
“What did you learn in school today?” Information for Parents

Spelling Mastery

Spelling Mastery is a Direct Instruction program that teaches children how to spell. It is separate from our school’s Direct Instruction reading and language programs.

Teachers spend about 15 minutes every day on Spelling Mastery. Spelling lessons are usually presented to the entire class, not small groups.

All of the material is cumulative. Once students learn a word or a rule, they continue to practice it regularly until the end of the program.

Lesson Activities

As with other Direct Instruction programs, Spelling Mastery is very interactive. Here are some of the activities a class might do in a typical spelling lesson:

The lesson might start with some new spelling words. For each new word, the teacher spells a word out loud. The class spells it back to her. (It may take more than one try for them to get it right.) When the class knows the word, the teacher calls on individual students to take turns.

Next, the teacher might say some words the class already knows. She says each word and asks the class to spell it back to her. Then the teacher calls on individual students to spell the word.

In the upper levels (C through F), students learn spelling rules. An example of a rule would be: If a word ends in *e*, you drop the *e* when you add *-ed*. For example, if you add *-ed* to *like*, you write *liked*, not *likeed*. Students spend most of the lesson learning and practicing these rules. They also learn to decide when to use each rule.

At the end of each lesson, students complete a worksheet to practice what they learned.

Three Strategies for Spelling Words

Students learn to spell in three ways:

1. Students spell words the way they sound. Many words can be spelled this way, assuming students know what letter goes with each sound. Words like *hand*, *smash*, *spill* and *frogs* can be spelled the way they sound. Almost all of the words in Levels A and B are spelled this way.

2. Students memorize words that don't follow any rule. Students practice spelling words like *friend*, *answer* and *people*, whose spellings can't be figured out.
3. Students learn rules about how to put different word parts together. These word parts are all called *morphographs*. Once they have learned to spell a few morphographs, students can mix them up to spell many words. They also learn the rules of putting morphographs together, for example, the final *e* rule described above. The table below contains 7 morphographs which can be put together to spell at least 26 words.

re	cover	ed
dis	pute	able
un		

Using these morphographs and the rules they have learned, students can spell these words: cover, recover, recoverable, recovered, repute, reputed, reputable, discover, discovered, discoverable, uncover, uncovered, uncoverable, dispute, disputed, disputable, disreputable, undiscovered, undiscoverable, unrecovered, unrecoverable.

Students learn about morphographs and how to put them together starting in Level C and continuing up through Level F. In these levels of the program, they also work on other important spelling skills, such as how to write contractions. They practice tricky words like homonyms, learning not to confuse words like *sail* and *sale*