

'SOS' Spelling Method

This method of learning spelling is called the SOS method - Simultaneous Oral Spelling. Dr. Lynette Bradley at Oxford University has shown that this method is almost twice as effective as simple writing or repetition. SOS is a multi-sensory learning method. When the child uses the SOS method, he/she is using all sensory channels to learn how to spell new words. He/she is using visual, auditory and motor/movement channels to take in the spelling pattern of the new target word. The child is also using his/her intelligence to check that they have not jumbled the order of letters by mistake. The SOS method also involves over learning. Each word is practised for 3 days in a row. This helps the child remember each new word he/she learns. The method is slow. Only 10 new words can be learned per week. However, it is effective.

SOS Spelling Method

Set aside a 10 minute period each day for helping the child with spelling. Spelling lists should be short; no more than 5 words. The same spelling list should be worked on for 3 days in a row. This means that no more than 10 new words can be learned in a week. Follow the routine described for each word.

1. Write the target word out or make it with plastic letters. Perhaps trace it on a tactile surface, e.g. carpet.
2. Tell the child how to say the word and what it means if he/she doesn't know.
3. Ask the child to copy the target word and to say the name of each letter as it is being written.
4. Ask the child to look at what they have written and to say the whole word.
5. Ask the child to check that what they have written is the same as the target word. This checking is done letter by letter from the target to the copy.
6. The child should then try to write and say the target word from memory. If he or she makes any mistakes, cross the word out and start again.
7. Repeat step 6 until the word has been written correctly 3 times.
8. Make sure the child practises each word following this routine for 3 consecutive daily sessions.

This is good system for teaching spelling families. Once a child has learnt to spell a word, then by changing the onset to create another word then they should be able to spell other words easily.

"Now you can spell goat - g-o-a-t you can now spell coat- c-o-a-t," and then introduce boat, moat moving on to initial sounds using consonant clusters e.g. bloat and throat, increasing the complexity of the onset as you progress through the spelling list.