

Multisensory Practice of Sounds and Patterns

Spelling sounds and patterns are practiced daily using multisensory structured procedures.

Sound Dictation Daily review with a sound or spelling deck develops automaticity in translating sounds to spellings (Cox, 1992). Each introduced sound is written on a separate index card. The sounds are represented by letters with appropriate diacritical markings that are enclosed in parentheses or slash marks; for example, (ā) or /ā/. The possible spellings of the sound are written on each card. Key words that unlock the spellings of each sound are also written on the cards.

While looking at a card that is not shown to the students, the teacher dictates the sound written on the card. Students repeat the sound and name the letter or letters that spell the sound as they write them. If students hesitate about the spelling of a sound, the teacher cues students with the appropriate key word. (See Appendix B at the end of this book for multisensory structured reading programs with spelling components. Several of these programs have commercially produced spelling decks that provide daily review of sounds that have been taught through a multisensory procedure for reading.)

When students are spelling sounds with multiple spellings, they repeat the sound and name and write the frequent, reliable spelling choices. For example, if the teacher dictates /ā/, students repeat /ā/ and say, “a-consonant-e, a; final, ay.” In this abbreviated response, the best spelling choices for /ā/ are recognized. Students write this information in shorthand: a-e, a // ay. The double slash marks (/ /) define the spellings according to their positions in words. Everything to the left of the slash marks represents possible spellings of a sound in initial or medial position. Everything to the right represents possible spellings of a sound in final position.

The media that students use to write their responses can be varied daily to provide different kinesthetic reinforcement. Students may write responses on unlined paper, on the chalkboard, on their desktops, on carpet squares, or in salt trays.

Word Dictation As each new spelling pattern is introduced, it is practiced to mastery first through the use of homogenous practice sessions in which every word contains the new pattern. When students demonstrate success in spelling the new pattern, het-

erogeneous practice sessions that contain the new pattern and previously introduced patterns are used. The words used for these practice sessions are not words that students have memorized or will need to memorize. At first, the words for heterogeneous practice should be one-syllable words that progress from two to three sounds to five to six sounds. When students are ready, they start with the spelling of one-syllable base words with suffixes, then move on to multisyllabic words, and finally, to multisyllabic derivatives. Word dictation practices provide review of sounds and patterns and instills a thinking process for spelling.

To establish this thinking process for spelling, a structured procedure is used for word dictation practice. S.O.S. was introduced by Gillingham and Stillman (1960) and adapted by Cox (1992; see Figure 10.2). At each step the teacher provides the necessary corrective feedback. The steps and rationale are as follows:

1. *Look and listen.* Students look at the teacher and focus on his or her mouth as he or she dictates the word. By focusing on the teacher's mouth, students use the visual display to clarify the sounds in the dictated word. For example, /f/ will be visually displayed with the upper teeth resting on the lower lip, whereas /th/ will be displayed with the tip of the tongue protruding between the teeth.
2. *Repeat and segment.* Students repeat the word while looking in a small mirror. The use of a mirror provides visual cues such as the position of the mouth or the placement of the tongue, teeth, or lips. The repetition of the word affirms that students heard the word correctly and gives them additional auditory input and kinesthetic feedback. The kinesthetic feedback clarifies the sounds in the dictated word. For example, with /f/, students feel the upper teeth resting on the lower lip, and with /th/, they feel the tip of the tongue protruding through the teeth.

The segmenting part of this step depends on the kind of word students are spelling and the needs of students. Initially, students segment monosyllabic words

