

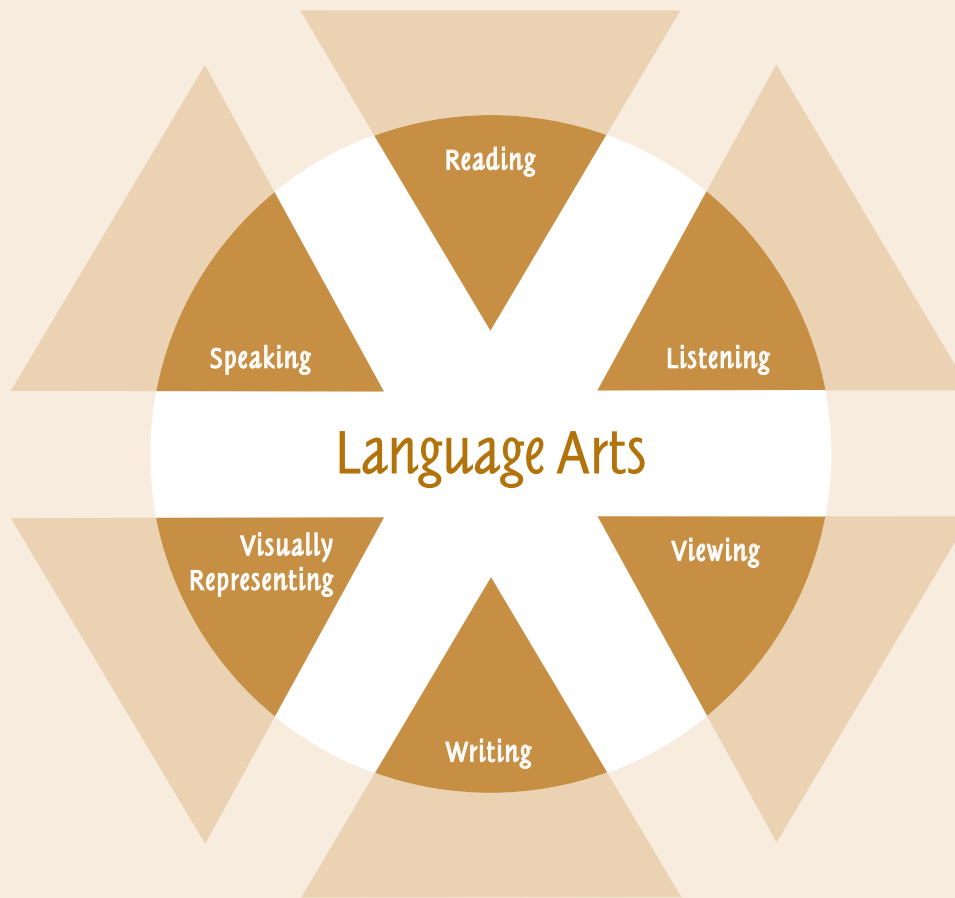
5

Language, Word Study, and the Tools of Writing

Context Setting:

After reading this chapter, you will be able to

- Describe the relationship between word study and reading
- Detail the relationship between word study and writing
- Identify a problem-solving approach to spelling and grammar
- Explain various philosophies on handwriting



Before We Begin

- What do you think is the best way for teachers to teach and students to learn spelling, grammar, and punctuation? What do your suggestions reflect about your philosophy of word study (studying words and their syntax, origin, etc.)?

What Is Word Study?

“When I come to a word that I don’t know, I _____.” If you would automatically fill in the blanks of this statement with “sound it out” because you had heard this many times while learning to read, your teacher probably used an approach that focused heavily on graphophonics or phonics. Sounding words out, or using phonics, becomes an end in itself in too many reading programs. There are three concerns with overemphasizing the teaching of phonics: (1) it detracts from focusing on reading to gain meaning from text or to communicate with the author; (2) readers are not relying on the other cueing systems of semantics, syntax, and pragmatics, three of the four essential systems an effective reader uses (as discussed in Chapter 3); and (3) English is not a very consistent language, and less than half of all words can be sounded out.

If the main purpose of using phonics is to help students gain meaning from text, word study and phonics instruction become somewhat tricky. How do we study “about” words and still keep them connected to meaningful text? One way to do this is to start with text and draw word study or word analysis from the text. For example, a group of first-grade children just finished reading the story about puppies featured in Table 5.1.

In this simple pattern story, there are many concepts that we might teach. We might focus on the things this playful puppy does and discuss how much fun it is to have a new puppy. We could focus on the story pattern and on the fact that only one word changes in each sentence, while the last sentence changes to end the story. We could teach the sight words *my*, *puppy*, and *can*, along with the use of picture clues or picture clues plus the first letter of each word to figure out what the puppy can do on each page. Or we might teach words that rhyme with *can*.

All of these teaching opportunities help children become better problem solvers when reading and writing. We want them to have as many tools for learning as possible at their disposal to assist them in building on what they know and

Table 5.1

My Puppy

My puppy can run.

My puppy can eat.

My puppy can play.

My puppy can jump.

My puppy can sleep.

I love my puppy.

are able to do on their own. The key is to begin with a meaningful piece of text that makes sense.

Rather than focusing on whether the child read all the words correctly when reading or spelled all the words correctly when writing, the main emphasis is placed on the question, “What is the author trying to tell me when I’m reading, and will someone be able to read what I wrote and know what I meant?” In both instances, the child needs to have well-developed word knowledge skills. Instead of merely learning to read and write words correctly, students problem solve to make reading and writing meaningful. In classrooms that are based on this belief, we repeatedly hear questions like “How did you figure that out?” “What would make sense here?” or “What could we do next?” Children learn to think about their learning (metacognition) and to evaluate their problem-solving efforts in these classrooms.

In the early childhood classroom, children learn about letters and the sounds they represent. The reciprocal nature of reading and writing can be made evident to young learners. They are guided to use what they know of writing to inform their reading and what they know of reading to inform their writing. “Children who have developed phonological awareness recognize that words rhyme, can begin or end with the same sound, and are composed of **phonemes** (sounds) that can be manipulated to create new words” (Ericson & Fraser Juliebö, 1998, p. 4). In other words, as children learn to read and write, they need to have awareness that speech and print are composed of words, words are composed of sounds, and new words can be formed by changing one or more sounds in a word.



Reflection Journal 5.1

Reflect on your experiences learning spelling, grammar, and punctuation. Was it (and is it) an easy process for you? What challenges did you have? What challenges do you still have today?

Phonemic Awareness

As you learned in Chapter 3, phonemic awareness is having an awareness of letter sounds and the ability to blend sounds together (What sounds do you hear in /cat/?) or take them apart (If you put the sounds /k//a//t/ together, what word would you have?). Therefore, teaching and assessment of phonemic awareness is done orally. Table 5.2 provides a sample of the types of items used to measure phonemic awareness on emergent reading screening instruments (Milwaukee Public Schools, 2000).

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Table 5.2 Measures of Phonemic Awareness

Early Emergent Level

1. Word Awareness

The child listens to a sentence, repeats the sentence, and indicates the number of words.

I ride my bike. (4)

2. Rhyme Awareness

The child listens to pairs of words and indicates whether or not they rhyme

me car (no)

hat sat (yes)

3. Initial Sounds

The child listens to a word and indicates the initial sound.

bike (b)

Upper Emergent Level

4. Final Sounds

The child listens to a word and indicates the final sound.

car (r)

5. Onset/Rime

The child listens to a pair of words and indicates the sound that is the same in both words.

hand stand (and)

6. Blending Phonemes

The child listens to a string of letters and blends them together to form a word.

