

Spelling Activities

Active Approaches to Teaching Spelling



The best resource in the classroom is you!

All the ideas in this booklet are designed to be

a) *easy to implement* and b) *easy to adapt.*

Unleash your creativity!

Many of the ideas in this booklet have been adapted from the Oxford A-Z of Word Games by Tony Augarde. Some are adapted from the First Steps Spelling Resource Book, by Alison Dewsbury et al.

Group and Classify

This generic activity is the basis for many of the games in this booklet and can be adapted for use from Reception to Year 6. It asks children to sort words categories and encourages them to see patterns, similarities and relationships. It can be the first step towards investigations which helps children discover spelling rules for themselves. Try them as whole class, teacher led sessions, small group activities, or as a physically active version in which children move around the classroom to find a group or word family.

The grouping can be specified by the teacher, eg: sort words by their initial letter or initial phoneme; sort words by the number of syllables, by vowel phoneme; by rhyme, etc. Alternatively, investigations can be much more open, in which the words are given, but the children decide what the categories and groupings might be. Another version would be for the children themselves to choose a group of words (for example a word bank compiled for the current topic) and choose to sort them in a number of different ways.

A final version would be to supply words which have been grouped in a particular way and ask the children to guess what the title of each group might be, for example: 'words *a* as their second letter'; 'animal names with two syllables'; 'words with irregular plurals' etc.

Word Rummy

Using mixed sets of words already generated (eg as topic word banks, or in relation to a previous phonics or spelling lesson), write one word on each card. Deal 5 cards to each player and leave the rest face down on the table. The first player takes either the up-turned card or the top card from the face down pile. The aim of the game is to collect pairs of words which have some connection to each other. Children must argue convincingly as to why two words should be kept as a pair.

Word Pairs

Play this (with a set of word cards as above) like the traditional memory game of 'pairs'. Children turn over two words at a time and collect 'pairs' which have a spelling connection. The teacher can specify the type of connection needed to form a pair or leave the children to find and explain a relationship.

Word 'snap'

Use the conventional rules for 'snap' except that two 'snap' words do not need to be the same, but to have a spelling connection. The child who calls 'snap' must be able to justify the connection immediately.

'Hangman' (with a difference)

Similar to the traditional name of 'hangman' but with the difference that the children are given the first letter and then must guess the letters in sequence. A penalty is only exacted if the letter guessed could *not* appear in that sequence in an English word. The 'possible' letter sequences are listed next to each other, but not the 'impossible' ones, so as to avoid exposing children to incorrect letter sequences (see example below). You might want to find a more 'politically correct' picture to replace the 'hangman' image!

The word to guess is 'spelling'.

Could be

Couldn't be.

s

b after *s*

st

c after *sp*

si

sp

spo

1 letter-2 letter-3

Words consisting of letters used a particular number of times - usually the same letters used either once twice or three times are called isograms. It is

easy to find short words consisting of letters used only once like dog, cat, turnip. However this game the challenge is to find a long word in which no letter is repeated. Pupils can try to write down longer and longer words of this kind perhaps moving through *comedian* to *discountable* and *dermatoglyphics*.

Players can also look for words which consist of the same letters repeated twice or three times. Two letter isograms include *gee-gee*, *tartar*, *reappear* and *intestines*.

Pyramidity

Pupils write a letter at the top of a page, add another letter to it and write a two-letter word below it. Then add another letter and (if necessary) rearrange the three letters to make another word which is written below the other two.

In this way, a pyramid is made out of words of ever increasing length.

Alternatively pupils can start with a long word and remove one letter at a time, rearranging the letter each time to make a pyramid of words that gradually decrease in length.

I
IF
FIR
RIFT
FIRST
STRIFE
TRIFLES

One to One

Start with one word, build the pyramid, as above, and then decrease back to one letter.

Word Winners

The first pupil chooses a word of at least four letters which each player writes in a column down the left hand side of the paper. They then write the same word in reverse down the right hand side of the paper. Pupils have to write in words that start and end with the resulting letters. The winner is the pupil who fills in the most words, finds the longest word or completes the most words in a set time (five minutes?)

eg:

E a c H

N a m e S

G o b I

L a t e r a L

I n k i n G

S o l u t i o N

H a n d l E

Avoid –a – Letter

One pupil (the chooser) chooses a letter and tells all the players. This is the forbidden letter. The chooser then asks questions. The players have to answer the questions without using a word containing the forbidden letter. If their answer includes the forbidden letter they are out.

eg:

(The letter is T.)

Chooser: What do you drink at teatime?

Avoider: I drink lemonade.

Chooser: How many are there in a dozen?

Avoider: Eleven plus one.

Chooser: What is seven minus four?

Avoider: Three

Chooser: You're out!

Secret Letters

This game is similar to avoid-a-letter. The chooser thinks of a letter in his/her head but doesn't tell the other players. This is the forbidden letter. The chooser asks the other pupils questions in turn. If their answer includes the forbidden letter they lose a life. Anyone who loses three lives is out. Anyone who guesses the letter is the chooser in the next game.

eg:

Chooser: What is the capital of England?

