

Letters and Sounds: Phase Six



Phase Six

(throughout Year 2)

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Key



This icon indicates that the activity can be viewed on the DVD.

Summary

By the beginning of Phase Six, children should know most of the common grapheme–phoneme correspondences (GPCs). They should be able to read hundreds of words, doing this in three ways:

- reading the words automatically if they are very familiar;
- decoding them quickly and silently because their sounding and blending routine is now well established;
- decoding them aloud.

Children’s spelling should be phonemically accurate, although it may still be a little unconventional at times. Spelling usually lags behind reading, as it is harder. (See Appendix 3: Assessment.)

During this phase, children become fluent readers and increasingly accurate spellers.

READING

At this stage many children will be reading longer and less familiar texts independently and with increasing fluency. The shift from learning to read to reading to learn takes place and children read for information and for pleasure.

Children need to learn some of the rarer GPCs (see *Notes of Guidance for Practitioners and Teachers*, Appendix 2, page 19,) and be able to use them accurately in their reading.

A few children may be less fluent and confident, often because their recognition of graphemes consisting of two or more letters is not automatic enough. Such children may still try to use phonics by sounding out each letter individually and then attempting to blend these sounds (for instance /c/-/h/-/a/-/r/-/g/-/e/ instead of /ch/-/ar/-/ge/). This is all too often misunderstood by teachers as an overuse of phonics rather than misuse, and results in teachers suggesting to children that they use alternative strategies to read unfamiliar words. Instead the solution is greater familiarity with graphemes of two or more letters. The necessity for complete familiarity with these graphemes cannot be overstated. The work on spelling, which continues throughout this phase and beyond, will help children to understand more about the structure of words and consolidate their knowledge of GPCs. For example, children who are not yet reliably recognising digraphs and are still reading them as individual letters will get extra reinforcement when they learn to spell words containing the digraphs such as **road, leaf, town, cloud, shop**.

As children find that they can decode words quickly and independently, they will read more and more so that the number of words they can read automatically builds up. There is a list of the 300 high-frequency words in Appendix 1 on pages 193–195. Increasing the pace of reading is an important objective. Children should be encouraged to read aloud as well as silently for themselves.

Knowing where to place the stress in polysyllabic words can be problematic. If the child has achieved a phonemic approximation of the word, particularly by giving all vowels their full value, the context of the sentence will often provide a sensible resolution; the child should then recheck this against the letters. Working through the word in this way will make it easier for it to be read more automatically in future.

In Phase Six, many children will be able to read texts of several hundred words fluently at their first attempt. Those children who are less fluent may benefit from rereading shorter texts several times, not in order to memorise the texts, but to become more familiar with at least some of the words that cause them to stumble, and to begin to experience what fluent reading feels like.

To become successful readers, children must understand what they read. They need to learn a range of comprehension strategies and should be encouraged to reflect upon their own understanding and learning. Such an approach, which starts at the earliest stages, gathers momentum as children develop their fluency. Children need to be taught to go beyond literal interpretation and recall, to explore the greater complexities of texts through inference and deduction. Over time they need to develop self-regulated comprehension strategies:

- activating prior knowledge;
- clarifying meanings – with a focus on vocabulary work;
- generating questions, interrogating the text;
- constructing mental images during reading;
- summarising.

Many of the texts children read at this stage will be story books, through which they will be developing an understanding of the author's ideas, plot development and characterisation. It is important that children are also provided with opportunities to read a range of non-fiction texts, which require a different set of strategies. The use of a contents page, index and glossary makes additional demands on young readers as they search for relevant information. In reading simple poems, children need to adapt to and explore the effects of poetic language, continuing to develop their understanding of rhythm, rhyme and alliteration.

From an early stage, children need to be encouraged to read with phrasing and fluency, and to take account of punctuation to aid meaning. Much of the reading now will be silent and children will be gaining reading stamina as they attempt longer texts.

In addition, as children read with growing independence, they will engage with and respond to texts; they will choose and justify their choice of texts and will begin to critically evaluate them.

It is important throughout that children continue to have opportunities to listen to experienced readers reading aloud and that they develop a love of reading.

SPELLING

Teaching spelling

Introducing and teaching the past tense

The past tense dealt with in this section is simple past tense, e.g. **I looked**, not continuous past tense, e.g. **I was looking**.

Before you teach children to spell the past tense forms of verbs, it is important that they gain an understanding of the meaning of 'tense'. Since many common verbs have irregular past tenses (e.g. **go – went, come – came, say – said**) it is often easier to teach the *concept* of past tense separately from the *spelling* of past tense forms. Short oral games can be used for this purpose.

For example, a puppet could say *Today I am eating an egg – what did I eat yesterday?* The response could be *Yesterday you ate a sandwich, Yesterday you ate some jam.* The puppet could say *Today I am jumping on the bed. Where did I jump yesterday?* and the response could be *Yesterday you jumped in the water, etc.* These games can be fitted into odd moments now and then; several children could respond in turn, and the games would also serve as memory training (don't repeat what's already been suggested).

Using familiar texts

Procedure

Use a current class text as the basis for discussion about tense.

