

Teaching Word Identification and Spelling Word Identification

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The importance of decoding to the reading process cannot be underestimated. Perfetti (1984) states that “only a reader with skilled decoding processes can be expected to have skilled comprehension processes.” To comprehend text, the student must first read the words accurately. English is an alphabetic system and good word identification skills depend upon the ability to efficiently utilize the alphabetic code. Decoding simply means translating print into spoken words and includes knowledge of sound-letter correspondences and structural analysis (syllables, word roots, suffixes and prefixes). Good readers decode with ease and automaticity. However, poor decoding is a very common characteristic of most poor readers and, therefore, an area that must be taught well and thoroughly.

In this section you will be given general information about decoding - both background information that you need to know as a teacher and some general instructional strategies. As a good reader, you have probably made inferences about the alphabetic code in English that allow you to read words you have never seen before. However, this information needs to be very explicit if you are to teach students who have difficulty in this area and who cannot make inferences themselves. For example, you are able to read words of different syllable types because of your implicit knowledge of syllables. You may not, however, be able to describe these explicitly or know how to teach these to a student. This unit will provide you with a base of explicit information necessary for teaching decoding. You will also learn some instructional strategies that can be used to teach decoding. This knowledge will help you select the most appropriate decoding materials to use with your students.

General Principles of Word Identification Instruction

INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE EXPLICIT AND DIRECT. Everything the student needs to know must be taught directly and clearly by the teacher. This does not mean that the student is not an active and involved learner. Students should be guided to make discoveries about the English language and to actively participate in the learning process. However, the teacher must make sure that each skill and concept is taught and mastered with nothing left to chance.

INSTRUCTION SHOULD BE SYSTEMATIC. Instruction should be systematic with skills taught in a logical order from simplest to most complex. The most regular letter-sound associations, syllable types, and spelling patterns of English should be taught first. After these have been mastered, the student should learn the less regular components.

TEACH TOTAL WORD STRUCTURE. Instruction should begin with phonemic awareness and proceed to letter-sound associations, syllable patterns, root words, prefixes and suffixes.

PHONEMIC AWARENESS INSTRUCTION AND PRACTICE. Phonemic awareness instruction and practice should continue after letters are introduced and throughout basic decoding instruction to ensure that students become proficient in analyzing the sounds of words for decoding and encoding.

ENCODING SHOULD BE TAUGHT IN CO-ORDINATION WITH DECODING. Encoding (spelling by mapping sounds to letters) should be taught in co-ordination with decoding. Spelling conventions and patterns should be taught as they are needed to spell words that the student is learning to decode.

DECODING SKILLS MUST FIRST BE TAUGHT FOR ACCURACY. Decoding skills must first be taught to accuracy and for then practiced for fluency and automaticity.

DECODABLE TEXTS SHOULD BE USED. Decodable texts should be used to reinforce accuracy and automaticity of decoding skills.

TEACH STRATEGIES FOR READING AND SPELLING IRREGULAR WORDS. Strategies for reading and spelling irregular words must be a part of instruction but these words should be taught as needed to read the texts that are used to support the development of decoding skills (rather than in arbitrary lists of “sight” words).

Sequence and Content of Word Identification Instruction

While there is no single, agreed upon sequence of decoding skills, there is a set of information which must be taught and the sequence selected should reflect the principle of teaching from SIMPLE to COMPLEX. Using this principle, the following sequences are frequently used.

1. Teach single consonants before consonant combinations.
2. Teach short vowels before long vowels
3. Closed syllables are taught as the first syllable type.
4. Syllable patterns are taught in single syllable words before words with two or more syllables are introduced.
5. Teach syllabication division strategies taught after multisyllable words are introduced
6. Spelling generalizations are taught in relation to syllable types
7. Prefixes, suffixes, root words and combining forms are introduced after some basic syllable patterns are taught
8. Practice for fluency and automaticity is a part of each step of instruction after accuracy has been established. Most decoding programs teach a small set of consonants and then one or two short vowels that can be combined into a number of CVC words. Smaller sets may be necessary for students with naming difficulties.

After single consonants and short vowels are mastered for reading and spelling single syllable words, introduce consonant blends and digraphs.

In addition to these general sequencing guidelines, you must be familiar with the sequence of skills (from simple to complex) WITHIN EACH DOMAIN of decoding. These are reviewed below.