/r/ /u/ /n/ (run)

7. Segmenting Phonemes

The child listens to a word and identifies the sounds in the word.

bike (/b/ /?/ /k/)

SOURCE: Milwaukee Public Schools (2000).

Children need to develop this conceptualization of sounds in words and words in sentences as they begin to read and write. In reading, they will use this understanding to blend sounds together (blending phonemes) as they learn to analyze new words. In writing, segmenting phonemes will be very important as they say words to themselves and attempt to write what they hear. Some experts (Allington, 1997; Goodman, Shannon, Goodman, & Rapaport, 2004; Routman, 2000) claim that 85% of children develop phonemic awareness without special instruction, and they question the efficacy of spending large amounts of time teaching and testing phonemic awareness directly. However, federal grants linked to NCLB (Reading First, 2001) have emphasized more direct teaching and assessment of phonemic awareness. Some researchers criticize organized instruction of phonemic awareness, and after an extensive review of research on this topic,

Table 5.3

Concept	Activities
Rhyme	Songs, nursery rhymes, poems
Alliteration	Riddles, guessing games
Initial/final sounds	Letter and object matches, picture sorts
Segmenting phonemes	Shared writing, journal writing, songs Ex: "B-I-N-G-O"

Krashen (2004) concluded that phonemic awareness occurred as the result of knowing how to read but was not the cause of it.

Whether referred to as phonemic awareness or not, most kindergarten and Grade 1 teachers provide very rich instruction in this area as part of a precursor to developing reading and language arts ability. "It has been my experience that children easily develop phonemic awareness in literacy-rich environments through experimenting with and enjoying rhymes, poems, chants, and songs, and through such activities as 'clapping' syllables, exposure to alliteration, frequent repetition of classmates' names, and regular talk about words" (Routman, 2000, p. 101). Table 5.3 outlines some interactive learning experiences for developing phonemic awareness (Bear, Invernizzi, Templeton, & Johnston, 2003).

An effective means to evaluate what students understand about phonemic awareness is to examine their writing. They can only write what they understand about sound and spelling patterns. For example, if only the first letter of each word is present in a child's writing, we know that the child has developed an understanding of initial sounds in words and has not yet mastered medial sounds. This might be reflected in a student writing "wwtm" to stand for "We went to McDonald's." Another student who writes "I LV MY GMR" for "I love my grandmother" demonstrates an understanding of initial, medial, and final consonants.

Word-Solving Skills: What Do You Notice?

Phonemic awareness, as we've seen, relates only to oral understanding of how sounds and words function in spoken language. How print and sounds interact is referred to as graphophonics (grapho = written, phonics = sound), often called phonics. Graphophonics relates to more than just the individual sounds represented by letters. It also provides the reader with important details concerning word identification and meaning. The child may "provide phonological identities for letters, digraphs, clusters, syllables, prefixes and suffixes, root words, phrases, and nonlanguage strings" (Clay, 1993, p. 290).

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Graphophonics is one of the cueing systems (syntax, semantics, graphophonics, and pragmatics or prior knowledge) discussed earlier in Chapter 3. It is an important cueing system that readers use to facilitate gaining meaning from print. Failing to teach children how to use graphophonics deprives them of an important resource in reading effectively and efficiently. An overemphasis on teaching phonics or the exclusive use of graphophonics in isolation can be just as harmful. Reading programs that place a heavy emphasis on phonics instruction and promote the use of reading materials that primarily reinforce word patterns, rather than meaningful content, are more likely to produce readers who recognize a high percentage of words but may have poor comprehension of what they read. This phenomenon highlights the fact that good readers do not rely on a single cueing system as they read. Instead, when they encounter difficulty while reading, they automatically think about (a) what would make sense here?—semantics, (b) what type of word (noun, verb, etc.) should be used here?—syntax, (c) what do I know about this topic that could help me here?—pragmatics, and (d) what letter/sound relationships and clues can I use to help me put this all together?—graphophonics. This process happens in a fraction of a second and is done automatically by good readers. We need to teach graphophonics but also need to keep its usefulness linked to the other cueing systems to help children take maximum meaning from print.

Emergent readers generally begin learning letter names and sounds before they enter school, and most children know them well by the middle of Grade 1. There are many games, activities, and songs available for teaching letters and sounds, but it is important to link all word analysis and word study activities to use in actual reading and writing. For example, if the letter *B* and the /b/ sound are being learned, select poems and short books that naturally feature words that begin with *B*. After the story or poem has been read and enjoyed, ask students to find and frame *B* words. Later, some of the simpler words could be written on cards and used to develop sight word vocabularies.

If we begin asking children “What do you notice?” in relation to what they’ve read or noted in print, we guide them to develop good observational and analytical skills. These skills may focus not only on word study areas but also on meaning and literary elements. Many emergent-level teachers make good use of children’s names while they are solidifying letter/sound recognition skills. With the students wearing name tags, the teacher might ask, “Whose name begins with *B*?” The children identify Beto and Bonnie. But when asked “Do you notice anything else?” one student notes that “Roberto” has *B* in his name but it is in the middle. Another student notices that the same is true of Abdul’s name, and a third states that if the *B* is at the beginning of a name, it is an uppercase *B*, and if it is in the middle of a name, it is a lowercase *b*. The students continue the conversation after the teacher finishes a reading of *Bread, Bread, Bread* (Morris, 1989), which supplies additional opportunities to reinforce the letter *B* and the /b/ sound.

Alphabet Books

During this phase, children may be exposed to numerous alphabet books, and they may make their own. Alphabet books may be developed in relation to a theme under study in the classroom. For example, family is often the theme for social studies in Grade 1. A family big book may be compiled by the class, beginning with “A is for Aunt, B is for Brother, C is for Cousin” and so on, with pictures from home of family members. Table 5.4 provides a listing of some alphabet books that are available for emergent readers. Older students in exploring a certain topic may also make alphabet books, for example, fifth-grade teacher Lori had her students do a Civil War alphabet book as a culminating activity.

Table 5.4 Alphabet Books for Emergent Readers

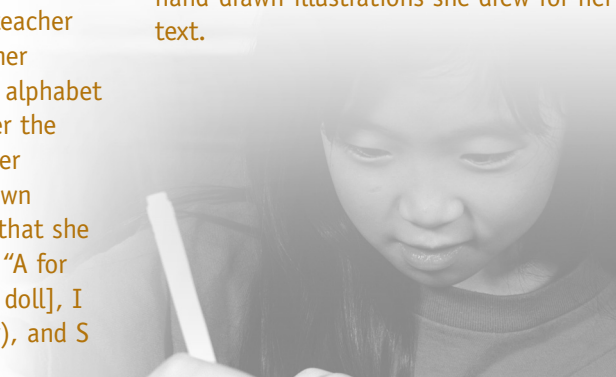
Graeme Base	<i>Animalia</i>
Jane Bayer	<i>A, My Name is Alice</i>
C. L. Demarest	<i>Firefighters A to Z</i>
Lois Ehlert	<i>Eating the Alphabet</i>
Tana Hoban	<i>A, B See!</i>
Bert Kitchen	<i>Animal Alphabet</i>
Arnold Lobel	<i>On Market Street</i>
Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault	<i>Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom</i>
L. Rankin	<i>The Handmade Alphabet</i>
Maurice Sendak	<i>Alligators All Around</i>
G. Shannon	<i>Tomorrow's Alphabet</i>
Chris Van Allsburg	<i>The Z Was Zapped</i>



A View From Home

Shelby, a 5-year-old kindergarten student, became enamored with the alphabet as she learned about the letters and the sounds they made. Her teacher made available and encouraged her students to read a wide range of alphabet books on a variety of topics. Over the weekend at home, Shelby used her crayons and paper to make her own alphabet book about the things that she likes, and included, for example, “A for animals, B for Baby Marissa [her doll], I for ice cream (bubble gum flavor), and S

for swimming.” Her mother helped her to spell the words and supplied some photos of objects she included in her book such as her dog Ziggy (Z) to accompany the hand-drawn illustrations she drew for her text.