1. Find extracts of past tense narrative and ask children to describe what is happening in the present tense. For example, use extracts from *Funnybones* (by Alan Alhberg and Janet Alhberg, published by Puffin Books) such as where the skeletons leave the cellar, climb the stairs and walk to the park.
2. Let the children compare the two versions. Discuss how they are different both in meaning and language.
3. Use the words **yesterday** and **today** to reinforce the different meanings.
4. Find bits of present tense dialogue in the text and ask children to retell it as past tense narrative.

Investigating and learning how to add suffixes

Phoneme frame

Purpose

- To reinforce understanding and application of the **-ed** suffix for the past tense

Prerequisite

- The children must have an understanding of the grammar of the past tense and experience of segmenting words into phonemes

Resources

For whole-class work

- Set of five-box and six-box phoneme frames drawn on the whiteboard
- Set of five-box and six-box phoneme frames, on laminated card so they can be reused, one per pair of children
- Word cards placed in a bag (e.g. **rounded, helped, turned, begged, hissed, wanted, sorted, hummed, waded, washed, hated, greased, lived, robbed, rocked, laughed, called, roasted**)

Procedure

1. Pick a word card from the bag and read it out without showing the children.
2. Working with a partner, the children say the word to themselves then segment and count the phonemes. They decide which phoneme frame to use and try writing it with one phoneme in each box.
3. Say *Show me* as the signal for the children to hold up their frames.
4. Demonstrate how to spell the word correctly using a frame on the whiteboard and ask the pairs of children to check their own spellings.
5. Repeat for about six words and look at the words that have been written. What spelling pattern do they all have? Emphasise that even when the final phoneme sounds different (e.g. **jumped**), the spelling pattern is still the same. Challenge the children to explain why this is (past tense of verbs). Look closely at the phoneme frames. Sometimes the **-ed** ending is two phonemes (e.g. **wanted**) and sometimes only one (e.g. **grasped**).

Word sort

Purpose

- To categorise words according to their spelling pattern

Use this activity to investigate:

- the rules for adding **-ing**, **-ed**, **-er**, **-est**, **-ful**, **-ly** and **-y**, plurals (see pages 189–190)
- how to differentiate spelling patterns (e.g. different representations of the same phoneme; the ‘w special’ – see page 187).

Resources

For whole-class work

- Set of word cards exemplifying the spelling patterns you are investigating (see ‘Practice examples’, on page 191, for suggestions)
- Reusable sticky pads

For independent work

- Different set of word cards, with words tailored to the children’s ability, one per pair or group of three children

Procedure

Whole-class work

1. Select a word, read it out and attach it to the top of the whiteboard. Underline the part of the word that you are looking at and explain what you are investigating (e.g. how the vowel phoneme is spelt; how the base word has changed).
2. Ask the children to identify other words that follow the same pattern. Challenge them to explain their suggestion and then move the words into the column.
3. When all the words have been identified, start a new column and ask the children to explain what is different about this spelling pattern.
4. If they suggest a word that does not fit the pattern, start a new column and challenge them to find other words that would go with it.
5. When the words have been sorted, ask the children to suggest spelling rules based on what they can see. Note their suggestions so that they can refer to them in independent work.

Independent work

1. Provide more word cards for the children to sort, working in pairs or groups of three.
2. The children use the same categories as before and take it in turns to place a word in one of the columns. The other group members must agree.
3. Words that they cannot place can go into a 'problem' pile.
4. The group compose a label for each column that explains what the words have in common.

Plenary

1. Look back at the rules that were suggested earlier and ask the children whether they were able to apply them when they sorted their own words.
2. Look at the 'problem' words and help the children to categorise them. Talk about exceptions to the general rules and ways to remember these spellings.

Add race**Purpose**

- To practise adding **-ing**

Use this activity to revisit the rules for: adding **-ing**, adding **-ed**, adding **-s** and adding suffixes **-er**, **-est**, **-ful**, **-ly** and **-y**. (see pages 189–190)

(The activity is described as if the focus were adding **-ing**. Modify appropriately for **-ed**, **-er**, **-est**, **-y**, **-s**.)

Prerequisite

- The children must have investigated and learned the appropriate spelling rules and be able to distinguish long and short vowel phonemes (e.g. /a/ and /ai/, /o/ and /oa/).

Resources

For whole-class work

- 18 cards: three sets of six cards – each set gives six verbs that fit one of the three rules of what we have to do to the verb when adding **-ing**: 1. Nothing, 2. Double the final consonant, 3. Drop the **e** (see 'Practice examples' on page 191)

For independent work

- Set of verb cards, three for each rule as described above
- Large sheet of paper with the three columns labelled as above, one per pair or group of three
- Whiteboards and pens, one per child

Procedure

Whole-class work

1. Draw three numbered columns on the whiteboard corresponding to the three possible actions to take when adding **-ing**: 1. Nothing, 2. Double the final consonant, 3. Drop the **e**.
2. Revise the rules for adding **-ing** to a verb.
3. Explain that this game is a race to see which column will fill up first.
4. Shuffle the verb cards and place them face down in front of you.
5. Show the first card. If there are children in the class who may not understand the word, ask someone to think of a sentence using the word (e.g. **I smile at my cat**).
6. Ask the children to discuss with their talk partners which column the verb belongs in.
7. Ask the children to show the card (or raise the number of fingers) to indicate which column the verb belongs in.
8. If some children show an incorrect card or put the wrong number of fingers up, explore why they made this decision.
9. Place the word in the correct column.
10. Repeat for more verbs. Note which column has filled up first and continue until the next one has filled. Stop the game there.

