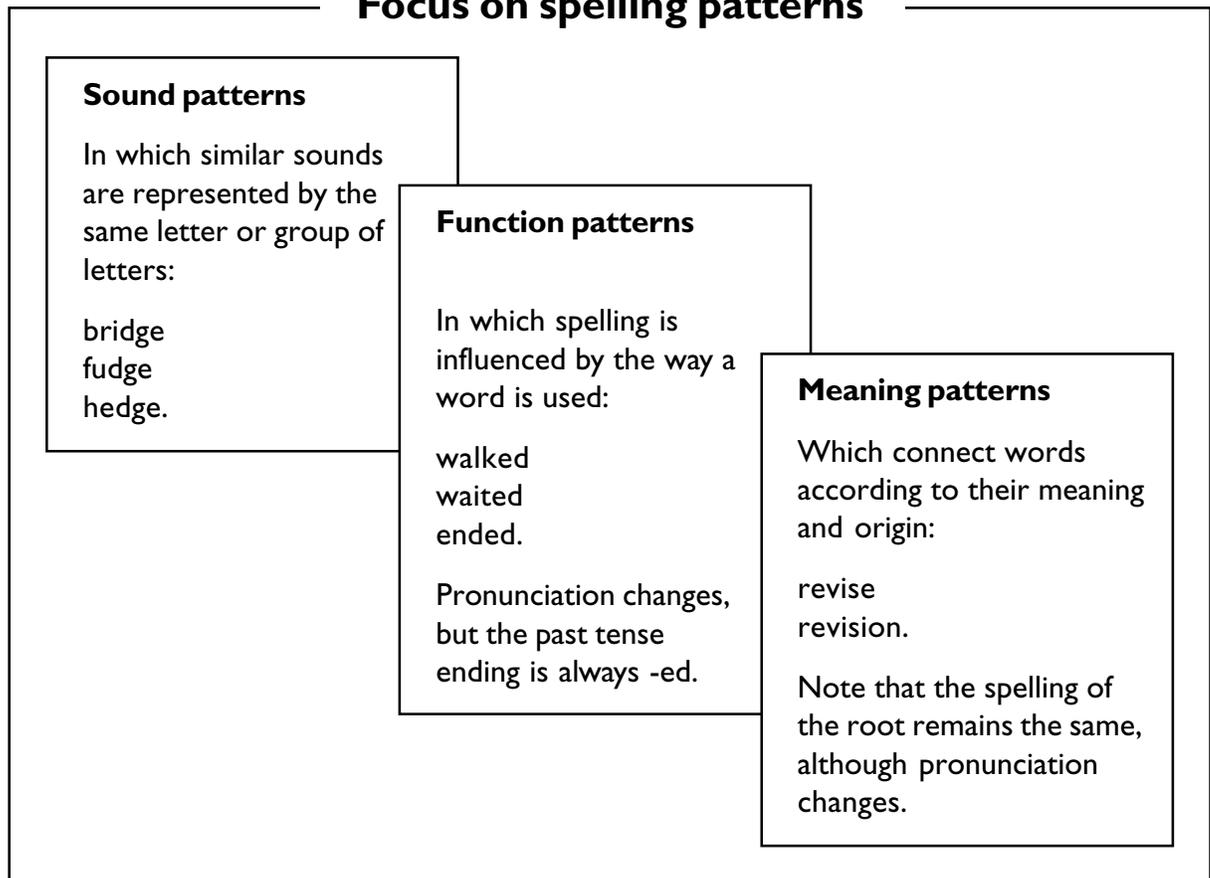


Spelling through reading

Spelling is a skill of word construction, not word memorization. Good spellers understand how words work and can build them as required. English words come from many different language backgrounds and have evolved over the centuries. Because of this, we can improve our spelling if we know about where words come from, what they mean and how they are constructed. After any reading experience, you can take the opportunity to draw the children's attention to certain words and how they are spelled.

Choose a word with a consonant or vowel combination you wish to teach. Print it on the board, and make sure the children can read the word. Then ask the children to suggest other words that share the same pattern. Older children can work in small groups to collect and list words that belong to the same family. Suggest that the children ask at home for other words belonging to patterns they have studied in class.

Focus on spelling patterns



Children can keep a growing list of new words that they meet during a theme. Post these in a prominent place during the course of the theme or provide each child with a copy, so that the words are available for the children to use in their own writing. List the words alphabetically, so that the children use their dictionary skills each time they look for a word. Make sure children do not think that this is a list of spellings to memorize; encourage them to use the list as a reference when they are writing or proofreading.

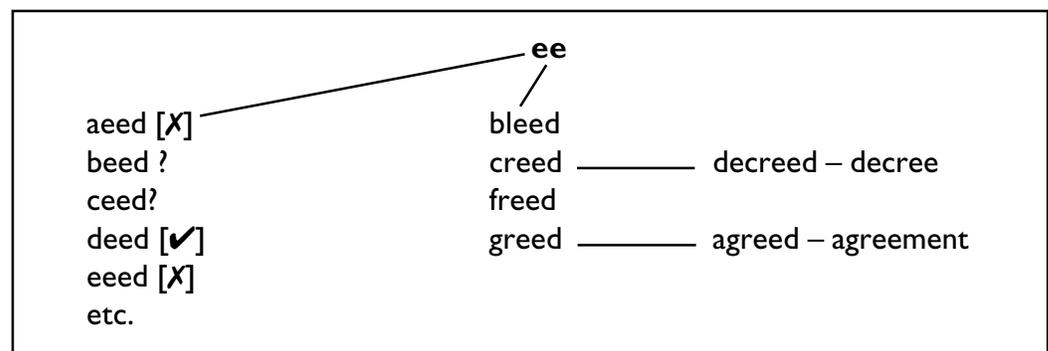
Understanding the 'parts' from which words are made

Many children, even when they can identify each of the single alphabet sounds and the phonemes that make up words, fail to see that these parts can be manipulated when we take control of language. Children may not see that 'sea' is made up of an **onset** (s) and a **rime** (ea). By changing the onset (st) and adding a new ending to the phoneme we create a new **rime pattern** (eam), which makes the word 'steam'. Children can be encouraged to take over control of words by playing word games and making word puzzles. Asking them to make a list of words by changing either the onset or the rime pattern, while keeping the same phoneme, can help them to understand how words are built. In understanding that they can spell 'scream' by knowing the rime pattern for 'dream' and 'cream', children are able to **make an analogy**.