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Literacy Centers

A number of interactive center or activity ideas can also be used to reinforce letter recognition and sounds. Supplying students with sponge letters and containers of objects, for example, having them sort the objects and place them under the correct initial letters, provides a kinesthetic approach to learning. Being able to physically manipulate the materials helps many children make links between the object, the initial consonant, and the initial sound of the object's name. The same could be done with picture cards or magnetic letters and cookie sheets to sort letters and objects. Links can also be made between strategies students are learning in literacy-related activities and other content areas. For example, they can sort initial sounds in word study and sort living and nonliving objects in science.

Word Sorts

Word and picture sorts are often used to practice word patterns. The sorts are conducted using word cards with which children are already quite familiar. There are two general types of **word sorts**. The first type is a “closed sort,” in which word cards are sorted into a predetermined category. For example, “Show me all the cards that rhyme with the word *hen*.” All of the word cards may be placed in a row, and the children may read the resulting list of rhyming words.

An “open sort” allows one person to make a display of several cards that all have something in common (*jump, run, hop, walk*). The other participants try to guess the common underlying organizer (all are ways to move). Both types of sorts can be used in small group and large group settings and provide opportunities for students to hone problem-solving skills while reinforcing recognition of words and patterns. Some common types of sorts include rhyming words, double vowel patterns, nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, concepts (such as colors, people, animals, mammal/nonmammal), and words with a specified number of syllables.

Table 5.5 provides a list of suggested graphophonics skills that might be taught at various reading levels. It is important to determine the skills that students already possess and can use confidently, rather than assuming that students are all at the same level. It would not be a good use of a student's time to spend several months studying the letters of the alphabet when the child already knew them before the school year began.

Integrated Word Study

It is easy to assume that because some children are very far behind their peers (struggling learners or English language learners, ELLs), heavy doses of skills practice (often referred to as “drill and kill” in this context) will provide these students with the background they lack and enable them to quickly catch up to their peers. Not surprisingly, the opposite generally occurs. Students concentrate on completing more skill activities, which results in less time for actual reading of meaningful text. They study skills in isolation but are not given the opportunity

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Table 5.5 Possible Word Study Themes

Emergent Readers Concept	Teaching/Practice Ideas
Letters of the alphabet	Making words
Consonant sounds	Letter-picture sorts
Vowel sounds	Rhyming words
Onset & rime—Level 1	Links to books, poems, songs
	Word wall
	Letter/sound games/software
Transitional Readers	
Onset & rime—Level 2	Making words
Spelling patterns—vowels	Word games/word sorts/software
Endings— <i>s, ed, ing</i>	Shared writing
Plurals	Phonics wheels
<i>R</i> -controlled words	Links to books, poems, songs
Making spelling pattern rules	Wall charts featuring word patterns
Blends	Word wall
Homophones	Relate to writing
Root words	
Early Readers	
Affixes	Links to print
Syllables	Wall charts, featuring word patterns, rules
Synonyms/antonyms	Relate to writing
Content area words	Software use
Contractions	
Digraphs/diphthongs	
Fluent Readers	
Word meaning	Links to print
Latin/Greek roots	Dictionary activities
Affixes	Relate to writing
Content area vocabulary	Software use

to see how these relate to actual reading. Furthermore, they learn about fewer books and stories in which they might become interested. It is difficult to become enthusiastic about learning to read when it only involves paper or electronic drill without the enjoyment of being exposed to quality literature.

Instead, it would be more beneficial to surround all students with quality reading materials that match their interests and reading level. Rich discussions

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and opportunities to respond to reading also fire students' desire to interact with text. Allowing students to listen to tape recorded versions of a story they are interested in (listening comprehension level), but may struggle to read independently will permit them to join their peers in discussing literature. Along with this immersion in quality literature, a teacher may focus on teaching the most essential skills students need assistance with and continually guide them in applying these skills to text.

Activities dealing with the use of patterns are especially prevalent in prekindergarten through Grade 1 but certainly could extend to all grades. In mathematics, children replicate and create object, color, and number patterns. In science, they sort and classify by identified properties or characteristics. In social studies, they note patterns in how families go about their days. This concept can certainly be extended to literacy development, especially in relation to word study.

Use of onset and rime (word families) is a very effective starting point for word study with emergent readers. They can learn a word (*cat*) whose rime (*at*) can be used to form many new words; students quickly expand the number of words (*bat, fat, hat, mat, Nat, pat, rat, sat*) they are able to recognize just by changing the onset. Linking these words to poems or stories to be read and reread many times by students provides them with the multiple practice opportunities necessary to begin internalizing sets of rhyming words. Shared and independent writing activities are appropriate avenues to use in guiding students to apply rhyming patterns they have learned to their own writing. "You want to write the word /bat/ here. *Bat* is one of our /at/ words. Can you remember how we write that? You can look at our list of /at/ words on the chart to help you."

In shared writing, the teacher or one of the students writes what the students dictate. The teacher may ask the students to spell along as he or she writes the message; patterns that have been studied already can be highlighted as the writing develops. If the teacher does this frequently during the day—"Spell the word *Dear* along with me for the beginning of our letter"—they are learning about and practicing spelling and phonics throughout the day.

The goal of all graphophonics instruction is for the decodable patterns to be recognized quickly and added to the child's sight word vocabulary. **Sight words** are recognized automatically and do not require word analysis. The less short-term memory that must be devoted to word analysis leaves more available for concentration on understanding and enjoying what was read; therefore it is desirable for children to develop a large repertoire of sight words.

Making Words

Making Words© (Clay, 1993) is an effective activity for guiding students to explore patterns in word formation. A set of letter cards needed for the day's word study is prepared for each child. Each card has an uppercase letter on one side and its lowercase counterpart on the other. The letter cards may be used to reinforce

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onset and rime patterns, for example, /at/ words. In this case, each student would have the following set of letters: *a, t, b, c, f, h, m, p, s*. Or they may receive the letters *s, t, a, n, d*. In the latter case, they would be asked to use the letter cards to spell the following words: *a, at, an, tan, Dan, Nat, sand, and Stan*. The children use all of the letters in forming the final word, *stand*. Manipulating the letter cards is a kinesthetic activity that allows students to physically explore word patterns. If students have difficulty spelling the word, they are encouraged to do as much on their own as they can and then look at their neighbors' work for additional help. Often the teacher has a chart to display the finished words and provide another source for students to use in checking their own work. Students spell the words together and individually, clap out the number of word parts, and divide the word into syllables.

