

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

How to Learn to Spell

Accurately and Confidently

Hi, my name is Bonnie Terry and I'm the co-founder of Scholar Within. I have taught tens of thousands of students at all levels to improve their reading and spelling skills, whether they are struggling, at level, or above level.

Through decades of working with students and professionals, I have discovered the most effective and efficient way to learn to spell accurately and confidently.

On the following pages, we share 7 fundamental aspects of an effective spelling program. These aspects are directly aligned with the [Orton-Gillingham method](#) along with the latest research on how people learn the most efficiently and effectively.



Bonnie Terry
M.Ed., BCET
Co-founder of Scholar Within

At Scholar Within, we have incorporated these insights, strategies, and methods into the Scholar Within [Spelling Program](#). You'll discover that our distinctive, multisensory, research-based approach makes spelling easy.

Table of Contents

What does it mean to be a great speller?	5
How do great spelling skills help with school and beyond?.....	7
Best Practices Guide	9
1. Multisensory Instruction.....	10
2. Phonics and Phonograms.....	12
3. Sequential and Incremental	14
4. Individualized, with Review Built-In	16
5. Short Lessons.....	18
6. Spelling Patterns.....	20
7. Play Games	23
Next Steps	25
What Parents Say About Scholar Within's Spelling Program	26
Additional Spelling Articles.....	29
References.....	30

What does it mean to be a great speller?

Great First Impressions

Just like a spectacular painting leaves a good impression, so too does good spelling. People are able to focus on the substance of your writing, rather than misspellings.

Improved Confidence

Accurate spelling skills lead to increased confidence in the classroom and the workplace. When you present your work or have to write in front of others, you will not have to worry about spelling errors.

Avoid Computer Error

Believe it or not, sometimes computers get it wrong. If your spelling is extremely poor, computers can incorrectly fix your spelling error to a word you did not intend to write.

Advance and Succeed Faster

University and job applications completed with spelling errors are often ignored.

How do great spelling skills help with school and beyond?

Improved Reading Skills

Spelling is the encoding of words. In other words, to spell, you pull the sounds within a word apart and match letters to the sounds. Reading is the inverse, or the decoding of words. Reading and spelling are interdependent, as they both rely on the sounds of letters that comprise words.

Improved Reading Comprehension

Great spelling skills help students further understand word relationships. Understanding word relationships directly improves vocabulary skills and understanding.

Improved Writing Skills

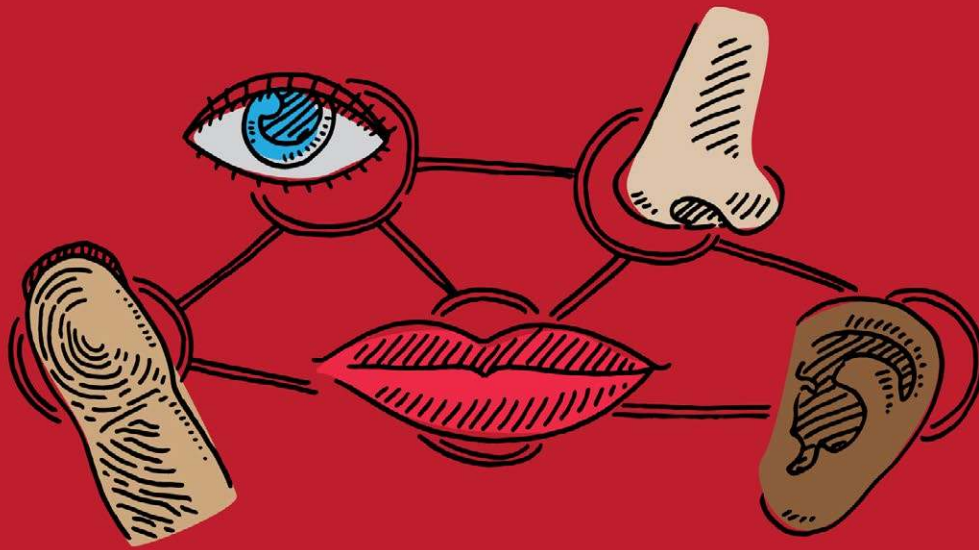
When you can spell easily and automatically, you can write without spending time on the mechanics of spelling the words. You can write words and sentences closer to the speed of thought.