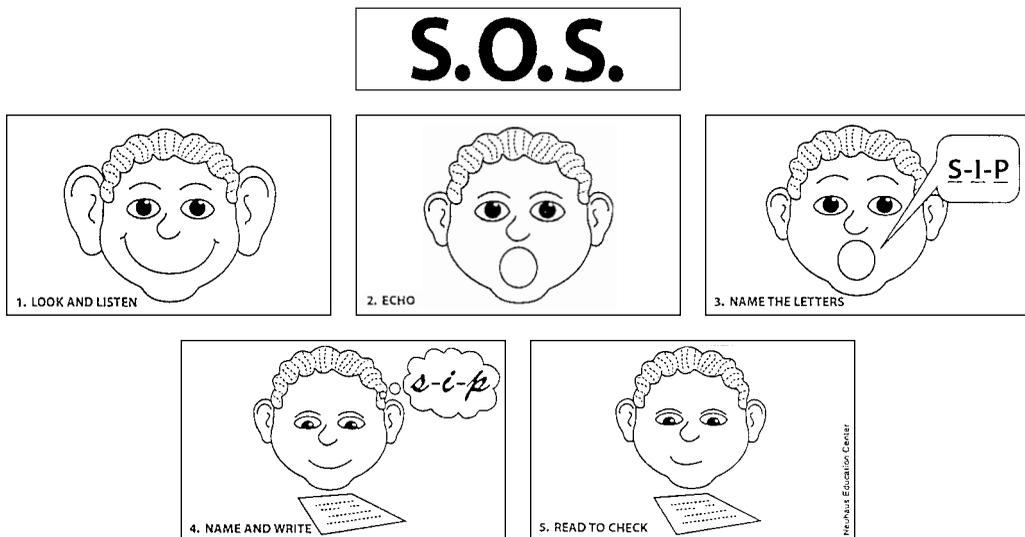


Figure 10.2. Simultaneous oral spelling (S.O.S.) procedure. 1) Look and listen, 2) repeat (echo) and segment, 3) name the letters, 4) name and write, and 5) read to check. (Used by permission of Neuhaus Education Center, Bellaire, TX. Sources: Cox, 1992; Gillingham & Stillman, 1960.)

with two to five sounds. Students segment each word into its constituent sounds. They may use their fingers to mark the sounds. They make a fist, and beginning with the thumb of their nonwriting hand (left palm up for right-handers; right palm down for left-handers) and moving in a left-to-right progression, students extend a finger for each sound that they hear as they segment the word. Instead of using their fingers, students may move counters such as blocks, buttons, or pennies for each sound they hear as they segment the word. Students continue spelling monosyllabic words until they can segment words into constituent sounds with ease.

When students can successfully spell monosyllabic words of five sounds, they are ready to advance to the spelling of derivatives and multisyllabic words. A derivative should be orally separated into morphemic units (e.g., /jümp/ is base word /jümp/ plus suffix /t/). A multisyllabic word should be segmented into its component syllables. Students may use the fingers of their nonwriting hand, blocks, buttons, or pennies to segment the words into morphemic units or syllables.

3. *Name the letters.* Before writing the word on paper, students spell the word aloud. This is a rehearsal step for writing. The teacher can guide students to the correct spelling before they write. The naming of letters impresses letter sequences in memory (Gillingham & Stillman, 1997).

If students have segmented the word using their fingers or counters, then they may want to touch each finger or counter as they spell, thereby reinforcing the sound–letter connection and sequence.

4. *Name and write.* Students write the word while naming the letters (Cox, 1992; Gillingham & Stillman, 1997). The rationale for this step is that naming letters builds the visual sequence of letters in the word through auditory and kinesthetic input. It is important for students to see the word they have spelled orally. If handwriting is not fluent, students can use plastic letters or letter cards to spell the words, or the teacher could serve as an **amanuensis** by writing for students on paper or on the board.
5. *Read to check.* After students have written the word, they read the word silently, using their decoding information. Knowledge of syllable types and syllable-division patterns will aid students' accurate reading of the word and confirmation of the spelling (see Chapter 9). This final step is intended to build independence in knowing that the word is spelled correctly and to teach proofreading skills. To monitor a large group in a class environment, the teacher may have students read the word aloud together and then touch and name the letters of this word. The teacher gives appropriate corrective feedback.

The S.O.S. procedure provides a structure for teaching students how to think about the process of spelling a word. Instead of impulsively writing a word on paper, students think about the sounds in the word and how those sounds can be spelled. They also impress the letter sequence in memory by naming the letters, monitor the spelling of the word by naming the letters while writing, and check the spelling by reading the word. In the initial stages of spelling instruction with dyslexic students, it may be necessary to build an understanding and memory of the five steps gradually by breaking the procedure down into smaller parts. Students may begin with Steps 1 and 2. The teacher says the word, and students repeat the word and segment it into its constituent

sounds. Students with recalcitrant spelling deficits may require practice with this abbreviated procedure for several days or weeks.

When students are secure with these two steps, Step 3 may be added, in which students spell the word aloud. When these three steps are secure, students can add Steps 4 and 5, with the teacher serving as the amanuensis. When the teacher writes the word, students can better attend to the letter sequence in the word and do not have to worry about the formation of the letters. Eventually, students will complete all five steps of the S.O.S. procedure independently.