Independent work

1. The children work in small groups. Each child needs a whiteboard and pen and the group needs a large piece of paper with three columns labelled as above.
2. The verb cards should be placed in a pile, face down in the centre of the table.
3. One child takes a card from the pile and shows it to the group.
4. The children decide which column the word belongs in and try the word on their whiteboards. When all agree, one child records the word in the agreed column on the paper.
5. Another child picks up the next verb card and repeats the process.

Plenary

1. Ask the children to read the words out for each column and check that all groups agree.
2. Ask some children whether there were any words their group disagreed about.
3. If you have looked at adding other endings (e.g. **-ed**, **-y**, **-est**) discuss whether there are similarities or differences between the rules.

Teaching spelling long words

Words in words

Purpose

- To investigate how adding suffixes and prefixes changes words

Use this activity to teach and reinforce prefixes and suffixes.

Prerequisite

- When you are selecting words for this activity, consider the vocabulary used by the children in your class and select words that they are likely to know. (See also 'Practice examples', page 191.) Explore the function of the prefix or suffix using familiar words, then help to expand the children's vocabulary by asking them to predict meanings of other words with the same prefix or suffix.

Preparation

- Prepare lists of the words you want to discuss with children and differentiated sets of words for the children to work with in the independent session

Resources

- Lists of words
- Whiteboards and pens, one per pair of children

Procedure

1. Show the children two related words, with and without the prefix or suffix. Ask them what they both mean and what has been added to the base word to make the other word. Do the same with three more pairs of words using the same prefix or suffix.
2. Ask the children, in pairs, to make up a sentence for each of two words to share with the class. Draw their attention to the different uses of each of the words.
3. Ask the children to think of other words with the same prefix or suffix and to write the words on their whiteboards. Ask the children to share the words with the class.
4. If it is relevant, show an example in which the spelling of the base word is altered when the suffix is added. Discuss the implications for spelling.

Clap and count

Purpose

- To provide a routine for spelling long words

Use this activity for spelling compound words, words with prefixes and other multi-syllabic words.

Resources

For whole-class work

- Differentiated sets of multi-syllable word cards, each card showing one word
- Whiteboards and pens, one per child

Preparation

For independent work

- Prepare differentiated sets of word cards (4–12 per group, depending on the children's ability)

Procedure

Whole-class work

1. Say a two-syllable word, clapping the syllables.
2. Do the same with words with three and more syllables including some of the children's names.
3. Point to two children who have names containing a different number of syllables. Clap one of their names and ask the children which one you are clapping.
4. Clap a two-syllable word and draw two lines or boxes on the whiteboard for each syllable.
5. Ask the children to write down the letters for the phonemes in the first syllable and show you.
6. If they are not all correct, take different versions from the children and discuss them.
7. Repeat with the second syllable.
8. Say another word and ask the children to clap it and draw boxes for the number of syllables on their whiteboards and show you.
9. Discuss deviations in the responses.
10. Ask the children to write down the letters for the phonemes in the first syllable and show you.

11. If they are not all correct, take different versions from the children and discuss them.
12. Repeat with the second and subsequent syllables.
13. Summarise the routine, with the children joining in, to help them to remember it: clap and count the syllables, draw the lines, write the letters.

Independent work

1. The children work in groups of up to four to play 'clap and count, draw, write' (as above).
2. Shuffle the word cards and put them in a pile, face down in the centre of the table.
3. When it is their turn, each child should take the top word from the pile, read it aloud and put it face down in front of them.
4. The children go through the same routine: clap and count the syllables, draw the lines, write the letters.
5. The card is then revealed and everybody checks the accuracy of their spelling, awarding themselves 1 point for the correct number of syllables and 1 point for each syllable spelt correctly.
6. Repeat until each child has had at least one turn and then add up the scores to determine the winner.

Plenary

1. Focus on children applying this strategy 'silently' (i.e. without stopping and clapping when trying to work out a spelling).
2. Read out five new words for the children to try and write 'secretly' using the routine: clap and count the syllables, draw the lines, write the letters – but they must not give away the number of syllables. You could show them how to tap very quietly with their fingers.
3. Write up the words and support children in checking their words. What are the difficult bits in each of the words? How does this routine help?

Finding and learning the difficult bits in words

Take it apart and put it back together

Purpose

- To help children learn high-frequency and topic words by developing their ability to identify the potentially difficult element or elements in a word (e.g the double **tt** in **getting**, the unusual spelling of /**oo**/, and the unaccented vowel **i** in **beautiful**).

