

## Lesson Plan: Spelling

By [Sarah Sahr](#)

Spelling is a struggle for native and nonnative speakers of English alike. Some people think spelling is a skill that can be learned; others just think spelling is a talent. I think spelling is a talent: All my life, I have been a terrible speller. However, I still love to play games with letters. Below are a few ideas to get students interested in and maybe even excited about spelling.

1. **Word Scrambles** – Give students small cut-out pieces of paper that spell out words, one letter per cut-out. It's best to start with the easiest words first, words that are just 3–5 letters. Or, give students more than one word. To do this, put one word on a colored sheet of paper and cut out each letter. Put a second word on a differently colored paper, cut each letter, etc. Put all the pieces of paper in an envelope and let students sort them out.
2. **Missing Letters** – Give students a list of their current spelling words with just one or two letters missing from each word. Have students fill in the missing letters. If you'd like to give your students some help, provide a letter bank (similar to a word bank) at the top of the page so students know what letters are missing. As they get better, take more letters away. You could take it one step further and give students a list of letters that belong to two words. Give the first letter of each word to help. Then, students have to use all the letters to finish spelling the words, for example:

e u i o u b g g s t n m h → t \_ \_ \_ & s \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ \_

3. **Pick 3 Letters** – Choose any three letters from the English alphabet and write them on the board. In groups, students have to come up with as many words as they can, using those letters; words can be of any length, as long as they include all of the provided letters. The group with the most words, spelled correctly, wins. Play this game in rounds. Let the letters get progressively harder. For example, the first round could be *t, l, a* (so words such as *late, tall*, or even *article* would be acceptable). Next could be *n, i, s*. Next, *q, k, e*, etc.

4. **Staying Above Water** - Using a current spelling word, the teacher puts dashes on the board equal to the number of letters in the word. The teacher also draws a simple picture of a person holding balloons over water (see photo). The number of balloons may vary, based on how many mistakes the teacher allows the students. Students have to guess what letters go on each dash. If they choose a correct letter, the teacher writes it on the appropriate dash. If a student chooses an incorrect letter, the teacher “pops” one of the balloons by erasing it. Also, if a student chooses an incorrect letter, the teacher should write it below the water to remind students they shouldn't choose that letter again. If all the balloons “pop” before the word is guessed, the teacher wins and the students lose. The students win if the full word is guessed before all the balloons are gone.



5. **BIG Word–Little Word** – On the board, write a word that students are familiar with that has many consonants and vowels. For example: PHOTOSYNTHESIS. Break student into groups of three to six. Groups have to come up with as many words as they can by using the

letters in *photosynthesis*. Make it a contest: Each letter in the word is a point, so, *the*=3 points, *synopsis*=7 points . Or, groups can compare their lists. If there are repeat words, those words are crossed out. Count the remaining words and the group with the most (unique) words wins. Other great big words to begin with are: MATHEMATICS, BIBLIOGRAPHY, MISREPRESENTATION, GYMNASIUM. Make it more challenging by saying that the “little” words must have at least three letters, at least four letters, etc.

6. **Small White Board Games** – Similar to [last month’s grammar games](#)... Small clipboard-sized white boards are great for spelling review. Divide your class into groups of four and make sure each group has a small white board. The activities below are a race. The first group to raise their white board over their heads with the correct answer gets a point.
  - a. *Spelling words* – Call out a spelling word and students spell it on the white board.
  - b. *Which letter is wrong?* – Prepare word cards with misspelled words. Hold up a word card and students identify the letter (or letters) that is wrong and write it on their whiteboard.
  - c. *Anagrams* – Prepare word cards with jumbled letters. Hold up a scrambled word card. The group that unscrambles and spells the word correctly gets a point.
  - d. *Recognizing sounds* – Say a word with a complicated sound to spelling relationship. Students have to write down the letters that make that sounds. For example:
    - i. What makes the /f/ sound in *laugh*? Students would write down *gh*.
    - ii. What makes the /i:/ sound in *bean*? Students would write down *ea*.
    - iii. What makes the /u/ sound in *through*? Students would write down *ough*.
7. **Chat Translation** – So many of our students have let their spelling fall to the wayside due to chat & SMS speak. Let students write a complete sentence in their favorite SMS text and translate it into proper English with correct spelling. For example:

*My smmr hols wr CWOT. B4, we used 2go2 NY 2C my bro, his GF & thr 3 :- kids FTF. ILNY, it's a gr8 plc.*

This translates to: My summer holidays were a complete waste of time. Before, we used to go to New York to see my brother, his girlfriend and their three screaming kids face to face. I love New York. It's a great place.

Taken from: no author, (2003). *Is txt mightier than the word?* Retrieved from BBC, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk\\_news/2814235.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/2814235.stm)

## Other Resources

*Online Activities:* These three websites have excellent collections of online spelling activities.

- [ESL Desk](#)
- [ITESLJ](#)
- [Many Things](#)

*Board Games:*

- [Boggle](#)
- [Scrabble](#)
- [Bananagrams](#)

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