At the transitional level, students are generally quite comfortable with basic word patterns, and they can use a word study booklet instead of letter cards. At this point the students would draw a dash to represent the number of letters in a specific word. A teacher saying, for example, "Our first word has four letters. Draw four dashes on your first line and write the word *same*. 'Your name is the *same* as mine.' We are using the 'e-marker rule' in this word. When a word ends with a silent *e*, the preceding vowel is long or 'says its name.'" Additional e-marker words might also be used in this lesson (*game, take, late, ride, nine, woke*) to further reinforce the concept. The same set of words is used for a number of days in a row until the children can readily form the words. Links between using e-marker words in reading and writing are then reinforced. Children point out when they find e-marker words in their reading and note how they decoded them. The teacher may point out when children misspell these words in their writing and guide them in making corrections.

Table 5.6 contains the 37 most basic rimes in English (Routman, 2000). It is important to make certain that students know how to use these patterns in their reading, but it is not advisable to spend large amounts of time on each separate rime. Once students know a few rimes, they often quickly acquire other similar patterns.

Table 5.6 The 37 Most Basic Rimes in English

ack	ank	eat	ill	ock	ump
ail	ap	ell	in	oke	unk
ain	ask	est	ine	op	
ake	at	ice	ing	ore	
ale	ate	ick	ink	ot	
ame	aw	ide	ip	uck	
an	ay	ight	it	ug	

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Word Analysis

By the end of Grade 2, the majority of the general phonics patterns are automatic for most students, and attention moves to focusing more on word analysis in relation to meaning. In the transitional stage, students work with more complex onset and rime patterns. They also learn more about blends (*st, br, sl*, for example), root words (*eating = eat + ing*), simple word endings and plurals (*s, ed, ing*), and simple syllabication rules. More irregular spelling patterns and previously studied patterns in need of review might be included in Grades 3–4. Grades 5–8 focus most fully on word meaning, including exploration of word derivations. Study of affixes (prefixes and suffixes) becomes more predominant in relation to determining word meaning. See Table 5.7 for a list of commonly used affixes (prefixes and suffixes).

Table 5.7 Commonly Used Affixes

Prefix	Meaning	Example	Suffix	Meaning	Example
anti-	against	antihero	-able	capable of	comfortable
bi-	two, twice	biannual	-ful	full of	wonderful
circum-	around	circumference	-graph	writing	biography
ex-	out, from	exhaust	-ism	action/practice	feminism
in-	not	inconsistent	-less	without	worthless
inter-	between	interface	-logy	study of	biology
quad-	four	quadrangle	-ment	state/quality	agreement
pre-	before	pregame	-ness	state/quality	forgetfulness
re-	again	renew	-ous	full of	studious
sub-	under	submarine	-sion/tion	state/quality	suspension
un-	not	unable			

At each level it is important to select word study areas that students need and to continually relate word study to actual reading. Intermediate and advanced students focus on more complex vowel/consonant patterns, such as (a) consonant digraphs, where two consonants combine to form a new sound (*ch, th, sh*), (b) vowel digraphs (two vowels represent a single sound, as in *rain*), (c) vowel diphthongs, such as *oi* in *coin*, *oy* in *boy* (the sound of the first vowel glides into the second), (d) more complex plural formations, and (e) syllabication rules. As at other levels, students explore relationships between word parts and meaning through word study activities. They internalize these skills most fully when asked to relate what they have studied to their reading and writing. Older students extend their

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vocabularies through an understanding of affixes, as well as relating known words to synonyms and antonyms. Teachers may systematically study particular affixes as they appear in reading material and point these out to students. Word study booklets, where students record their study of word parts and word meaning, are helpful. They might record words they encounter in their readings that reflect affixes, synonyms, antonyms, homographs, and such, including the sentence where it is found. The booklets may also include areas of study that need review by the student, for example, determining when to double the last consonant before adding an ending.



Reflection Journal 5.2

Many times our preservice teachers provide interesting glimpses into the kinds of experiences they had as part of their own literacy development. Sometimes they even bring a tattered writing workshop folder from the fifth grade or favorite novels they wouldn't dream of parting with—even at age 20. Unfortunately, we never hear these kinds of responses when a study of teaching grammar is next on the syllabus. Why do you think that is true? Do you think we could make learning grammar less painful, maybe even fun? What are your experiences and thoughts about grammar?

Grammar

“Children intuitively learn the structure of the English language—its grammar, as they learn to talk. . . . They have almost completed [this understanding] by the time they enter kindergarten. The purpose of grammar instruction, then, is to make this intuitive knowledge about the English language explicit and to provide labels for words within sentences, parts of sentences, and types of sentences” (Tompkins, 2005, p. 568).

A problem-solving approach to learning grammar is a way to make it more useful and interesting for students, studying grammar to improve communication with one another. What students seem to object to most is the completion of page after page of workbook drill of grammar concepts. Often there is insufficient transfer of this knowledge to the students' writing because it is not relevant to what they are writing or issues they face in their writing. Students who understand how language is structured are able to manipulate it more effectively in making meaning clear. Languages have sets of rules for standard usage. Children may speak a dialect of English or use regional variations of Standard English, and these are acceptable methods of expression with regular patterns of usage. However, we do children a very big disservice if we do not make certain they are able to use Standard English as well (Delpit, 1995). Students should not be excluded from

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later educational or job opportunities because they are not well versed in the formal use of English. There will be many instances when each of us will be judged by how well we express ourselves, and our students need to understand this.

There are four general areas that are generally associated with the study of grammar: parts of speech, capitalization and punctuation, sentence structure, and types of sentences. Instructing children in these areas as they become essential for improving their speaking and writing skills provides them with an authentic purpose for learning grammar concepts. For example, if students are writing strings of short, choppy sentences, it may indicate that they are ready for instruction in combining sentences to form one sentence that is smoother and more interesting to listen to or read.

Assessing student speaking and writing is a beneficial way to determine instructional areas to focus on in grammar. If there are many areas that need attention, the teacher will need to prioritize and select a specific area to begin with. As students gain expertise in the first area, a new one may be added, and so on. Some comprehensive language arts and/or grammar series have been published, such as *Write Away* (Kemper, Nathan, Sebranck, & Elsholz, 1994), and teaching children to use these texts as resources to support speaking and writing may serve a better purpose than completing endless drill exercises in traditional grammar texts. Grammar can be taught and reinforced all day long in any content area class. Like spelling, grammar concepts that have already been taught can be reinforced in shared writing or reading and individual conferencing with students.

To ignore grammar issues with ELLs would be a mistake. Without specific instruction, some students do not move to full fluency in English (Wong-Fillmore, 1985). However, this is often a delicate line to walk for teachers. Over time, ELLs learn a great deal of English merely by being immersed in the language. Overemphasis on grammar forces students' attention on the form of language rather than the use of language to communicate effectively. Selecting one area at a time needing particular attention, and teaching and practicing this concept to mastery, is more effective than marking all errors on a student's writing.

Parts of Speech

The parts of speech is one area of grammar study that is relatively easy to teach and helps students learn how language is organized. Even the youngest of students can learn to identify nouns and verbs and the jobs they do in a sentence. Poetry can work well for teaching and learning parts of speech because it uses language so succinctly. Teachers may search for poems that emphasize nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs. Students will enjoy the poems first and learn about the parts of speech a bit later. The rhythm, cadence, and/or lyrics of the poems may help students make links between specific poems and parts of speech. For example, in studying prepositions, poems might be used in which each line begins with a preposition, as in Table 5.8. Similarly, poems highlighting adverbs may lead students to note that most words that end in *ly* are adverbs. In other scenarios,

Table 5.8 Preposition Poem

In the dark
Down the street
With his brother
They sneak
Across the yard
Up the porch and
Into the house
Without getting caught
Out too late
By their mother

having poems on overheads and asking children to circle or highlight specific parts of speech may be effective ways to develop understanding of specific parts of speech. Students may also create charts or big/little books to document parts of speech. Other parts of speech minilessons might include sharing children's books that address specific parts of speech, and for younger children movement activities that dramatize verb action or impersonate nouns can be helpful.