Resources

- Set of large word cards and blank strips of card (for writing explanation sentences)
- Reusable sticky pads

For independent work

- List of high-frequency or topic words and a list of word descriptions with a blank box beside each description

Procedure

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that if we understand why a word is spelt in a particular way, it can help us to remember how to spell that word accurately when we are writing.
2. Write a word on the whiteboard. Ask the children why they think it is spelt like this. Allow some thinking time and then take feedback.
3. Follow the sequence below to 'take the word apart and put it back together again'.
 - The children say the word out loud and clap the syllables – underline these on the whiteboard.
 - The children count the phonemes and hold up the correct number of fingers. Draw in sound buttons on the whiteboard.
 - The children spot any other distinctive features – note these and/or highlight the particular part of the word.
 - Summarise all the features in a description: the children suggest a sentence orally, you select succinct and accurate ideas and write a description on a strip of card (e.g. **their**: this word has one syllable, two phonemes and it begins with the letters **the** just like two related words **them** and **they**; **wanted**: this verb has two syllables, six phonemes, it begins with the 'w special' (see page 187) and has an **-ed** ending for the past tense).

4. Continue with more words so that children get used to the routine.
5. Check the children's understanding of the descriptions. Give some children the sentence strips and some the cards with the words you have described. Ask them to read their cards.
6. Choose a child to bring a sentence strip out and stick it on the whiteboard. Read the description together and ask the child who has the correct word card to bring it to the whiteboard. The first child checks the word and sticks it on the whiteboard if it matches the description. The other children put their thumbs up or down to show whether they agree or not. Repeat until all the sentences are matched with words.

Plenary

1. Ask a child to describe a word. (It could be a word on the list or another word entirely.) Can any of the other children find a word that matches the description?
2. Talk about how this activity can help the children to learn particular spellings. They have taken words apart and looked at distinctive features. This will help them to remember the spellings. Ask each child to choose one word from the list and write it, with the description, in their spelling log. Challenge them to learn it. When they do independent writing they can expect to see an improvement in the spelling of this word.

Learning and practising spellings

Memory strategies

Purpose

- To develop familiarity with different strategies for memorising high-frequency or topic words

Resources

- Poster of four memory strategies (see next page)
- List of words to be spelt

Procedure

Whole-class work

1. Introduce the activity by explaining that in addition to knowing how a word is constructed we may need additional aids to memory.

2. Display the poster of four memory strategies and tell the children that it contains three good ideas for helping them to remember spellings, and a final emergency idea (in case nothing else works).
3. Write a word on the whiteboard, ask the children to read it together and clap the syllables.
4. Discuss with the children the features of the word that might make it difficult to remember and which memory strategy might be helpful.
5. Rub the word off the whiteboard and ask the children to write the word.
6. If children made errors, discuss them in relation to the memory strategy.
7. Repeat 3–6 with another word.
8. Write another word on the whiteboard, ask the children to read it and clap the syllables.
9. Ask the children to discuss with their partners which memory strategy they could use, then ask them to learn the word.
10. Rub the word off the whiteboard and ask the children to write the word.
11. Discuss the strategies chosen and their effectiveness for learning the word.
12. Repeat 8–11 with two more words.
13. Finally dictate each word learned during the lesson for the children to write.

Strategies	Explanations
1. Syllables	To learn my word I can listen to how many syllables there are so I can break it into smaller bits to remember (e.g. Sep-tem-ber , ba-by)
2. Base words	To learn my word I can find its base word (e.g. Smiling – base smile +ing , e.g. women = wo + men)
3. Analogy	To learn my word I can use words that I already know to help me (e.g. could: would, should)
4. Mnemonics	To learn my word I can make up a sentence to help me remember it (e.g. could – O U Lucky Duck; people – people eat orange peel like elephants)

Learning words

The best way of giving children words to memorise is to provide a sentence for children to learn so that they get used to using the target words in context. The sentences could be practised at home (or in time allocated during the school day) and then children can show what they have learned by writing the sentences at the beginning of spelling sessions.

The purpose of the following two routines is for children to:

- show what they have learned;
- practise writing words that follow the same pattern or convention;
- use the words in the context of a sentence;
- reflect on what they have learned and learn from their errors.

The children are involved in assessing their own learning as they check their work. They are encouraged to explain their decisions about spelling so that they can understand their success and overcome misconceptions. They use their spelling logs to record words that they often have difficulty with.

Routine A

Preparation

- Select words and devise a sentence for dictation. Write out a list of all the words to be used in the routine, and the final sentence.

Resources

- Sentence for dictation
- List of words

Procedure

Routine A is made up of the following five elements.

1. **Show me what you know.** Test the children on the words they have been learning. Either read the whole sentence and ask them to write it, or read the individual target words.
2. **Spell the word.** Select five more words that follow the same pattern or convention. Remind the children about the convention or spelling pattern they explored. Explain that they will be able to use what they have learned to try spelling the new words.
3. **Read out one word at a time.** All the children write it, read what they have written and check that they are happy with it.

4. **Write the sentence.** Dictate a sentence that includes several target words. Break it into meaningful chunks, repeating each string of words several times. Give children time to check what they have written and remind them of the target features (e.g. **-ed** endings; different spellings of the long vowel phoneme, strategy for remembering a difficult bit).
5. **What have I learned?** Display the list of words for children to use when they are checking their own work. They work in pairs supporting one another in identifying correct spellings and underlining any errors.

