

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

Question 20 from Helping Your Child Become a Reader
(Scanlon, Anderson, Barnes, Morse, & Yurkewecz-Stellato, 2024)¹

Beyond encouraging and engaging children in reading and providing them with opportunities to write using sound spelling, some of the following suggestions can help with spelling development:

Notice and comment on the sounds that are accurately spelled in sound spellings. For example, you might say “You’re right! That is the way to spell the first sound in that word.”

Encourage children to use handy resources. If children are writing about something in a book or completing a homework paper, encourage them to find the correct spellings of words in the available resources. For example, if a child is doing a homework paper for math and needs to write out an answer for a question like, “How many loaves of bread were left?” the child can use the spellings in the question and thereby avoid an answer like “Six lovs uv bred wer laft.”

Encourage children to use the spellings of known words for ideas about the spellings of unknown words. For example, if a child 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 children frequently misspell common words that “should” already be known, provide a short list of the correct spellings for the most frequently used words that the child tends to misspell. Encourage children to refer to it when they write. As children master the spellings of the words on the list, replace the known words with other words that are frequently misspelled – as needed.



Provide correct spellings when children ask. As a first step, encourage the child to think about how the word could be spelled if they are at a point where they are likely to be able to do so and/or refer them to available resources. Comment positively on what they figure out and provide the complete spelling if need be.

¹ The complete 23 question booklet can be accessed at: eltep.org/isa-parent-booklet
All individual questions and the complete booklet can be shared for non-commercial purposes.