Knowing and using these terms when working with words helps children to understand that the parts of words may be controlled and manipulated.

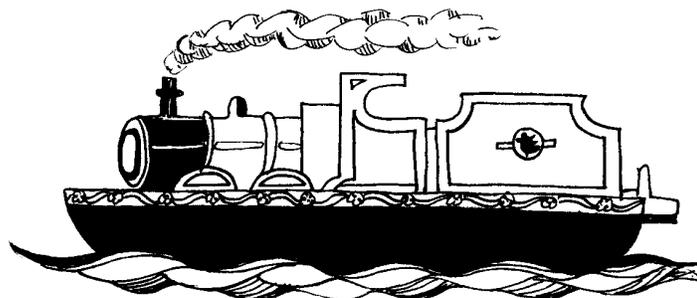
Simple word webs

Either before or at the end of a whole class shared session, encourage the children to work together to play with word families, making simple word webs. Encourage them to work through in alphabet order trying and rejecting 'words' by changing onsets, adding new endings or suffixes or new prefixes.



In their guided or independent activities the children could then work with a dictionary to check which of their queries are real words or not. Less able children will often find it helpful physically to make the words using plastic letters or letter cards.

Children also need to know that long words are made up of syllables. Encouraging them to play with syllables can be the precursor of understanding the role of prefixes and suffixes. Ask the children to take 'car-a-van' and make nonsense vehicles, such as: train-a-boat, bus-a-bike, tram-a-trolley, and then illustrate them.



Blending

The vocal machinery of children of Primary school age is still developing, and many children will have difficulty pronouncing some of the blends, especially at the beginning of words, for example 'must' and 'stir'. Particularly with three-letter blends children will often insert a hidden vowel or 'schwa' sound. Thus 'string' can become 'stirring', especially if the word is encountered in isolation and out of context. This does not mean that the children cannot recognize and match the pattern by sight.

Although the ultimate aim must be for children to recognize common words instantly both in and out of context, there are steps which can assist the less able child. Ask the children to make nonsense words using plastic letters. They should change the vowel each time. Once they have made a set, they should read them aloud to a partner. As they gain confidence they can be asked to read them as quickly as possible. The resulting tongue-twisting causes great hilarity but helps them to develop a perception of what is sense and what is nonsense.

blab	bleb	blib	blob	blub
blad	bl_d	bl_d	blod	blud
blat	bl_t	blit	bl_t	bl_t

Learning about syllables

One of the most vital skills in reading is the ability to split a word into its parts. Often children who have achieved the first stages of phonic skill, that of recognizing the main sounds and blends, will still stick on a plateau in terms of their development because of their lack of skill in syllabification. As soon as children recognize the difference between vowels and consonants, they should begin to split words up. Teachers may find it helpful to begin with simple compound words, such as car/pet, sun/light, star/fish, to demonstrate the knack of identifying the vowels and marking syllable boundaries.

Because the syllable boundaries are much easier to distinguish once you can read and understand the principle of roots, prefixes and suffixes, it is sensible to begin by marking boundaries in words the children can already read or are likely to find memorable. 'Hippopotamus' is an excellent example of a seemingly complicated word which is made up of simple parts. Again, practice in physically building words can assist children when it comes to breaking these words down in reading and can also reveal some of the 'tricky bits' which may cause problems in spelling.

Working with a group of children, each of whom has a set of plastic letters or letter cards, ask them to build words in parts: cat-er-pill-ar, bib-li-o-graph-y, re-mem-ber, hes-i-tate. You may then discuss the rules governing each part of the word, whether vowels are long or short, and why.

Call My Bluff!

As children begin to learn about the roots and derivatives of words, a game based on the idea of the television game, *Call My Bluff*, can act as the precursor to more formal work on prefixes and suffixes. Children will often display an implicit understanding of how words work which is far beyond their independent reading stage.

Take a nonsense root word, for example 'whipple', and ask the children to play a game, imagining a meaning for the word in their minds. They must not reveal this meaning to the rest of the class. Then ask them to think of answers to the following questions:

- ✓ Is it a noun or a verb? – **A** whipple or **to** whipple?

A lesser spotted whipple.

The boy whipped noisily after school.

- ✓ What would it mean if you said something was 'whipply'?
- ✓ Could you have a 'whipply' day?
- ✓ Why might someone be called a 'whipler'?
- ✓ And could you be 'dewhippled', 'unwhipped' or 'diswhipped', and what would be the difference?

How did it feel to be diswhipped?

Later, as children begin to extend their knowledge of different prefixes and suffixes, they might speculate on the meaning of: a 'whiplologist'; 'whiplation'; an 'anti-whipling' society or what might happen in a 'whiplotomy'?

I want to be a whiplologist when I grow up!

All of these, of course, demand the application of spelling rules and conventions to be applied to their creation.

Down with whipling!