Focus on successful strategies, asking what the children have learned that has helped them spell this word correctly. Encourage the children to articulate what they know and how they have applied it. Then focus on some errors and help children to understand why they might have mis-spelt the word – were they tripped up by the difficult bit? Did they forget to apply the rule?

Routine B

Preparation

- Devise two sentences that include examples of words from this phase and incorporate words from previous phases. Select three words for the children to make into their own sentences. Write out the dictations, and the words as three word cards.

For this activity the children should write their sentences in a notebook so that there is an ongoing record of their progress.

Resources

- Two sentences
- Three word cards

Procedure

Routine B is made up of the following three elements.

1. **Write the sentence.** Dictate two sentences that include target words and other words needing reinforcement. Break each sentence into meaningful chunks, repeating each string of words several times. Give children time to check what they have written and ask them to look out for words they have been working on. Is there a pattern to follow or a rule to apply?
2. **Create a new sentence.** Read out the three words you have chosen and provide children with a theme, e.g. create a new sentence about children eating lunch using the words **wanted**, **their** and **shared**. Give the children time to write their sentences, read through and check them. Have they used the strategies they have been learning to recall the correct spelling?

One (confident) child could write his sentence 'in secret' on the whiteboard. Reveal this sentence and ask the children to read it through. Ask which words are spelt correctly. Analyse any errors and talk about why they might have been made.

- 3. What have I learned?** Display the sentences from the earlier dictation and word cards for the new sentences. Ask children to check their work in pairs. They support one another in identifying correct spellings and underlining any errors.

Possible questions are: *Were there words in this dictation that you have mis-spelt before? Did you get them right this time? What strategy did you use to remember the difficult bit? Did you spell the target words correctly in your sentence?* Give the children the opportunity to select one or two words to add to their spelling logs.

These are likely to be words that they use regularly and find difficult to spell.

For really tricky words the following process – simultaneous oral spelling – has proved useful for children.

Procedure

1. The children copy out word to be learned on a card.
2. They read it aloud then turn the card over.
3. Ask them to write out the word, naming each letter as they write it.
4. They read aloud the word they have written.
5. Then ask them to turn the card over and compare their spelling with the correct spelling.
6. Repeat 2–5 three times.

Do this for six consecutive days.

Application of spelling in writing

Children's growing understanding of why words are spelt in a particular way is valuable only if they go on to apply it in their independent writing. Children should be able to spell an ever-increasing number of words accurately and to check and correct their own work. This process is supported through:

- shared writing: the teacher demonstrates how to apply spelling strategies while writing and teaches proofreading skills;
- guided and independent writing: the children apply what they have been taught. This is the opportunity to think about the whole writing process: composition as well as spelling, handwriting and punctuation;

- marking the children's work: the teacher can assess their progress and their ability to understand and apply what has been taught, then identify targets for further improvement;
- teaching and practising handwriting: learning and practising a fluent joined style will support the children's spelling development.

Marking

Marking provides the opportunity to see how well individual children understand and apply what has been taught and should always relate to the specific focus for teaching.

- Set clear expectations when the children start to write. Remind them of the strategies, rules and conventions that they can apply. Expectations and marking will reflect the children's cumulative knowledge but the marking should not go beyond what has been taught about spelling. Ensure that the children know what the criteria for success are in this particular piece of work. For example: *Now that you understand the rules for adding **-ed** to regular verbs I will expect you to spell these words correctly.*
- Analyse children's errors. Look closely at the strategies the children are using. What does this tell you about their understanding? For example, a child using **jump**t instead of **jump**ed is using phonological knowledge but does not yet understand about adding **-ed** to verbs in the past tense.
- Provide feedback and time to respond. In your comments to the children, focus on a limited number of spelling errors that relate to a particular letter string or spelling convention. Ensure that the children have had time to read or discuss your feedback and clarify expectations about what they should do next.
- Set mini-targets. Present expectations for independent spelling in terms of simple targets that will apply to all the writing the children do. These targets would generally be differentiated for groups, but it may be appropriate to tailor a target to include specific 'problem' words for an individual (e.g. I expect to spell these words correctly in all my writing: **said**, **they**).

Targets can be written into spelling logs for the children to refer to regularly.

Children gaining independence

- Strategies for spelling during writing. Children need strategies to help them attempt spellings they are not sure of as they are writing, without interrupting the flow of their composition. Aim to build up routines where the children will try different strategies before asking for help (see the poster 'Things to do before asking someone' on page 192).
- Using spelling logs. Children can each have a log – ideally in the form of a loose-leaf folder that can be added to – to record the particular spellings they need to focus on in their work. The spelling log can be used in the following two main ways.
 1. As part of the spelling programme: a regular part of the spelling activities involves the children identifying specific words that they need to continue to work on. These could be words exemplifying a particular pattern or convention or high-frequency words. These words are put into the children's logs with tips on how to remember the spelling.
 2. To record spellings arising from each child's independent writing: these words will be specific to the individual child and will be those that frequently trip them up as they are writing. These words can be identified as part of the proofreading process and children can be involved in devising strategies for learning them and monitoring whether they spell the target words correctly in subsequent work.