Consonants

Consonants differ in several ways:

- (1) whether the letter represents one or more sounds
- (2) the ease with which the sounds can be discriminated and produced
- (3) the frequency with which they are used in words. If students need instruction in the sounds of consonants, the following sequence is recommended.

1. Teach consonant sounds that are most easily discriminated and produced first.

2. When teaching letters that have more than one sound, teach the most common sound first.

Note these characteristics:

- C “borrows” its sounds from /k/ (before a, o and u) and /s/ (before e, i or y); teach the /k/ sound first.
- G makes two sounds: /g/ as in *go* (before a, o, u) and the “borrowed” sound of /j/ as in *large* (before e, i or y). Teach /g/ as in *go* first.
- S makes two sounds: /s/ as in *sat*; /z/ as in *toes*. Teach the /s/ sound first.
- X represents the sounds of /k/ /s/.
- Y can be a consonant as in *yet* or a vowel as in *candy*. Teach as a vowel first.
- Q represents the sounds of /k/ /w/ and is always written as qu.

3. Consonant digraphs: two consonants that combine to make a single sound. The most common are: ch, sh, th, wh. Other consonant digraphs are -ck and -ng.

4. Consonant blends: two or three sounds that slide together. The most common are blends with l (bl, cl, etc.), blends with s (sc, sm, etc.), blends with r (br, fr, etc.) and 3 letter blends (scr, spr, spl, str). Digraphs and single consonants may also be combined (shr, squ, thr).

Vowels

Vowels should be taught, not as 5 or 6 letters, but as 15 open sounds that are a part of every syllable in English. A common practice is to teach vowel sounds and patterns in conjunction with syllable patterns. Most programs teach “short” vowels first because they are more frequent in English than long vowels and their spelling patterns are simpler. Short vowels are found in closed syllables. Teach short sounds of a and i first since these are easy to discriminate and visually are very different. After these are mastered proceed to the short sounds of u, o, and e. Be very careful to use clear examples of these sounds in “key words” – /a/ in *apple*; /i/ in *itch* or *igloo*; /u/ in *up* or *umbrella*; /o/ in *octopus*; and /e/ in *edge*.

“Long” and Other Vowel Patterns:

The **vowel-consonant-e** (silent-e pattern) is generally considered the simplest long vowel pattern and is often the second syllable pattern taught for reading and spelling (after closed syllables). Once the student learns the closed and silent e syllable patterns in single syllable words, these can be combined to make hundreds of words (e.g., pancake, sunshine, mistake).

After the silent-e pattern is well established, the student is ready to move on to other vowel patterns. The order of presentation varies but the patterns include:

Open syllables: long vowels at the end of words or syllables.

This pattern is found in words such as no, he, she and in syllables (pi-lot; mu-sic). Syllables with this pattern are called open syllables.

Vowels followed by r (ar, or, ir, er, ur). These are often referred to as **r-controlled vowels** and are neither long nor short. Syllables with r-controlled vowels are a separate syllable pattern in English.

Vowel teams/digraphs (two vowels make one sound). Common digraphs include ai, ay, oa, ee, ea (long and short sound of e).

Vowel diphthongs (two vowels that begin with one sound and slide into another). These are complicated because many make more than one sound (ou in out and soup; ow in crown and crow) and some sounds have more than one spelling (/oi/ as in boy and oil).

In some decoding curriculums, vowel digraphs and diphthongs are combined into one syllable pattern (vowel teams; double vowels). In others, these are considered two separate syllable patterns.

Consonant-le Always found at the end of a word unless it is part of a two syllable word

Vowel type is a schwa sound.

Additional components of a decoding curriculum:

SYLLABLE PATTERNS. Closed, vowel-consonant-e, open, r-controlled, double vowel, and consonant -le)

SYLLABICATION STRATEGIES for breaking long words into parts

COMMON PHONOGRAMS (-ng and -nk combinations, -tion, -ight, etc.)

SPELLING PATTERNS for single syllable words

SPELLING GENERALIZATIONS for multisyllable words

SILENT LETTERS

PLURALS, CONTRACTIONS

ROOT WORDS, SUFFIXES AND PREFIXES and other morphological patterns

Instructional Strategies and Activities for Decoding

USE PICTURE CUES FOR DECODING. The same picture cues that were used to teach letter-sound associations initially should also be used during decoding to help students use the correct sound for letters within the words they are reading.