An efficient way to practice parts of speech is to have students relate them to their own reading and writing. Asking students to circle all the verbs they used in a piece of writing and evaluate how descriptive they are will help them make their writing more interesting and precise. In preceding minilessons, the teacher could have highlighted the colorful use of verbs by certain authors or poets or asked the students to brainstorm more descriptive words for common verbs such as *said* or *went*. Students then complete independent work to either evaluate an author's use of parts of speech or focus on them in their own writing. With these types of activities, it would be logical to introduce the use of the thesaurus and have students consult them in their own writing. These activities link grammar and vocabulary as students explore the use of different parts of speech. At this point, students may try their hand at writing their own poetry, using the poetry studied as samples. Sharing sessions that focus on discussions of how, for example, descriptive verbs and adjectives were used to create more vivid images helps students explore parts of speech more fully. In these sessions, students demonstrate how well they are able to identify parts of speech and describe their functions in sentences.

Numerous games can be developed for students to identify, sort, and use parts of speech. Software is also available for the same purposes. Care must be taken to evaluate these materials to make sure they teach valuable skills and are related back to their use in reading and writing.

 PART 2 Frameworks and Approaches to Teaching, Learning, and Assessing in the Language Arts**Table 5.9 The Importance of Capitalization and Punctuation**

Which message is easier to read?

1. how important is capitalization and punctuation in writing do we really need to teach it it would save a lot of time if we could just skip it
2. How important are capitalization and punctuation in writing? Do we really need to teach it? It would save a lot of time if we could just skip it!

Capitalization and Punctuation

Use of capitalization and punctuation to enhance writing and appropriately interpret text is another area of grammar that students need to gain experience using. Table 5.9 highlights the importance of punctuation and capitalization in clearly communicating ideas.

Minilessons on capitalization may focus on beginning sentences with capital letters and capitalizing proper nouns. Punctuation may begin simply with an emphasis on using periods, question marks, and exclamation points appropriately. As students write, they are encouraged to capitalize the first word of each sentence and to use proper punctuation at the end of the sentence. As teachers circulate about the room while students are writing, they may offer individual guidance with these concepts. Self, peer, and teacher assessment and editing provide students with additional opportunities to solidify these skills. Providing students with rubrics for completing and revising writing provides guidelines for their work.

Many schools emphasize the use of language drills as a way to improve the correct use of spelling and grammar. In this type of activity, one or more sentences containing errors are written on the board or overhead transparency, especially in an area that is being studied in language arts. Students rewrite the sentences on their papers correctly. This is followed by a class discussion of the errors, with a student or the teacher making corrections on the board. Although these drills are widely used, teachers are often frustrated that these exercises do not transfer to student writing. Requiring students to correct errors in their own writing may be much more effective in helping them to internalize spelling and punctuation patterns.

Lessons for more advanced writers may include a review of the use of commas and minilesson demonstrations on when or how to use semicolons and colons. These concepts might be highlighted in texts the students are reading, along with explanations about how these areas of punctuation clarify meaning. When students begin writing more complex sentences, a need to use these structures will become apparent. As often can be the case in literacy development, the students' emerging skills will guide us in knowing what to teach. Either teaching what they already know or expecting them to master concepts they are not ready

for does little to promote student learning. Instead, it will be important to look at what they manage easily and determine how best to move to the next step.

Sentence Structure

Sentence structure, as its name implies, focuses on how written communication is organized at the sentence level. A beginning level of sentence structure instruction may be designed to explore how sentences can be divided into subjects and predicates. In this way it becomes clear who the actors are and the actions they are involved in. Identifying subject and predicate helps readers interpret authors' ideas and helps writers clarify their own message.

Again the question becomes not merely can the children identify subjects and predicates correctly, but can they use this in their own reading and writing as a strategy to tease out and create meaning. It is meaningful to use the children's own reading and writing to teach this concept. However, it is important to use simple sentences initially because many sentences from children's and young adult literature are complex and have many clauses, prepositional phrases, and complex structures that may confuse students. Take, for example, this sentence from *Three Monks, No Water* by Ting-Xing Ye (1997). "Once upon a time, there was a mountain; on the mountain, there stood a temple; and in that temple, all alone, lived a young monk" (p. 1). The sentence takes many twists and turns and would require a teacher to do a lot of explaining as a grammar study. Sentences of this intricacy, however, may be appropriate for students studying complex sentences and punctuation. Sentences like "We can't find our cat" or "Mommy and Daddy bought a new car" are more manageable for the beginning study of subjects and predicates.

Table 5.10 highlights identification of subjects and predicates in sentences from the book *First Day in Grapes* by L. King Pérez (2002).

Minilessons that teach subjects and predicates and what they are and why it is important to be able to identify them can be followed by opportunities for students to practice identifying them on their own. In cases like this, perhaps a worksheet or two would be acceptable merely for students to learn the concept. Teachers may also use examples of student writing (from previous years) and teach students how

Table 5.10 Subjects and Predicates

Chico // never could decide if California reminded him of a fruit basket or a pizza.

Subject **predicate**

His family // traveled from one migrant camp to another, picking fruits and vegetables.

Subject **predicate**

They // had arrived at a camp in grapes last night.

Subject **predicate**

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to identify clearly written versus ambiguous sentences. Students could be given opportunities to make suggestions for clarifying the ambiguous sentences. For example, a child's sentence written as "Not find the cat" could be clarified to read "We can't find our cat." The change clarifies who can't find the cat and the cat's owner. Chart stories or overheads used for other purposes may also be analyzed to practice identifying subjects and predicates in sentences. Encouraging students to approach the study of grammar as detectives out to investigate how language is put together may help foster positive attitudes about grammar.

Once students understand subjects and predicates, a logical next step would be to move on to other structures within sentences. For example, prepositional phrases clarify the predicate more fully and provide information for making meaning and comprehension. Earlier examples, from *First Day in Grapes* (Pérez, 2002), highlighted the following sentences: "His family traveled *from one migrant camp to another*, picking fruits and vegetables" and "They had arrived *at a camp in grapes* last night." Each prepositional phrase provides more information about the verbs *traveled* and *arrived*. Since there are many prepositions, students should have access to a list of them that may be kept in their word study booklets or displayed on a chart in the classroom. Minilessons can be designed to teach the use and structure of prepositional phrases as well as games and learning activities used to reinforce their identification. As a final phase, students should look at the use of prepositional phrases in their own writing and self-assess how well they clarify the intended message.

Dependent and independent clauses are intended to clarify meaning but can be confusing for students. Guiding students in separating clauses from subject and predicate may be another strategy they can use in gaining meaning from print. Clauses are also evident in the sample sentences. "His family traveled from one migrant camp to another, *picking fruits and vegetables*." And "Chico never could decide *if California reminded him of a fruit basket or a pizza*." "[P]icking fruits and vegetables" further clarifies the work done at migrant camps and lets the reader know a bit more about what to expect in this story. This phrase would be an incomplete sentence on its own and therefore is classified as a dependent clause.