The children should have no more than five target words at a time and these should be reviewed at intervals (e.g. each half-term). The children can look for evidence of correct spellings in their independent writing and remove the word from the list once it has been spelt correctly five times in a row. The teacher can write the child's spelling target into the log so that the child can refer to it regularly.

Proofreading

Children need to be taught how to proofread their work as part of the writing process. Editing for spelling (or typographic errors) should take place after the writer is satisfied with all other elements of the writing. It is important that teachers model the proofreading process in shared writing.

1. Preparation. Towards the end of a unit of work, after the children have revisited and revised their work in terms of structure and content, sentence construction and punctuation, the teacher selects an example of one child's work, writes it out and makes a few changes so that it is not immediately recognisable.
2. Shared writing. Read through the work as the children follow, explaining that you are looking for a particular type of spelling error, related to specific recent teaching focuses (e.g. the spelling of **-ed** endings). Think aloud as you identify each error and encourage the children to go through the following routine.
 - Underline the part of the word that looks wrong and explain why it looks wrong.
 - Try out an alternative spelling.

- Ask yourself whether it looks right.
- Check from another source (e.g. words around the room, another child, spelling log, dictionary).
- Write in the correct spelling.

Repeat this until the target words have been corrected. Are there any patterns in these errors? Is there a strategy that would help the children to avoid the same errors in the future (e.g. consonant doubling after short vowels)?

3. Independent and guided writing. The children repeat the same process for their own writing across the curriculum. Less confident writers can be supported in this process with guided writing sessions.

Using dictionaries and spelling checkers

Children should be taught to use a dictionary to check their spelling. By Phase Six, the repeated singing of an alphabet song at earlier phases should have familiarised them with alphabetical order. Their first dictionary practice should be with words starting with different letters, but once they are competent at this, they should learn how to look at second and subsequent letters when necessary, learning, for example, that words starting **al-** come before words starting **an-** and **as-**, and words starting **ben-** come before words starting **ber-**. Knowledge gained in Phase Five of different ways of spelling particular sounds is also relevant in dictionary use: for example a child who tries to look up **believe** under **belee-** needs to be reminded to look under other possible spellings of the /ee/ sound. Having found the correct spelling of a word, children should be encouraged to memorise it.

Unless a first attempt at spelling a word is logical and reasonably close to the target, a spelling checker may suggest words which are not the one required. Children need to be taught not just to accept these suggestions, but to sound them out carefully to double-check whether the pronunciation matches that of the word they are trying to spell.

Links with handwriting

Developing a fluent joined style is an important part of learning to spell and the teaching of spelling and handwriting should be closely linked.

- Handwriting sessions. As children are taught the basic joins they can practise joining each digraph as one unit. This can develop into practising letter strings and complete words linked to the specific focus for teaching (e.g. joining **w-a** to support work on the 'w special' – see page 187).
- High-frequency words can be demonstrated and practised as joined units (e.g. **the, was, said**).
- Spelling sessions. The children need to see the target words written in joined script as frequently as possible and to practise writing words, for example in dictations and at home using joined script themselves.

Knowledge of the spelling system

In Phase Six children need to acquire more word-specific knowledge. They still need to segment words into phonemes to spell them, but they also learn that good spelling involves not only doing this and representing all the phonemes plausibly but also, where necessary, choosing the right grapheme from several possibilities.

In some cases, word-specific spellings (e.g. **sea/see**; **goal/pole/bowl/soul**; **zoo/clue/flew/you**) simply have to be learned. It is important to devote time in this phase to learning common words with rare or irregular spellings (e.g. **they, there, said**) as the quantity children write increases and without correction they may practise incorrect spellings that are later difficult to put right.

However, there are spelling conventions or guidelines that generalise across many words and that children should understand. Where there are exceptions these can usually be dealt with as they arise in children's reading and writing.

Some useful spelling guidelines

1. The position of a phoneme in a word may rule out certain graphemes for that phoneme. The **ai** and **oi** spellings do not occur at the end of English words or immediately before suffixes; instead, the **ay** and **oy** spellings are used in these positions (e.g. **play, played, playing, playful, joy, joyful, enjoying, enjoyment**). In other positions, the /ai/ sound is most often spelled **ai** or **a-**consonant-vowel, as in **rain, date** and **bacon**. The same principle applies in choosing between **oi** and **oy**: **oy** is used at the end of a word or immediately before a suffix, and **oi** is used elsewhere. There is no other spelling for this phoneme.

Note that it is recommended that teachers should (at least at first) simply pronounce the relevant vowel sounds for the children – /a/, /e/, /i/, /o/ and /u/; /ai/, /ee/, /igh/, /oa/ and /oo/. Later the terms 'long' and 'short' can be useful when children need to form more general concepts about spelling patterns.