BUILD AND CHANGE WORDS USING LETTERS. This very effective strategy is an excellent bridge between phonemic awareness instruction and decoding. Building and changing words focuses students' attention on the sounds within words and the letters that are used to represent the sounds.

SEGMENT WORDS INTO SOUNDS USING FINGERS. Teach students to represent each sound in words they are decoding by representing each sound with a finger. This strategy was introduced in Unit 5 as a way to teach students to segment words presented orally into individual phonemes. This process can also be used to help students decode unfamiliar words.

ANALYZING AND CATEGORIZING WORDS. After students have learned several characteristics of sound and letters and at least one syllable pattern, teach them to analyze words and place them into categories according to different characteristics.

TEACH ONSET-RIME STRATEGIES. This is also an excellent strategy to use for reading words after students have learned the concept of decoding each individual sound and have been introduced to consonant blends.

BUILD LINKS BETWEEN PHONEME SEGMENTATION AND SYLLABLES. As students move from letter-by-letter decoding into more efficient analysis, an important step is the transition from single to multisyllable words. Students should first practice HEARING and PRONOUNCING the syllables in words (teachers may return to the "Say it and Move it" type of activities presented in Unit 5). Once students can do this reliably, ask them to represent each spoken syllable with something concrete (e.g., a blank card, a piece of felt). For each syllable, tap the sounds and place the individual letters (letter tiles, letters on tag board, etc.) to represent the sounds on each syllable.

USE DISCOVERY TO INTRODUCE SYLLABLE TYPES. Although direct instruction is critical for students, guiding them to discover certain concepts can be very effective. In the discovery method, the teacher is in control and guides the students to discover what the teacher wants. For example, after students have been taught the concept of a syllable (e.g., must contain a vowel) and have learned about closed syllables, students can be guided to discover other syllable types. For example, words of closed and a contrasting syllable pattern (e.g., vowel-consonant-e) are presented on cards and students analyze ways to categorize the words. Students are guided to discover that some of the words have a consonant after the vowel and

some end in the letter e. Similar contrasts can be made between closed and open syllables. The main concept is always what impact these changes have on the sound of the vowel within the syllable.

USE LETTER CARDS TO TEACH SYLLABLE DIVISION. After students are introduced to words of more than one syllable, they must be taught to recognize syllable patterns within words. In English, the key to syllable division is locating the vowel sounds and determining what comes after the vowel. This is often difficult for students and must be taught carefully with lots of practice.

PRACTICE WITH DECODABLE TEXT. Once decoding skills have been taught, it is important that these skills be practiced until they have become automatic. For some students this requires tremendous amounts of practice - seeing words with particular patterns or letter-sound associations and pronouncing those words correctly. A major benefit of decodable materials is the decrease in “guessing” based on partial letter cues that poor readers so often do. Practice with word lists is a first step but students also need practice with connected text. For readers with problems in decoding, reading decodable text (i.e., text that contains many words with the patterns/sounds taught plus a small set of irregular words) is a critical component of instruction.

Instructional Strategies for Reading Irregular Words

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It is important that students, and their teachers, realize that most words (approximately 87%) in English follow regular orthographic patterns. Also, only parts of most irregular words are irregular; most commonly the vowels and silent letters in consonant combinations. Lists of frequently used words in English (such as the Dolch and Fry lists) contain both phonetically regular and irregular words. The regular words should be taught as part of the decoding curriculum (rather than memorized as sight words) and the truly irregular words should be taught separately using these suggested strategies:

-Select a small set of irregular words for instruction. This should be guided by the words that are used in the decoding curriculum and the student’s performance on the assessment of sight word knowledge. For instruction, group words that are visually distinctive such as ‘the, is, are’ rather than words that look alike (the, then, that).

- With the student, analyze the parts of the words that “play fair” or follow the rules that have been taught thus far.

- Write the words on cards (use colored index cards to highlight the difference between irregular and regular words) and underline or trace with a highlighter the parts that are irregular.

- Use multisensory strategies to help build up memory for the letters in the word. For example:

(1) trace the letters on the card while saying the letter names

(2) look at the word, say the letters then say the word

(3) look at the word then close your eyes and write the letter in the air visualizing each letter and saying the letter name

(4) write the letter on a textured surface, say the letter names and then the word.