Improved Communication Skills

We communicate more than ever through writing emails, text messages, and social media. When we spell correctly, people can clearly understand each other.

How to Learn to Spell:

Best Practices Guide



1. Multisensory Instruction

Our five senses are the primary methods we use to learn. We rarely experience with one sense alone. Our senses work together to give us a complete picture of our experiences.

Memory and Learning

When we learn to spell, we use our auditory, visual, and tactile-kinesthetic processing skills. When spelling is taught and learned with a multisensory approach, our senses work together. This approach gives us greater understanding and improves our memory.

Learning with two senses improves a student's recall ability. Using three senses leads to even greater recall ability.

The Five Senses

1. **Taste:** sweet (ice cream), sour, salty (potato chips), and bitter
2. **Smell:** fragrant, minty, sweet (cookies baking), etc.
3. **Sight (Visual):** picture, word, visual memory, discrimination, figure-ground, etc.
4. **Hearing (Auditory):** auditory memory, discrimination, figure-ground, etc.
5. **Touch (Tactile-Kinesthetic):** directionality, locomotion, motor skills, etc.

Multisensory spelling instruction is the foundation of our [spelling program](#) with multisensory interactive video lessons, application lessons, and games.



2. Phonics and Phonograms

Phonics is the method used in teaching reading where students learn to pair individual sounds with a visual symbol (letters).

There is a systematic and predictable relationship between written letters and their sounds. When we hear letters or words, we associate their sounds with the symbols that represent them. This process is called the *Alphabetic Principle*.

Phonograms are individual letters or letter combinations that represent a sound.

- › **W** is a phonogram that makes the /w/ sound in *wag*.
- › **I** is a phonogram that makes the /i/ sound in *tip*.
- › **SH** is a phonogram that makes the /sh/ sound in *wish*.
- › **OW** is a phonogram that sounds like the /ō/ sound in *flow* or the /ow/ sound in *now*.

When you say words slowly, we can hear the individual sounds.

Specific phonics and phonogram instruction helps students learn the relationship between written language and spoken language.

When students learn to spell and read using phonics and phonograms, both spelling and reading become easier. We use specific phonics and phonogram instruction through the spelling lessons and activities in our [Spelling Program](#).



3. Sequential and Incremental

Sequential and incremental lessons use a logical order or sequence. They start with simple and foundational concepts and gradually increase in difficulty. This approach ensures that students master the foundational components of learning.

Sequential, incremental lessons help students make associations from previous lessons to current lessons. Each lesson builds upon what has been previously learned, and students can see clear relationships.

Building associations is the core of the learning process. Students are able achieve long-term learning when they learn in this way.

Incremental learning ensures that there are no gaps in learning. Every step in our [spelling program](#) is incremental, moving students toward the goal of learning to spell easily and accurately.

Scholar Within's spelling lessons are organized in a sequential, logical order. Students are able to make associations from what they have previously learned to current lessons.

Whether students begin at the kindergarten level, the 4th-grade level, or even the 8th-grade level, they learn all of the eight spelling patterns in a sequential, incremental manner. Each spelling level progresses at a specific pace, with grade appropriate words.



4 Individualized, with Review Built-In

When you learn to spell, there are three different levels of instruction:

1. Independent:

Spelling is easy and students can spell accurately.

2. Instructional:

Students receive direct instruction to improve spelling skills and spelling progresses readily over time.

3. Frustration:

Spelling is difficult. It takes a lot of effort to learn how to spell accurately.

When students learn at their instructional level, they advance faster, because they are met where they are academically.

Our [spelling program](#) has specific levels directly tied to grade level to achieve the greatest progress over time.

Review-based Spelling Curriculum

Reviewing learned concepts helps students develop a strong foundation of how and why we spell words the way that we do.