A clause within a sentence that could stand on its own as a separate sentence (e.g., has a subject and predicate) is called an independent clause. The sentence from the text *Three Monks, No Water* (Ye, 1997) contains two independent clauses. Punctuation is crucial in setting dependent and independent clauses apart from the rest of the sentence and presents a good opportunity to link grammar and punctuation. Minilessons that highlight how dependent and independent clauses are used in children's and young adult literature may be followed by opportunities to create such clauses in students' own writing.

Sentence Types

An examination of sentence types leads children to recognize that there are simple sentences, "Our cat is lost," and complex sentences, "We called our friends

to come and help us because our cat is lost.” One way to study sentence types is from the perspective of asking what makes writing interesting. Does it sound better to say “My grandmother came to visit. My grandfather came with her. My cousins are coming to visit tomorrow” or “My grandparents came to visit today and my cousins are coming tomorrow”?

Children’s writing often resembles the former example early in their writing development. Exploring the writing of favorite authors can help them determine what they as writers might do to hold a reader’s interest. Many factors influence good writing, such as creative plots, descriptive language, and interesting characters, but certainly another aspect involves the flow and rhythm of the language. Varied use of simple and complex sentences is part of what creates that language cadence.

There are numerous aspects of grammar that might be studied. Some will be important to your students’ reading and writing development, and they will emerge as areas in which students need to gain expertise. These are areas that should definitely be taught. Other areas, especially those covered in students’ grammar or language arts texts, are often too complex for students and do not enhance their literacy development; these areas could be safely eliminated from study.

As suggested, grammar can be made instructional and interesting for students if we make it relevant and select interesting learning experiences. A workshop approach may be a good format to use in teaching grammar concepts through minilessons, providing opportunities for practice and linking assessment to application of grammar to improve writing and reading.

Spelling

Reflection Journal 5.3

From what you remember, how did you learn to spell? Are you a good speller? What helped you become a good speller? Do you struggle with spelling? What would have helped you become a better speller? Write about your own feelings and experiences related to spelling.

Approaches to Teaching and Learning Spelling

The purpose of spelling correctly is to make writing more comprehensible to readers. Schools have different philosophies about how to help students become competent spellers. One philosophy is linked to the basal approach to reading, as described in Chapter 3. In this approach, each student has a spelling workbook or

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“speller” that features weekly lists of words and activities designed to provide practice in learning to spell these words correctly. Word lists are prioritized and begin with the simplest words and word patterns, for example, *the, can, pan, cat,* and *hat,* and continue with increasingly complex lists of words across each grade level.

The teaching format for spelling is quite standard and may sound familiar to you if you learned to spell using this approach. Each set of words is generally taught on a 5-day cycle, beginning with a pretest on Monday, word practice activities on Tuesday through Thursday, and culminating with a posttest on Friday. Word practice activities often consist of completing workbook pages, writing each word several times, defining words, and putting words in alphabetical order.

The basal method of teaching spelling is attractive to schools that believe learning to read and write involves mastery of a hierarchy of reading and writing skills. It is manageable and ensures that students receive an organized focus on spelling. However, there are drawbacks to teaching spelling in this fashion. For starters, what of the students who receive 100% on the pretest and another grade of 100% on the posttest? How has their spelling ability been extended or challenged if they could already spell the words correctly on Monday? Have we met the needs of those students? What of a student who receives a grade of 30% on Monday and 40% on Friday? We are asking him or her to work at the frustration level every week. How have we met those students’ needs? Obviously, we could vary the word lists for each of our students or groups of students, and this would represent an improvement. However, there is another concern with this approach. Teachers frequently report that they do not see sufficient transfer from the spelling units to the students’ independent writing. In essence, students learn the words to perform well on the test but do not transfer that learning into spelling those words correctly in their own writing.

Sharon Schmerhorn developed a response to the traditional spelling program that worked well for many of her students.



A View From the Classroom

Sharon Schmerhorn’s Spelling Class

Javier did well in school and enjoyed everything except spelling. Each week his fourth-grade class received a list of 15 words to study. His heart would sink during the pretests, when he knew he’d misspelled most of the words. All week long he studied the words at school and then practiced with his mom at night. By Friday, he could remember how to spell a few of the words, but he got so nervous during the posttest that he mixed up many of those words too.

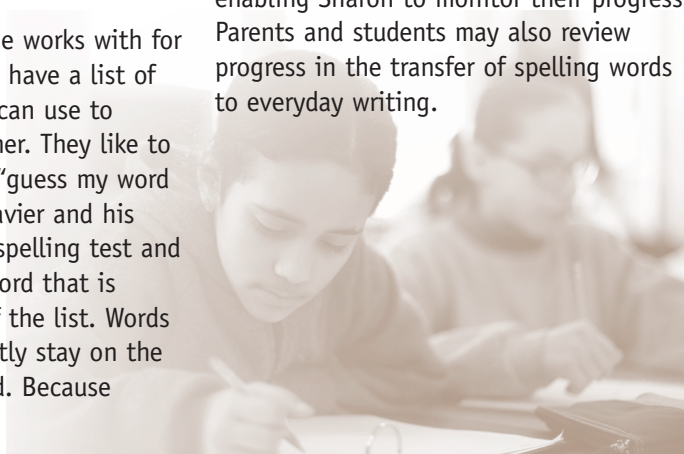
When Javier went to the fifth grade, he was lucky enough to have Sharon as his teacher. Sharon recognized that each student had reached a unique level in his or her spelling development, and she devised an individualized spelling program that enabled each student to work at his or her instructional level. Now Javier selects 10 words from his own writing that he has trouble spelling correctly. He knows that Sharon will help him if he’s not sure which ones to select. She also adds a few words for the whole class. These words include the name of the

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month, four or five content area vocabulary words, and two or three words related to special upcoming events. Javier feels more comfortable with the new spelling program and is learning to spell words correctly that he had been struggling with for a long time. For example, he had spelled *they* as *thay* since second grade.

Javier has a partner that he works with for 20 minutes each day. They have a list of games and activities they can use to practice their words together. They like to play “word scramble” and “guess my word and write it.” On Friday, Javier and his partner give each other a spelling test and correct the results. Each word that is spelled correctly comes off the list. Words that are not spelled correctly stay on the list until they are mastered. Because

Javier has only a few difficult words to learn each week, he doesn't feel overwhelmed by spelling class. He and his partner often come up with mnemonic devices or word chunks to help them spell the more challenging words. All of the students keep a log of their spelling activities along with their spelling tests, enabling Sharon to monitor their progress. Parents and students may also review progress in the transfer of spelling words to everyday writing.