2. When an /o/ sound follows a /w/ sound, it is frequently spelt with the letter **a** (e.g. **was, wallet, want, wash, watch, wander**) – often known as the 'w special'. This extends to many words where the /w/ sound comes from the **qu** grapheme (e.g. **quarrel, quantity, squad, squash**).
3. When an /ur/ sound follows the letter **w** (but not **qu**) it is usually spelt **or** (e.g. **word, worm, work, worship, worth**). The important exception is **were**.
4. An /or/ sound before an /l/ sound is frequently spelled with the letter /a/ (e.g. **all, ball, call, always**).

5. English words do not end in the letter **v** unless they are abbreviations (e.g. **rev**). If a word ends in a /**v**/ sound, **e** must be added after the **v** in the spelling (e.g. **give, have, live, love, above**). This may seem confusing, because it suggests that the vowels should have their 'long' sounds (as in **alive, save** and **stove**) but in fact there are very few words in the **give/have** category (i.e. words with 'short' vowels) – they are mostly common words and are quickly learned.
6. Elisions, sometimes known as contractions, such as **I'm, let's** and **can't** are usually easy to spell, but children need to know where to put the apostrophe. They should be taught that it marks the place where letters are omitted.
7. Confusions are common between **their** and **there** and can persist unless appropriate teaching is given. **There** is related in meaning and spelling to **here** and **where**; all are concerned with place. **Their** is related in meaning (plural person) and spelling to **they** and **them**. To avoid confusing children, experience shows it is advisable not to teach these two similar sounding words **there** and **their** at the same time but to secure the understanding of one of them before teaching the other.

An additional problem with the word **their** is its unusual letter order. However, if children know that **they, them** and **their** share the same first three letters, they are less likely to misspell **their** as **thier**.

8. Giving vowel graphemes their full value in reading can help with the spelling of the schwa sound. For example, if children at first sound out the word **important** in their reading with a clear /**a**/ sound in the last syllable, this will help them to remember to spell the **schwa** sound in that syllable with the letter **a** rather than with any other vowel letter.
9. In deciding whether to use **ant** or **ent, ance** or **ence** at the end of a word, it is often helpful to consider whether there is a related word where the vowel sound is more clearly pronounced. When deciding, for example, between **occupant** or **occupent** the related word **occupation** shows that the vowel letter must be **a**. Similarly, if one is unsure about **residance** or **residence**, the word **residential** shows that the letter must be **e**.

Note: The **i** before **e** except after **c** rule is not worth teaching. It applies only to words in which the **ie** or **ei** stands for a clear /**ee**/ sound and unless this is known, words such as **sufficient, veil** and **their** look like exceptions. There are so few words where the **ei** spelling for the /**ee**/ sound follows the letter **c** that it is easier to learn the specific words: **receive, conceive, deceive** (+ the related words **receipt, conceit, deceit**), **perceive** and **ceiling**.

Adding suffixes to words

During Phase Six, children should also start to learn spelling conventions for adding common endings (suffixes) to words. Most children will have taken words with suffixes in their stride in reading, but for spelling purposes they now need more systematic teaching both of the suffixes themselves and of how the spelling of base words may have to change slightly when suffixes are added. Some grammatical awareness is also helpful here: just knowing that the regular past tense ending is spelt **-ed** is not enough – children also need to be aware that the word they are trying to spell is a past tense word. Without this awareness, they may, for example, spell **hopped** as **hopt**, **played** as **plaid**, **grabbed** as **grabd** and **started** as **startid** – perfectly accurate phonemically, but not correct. Conversely, once they have understood that the **-ed** ending can sometimes sound like /t/, they may try to spell **soft** as **soffed**, unless they realise that this word is not the past tense of a verb. (See 'Introducing and teaching the past tense' on page 170).

These are examples of common suffixes suitable for Phase Six:

- **-s** and **-es**: added to nouns and verbs, as in **cats**, **runs**, **bushes**, **catches**;
- **-ed** and **-ing**: added to verbs, as in **hopped**, **hopping**, **hoped**, **hoping**;
- **-ful**: added to nouns, as in **careful**, **painful**, **playful**, **restful**, **mouthful**;
- **-er**: added to verbs to denote the person doing the action and to adjectives to give the comparative form, as in **runner**, **reader**, **writer**, **bigger**, **slower**;
- **-est**: added to adjectives, as in **biggest**, **slowest**, **happiest**, **latest**;
- **-ly**: added to adjectives to form adverbs, as in **sadly**, **happily**, **brightly**, **lately**;
- **-ment**: added to verbs to form nouns, as in **payment**, **advertisement**, **development**;
- **-ness**: added to adjectives to form nouns, as in **darkness**, **happiness**, **sadness**;
- **-y**: added to nouns to form adjectives, as in **funny**, **smoky**, **sandy**.

The spelling of a suffix is always the same, except in the case of **-s** and **-es**.

Adding **-s** and **-es** to nouns and verbs

Generally, **-s** is simply added to the base word. The suffix **-es** is used after words ending in **s(s)**, **ch**, **sh** and **z(z)**, and when **y** is replaced by **i**. Examples include **buses**, **passes**, **benches**, **catches**, **rushes**, **buzzes**, **babies**. (In words such as **buses**, **passes**, **benches** and **catches**, the extra syllable is easy to hear and helps with the spelling.) Words such as **knife**, **leaf** and **loaf** become **knives**, **leaves** and **loaves** and again the change in spelling is obvious from the change in the pronunciation of the words.