1. Short lessons (10-20 minutes) that students can do at their own pace.
2. Review of prior-learned concepts with each week's lesson to form long term memory.
3. Progress on to the next lesson or level when the student has mastered the material.

In our [spelling program](#), we build upon previously learned spelling patterns and review concepts each week. Students see there is a logical system to spelling.

5. Short Lessons



Shorter Lessons Are More Effective

Studies from SRCD, the Society for Research in Child Development, show that short, frequent lessons are more effective than lengthy individual lessons.

This format keeps concepts students are learning in front of them on a regular basis. It facilitates the introduction of new concepts along with reinforcement of previous concepts with continual review.

Different Types of Lesson Activities

Mix up your spelling lessons with different types of activities. Do activities that use all of your senses. Do activities like card games and puzzles that build a stronger understanding of how letters construct words according to their spelling patterns.

When you vary the types of activities and if they are all short in duration, students can do one part of a lesson, take a break, and then proceed with the next part, according to their needs.

Short activities keep spelling fun and help students remember how to spell accurately and confidently.

Scholar Within's [Spelling Program](#) lessons typically take 15 to 20 minutes. Short, multisensory lessons, help students be more attentive and retain and recall information more easily.



v̄c

VOWEL-CONSONANT

v̄ce

VOWEL-CONSONANT-SILENT

vv

VOWEL-VOWEL

6. Spelling Patterns

Phonetic Spelling Patterns

Most words in the English language follow specific patterns. In fact, there are only [8 spelling patterns](#) to learn in our program. Every syllable in a word has a vowel pattern.

Learning to spell this way is much easier than learning 30 spelling rules or trying to memorize the spelling of every word.

When we learn to spell with spelling patterns, spelling is demystified. Spelling becomes logical and easier to remember. Imagine learning a spelling list where the focus is on the structure of the language. Spelling then becomes so much easier!



[Watch the Learn to Spell Video on YouTube](#)

Vowel-Consonant Pattern

The most common spelling pattern is the vowel-consonant pattern. This is the pattern where vowels give their short sound.

These are words like ***cat***, ***pet***, ***him***, ***pot***, and ***nut***.

How Spelling Patterns Work

Look at the following words to see how each is comprised of spelling patterns. Every syllable has a pattern.

athlete
vc vce

online
vc vce

power
v+w v+r

spelling
v+l v+ng

Learning how to spell with spelling patterns takes the guesswork out of spelling.

Our specific methodology for teaching spelling incorporates auditory, visual, and tactile-kinesthetic learning with spelling patterns.

[Learn More](#)



7. Play Games

Manipulate Letters and Sounds

Game playing not only makes learning to spell more fun, but it helps you play with how letters are put together to build words.

Spelling and word games give students a chance to manipulate *phonemes* (individual letters like /b/, /c/, /d/, /t/) or *phonograms* (groups of letters like /ch/, /sh/, /th/, /wh/, /ck/).

When students manipulate phonemes to make words, they dramatically improve their knowledge of how letters come together to make words. This increased knowledge improves both reading and spelling skills.

Take a look at the following examples:

stem to step, step to steep, steep to beep, beep to beet, beet to street

The ability to change the above word pairs improves students' ability to spell.

Game playing allows students to do this type of manipulation in a fun manner. Participants learn from watching each other take their turns. This process is called *reciprocal teaching and learning*.

Additionally, just the action of playing a game puts the body and mind into a more relaxed state, making it easier to learn.

Our [spelling program](#) includes custom-designed card games every few weeks.

Next Steps

By reading this guide, you've learned what needs to be in an effective spelling program. You've gained an understanding that teaching spelling in a multisensory way makes learning spelling easier.

You've also become aware that there are only 8 spelling patterns to learn, which are much easier to learn than 30 different spelling rules.

Some of the concepts may seem difficult to implement on your own. However, the [Scholar Within Spelling Program](#) takes the struggle out of teaching spelling. The step-by-step approach with video lessons, puzzles, application lessons, and games make the difference. Lessons are broken down into bite-size pieces that are easy for students to learn.