- Practice reading the words each day in several different contexts:

For example:

(1) Read the words on the cards several times (with the teacher modeling as necessary). Keep a set of irregular words and “recycle” or review frequently.

(2) Read the words in lists where the same words appear over and over in different orders (the, is, are, is, are, the, the, are, is).

(3) Read the words in phrases, sentences and in text. In addition to the decodable text discussed above, other texts can be used with these procedures. Highlight each of the irregular words that are to be practiced in any text (e.g., newspaper, magazines). The teacher or parent reads while the student follows; the student reads only the highlighted words. Another option is to have the student go through the text and read each highlighted word.

Strategies for Error Analysis and Correction

The first step in error correction is to determine the source of the error. Errors in word identification may be due to a number of problems: e.g., lack of knowledge of specific rules, difficulty analyzing the sounds within words, poor understanding of the process of decoding, lack of sufficient knowledge of letter-sound associations and spelling patterns, or simply insufficient attention to the letters within the word. For some students, the habit of guessing is so strongly established that the first step must be to interrupt this pattern and convince the student to actually analyze the printed word. Errors reading irregular words may reflect the

student's unfamiliarity with the word or confusion with words that look similar (e.g., 'where' read as 'were'). After the source (or sources) of the error are determined, the teacher's next step is to frame a question/s or provide a cue/s that will enable the student to correct the error. Telling the student that the response is incorrect or saying "try again" are usually not productive.

A vowel error example:

The student reads 'slot' as 'slat'

Teacher: Point to the vowel in the word and give me the sound.

Student: Points to the letter o and gives the letter name.

Teacher: Yes, that is the name of the vowel. What sound have we learned for that letter?

Student: Gives the short sound /o/

Teacher: Now read the word with the /o/ sound.

If the student was unable to give the correct sound for the vowel, the teacher could refer to a picture or gesture cue. If the student gave the correct sound but could not read the word, the teacher could ask the student to sound tap the sounds and blend.

An error involving knowledge of syllables:

The student reads the word 'tattle' as 'tattle'

Teacher: Show me where you would divide this word into syllables.

Student: Points between the double letters.

Teacher: Now, cover up the second syllable and read the first.

Student: /tat/

Teacher: Now read the entire word (this presumes that the student has been taught the consonant-le syllable pattern)

Note: The first question would be appropriate only if the student had been taught the first principle of syllable division (divide between double letters). If the student did not know this principle, the teacher could have covered the second syllable and proceeded as above.

Spelling

In Unit 4 we discussed the different types of language skills which are important for reading and writing (i.e., phonology, orthography, morphology, syntax, semantics, and pragmatics). Orthography, or the spelling patterns of English, is the study of the ways in which speech is represented in writing. Because there is not a direct, one-to-one relationship between speech sounds and letters in English, students are often taught to memorize word spellings. However, an understanding of the nature of the spelling process has led to an appreciation of the critical role of linguistics (i.e., knowledge of language structures, in learning to spell). Research has also led to a renewed appreciation of the reciprocal relationship between reading and spelling. Prior to the 20th century, spelling was the primary method of teaching reading and we again recognize that spelling instruction enhances reading skill; for example, through the reinforcement of letter patterns (Carreker, 1999).

It is important for teachers to understand that spelling is more complex and more difficult than word identification. In order to be good spellers, students must be able to ENCODE, that is segment words into sounds and map those sounds onto letters in the correct sequence. They must also possess considerable knowledge about the correct orthographic representation for the sounds in each word. For example, a student who is able to determine that the long vowel /e/ is present in a word still must be able to select from multiple spellings for this sound in order to spell the word correctly. Although there are some general “rules” for spelling sounds such as the -ey spelling for the long e sound at the end of words, in other cases (such as the word ‘team’) the student must rely on memory for the correct spelling. The student’s memory for letter sequences must be exact - ‘taem’ and ‘teem’ are incorrect while ‘team’ is correct. In addition, correct spelling in English requires knowledge of syntax, morphology, and semantics. For example, students must understand that past tense is formed by adding -ed to words even though the -ed ending may have three different sounds (/t/; /d/; /ed/).

