

Games, lessons, lists, and techniques to
help your child become a super speller!

Teaching Kids to Spell FOR DUMMIES®



Tracey Wood, MEd

Author of *Teaching Kids to Read For Dummies*

A Reference for the Rest of Us!®



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About the Author

Tracey Wood was born in England. She went to teachers college in Leeds and graduated with an honors degree in Psychology and Education. She taught in a special school for four years and loved it. But sunnier climes called and she left England for a backpacking vacation in Australia. Twelve years later, she was still enjoying the warmth of Australia and had traded her backpack for a husband and two kids.

In Australia, Tracey earned a Diploma in Special Education and a Master's degree in Education. For several years she ran a high school special education unit and then started her own reading clinic. In the 90s, Tracey moved to the San Francisco Bay Area, where she set up a reading and writing clinic, helped in her kids' school, led two scouting troops, instructed for the Red Cross, created her Web site (www.readingpains.com) and wrote her first book, *See Johnny Read! — The 5 Most Effective Ways to End Your Son's Reading Problems*.

Still on the move (with her husband's job), Tracey relocated to Toronto and wrote her second book, *Teaching Kids to Read For Dummies* (Wiley). Tracey is now a literacy consultant, writer, and public speaker. She's the kids' reading and writing expert on www.LDonline.com and www.kidslinktoronto.com, she contributes articles to magazines like *Big Apple Parent* and *Teachers of Vision*, and she's committed to steering

(albeit unsteadily) her two children through childhood with all their limbs and faculties in tact.

Dedication

When I asked my youngest child what she'd like me to say about her if I were to mention her in my book, she said I should say, "Her beauty is greater than the golden sun high above." When I asked my oldest child the same question, she said, "Say I'm more beautiful than her." So there you are, I said it. This book is for both of you, so utterly and equally amazing!

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Introduction

Want to steer rather than drag your child through words like beautiful they're?throat?menyuntill

Ta-da! The cavalry has arrived! This book gives a resounding boot to the typical tedium of spelling lessons and champions the cause of concerned but busy people like you (who can easily doze off at the mere hint of blah, blah, blah). *Teaching Kids to Spell For Dummies* is exactly right for you. It gives you practical activities that really work. It's easy to follow, pick and choose from, and come back to. It doesn't ask you to buy extras, and all you really need for an immediate start is paper and pen. Oh, and there's an added bonus. Right here in these pages I put jokes that are, let's just say, acute.

But what about your child, what's in this book for him or her? I can almost hear that devilish groan, so just for your child, I've packed this book with memory joggers and appetizing, bite-sized pieces of information. If your child makes careless spelling errors, this book can sharpen his eye with the proofreading and dictation activities that I dole out in The Part of Tens. If she can't write long-vowel sounds, she'll make quick progress with the easy rules I provide in Part III. If he's been making basic mistakes for a while, he can rebuild his skills from the short-vowel sounds that I give you in Part II.

To help your child get a solid grasp of spelling, you need practical, good sense information. And that's exactly what you find here in these pages. Welcome!

About This Book

Regardless of whether you're a shaky speller or friends marvel at your adverbs, whether your child's a beginner or practically a veteran, or whether you're apprehensive about teaching or can't wait to begin, this book is for you. That's because you can surf through it or immerse yourself chapter by chapter, as you need. So much spelling information is here in this book that you're assured of getting the guidance you're looking for, whatever your needs. And you'll love "The Part of Tens" at the end of this book, where you get quick lists, each of ten items, of all the really handy stuff.

Foolish Assumptions

Because you're reading this book I'm assuming:

- ✓ You'd like to help a child become a better speller but need cheerful, plain-talking guidance.
- ✓ You have interest and enthusiasm but not unlimited time.
- ✓ You'd like pointers as you go so you know whether you're doing things right.

What You're Not to Read

Many books about spelling are full of forced rules. They have you making strange pronunciations and give you rules that hardly ever work even after you've stretched and rolled your tongue obligingly. This book isn't like that. It gives you a few rules that really work, and if I use jargon, I warn you in advance so you can skip it if you want to. In addition to a few bits of jargon, I spice up each chapter with sidebars. Sidebars offer bonus or additional information that may be anything from a cute story to illustrate a point to a quick detour into an extra activity you may think you'd like to try out. In other words, you can skip the sidebars if you're in a rush; but if you like quirky stuff and diversions, you'll definitely enjoy them.

Conventions Used in this Book

To "he" or not to "he?" In this book I clean up that sticky dilemma by using "he" and "she" interchangeably. You can be sure that this book is for and about all kids, and after you're used to switching between he's and she's, you'll probably think all other books should do the same.

How This Book Is Organized

This book has six parts:

Part I: Understanding the Basics of Good Spelling

Some kids seem to have an amazing-speller gene. Most kids have to work at it. Your child probably thinks twice about how to spell *twice* and scrabbles for scrap paper to figure out *probably*. The good news is that the tips, rules, and activities in this book can help your child. This part of *Teaching Kids To Spell For Dummies* outlines them for you along with the best ways to teach them. You get a lightning tour of stuff like digraphs, letter orientation, and phonemic awareness, so you don't feel like you never got the memo when you read more about them later.

Part II: Getting Easy Words onto Paper

You're going to hear quite a bit about short vowels in this book. Short vowels are solid and predictable letters that your child writes in an awful lot of words, putting them into words like *put* and *can* and stringing them into big words like *introduction* . Part II shows you how to take your child carefully through the short-vowel words and spelling chunks to build a set of spelling skills on a strong foundation.

Part III: Getting to Grips with Long Vowel Sounds

This part of the book shows you how to make short work of spelling long-vowel sounds. Long-vowel sounds are a definite problem area for kids, but this section gives you three simple rules to make things easy. In addition, you find out the ins and outs of sight words or most common words. You're told why teachers fuss so much about sight words, and how to get one step ahead. I give you a list of 220 sight words that comprise a whopping 70 percent of all the words in regular text. When you explain how to spell these words, you iron out any frequent errors that your child makes.

Part IV: Using Word Families

Words are easier to remember when you classify or group them. *All*, for example, is a forgettable word until you show your child that it fits snugly inside a whole army of words like *ball*, *call*, *tall*, and *small* . Words like *right* belong with *fight*, *might*, and *tight* , and there's no end to the words your child can make from a spelling chunk like *ou* . Part Four shows you these word families.

Part V: Spelling Words in Chunks

Part V shows you how to make sure that your child figures out words methodically, starting at the beginning, moving to the middle, and finishing up at the end. Here you show your child how to gain control of even the longest of words. I talk about contractions in this section, too. Not the stork-visiting-in-the-middle-of-the-night kind, but rather the ones that squeeze words like *has not* into *hasn't*. You see how syllables and contractions work and how to steer your child past the pitfalls that kids often fall into.