So, if you'd like to continue this journey of learning to spell, we can do it together.

[Learn More](#)

What Parents Say About Scholar Within's Spelling Program

“The spelling videos showed us step-by-step the structure. You really made spelling easy for my kids. The way you explain it, it really sinks in. Your materials help build my kids’ self-esteem up. They’re short quick activities. We love playing the games, too. Thanks again for your program!”

– Regina A., CA

Your videos make it so easy for my kids to actually see and hear how letters and sounds come together to make words. They are improving my kids’ spelling and reading skills. Such a bonus! And, they love playing the games, too.

– Sky B.

“My third-grader and eighth-grader easily learned the patterns and liked the puzzle pages. Spelling time became easy and fun!”

– Lynn F., NY

“Spelling is much easier for my son. If your student is having trouble with the spelling rules, focusing on the eight spelling patterns may be just what they need to get them over the hurdle.”

– Heidi P., OR

I’m an elementary reading teacher with 30 years of experience. Scholar Within’s Spelling Program makes clear on a step-by-step basis how we put letters together to make words. For the first time, my students see the 8 spelling patterns. The kids see the patterns with all of their words. It doesn’t take them long to become proficient at it. It just takes a few days of using the program and my students’ spelling improves.

– Marcia B.

At-Home and Online Spelling Program

WITH PHONICS AND SPELLING PATTERNS



Are you ready to help your child become an
accurate and confident speller?

[Get Started](#)

Additional Spelling Articles

[10 Spelling Activities for Any Word List](#)

[What Causes Problems with Spelling](#)

[Reading and Spelling: Decoding and Encoding](#)

[Choosing the Best Dictionary for Students](#)

[Auditory Processing and Spelling](#)

References

Multisensory Learning

Başar, E. "The Theory of the Whole-Brain-Work." *International Journal of Psychophysiology: Official Journal of the International Organization of Psychophysiology*, U.S. National Library of Medicine, March 2006, pp. 133-38.[5] <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16563537/>.

Cox, Michelle. *Effects of Multi-Sensory Instruction Techniques on Memory and Learning in a Sixth-Grade Population*. St. Bonaventure University, <http://web.sbu.edu/psychology/lavin/michelle.htm>.

International Dyslexia Association. "Multisensory Structured Language Teaching Fact Sheet." <https://dyslexiaida.org/multisensory-structured-language-teaching-fact-sheet/>. [9]

Hoisington, Becca. "Multisensory Activities to Teach Reading Skills." *Literacymn.org*, Minnesota Literacy Council, 2015, https://mnliteracy.org/sites/default/files/multisensory_techniques_to_teach_reading_skills.pdf. [13]

Shams, L., and A. R. Seitz. *Benefits of Multisensory Learning*. *Trends in Cognitive Sciences*, 60, November 2008, pp. 411-17.[4] [https://www.cell.com/trends/cognitive-sciences/references/S1364-6613\(08\)00218-0](https://www.cell.com/trends/cognitive-sciences/references/S1364-6613(08)00218-0).

"Why Multisensory Learning Is an Effective Strategy for Teaching Students How to Read." *Waterford.org*, 5 Mar. 2019, <https://www.waterford.org/education/why-multisensory-learning-is-an-effective-strategy-for-teaching-students-how-to-read/>.

Orton-Gillingham

Ritchey, Kristen D., and Jennifer L. Goeke. *Orton-Gillingham and Orton-Gillingham–Based Reading Instruction: A Review of the Literature*. *The Journal of Special Education*, VOL. 40/ NO. 3/2006/PP. 171–183. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ758184.pdf>.

What Works Clearinghouse. "Orton-Gillingham-based Strategies (Unbranded)." US Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences, July 2010, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/InterventionReports/wwc_ortongill_07011.pdf.

Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Reading, and Spelling

Brooks, G., C.J. Torgerson, & J. Hall. (2008). The use of phonics in the teaching of reading and spelling. *EBP Briefs*, 3(2), 1-12. <https://images.pearsonclinical.com/images/assets/ebp/pdfs/3-2-june-2008.pdf>.