Development of Spelling Skills and Spelling Disability

Stages in the development of spelling skills have been described by Moats (1995). During the early stages of development, young children experiment with writing letters or letter-like shapes but do not understand the concept of letters representing sounds. This has been referred to as *Precommunicative Writing*. As children begin to understand that letters represent speech sounds, they enter the *Semiphonetic Stage* in which mostly consonants are used to represent sounds in words. As students gain more experience with print and knowledge about letter-sound associations, their spelling enters the *Phonetic Spelling Stage* in which all sounds in words are represented. At the *Phonetic stage*, students segment words into sounds and rely heavily on articulatory-phonetic feedback (the way sounds feel) for spelling. Knowledge of letter names is used to determine long and short vowel spellings at this early stage and typically one letter is used to represent one sound. Early stages of spelling have been referred to as “invented spelling” which is developmentally appropriate during preschool and first grade. By the end of grade one, most students are beginning to produce more accurate spellings.

As students’ reading skills increase, they begin to learn about the various spelling conventions in English (e.g., long vowels are often spelled with two or more letters; words can have silent letters; letters are sometimes doubled, etc.). During this stage, called *Transitional Spelling*, students begin to combine orthographic information with phonetic/letter name information to spell words.

The final stage of spelling is referred to as *Morphophonemic* and is the stage in which students learn a large body of information about the ways in which word meanings influence spelling. Inflections such as **-ed** and **-ing** are typically mastered earliest (second to third grade). Students must also learn about common homophones (to, two, too) as well as prefixes and suffixes and the presence of unaccented vowel sounds (schwa) in words of more than one syllable. For most normal readers, spelling skills continue to develop throughout their educational career. They learn more orthographic patterns and become more adept at using various sources of information, particularly analogies to other words, for spelling. This knowledge is often implicit and good spellers are often unable to explain how they know that a word is spelled a certain way.

Spelling Disability

Even good readers may have difficulty spelling but for students with learning disabilities, mastery of spelling is an even greater challenge. Students with specific reading disability have significant difficulties with spelling and typically make much slower progress in spelling than in reading. Even though disabled spellers progress through the same early stages of spelling development as normal spellers, they progress at a much slower rate and may never achieve the highest levels of spelling skill.

Spelling is a linguistic skill which depends upon sensitivity to the sounds of words (phonology) as well as to letter patterns (orthography) within words. It is important to note that orthographic memory is different from visual memory and poor spellers may perform quite well on traditional tests of visual memory and visual-spatial skills. Studies of poor spellers indicate that impaired readers make errors related to orthography, phonology, and morphology. The students who responded best to instruction were those who made fewer errors related to phonology and morphology. Research indicates no relationship between IQ and spelling skills.

General Principles of Spelling Instruction

Even though research and clinical experience indicate that students with reading problems will have a very difficult time learning to spell, it is also clear that instruction can have a significant impact on the development of reading skills. Even though many poor readers may never fully master spelling skills at the highest levels, most can become good enough spellers to make effective use of technology and other spelling aids. In order to provide effective spelling instruction, teachers must have a firm understanding of the ways in which spelling skills develop as well as a strong knowledge of phonology, phonics, orthography, morphology, syntax, semantics.

COORDINATE SPELLING WITH WORD IDENTIFICATION INSTRUCTION. Teach students to spell (encode) the phonetically regular words they are learning to decode in a structured and systematic manner. Teach spelling rules and patterns in coordination with the decoding skills (e.g., teach the rule for doubling s, f, l & z and the -ck for the /k/ sound when closed syllable words are taught).

TEACH SPELLING DIRECTLY WITH GUIDED PRACTICE. Teach spelling patterns, rules, letter-sound associations directly, one skill at a time, with opportunities for guided practice in numerous settings until the skill is well learned.

TEACH ALL LEVELS OF WORD ANALYSIS. Begin with phonemic awareness and include letter-sound associations, spelling patterns, onset-rime, rules and morphology.

DISTINGUISH BETWEEN REGULAR AND IRREGULAR WORDS. Always differentiate between regular and irregular words using clear procedures for practicing each. Regular words may be divided into those that can be spelled as they sound (REGULAR) and those that require the application of a rule (RULE WORDS). Students should practice fewer irregular words each lesson than regular. Both should be taught using multisensory strategies.