In other classrooms, teachers do not approach spelling as a separate subject but integrate spelling with the teaching of writing. They use word study sessions in lieu of traditional spelling programs (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996, 2001). The activities mentioned earlier (Making Words, word sorts, onset and rime, word wall, and spelling rules) take place during the language/word study portion of the reading block. There are several advantages to using this approach to teaching children to improve their spelling ability. First, the content of the word/language study matches the instructional level of the students. A commercial program presents a “one size fits all” sequence of spelling development that may not be consistent with the needs of students. In the language/word study approach, teachers analyze student writing as one source in developing word and language study units. They also select words and patterns that relate directly to the learning experiences of the students. Second, a word study approach to spelling encourages students to explore word patterns and word structure more fully and to develop their own explanations for these patterns and structures. Word walls, word charts, and word study booklets can be used as resources to support language/word study. Third, because the material for word study comes directly from the writing and classroom experiences of the students, it is easier to help them link their word study back to their own writing. Students who misspell words already studied may be reminded to use the word wall, classroom charts, or word study booklets to check their work. Finally, students develop a better sense of learning about words and language in this format. “Have-a-go

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sheets" (Bolton & Snowball, 1993), for example, allow students to explore the spelling of words they are struggling to spell correctly. Students try out two or three different spellings of a word before they confirm the correct spelling by asking someone or using an outside resource, such as a dictionary or word study booklet (see Table 5.11), promoting reflection on how words are structured. Bear and colleagues (2003) offer a wide range of word study suggestions in their book *Words Their Way: Word Study for Phonics, Vocabulary, and Spelling Instruction*.

Table 5.11 Have-a-Go

Misspelled Word	Have-a-Go	Have-a-Go	Correct Spelling	Copied Spelling
skol	skool	scool	school	school
theef	theif	thief	thief	thief

Spelling Frequently Used Words

High-frequency words are listed in Table 5.12. As the name suggests, these are the 100 most frequently used words in the English language. Teachers make certain that these words first become sight words for their young readers and later become words they spell correctly in their independent writing. Some high-frequency words may be added to personal word lists and to the word wall each week.

Once words are added to a word wall, students can be held responsible for spelling them correctly because there is a reference available to check their spelling. Early in the school year and throughout the remainder of the year with younger students, it would be advisable to assess which high-frequency words students can spell correctly and on which they need to work. This information can be used to group students at similar spelling levels or prepare individual word lists if a more formal spelling class format is to be used. If the word study format is used in lieu of this, then progress in daily writing will be the gauge of student progress in the correct spelling of high-frequency words.

Learning Spelling Words

Gentry (1987), an expert on spelling, suggests some simple but effective ways for students to visualize and practice new spelling words. During the pretests, students should listen to and then write the new words. Immediately following this activity, they listen to the correct spelling of each word, pointing to each letter of their spellings, and make the necessary corrections. In this way students can identify how close they have come to the conventional spelling of the words.

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Table 5.12 High-Frequency Words

a	friends	lot	their
about	from	make	them
after	fun	me	then
all	get	more	there
and	go	my	they
are	good	no	things
as	got	not	this
at	had	of	time
back	has	on	to
be	have	one	too
because	he	or	up
big	her	other	us
but	him	our	very
by	his	out	want
came	home	people	was
can	house	play	we
could	I	said	went
day	if	saw	were
did	in	school	what
didn't	is	see	when
do	it	she	will
don't	just	so	with
down	know	some	would
every	like	that	you
for	little	the	your

A five-step approach to learning to spell the words is recommended. Students look at a word, spell it while pointing to each letter, close their eyes and create a mental image of the letters and their organization, write the word, and check for correctness. Younger children might use word boxes (Clay, 1993), in which they draw boxes for the number of letters in a word and write one letter in each box. To practice spelling the word, students use a game chip that they move from letter to letter as they practice spelling the word. If applicable, a picture cue can be added to the activity. "Notice in the segmenting sounds activity that students see the



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letters and words (visual), hear the sounds (auditory), and touch (tactile) and move (kinesthetic) the magnetic counters to experience a multisensory approach” (Bender & Larkin, 2003, p. 55). This approach may be useful for students who struggle with spelling and writing (Atkinson, Wilkite, Frey, & Williams, 2002).

Teele (2004) has experimented with students with high ability in spatial reasoning in learning to spell. Her work indicates that asking students to draw a picture to represent words they are studying and write the word several times within the drawing is helpful. “I asked them to look at their picture and take a snapshot of the picture in their brain and to study the spelling of the word” (p. 132). Many students using this method were more successful than with more traditional spelling techniques.



Theory Into Practice

Many teachers incorporate word walls into their classrooms and have students complete activities using the word wall words. A method for helping students visualize the word as they learn and use it is to cut closely around the letters so that the tall letters and the letters that fall below the line stand out. Seeing the “shape” of words is a helpful visual for some learners.

Spelling Within the Writing Process

Making the transfer from spelling words to independent writing is difficult for some students. Asking them to make an attempt to write on their own is a first step. Using temporary or developmental spelling allows students to think about what they already know about how words are structured. As teachers circulate about the room, they may work briefly with individual students to assist them in (a) listening for beginning, medial, or ending sounds; (b) thinking about word chunks; (c) thinking about whether they’ve seen the word before; (d) linking the word to similar words; or (e) looking for root words, prefixes, or suffixes. Self- and peer editing were discussed earlier in relation to reviewing written work in terms of grammar and punctuation. The same can be done with spelling. On writing pieces that students wish to take to publication or make public in any way, the writing should be proofed for spelling. They may be able to correct some misspellings independently; for other errors, they may circle words they believe they have not spelled correctly. Have-a-go sheets (Bolton & Snowball, 1993) may be useful for students to explore conventional spellings, and asking a peer to edit the writing may help students determine other words that need to be edited. The peer may also provide some assistance in helping the author correct misspelled words. A final editing by the teacher will catch any additional spelling edits that need to be done. The actual editing process would primarily focus on the content and clarity of the message and use of language, but for the purposes of this discussion, only spelling is highlighted here.

Dictionaries may prove useful during the editing stage. Minilessons conducted prior to this point will prepare students with age-appropriate dictionary skills so that they are able to use this resource efficiently and effectively. Selecting dictionaries appropriate for the age and reading level of the students will also help avoid frustration. Older students can learn how to use pronunciation keys, word origin information, and other features in their word studies. Having students look words up in the dictionary, copy the definitions, and use them in sentences, however, is not a good use of the dictionary as a tool and represents busy work.

Spelling is an important component of writing. Conventional spelling helps the writer communicate more fully with the reader. Whether spelling is taught through a formal program or as part of ongoing word study, students' progress in spelling should be monitored and supported. Most important, spelling should always be linked to actual writing. Table 5.13 provides an overview of the components of effective spelling instruction. Teachers support student development in spelling all day long when they highlight how words are structured and used in all content areas (Fountas & Pinnell, 1996).

Table 5.13 What Does Good Spelling Instruction Look Like?

Good spelling instruction

- Is developmental in nature
- Is linked to student writing
- Encourages students to explore word patterns and chunks
- Provides multiple, interesting opportunities to practice word spelling
- Occurs at the instructional level of the child
- Is multisensory, especially for young children, students with learning difficulties, or students who are learning English

Handwriting

If the purpose of writing is to communicate with someone, then attention must be placed on developing quality penmanship. Handwriting that is legible is easy to read. Generally, young children learn manuscript (printing) writing first and later switch to cursive writing in about the third grade. Manuscript writing is often considered easier to master. Straight lines, half circles, and circles are used to form all of the letters in the Zaner-Bloser approach to manuscript handwriting, an approach that is widely used in U.S. schools (Hackney, 2003). "Manuscript

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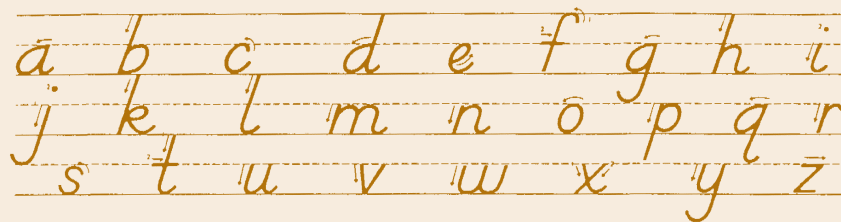
handwriting is considered better for young children because they seem to lack the necessary fine motor control and eye-hand coordination for cursive handwriting. In addition, manuscript handwriting is similar to the type style in primary-level reading textbooks" (Tompkins, 2005, p. 601). A sample of traditional manuscript handwriting can be found in Table 5.14.

