

Psych Ed

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Teaching Spelling and Writing Skills

Spelling

Children who have deficits in phonological processing have spelling problems (see the page which describes the development of phonological processing).

A history of articulation difficulties and, especially, persistence of articulation deficits, also predict spelling problems. Spelling deficits remain chronic, i.e. spelling can be improved but all spelling errors will never be eliminated. Spell-check helps but is not a perfect solution.

Children can memorize spelling words for a spelling test but will not necessarily retain these words.

Children who have spelling deficits are prone to avoid written work, because they know that they will make mistakes. Allowing them to use the computer for written work makes it easier for a parent to correct the inevitable spelling mistakes. When helping a child to complete a written assignment, be ready to write the correct spelling of words on a page separate from child's work.

Tell your child to ask you how to spell words he/she finds difficult, and then either dictate the correct letters to the child or write the word down so he/she can copy it. Do not ask the child to guess or try to sound out how the word should be spelled. This will lead to frustration, waste time and result in the child practicing making errors.

Sentence Writing

All written work completed at home needs to be correct and neat. If the child has spelling and writing difficulties, then an adult has to supervise the writing process and provide ongoing guidance. This includes showing the child where to start and end a line (margins), to capitalize the first letter of the first word of a sentence, to make a period at the end of the sentence etc.

Prevention of a mistake is better than correction of a mistake, because it avoids the frustration of erasing and re-writing. Further, it prevents the formation of a memory of the mistake.

Short sentences reduce risk of grammatical and punctuation mistakes. When a sentence is in the middle of the second line, it is time to think how to finish it.

Paragraph/Essay Writing

Children can find it difficult to generate ideas to a topic set by the teacher. Provision of a template, i.e. a systematic way of starting an essay, could be helpful. This could be a list of Who, Where, What, When and Why questions. Writing ideas down, out of order, as they come to mind, can help some children. The parent may need to write the first sentence of each section to start the process. The "Hamburger Method" of paragraph and essay writing skills can be downloaded and used as a visual guide.