"Why is Early Literacy Important?" *Raising Readers*, 13 April 2017, <https://www.raisingreaders.org/understanding-early-literacy/why-is-early-literacy-important/>.

National Reading Panel. *Teaching Children to Read: An Evidence-Based Assessment of the Scientific Research Literature on Reading and Its Implications for Reading Instruction*. 27 Feb. 2000, <https://www.nichd.nih.gov/sites/default/files/publications/pubs/nrp/Documents/report.pdf>.

Reutzel, D. Ray, Angela Child, Cindy D. Jones, and Sarah K. Clark. "Explicit Instruction in Core Reading Programs." *The Elementary School Journal*, vol 114, no. 3., Mar. 2014, pp 406-430, *JSTOR*, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1086/674420>.

Spiteri-Bender, Angelina. "Tying Phonological Awareness to Reading and Spelling." *Orton-Gillingham Weekly*, Brainspring.com, 10 Jan. 2019, <https://brainspring.com/ortongillinghamweekly/tying-phonological-awareness-to-reading-and-spelling/>.

Weinrich, Barbara, and Emily Fay. "Phonological Awareness/Literacy Predictors of Spelling Abilities for First-Grade Children." *Contemporary Issues in Communication Science and Disorders*, vol 34, 2007, pp. 94–100, https://pubs.asha.org/doi/pdf/10.1044/cicsd_34_F_94#:~:text=Phonemic%20awareness%2C%20particularly%20sound%2Dto,et%20al.%2C%201993.

Individualized Learning

Aharon, Yadin, and Rachel Or-Bach. "The Importance of Emphasizing Individual Learning in the "Collaborative Learning Era." *Journal of Information Systems Education*, vol. 21(2), 2010, <https://jise.org/Volume21/n2/JISEv21n2p185.pdf>.

Lesson Sequencing

Bilash, Olenka. "Lesson Sequencing." Best of Bilash, Improving Second Language Education, May 2009. <https://bestofbilash.ualberta.ca/lesson%20sequencing.html>.

Short Lessons

Vlach, Haley A., and Catherine M. Sandhofer. "Distributing Learning Over Time: The Spacing Effect in Children's Acquisition and Generalization of Science Concepts." *Society for Research in Child Development*, John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, vol. 83(4), 22 May, 2012, pp. 1137-1144, <https://srcd.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/j.1467-8624.2012.01781.x>.

Hamilton, L., R. Halverson, R. Jackson, E. Mandinach, J. Supovitz, and J. Wayman. *Using Student Achievement Data to Support Instructional Decision Making (NCEE 2009-4067)*. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, Sept. 2009, https://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/Docs/PracticeGuide/dddm_pg_092909.pdf.

Game Play

Cassar, A.G., and E.E. Jang. *Investigating the Effects of a Game-based Approach in Teaching Word Recognition and Spelling to Students With Reading Disabilities and Attention Deficits*. Australian Journal of Learning Difficulties, vol. 15(2), Nov 2010, pp. 193-211, https://www.researchgate.net/publication/233328373_Investigating_the_effects_of_a_game-based_approach_in_teaching_word_recognition_and_spelling_to_students_with_reading_disabilities_and_attention_deficits.

Charlton, B., R.L. Williams, and T.F. McLaughlin. *Educational Games: A Technique to Accelerate the Acquisition of Reading Skills of Children With Learning Disabilities*. The International Journal of Special Education, vol 20, no.2, 2005. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ846936.pdf>.

Cardella, Kathryn. "Evaluating Phonics Games for Authentic Literacy Experiences." The College at Brockport: State University of New York. Education and Human Development Master's Theses. 325. 17 Feb. 2013 https://digitalcommons.brockport.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1317&context=ehd_theses.

Gutierrez, Armel F., and Eric Chudler, Monitoring Editor. "Development and Effectiveness of an Educational Card Game as Supplementary Material in Understanding Selected Topics in Biology." *CBE Life Sciences Education*, American Society for Cell Biology, 2014, <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3940466/>.