USE CUES AND MNEMONIC DEVICES. Facilitate recall of skills such as letter formation, letter-sound associations, and rules with cues such as pictures, stories, rhymes, gestures, etc.

USE DISCOVERY TEACHING. Use discovery teaching techniques for spelling patterns and rules.

PROVIDE ERROR CORRECTION. Students should be given direct and immediate error correction for spelling errors. The ultimate goal is for the student to independently correct their own errors.

Sequence and Content of Spelling Instruction

Spelling instruction should be thoroughly integrated with word identification instruction rather than a separate process. For students with persistent reading and spelling difficulties, the sequence of spelling skills should be the same as for reading. Therefore, the best approach is to use materials for reading instruction which include spelling skills carefully coordinated with word identification. If using materials which do not include spelling, the teacher must carefully coordinate spelling instruction so that it matches the reading curriculum. Words to be spelled by encoding should be the same words that the student is taught for decoding. Irregular words for spelling should be those words which are needed to read the decodable texts that are used for practice of reading.

Assessment of spelling skills can also be used to guide instruction for individual students. For example, students who are significantly more advanced in reading than spelling might be working on roots and prefixes for reading but require additional work in more basic spelling patterns. Careful and detailed assessments of spelling skills can provide guidance for the teacher in selecting areas for remedial instruction. Even with such students (more advanced in reading than spelling), the teacher should connect the spelling skills to reading. For example, consider a student who has not yet mastered the doubling rules for spelling but can read these words correctly. This student could be led to discover the rules that govern spelling through analysis of the words and then given systematic practice spelling these words.

It is important for teachers (many of whom are intuitive spellers) to thoroughly understand the

rules and patterns which govern spelling in English. The information presented below constitutes only the most basic content of spelling instruction.

SYLLABLE PATTERNS. The six syllable patterns form the basis for decoding and encoding most English words. Basic letter-sound associations and spelling patterns may be taught in the context of the syllable patterns. To help students learn variant spelling patterns, it is useful to teach the most common spellings and where these occur in words.

SPELLING PATTERNS AND RULES. Patterns should not be memorized; rather, they should first be discovered by students under the teacher's guidance and then practiced for reading and spelling until they are automatically recalled. The term 'rule' is best used for those situations in which letters in words are changed, dropped, or doubled. We recommend that you thoroughly review Carreker's chapter on spelling in the Birsh text.

Teaching Spelling of Phonetically Regular Words

A basic component of spelling instruction is the development of accurate and automatic sound to letter associations. Students should be first taught letter-sound associations as described in Unit 5. For spelling, the important skill is the ability to recall and write the letter/s that represents the sounds. As students learn multiple spellings of sounds, they should write all of these from dictation.

Provide students with opportunities to discover spelling conventions rather than teaching in a rote manner. Patterns that are appropriate for the discovery method include:

- when to use k or c to spell the /k/ sound
- when to use ck or k to spell the final /k/ sound
- when to use ou or ow to spell the /ou/ sound
- when to use tch or ch to spell the final /ch/ sound
- when to use dge or ge to spell the final /j/ sound.

Spelling From Dictation Using Multisensory Techniques

Various multisensory spelling procedures have been developed and include some or all of the following components;

1. Listen to the word and look at the teacher's mouth.
2. Repeat the word dictated by the teacher. Students may look in small mirrors as they repeat the word.
3. Pronounce each sound or syllable in the word (in some methods, only the vowel is pronounced)

4. Use a gesture as each sound or syllable is pronounced (e.g., sound tapping; finger spelling; moving a marker for each sound; tapping the hand on the arm for each sound or syllable; placing a paper or felt square for each syllable).
5. Name each letter in the word.
6. Write each letter while saying the letter name or sound. Variations include writing in the air, on the table, using individual letters that are manipulated, as well as writing with a pencil.
7. Read the word that has been written and proof. At this step, some teachers ask the student to mark aspects of the word (e.g., indicate if the vowels are long or short; underline consonant digraphs; etc.). Methods of proofing include: touch and name each letter; tap each sound in the word and check the letter/s used to represent it. Teachers provide corrective feedback and students correct their errors.

