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HELP YOUR KIDS SPELL BETTER

Does it drive you wild when you think about spelling? Are you afraid you've passed along the "bad speller" gene to your kids? Perhaps that's all in the past!

Spelling is a memory skill and depends on repeated encounters with the word. It won't do any good at all to tell a bad speller to look it up in the dictionary because they can't spell it well enough to look it up! Here are some effective and fun-filled ways to learn to spell new words.

1. Write the word in the air with your finger while you visualize it.
2. Write the word on unlined paper using brightly colored "sniffy" markers
3. Have someone write the word with their finger on your back.
4. Write it in chocolate pudding on a cookie sheet.
5. Write the word in large letters on shelf paper (or recycled roll-ends from the local newspaper) with your right hand and then trace over it with your left hand (or vice versa for lefties)
6. Spell the word using magnetic refrigerator letters
7. Spell out the word using Scrabble letters
8. Write the word in a dark color and highlight the vowels with a light color.
9. Break the word into parts if it has more than one syllable by putting each part on a separate piece of paper, scrambling the pieces and rearranging them
10. Write the word on an index card. Put a synonym (means the same) on the back.
11. If the word has a Greek or Latin root, find out what it is and write it down.
12. Practice spelling words in the car instead of listening to the radio

Good spelling skills and good memory skills go together. Remembering how a word "looks", how many tall letters and short letters it has, remembering its general shape, remembering its uniqueness will help the brain hang onto the correct spelling. In many ways, recognizing words is like recognizing faces. Once you figure out how it is that you recognize a person will help you figure out how to "recognize" a word and whether it is correctly spelled.

If you have an older child whose written work you are correcting for misspellings, the tried and true method of editing is to circle the incorrectly spelled word and directly above it, write the proper spelling. Have the child make a list of all the incorrectly spelled words and

see if there is a pattern (there usually is); sometimes this fixes the problem!

Many "bad spellers" are afraid, truly afraid, of words. You can help defuse this fear by putting large-print dictionaries and word books (topically arranged) like Harry McNaught's *500 Words to Grow On* in the car, in the bathroom, in the kitchen by the microwave, and by the television. Tape a new word to the dashboard of the car every day and play with it, letting kids guess its meaning, make up sentences using it, figuring out its origins. Homonymns (they sound alike but are spelled differently) account for a large portion of common misspellings. Playing with the variants of these "spelling demons"--bare/bare, here/hear, their/there/they're, its/it's, wear/where, to/too/two).

Remember: in the beginning was The Word, and it was probably spelled ~~write~~ ~~wright~~ right.

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