



Special Needs Tip: Things to try at home based on strategies we use in school to help support your child's learning. We hope that these ideas might be helpful, but there is no obligation or expectation for you to use them.

Activities to support word recognition for reading and spelling

When we are teaching reading and spelling much of the focus is on phonics. At the same time, it is important to help children to recognise whole words, particularly words that cannot be sounded out easily and those children that come across frequently. These are known as tricky words and high frequency words (HFW). In school, we tend to focus our work on whole word recognition on helping children to learn the high frequency words (HFW) and the key words on the different year group lists, but this approach works with any group of words. You may want to use it with the words in your child's reading book or words that you know that they struggle to read or spell. There is a list of key words and a recommended order for teaching them included under the additional learning support tag.

For these activities it is best to write all the words in unjoined lower case letters, rather than capital letters, so that they are as clear as possible.

Here are some activities to support children's whole word recognition skills.

Matching key words or spellings

Write a number of words (about 5 words, including each word twice) on slips of paper and ask your child to read and match the pairs of words. You could do this against the clock and see how quickly they can complete the exercise. These can be used to play 'snap' or 'pairs'.

Matching words with the same letter

Write a series of focus words on little bits of paper. Read each of the words with your child. Put them out so that your child can see all the words, then ask them to find all the words that begin with the same letter or end with the same letter. Each time they find a word, encourage them to read it. Alternatively, ask them to find all the word that contain a particular letter. This approach can be used focusing on sounds within words as well.

Matching tricky words

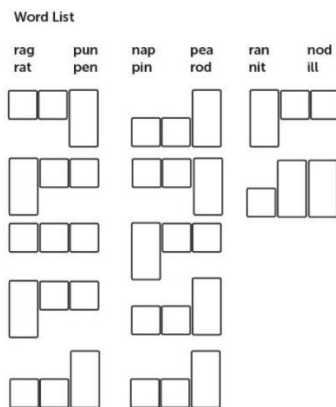
Before you read with your child, look forward in their book and identify a few words (no more than three at a time) that they might find tricky to read. These might be words that they regularly read incorrectly, or it might be new or unusual words.

Write these words on a slip of paper. Prepare to start reading the book with your child. Before they start to read, ask your child to match the word to the words on the page. This means that they have already identified and practiced these words before they start reading.

Look at word shapes and patterns of letters in words

When children are learning to read or spell new words, it is good to focus them on the word shape and the pattern of letters in words.

- Focus on the shape of the word looking for the ascenders (letters going up) and descenders (letters going down) and how many letters there are in the word as in the example below. Then ask your child to match the words to their shapes.



Sheets like this can be easily drawn or there are lots of examples online. It is often helpful for children to draw these for themselves. This is a good way of practicing spellings.

- Word searches support with this. There are lots of word searches available online or you can use an online programme (e.g. <https://thewordsearch.com/maker>) to design a word search containing the words you want your child to focus on.
- This is supported by games like Boggle
- You can try giving your child (or children) a longer word e.g. elephant, railway, together, and then ask them to see how many words they can make using the letters from the word. They can change the order of the letters but can use only the letters once. If they were using the word 'elephant' they could use 'e' twice as it occurs in the word twice, but 'a' only once.
- Coloured writing. Ask your child to write the words that they are practicing for spelling using different colours for consonants and vowels. They can also use a different colour to highlight a focus sound in a word or spelling rule.

Ask a Question

Pick five to ten words to learn, making sure they are ones that you can use as an answer. Some are better, but most words can be used, if you think creatively. Then ask your child a question and ask them to pick the right answer from their key words. So, if one of your keywords is cat, a question could be 'What purrs?', and they have to pick cat from their list of words.

Word Detectives

Give your child a key word on a piece of paper and then ask them to see how many different times they can find it round the house. Think food packets, books, magazines, writing on mugs and bags etc.