Sentence Dictation When students' handwriting is fluent and students have demonstrated success with word dictation, the dictation of phrases and sentences can begin. The dictation practice sessions are designed to review previously introduced spelling patterns and irregular words in context. Only three or four phrases or simple sentences are used for a dictation session. A structured procedure for dictation (Cox, 1992; Gillingham & Stillman, 1997; see Figure 10.3) aids this process. The steps and rationale of the procedure are as follows:

1. *Look and listen.* Students look at the teacher and listen as the teacher dictates a sentence. As with S.O.S., students look at the teacher's mouth to clarify the sounds in the words.
2. *Repeat.* Students repeat the sentence. Using a nonverbal cue, the teacher signals that students should repeat the sentence. Students continue to repeat the sentence until it is secure.
3. *Write.* When the teacher believes that the sentence is secure, he or she indicates that students should begin writing the sentence. The teacher again uses a nonverbal

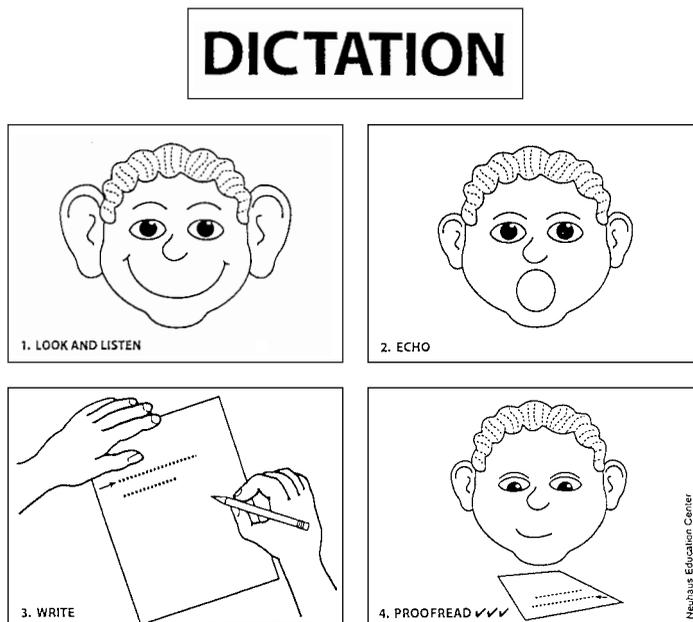


Figure 10.3. Dictation procedure. 1) Look and listen, 2) repeat (echo), 3) write, and 4) proofread. (Used by permission of Neuhaus Education Center, Bellaire, TX. Sources: Cox, 1992; Gillingham & Stillman, 1960.)

cue to indicate that students should begin to write. The use of nonverbal cues does not interrupt students' auditory memory of the sentence sequence.

4. *Proofread.* When students have finished writing the sentence, the teacher dictates it three times as students check for missing words, for capitalization and punctuation, and for spelling errors. As students check each feature, they place a checkmark at the end of the sentence. Three checkmarks after the sentence indicates that all three features have been checked. Students can extend this method of checking to their written composition. After writing a paragraph, they should check it three times for these same features. Three checkmarks in the top margin of a paper indicate that all three features have been checked.

It is suggested that students be given one more opportunity on another day to check the dictation paper for spelling errors. A freshly completed dictation paper is considered "hot" (Cox, 1992). It is difficult to see errors in a "hot" dictation paper. When students have the opportunity to review the dictation sentences at another time, they are better able to see errors. With knowledge of the frequent, reliable patterns in English, orthography is no longer a conundrum to students. They have a means of organizing and managing the language for spelling.

Rule Words

Rule words are spelled the way they sound, but certain information needs to be considered before the word is written. There are five major rules that indicate when a letter should be doubled, dropped, or changed. Two of these rules are used for doubling consonants within a base word. The other three major rules deal with spelling derivatives. They involve a change to the spelling of a base word (i.e., a letter is doubled, dropped, or changed) when adding a suffix. All of the rules are introduced through guided discovery teaching procedures.

Major Spelling Rules

The five major rules include the Rule for Doubling the Final Consonant (the Floss Rule), the Rule for Doubling a Medial Consonant (the Rabbit Rule), the Doubling Rule, the Dropping Rule, and the Changing Rule. Each rule has a set of **checkpoints**. These checkpoints signal students that a letter may be doubled, dropped, or changed. All of the salient checkpoints must be present for a letter to be doubled, dropped, or changed.

The Rule for Doubling the Final Consonant (the Floss Rule)

Discovery words:

tiff *tell* *toss*
puff *doll* *pass*
staff *hill* *mess*

In a one-syllable base word after a short vowel, final /f/, /l/, and /s/ are spelled *ff*, *ll*, and *ss*, respectively. When deciding whether to apply this rule, students must think about these checkpoints: 1) one syllable; 2) short vowel; and 3) final /f/, /l/, or /s/. If all three checkpoints are present, then the final consonant is doubled. If any one of the checkpoints is missing, then the final consonant will not be doubled.

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