Not all students require all of the steps. Either use the procedure outlined in the reading program you are using or a variation of the ones listed here (a simple procedure is described below). Teach one basic procedure well before making changes. Select words for spelling that the student has been taught to decode and adjust the number of words to ensure student mastery. Some students require much more practice than others and the number of words presented at each session must take this into account. As single syllables become more complex, be sure the student can accurately segment the word into each individual sound.

A Procedure and Mnemonic for Spelling Single Syllable Words from Dictation

After students can segment consonant-vowel-consonant words into first, middle, and final sounds and have learned a small set of consonants and short vowel letter-sound associations, the following procedure is appropriate for practice of spelling:

1. teacher dictates word and student repeats
2. student segments words into sounds (teacher gives feedback as necessary)
3. the student spells the word by giving the letter names
4. students either select the letters (from a set of letters on cards) or write the letters
5. the student reads the word

Building and Changing Words with Letters for Spelling Practice

For spelling, the teacher dictates a word and students use letters on tiles or cardboard to spell the word. Then the teacher gives another word that differs from the first in only one sound and the students must change their letters to spell the new word.

Onset-Rime Instruction for Spelling

After the student is proficient in segmenting the word into phonemes, teach the onset-rime method of division as an alternative. This involves teaching the student to divide the word into onset (beginning consonant/s) and rime (vowel and ending consonant/s). This procedure is called “Break and Spell” in the Hill Methodology.

A Procedure for Practicing Spelling Multisyllable Words From Dictation

After the student is proficient with at least one type of single syllable word (e.g., closed syllables), it is appropriate to begin work on multisyllable words. Gradually increase the complexity of the words taught in coordination with decoding instruction. The student is now required to segment the word into syllables before spelling.

Use the following sequence:

1. teacher dictates a multisyllable word and student repeats
2. student indicates the number of syllables using cards, pieces of felt or by drawing lines on a white board or paper for each syllable.
3. student then pronounces the first syllable and spells it using letter cards or by writing the letters (say letter names as syllable is spelled); follow same procedure for remaining syllables
4. student then reads the entire word moving his finger under each syllable and looking at the syllable as it is read
5. if the student has problems with the sounds in a syllable, they should segment the syllable into sounds and then spell. If an error is made in the letters used to spell a sound, give the student cues so that they can correct the error (e.g., if the student has used -ik to spell -ic at the end of the word panic, ask them to give you another way to spell /ik/ at the end of a multisyllable word).

Teaching Strategies for Spelling Irregular Words

Irregular words are those words containing letters that do not match its pronunciation (e.g., enough, said, there, who). Some reading programs also classify words as irregular if they contain letters that are infrequently used for speech sounds. Irregular words should be distinguished from ‘high frequency’ or ‘sight words’ such as those on the Dolch and Fry lists. These lists contain commonly used words that are both regular and irregular and should be taught accordingly. For irregular words, the following strategies are useful.

- Select a small number of irregular words for instruction. These should be words that are useful in reading text (i.e., words that are necessary for the texts used to support word identification instruction). The number of words selected should reflect the number that can be successfully learned within a particular time frame (e.g., one week). Select words that the student can read and use appropriately.
- Group words for instruction by spelling pattern as possible. For example: *there, where* and *here; two, twenty* and *twelve*.
- Discuss word origin with students to help them begin to see the rationale for some irregular

spellings (e.g., ph to spell the /f/ sound in words of Greek origin).

- Most irregular words contain some phonetically regular parts. Guide the student to determine the parts of the word that are regular and those that do not. Circle, underline or highlight the irregular parts on a model of the word correctly spelled.

- After the irregular word has been analyzed, provide practice that will help the student remember the word's spelling. Practice can include: tracing the model saying the name of each letter as it is traced; copying the model while saying the letter names; covering the model and writing the word in the air again saying the letter names; closing eyes and spelling the word, then check the model; covering the model and writing the word on paper, then checking the model. After a word has been practiced in these ways, it should be used in lots of meaningful writing activities until completely mastered.

- Teach students to pronounce irregular words as they are spelled. The classic example is Wednesday pronounced as wed-nes-day but many irregular words can be recalled in this way. Pronouncing silent letters helps students recall words such as knife (/k/ /nife/ and comb (/k/ /om/ /b/.

- Provide and help student develop mnemonic cues for irregular words, words with infrequent spellings and for homophones. Examples include: WhERE did you go? HERE, there and everywhere and You hEAR with your EAR.
