.

change + able: _____ space + y: _____ budge + ing: _____

courage + ous: _____ enforce + able: _____ age + ing: _____

Wednesday

College is a place of higher learning. (You'll gain much knowledge while you are in *college*.)

Collage is a type of art. (What a beautiful *collage* of bridge photographs.)

(Hint: College = education; collage = art.)

1. Write the correct word (*college* or *collage*) in each blank.

The art judge liked my _____. A nice hedge surrounds the _____ campus.

2. Write your own sentence with *college* and your own sentence with *collage*.

Thursday

1. In each pair, underline the word that is spelled correctly.

calender/calendar nursrey/nursery annonymous/anonymous smudgeing/smudging stereos/stereoos

2. Search this page for words that use Key #88. Circle any that you find.

Friday

Check Yourself: On a separate sheet of paper, correctly spell each word that your teacher calls out.