

A Pocket Guide to...



Helping your child  
with spelling

# Background

We want children at Oatlands to develop into enthusiastic, imaginative and purposeful writers. To do this they need to be confident accurate spellers in order that they can record their ideas independently and be adventurous in their choice of vocabulary.

At Oatlands, learning to spell is developed from a secure phonic base whereby children learn to segment (break up) words into their individual phonemes (sounds) and learn the graphemes (written letter shapes) to represent these sounds (e.g. 'sheep' is /sh/ /ee/ /p/).

Unfortunately in English there are also many words that don't follow the rules we learn in our phonics lessons. These are known as 'common exception words' or 'tricky' words. We learn a few of these each week and these will be sent home with your child's Bookshare. This booklet contains some ways you can help your child with these at home. A list of all the words your child is expected to be able to read and spell by the end of the year is available on the school website and in parent planners.

At Oatlands we do not have formal weekly spelling tests for two main reasons:

- the potentially detrimental effects on children who find spelling difficult and are faced with comparing 'scores' with their peers each week.
- the overwhelming evidence that learning a list of spellings over a week is essentially a short term memory activity, and while a child may get 10/10 every week, unless this knowledge is applied in a meaningful context the spellings will not be retained. A child may spell words correctly in isolation but then cannot apply this to their writing in class.

We do play 'Spelling Bingo' or have informal checks each week where the children can check their own learning and progress in learning the words that are sent home. The rest of this booklet gives you some ideas for helping your child with these 'tricky' words.

## Helping Your Child

**Look, Cover, Write, Check** - Look at the word to practise it, cover it up, then try and spell it before checking.

[ictgames.com](http://ictgames.com) have an online tablet-friendly version of this activity and there is a printable version in the Homework Resources section of the school website.



**Pairs** - Play pairs with the words and if you find a matching pair of words you get the other players to practise spelling it.

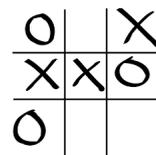
**Tracing** - Trace the word using different coloured pens for each letter or syllable.



**Quickwrite** - Use a stopwatch and see how quickly you can write your list of words.



**Tic, Tac, Toe** - Have a tricky word each and play 'noughts and crosses', taking turns to write your word in a square.



**Mnemonic** - We use lots of these in school. Use the each letter to make the first letter of a sentence.

e.g. said - silly ants in dresses

people - people eat omelettes, people like eggs

could/would/should - o u lucky duck

**Puzzles** - Write the spellings on pieces of cards and then cut them up, jumble them and then match.



**Stairs** - Write the words as if they were stairs, adding one letter at a time. e.g.  
s sp spe spel spell

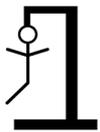


**Chalk** - Practice writing the words on the pavement or patio using chalk.



**Water Painting** - Use a paintbrush and some water to write the words in water on the walls outside or paint over your chalk writing.

**Hangman** - Choose a tricky word to play Hangman with.



**Spelling Tennis** - With a friend, take turns to say the sounds in the tricky words.



**Anagrams** - Muddle up the letters using cards or magnetic letters and see if you can unjumble them to make a word.

**Applying** - Most importantly, once your child has learned a spelling, they also need to be able to apply it in context. Dictate a short sentence containing the word to your child to see if they can still spell it! e.g. The frog was in the pond.

Which words need practising?

In class we practise both words linked to our phonics which can be sounded out and a few 'tricky' words each week. These can be found in the half-termly parent planners and are also sent home each week with Bookshare. Please come and ask your child's class teacher if you have any questions or would like more support.