Child 1: London.

Chooser: What is six take away two?

Child 2: Four.

Chooser: Who had hair made of snakes?

Child 3: Medusa

Chooser: Lose a life. What season comes after winter?

Child 1: Spring

Chooser: Lose a life. How many sides on a hexagon?

Child 2: Six

Chooser: Lose a life.

Child 2: Is the letter S? Because S is the only letter 'Medusa', 'spring' and 'six' have in common.

Belling Spee

One pupil asks another to spell a word – backwards! Start with easy words and gradually get more difficult.

Beheadments

Clues are given to a pair of words in which the second word is formed by removing one letter (often the first letter) from the first word.

eg:

Behead a woodwind instrument and get a stringed instrument.

Flute – Lute

Challenge pupils to find and write down as many beheadments as they can.

(Removing the last letter is called **Curtailments**)

Catchword

In pairs give pupils a sequence of adjacent letters. They have to think of as many words as they can that include the sequence within a set time limit.

eg:

AT

Bat, cat, sat, rat, spat, that, ratio, satellite, battery.

Extend to use dictionaries / books. The pair who find the longest word that includes the sequence are the winners.

Variations

Use sequences of non adjacent letters.

eg: PFT – profit, perfect, prefect.

At the Double

Choose a pair of letters. Ask the children to write down all the words they can think of that contain the letters (in a set time). This can be played in pairs. The winner is the one who thinks of the most words. Alternatively, score one point for each word, but two points for each word that nobody else writes down. If desired, it can be ruled that the pair of letters can't start or end a word.

eg:

D and L

Saddle, muddle, fiddle, oddly, cuddley, cordless, groundless, handlebars, kindling, swindle.

Endings

Choose a word ending. Ask children in turn to think of a word with the ending.

Alternatively give children a range of endings and ask them to list as many words as they can with the endings.

Fill-ins

(This is similar to word winners)

Give the children a list of letters which includes only the first and last letters of words. The children have to find letters to 'fill in' the gaps which spell words. Challenge pupils to find four, five, six letter words.

eg:

A-L

W-N

I – D

S – T

Animal, weapon, intend, straight.

Which Words?

Give the children definitions of words that are spelt the same but pronounced differently.

eg:

Which word? One means 'to leave' – one means 'a large expanse of sand'.

Desert

Which word? One means 'to say no' – one means 'rubbish'.

Refuse

Variations

Words with the same spelling but different meanings.

eg:

Which words? One means 'to relax' - one means 'the remainder'.

Rest

Which word? One means 'in good health', one means 'where you get water'.

Well

Backwords

Challenge to children to find words that spell another word backwards.

eg:

Top – pot

Pit –tip

Snap – pans

Plug – gulp

Part – trap

Dessert – stressed

Word Ladders

Give children two different words – one at the top and one at the bottom.

Starting at the top challenge them to change one letter at a time until they spell the bottom word.

eg:

Change LAND to HUNT

L A N D

H A N D

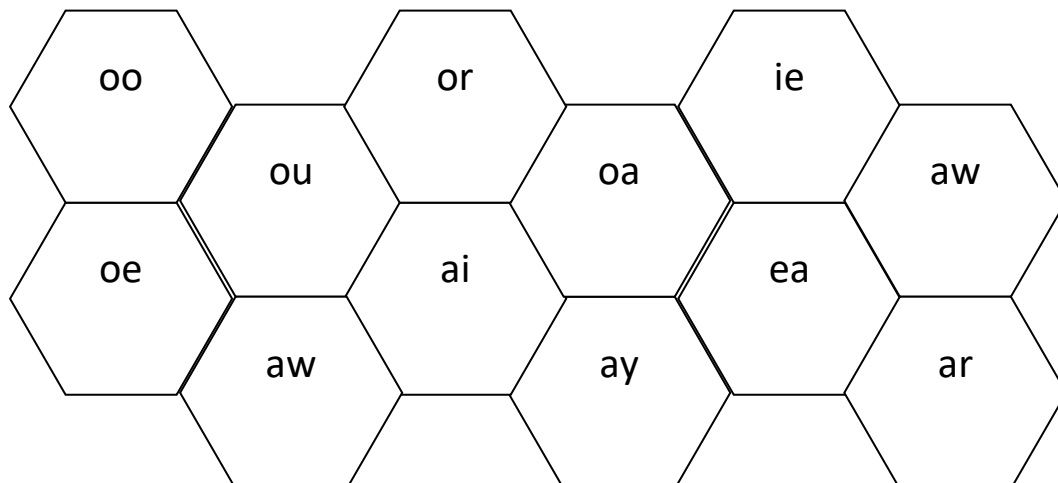
H A N G

H U N T

H U N T

Block Busters

Get across the grid in the quickest time thinking of words with the right grapheme.



Get across the grid in the quickest time thinking of words with the right prefix or suffix.

