

## What can I do to help my child learn to spell more accurately?

There are many words in English that cannot be spelled correctly by simply thinking about the sounds and the letters. For example, words like *the*, *of*, *know*, and *to* are likely to be misspelled by beginning writers unless they have been specifically taught to spell them or they have encountered them many, many times in their reading.

While parents sometimes urge schools to do a better job of teaching spelling, it is important to understand that it is simply not possible to teach children to spell the thousands upon thousands of words that a competent writer can spell accurately. In fact, most words that we learn to spell are learned through encountering the words multiple times during reading and through learning to use common spelling patterns (such as ight, oy, etc. which are often explicitly taught in school). So, extensive reading is important for spelling development.

Beyond encouraging your child to read, there are other things that you can do to help him with spelling:

**Encourage your child to use handy resources.** If your child is writing about something in a book or is completing a homework paper, encourage him to find the correct spellings of words he wants to write. For example, if he is working on a homework paper in math and needs to write out an answer for a question like, “How many bowling balls were left?” he should use the spellings in the question and thereby avoid an answer like “Six bolin balz wr laft.”



**Encourage your child to use words he knows how to spell for ideas about how to spell words he doesn't know how to spell.** For example, if he knows how to spell *night* and wants to spell *light*, you might point out the similarity. “It’s just like *night* except for the first letter.”

**Provide a list.** If your child frequently misspells common words that he “should” know, provide a short list of the correct spellings for him to refer to when he writes.