Adding other suffixes

Other suffixes have just one spelling. As with **-s** and **-es**, many can be added to base words without affecting the spelling of the base word. Adding a suffix may sometimes mean, however, that the last letter of the base word needs to be dropped, changed or doubled, and there are guidelines for this. Once children know the guidelines, they can apply them to many different words. Only three kinds of base words may need their last letters to be changed – those ending in:

- an **-e** that is part of a split digraph (e.g. **hope**, **safe**, **use**);
- a **-y** preceded by a consonant (e.g. **happy**, **baby**, **carry**);
- a single consonant letter preceded by a single vowel letter (e.g. **hop**, **red**, **run**). This simplified version of the guideline applies reliably to single-syllable words. Later, children will need to learn that in words of more than one syllable, stress also needs to be taken into account.

General guidelines for adding other suffixes

Children should be taught to think in terms of base words and suffixes whenever appropriate. Suffixes are easily learned and many base words will already be familiar from Phases Two to Five.

1. If a base word ends in an **e** which is part of a split digraph, drop the **e** if the suffix begins with a vowel (e.g. **hope** – **hoping**; **like** – **liked**: the **e** before the **d** is part of the suffix, not part of the base word). Keep the **e** if the suffix begins with a consonant (e.g. **hope** – **hopeful**; **safe** – **safely**).
2. If a base word ends in **y** preceded by a consonant, change the **y** to **i** before all suffixes except those beginning with **i** (e.g. **happy** – **happiness**, **happier**; **baby** – **babies**; **carry** – **carried**). Keep the **y** if the suffix begins with **i**, not permissible in English (e.g. **baby** – **babyish**; **carry** – **carrying**), as **ii** is not permissible in English except in **taxiing** and **skiing**.
3. If a base word ends in a single consonant letter preceded by a single vowel letter and the suffix begins with a vowel, double the consonant letter. Another way of stating this guideline is that there need to be two consonant letters between a 'short' vowel (vowel sounds learned in Phase Two – see also the note on page 187) and a suffix beginning with a vowel (e.g. **hop** – **hopped**, **hopping**; **red** – **redder**, **reddest**; **run** – **running**, **runner**).

In all other cases, the suffix can simply be added without any change being made to the spelling of the base word. This means that for words in 1 and 3 above, the spelling of the base word does not change if a suffix beginning with a consonant is added (e.g. **lame** + **ness** = **lameness**; **glad** + **ly** = **gladly**). Similarly, no change occurs if the base word ends in any way other than those mentioned in 1, 2 and 3 above.

Practice examples

Examples for practising adding the suffixes **-s** or **-es**

stop	fizz	hurry
park	circus	fly
bunch	room	bunny
mend	fuss	marry
dish	goal	dry
thank	cross	curry
crash	boat	cry
match	buzz	puppy
bark	melt	try
night	stitch	fry

Examples for practising adding the suffixes **-ing**, **-ed**, **-s**, **-er**, **-est**, **-y**, **-en**

All the base words need changes made before the suffixes are added.

Words ending in -e	Words ending in -y	Words ending in a single consonant
like (ing)	marry (ed)	stop (ing)
ride (er)	funny (er)	mad (er)
tame (est)	worry (ed)	skip (ed)
bone (y)	copy (er)	run (ing)
bake (ed)	hurry (ed)	hop (er)
hike (ing)	messy (est)	nod (ed)
fine (est)	lucky (er)	pad (ing)
wave (ed)	ferry (s)	hid (en)
rule (er)	carry (ed)	hot (est)
rude (est)	pony (s)	rip (ed)

Examples for practising adding the suffixes **-ing**, **-ed**, **-ful**, **-ly**, **-est**, **-er**, **-ment**, **-ness**, **-en**

Some of the base words need to be changed before the suffixes are added but some do not.

Remember: a final e in the base word may or may not need to be dropped	Remember: a final y in the base word may or may not need to be changed to i	Remember: a final consonant in the base word may or may not need to be double.
spite (ful)	merry (ly)	bad (ly)
rude (ly)	employ (ment)	flap (ed)
white (er)	play (ed)	send (ing)
bite (ing)	enjoy (ment)	slim (est)
lame (ness)	silly (ness)	fan (ed)
safe (ly)	funny (est)	sad (ness)
amuse (ment)	obey (ing)	put (ing)
rise (ing)	sunny (er)	flat (en)
time (ed)	happy (ly)	bat (ing)
use (ful)	stay (ed)	dark (est)

Things to do before asking someone

What can I do if I get stuck on a spelling?

Find another word that will do for now and come back to this one later or even leave a gap.

Or try these three things before you ask someone:

1. Try using phonic strategies. Say the word and segment the phonemes. Split a long word into syllables.

2. Think about other words that sound the same. Can you use what you know about spelling similar words?

3. Look at your spelling log, word banks or displays in the classroom. Can you find the word you want? Try looking for the word in a dictionary.