Table 5.14 Traditional Manuscript Handwriting Sample

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R
S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i
j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r
s	t	u	v	w	x	y	z	

A more recent philosophy regarding handwriting has taken a different view with regard to penmanship. The d'Nealian (Thurber, 1986) style examines the level of difficulty that children face in transitioning from the manuscript to the cursive style of writing and strives to make links between the two types of handwriting. In this approach many lowercase letters have tails at the end of the letter to mimic cursive writing. The letters are not yet connected, but it is an easy transition when students begin cursive writing. Table 5.15 provides a sample of lowercase d'Nealian manuscript writing.

Table 5.15 D'Nealian Lowercase Alphabet Letters



Traditionally, teachers spent a great deal of time having children complete daily handwriting exercises that methodically focused on the formation of each letter of the alphabet and required the completion of a series of practice sheets. Young children were encouraged to use “fat” pencils and were reprimanded to “stay in the lines” of prelined penmanship paper. However, when we look at the size of children’s hands at the early childhood level, it quickly becomes obvious that their small hands could much more easily manipulate thinner writing instruments than wider ones. If we also examine their fine motor skills, it is obvious that paper without any lines at all might be more suitable for our youngest writers. Crayons, markers, chalk, and so on also make fine writing instruments and pique students’ interest in handwriting.

Practicing Handwriting

When practicing and learning new words such as working with spelling, students can practice handwriting skills at the same time as learning their spelling in a meaningful manner. Another time to practice handwriting in an authentic way with younger students is while working with word wall activities. While many word wall activities are done orally, a teacher may ask students to write the words in addition to the oral component while at the same time practicing correct handwriting methods, for example, asking students “What are the words on the word wall that have *ing* endings?” After orally reciting them, the students could be instructed to write them using correct penmanship modeled by the teacher.

Pencil grip is an aspect of handwriting that should also be addressed. While children are writing, teachers may wish to note how children hold their pencils and make adjustments as needed to produce legible writing. It is much easier to assist children in making changes in pencil grip as early as possible. Students who have adopted a nontraditional grasp of their pencils may find it difficult to change their habit later.

Assessing Handwriting

Even though classroom teachers do not currently devote the same amount of time to handwriting as they once did, it is an important skill for children to develop. Children do need to learn how to form letters correctly, and the legibility of their writing needs to be monitored. Using small chalkboards or dry erase boards, younger students may practice formation of letters. The handwriting of older students may be evaluated to determine what improvements need to be made. Small group sessions may be advisable at this age level if there are only a small number of students who struggle in this area. Having students assess their own handwriting periodically may be an effective way for them to monitor improvements in this area. They may also compare handwriting from earlier samples to determine how much progress they have made. Table 5.16 contains a sample of self- and peer assessments of handwriting.

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Table 5.16 Rubric for Assessing Handwriting

Self-Assessment of Handwriting

As I look at my handwriting

- I can easily read what is written
- It is large enough to easily see
- The handwriting slants to the right
- All of the letters are correctly formed

Peer Assessment of Handwriting

I am assessing _____'s handwriting

- I can easily read what is written
- It is large enough to easily see
- The handwriting slants to the right
- All the letters are correctly formed

Stop to Think

Some people believe that in today's technological world, which incorporates word processing, learning "proper" and legible handwriting is unnecessary. What do you think? How will you discuss this issue with parents who have a differing viewpoint than you do related to handwriting instruction and practice?

Adaptive materials are available for students who have physical difficulty in grasping a pencil. For some students who are not able to master the art of handwriting for one reason or another, keyboarding may be a very effective alternative. These students may be allowed to type all of their work rather than writing it in long hand.

All students need to learn keyboarding skills from a very early age. Many schools have computer labs where children learn and practice keyboarding and computer skills. Some are even lucky enough to have a computer teacher who works regularly with the students in the school. Sufficient opportunities to practice will help make this skill more automatic for students. Desktop publishing and use of graphics can also greatly enhance student motivation, as well as the appearance of their writing.

The topics of this chapter—spelling, grammar, punctuation, and handwriting—do not focus directly on the art of writing. They do, however, enhance the clarity, precision, and legibility of student writing. Learning skills in this area will certainly help students become more proficient readers and writers.

CHAPTER 5 Language, Word Study, and the Tools of Writing

End-of-Chapter Reflection

- Reflect briefly on how you could teach spelling effectively in an eighth-grade classroom, a fourth-grade classroom, and a first-grade classroom. Reflect as well on how you could effectively teach grammar at these same levels.
- What would you say to a seventh-grade student who stated, “I don’t have to have good handwriting, I do all my writing on a computer”?
- Many parents are familiar with traditional basal approaches to teaching and learning spelling. How would you describe your rationale for using more meaningful methods?

Planning for Teaching

1. Evaluate a child’s writing. Create a chart to identify which graphophonic patterns the child has control of and uses correctly, which ones are nearly correct, or which are not yet under control. Examine the second column, “nearly correct” (instructional level), and recommend word patterns on which this child appears ready to work.
2. Visit the educational materials center in your college library or a teacher supply store to review the resources that could be used for word study activities with students. What are the characteristics of the best resources you found that make them good learning tools for the classroom? Design a set of criteria for selection of quality word study materials.
3. Make a list of approximately 10 words that you struggle with in spelling. Analyze your word list. Which words are irregular spellings (*subpoena, pneumonia*), homonyms (*there, their*), and so on? Try out some of the teaching suggestions from this chapter for learning to spell these words automatically. Which ones work best for you? Why do you think they were effective? Consider your learning style, ease of use, and so on.
4. Write a note to a friend. Print three sentences and write in cursive for three sentences. Compare your sample to the model in this chapter. Has your writing become very stylized? Practice writing the note over using the handwriting models provided.

Connections With the Field

1. Visit a Grade K–8 classroom. Examine the kinds of activities the students engage in for word study. How does the teacher link these activities to actual reading? Are there additional activities that you would use in this area?
2. Visit a classroom to observe word study or spelling. What kinds of activities are used? How does the teacher monitor progress? Are individual students’ needs being met? In a small group, compile the information about the different approaches to spelling that were observed. Are there certain activities or approaches that appear to be more effective than others? Why?

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Student Study Site

The Companion Website for Developing Voice Through the Language Arts

<http://www.sagepub.com/dvtlastudy>

Visit the Web-based student study site to enhance your understanding of the chapter content and to discover additional resources that will take your learning one step further. You can enhance your understanding of the chapters by using the comprehensive Study Guide, which includes learning objectives, key terms, activities, practice tests, and more. You'll also find special features, such as the Links to Standards from U.S. States and associated activities, Children's Literature Selections, Reflection Exercises, Learning from Journal Articles, and PRAXIS test preparation materials.

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Technology Resources

Guide to grammar and style: <http://andromeda.rutgers.edu/~jlynch/Writing>

Guide to grammar and writing: <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar>