

Instructions for Parents/Teachers

I have set up the spelling lessons to teach one new spelling rule at a time and spend one week (assuming 4 lessons are completed each week) practicing each new rule before introducing the next spelling rule. At the beginning, after every couple of rules, I include a week of review focusing on the most recent two rules. Once the first few rules have been introduced, I include periodic cumulative reviews in order to give more practice time on all of the rules introduced so far before moving on to new material.

A few notes to explain how the lessons are set up:

Initial note: the lessons build, so even if some of the spelling rules are ones your child already knows, it is still important to do at least one lesson per rule in order to understand the color coding (explained below). Have your child complete the **2nd to last** lesson from each rule that you choose to skip over.

For the first 2-3 weeks of using this program, while your child is getting used to the format of the lessons, you will probably need to spend the time along side of him (I am using "him" generically) while he completes the lesson. Then, after those first 2-3 weeks, he will probably be able to work more independently for most of the lessons (with you giving hints only if he gets stuck on a word here or there). The first lesson in each new unit, though, may still require your assistance while your child is learning how a new rule works. Depending on your child's needs, you may even choose to complete one sentence at the beginning of a new unit for him (while along the way explaining why you circled or underlined each word) so that he can see the rule in action.

For each new spelling rule, the rule is explained at the beginning of each lesson and an example is given. Then, your child will be given a set of sentences and asked to use a particular color of crayon to circle any words that follow that spelling rule in the sentences. After the first few lessons, he will also be asked to use the same color of crayon to underline any words that are exceptions to the rule. Each new rule (or group of related rules) will have its own color. Having a unique color associated with each rule gives the child another visual stimulus (besides just the spelling of the word) to reinforce each rule and also provides a way for the lessons to build and reinforce previous rules without things running together and getting confusing.

At the beginning of the program, I will gradually add in new things for your child to look for (for example, looking for exceptions to the rule in addition to looking for words that follow the rule) so that he has time to get used to each new task before I introduce another. By the time the second rule is being reviewed, your child will be asked to identify not only the current rule he is learning, but also any previous rules that have been introduced. This provides him with many opportunities to practice recognizing the rules and serves to reinforce and strengthen his ability to remember each of the rules he is learning. Since the process is gradual, it should build slowly enough not to overwhelm; however, if you find that your child is getting frustrated with trying to identify both old and new rules at the same time, feel free to break it up and

have him first look only for words pertaining to the new rule. Then, at a later time you can have him go back through the sentences to search for words that pertain to any of the previous rules. On occasions when your child gets stuck and can't find all of the words/rules in a sentence, it is perfectly fine to give him hints (for example: if your child is unable to find as many rule words in a sentence as indicated, you could say, "You should have 2 blue words in this sentence [blue = words ending in 'll', 'ff' or 'ss'].") Or, if he has found all of the words but had not identified all rules that were covered in those words, you might say, "One of your red words also follows another rule").

Some rules can be explained briefly so that one reading of the explanation is sufficient to understand the rule. Other rules, however, require more steps in order to explain thoroughly. In times when reading through the rule before the first lesson is not enough for your child to fully understand how the rule works, if you help him complete first lesson (which always focuses just on the current rule), how the rule applies should make enough sense by the end of that first lesson.

Periodically, as your child is identifying and circling words in a lesson or review, ask him to stop and explain why a word he circled fits into the rule for that color. Sometimes select a word that uses the current rule and sometimes a word from a previous rule to make sure he is retaining the information longer term. If a particular vowel sound (short vs long) or another consonant is needed in order for the rule to apply, make sure he mentions that piece of the rule in his explanation so that you can see that he knows all of the essential details that make the rule work the way it does (example: instead of just saying "the word ends in a double 'l' ", saying "the word has a short vowel sound, so I know it has to end with a double 'l' instead of just one 'l'."). Also, pick out an occasional exception word to see if he can explain why it is an exception. If he leaves out a part of the rule in his explanation, prompt him to add the missing piece. If he doesn't remember the missing part of the rule, ask him to look at the explanation at the top of the lesson pages for that rule and then say how the rule applies to this particular word that he just circled. (For a given lesson, ask about 1 or 2 words, at most, so that it doesn't bog down the lesson)

An additional note: there will be many instances when a single word follows more than one rule. In these cases, your child should circle the word more than once - once with each color that is appropriate. For example, after you have gotten to week 7, the word "kite" should be circled with green for the silent 'e' rule (from week 1) and also with red for the 'c' versus 'k' rule (from week 7).

For the most part, the words I use in sentences for the spelling exercises will be at an age-appropriate reading level. Occasionally, however, for the purpose of creating more interesting sentences I have included words in the sentence that may fall slightly above your child's reading ability. Since the focus for these exercises is on learning specific rules to spelling, it is fine for you to help them read more complicated words when they come across them.

While the first few lessons for each spelling rule provide your child opportunities to use their detective skills and find words that use the current spelling rule (as well as previous rules), the final lesson in each unit provides him (or her) an opportunity to practice writing a selection of words that use the latest rule. This

combination, along with the color-coding of the rules, provides a variety of cognitive reinforcement for what your child is learning.

Based on the needs of your child, in addition to having the final lesson in each series focus on writing practice, you may find it helpful to end each spelling lesson with a short (3-4 minute) writing practice time to reinforce the lesson. In this case, have your child copy any of the current rule words that he used in that day's lesson on a blank sheet of lined paper.

This format accommodates the reluctant writer (since only one lesson each week requires writing) while providing the option for additional days with writing practice if needed/desired.

The first few lessons in the program, when your child is practicing only one to two rules, will probably only take 5-10 minutes. Once your child is looking for words to more than two rules, he will probably need to spend up to 15 minutes on each lesson. I do not expect any lesson in Year One to take more than 20 minutes at the most (unless your child is like my son and finds ways to distract himself instead of working on the lesson ☺).

At the beginning, after introducing every couple of new rules, I will include a word search and crossword puzzle for review. After the first several lessons, review weeks will expand to include also 1-2 cumulative review lessons in the same format as the regular lessons). The crossword puzzles should provide you with a good opportunity to assess whether your child understands and can apply the recent rules.

For each lesson, I will provide an answer key in a separate, similarly named file.

For any crossword puzzles in the reviews or fill-in-the-blank lessons, since the goal of the lesson is more to reinforce learning of the spelling rules than it is to develop word sleuthing skills, if your child gets stuck on a word (and the letter clues provided by the words that cross through it aren't enough), it is ok for you to give him clues in order to help him figure out what the correct word choice is. If he still does not know what word to use, you may tell him the word. The most important part for him to solve on his own, if possible, is the spelling of the word.

You will need to print the lessons (probably obvious given the color-coded circling with crayons that is central to the lesson format). The one lesson that you can go without printing is the final one for each set - when your child practices writing a sampling of the rule words. For this lesson, you may either print the lesson or, if you prefer, you can have your child sit at the computer and copy each of the words from the computer screen onto a blank sheet of lined paper. Tip: In order to conserve ink, you may set your options to "draft" or "fast" mode when printing.

If after the final lesson for a unit, you want to give your child a progress test to determine how well he is retaining the material (either just for the current rule or also for any previously studied rules), you can select a sampling of words from all of the lessons for the current rule as well as (if desired) any previous rules to make up your own test using the approach outlined below (select words that are single-syllable). Testing for both the current rule and previous rules allows you to see whether your child is retaining the information long-term or is only remembering what he worked on most recently.

Testing: Once you are ready to test your child, say the first word in the test to him, then use it in a sentence, then say the word again (I also, at the beginning of the test, encourage my son to stop and remember the colors we've used and what the corresponding rules were that he has been studying before deciding how to spell each word). Have him spell the word on lined paper. After each word, check his spelling for correctness. If incorrect, dictate the proper spelling to your child for him to write down next to his original word and have him circle the correctly spelled word before proceeding with the next word in the test. If the word is correct, let your child know that he spelled it correctly before proceeding with the next word. Then, proceed the same way with the next word. Note: from what I have read, research indicates that immediate correction of any misspelled words (as suggested above) reinforces learning the correct spelling more effectively than delayed correction (i.e., waiting until the end of the test to make any corrections) can.

One more note: homophones provide a challenge that is difficult to address in the process of presenting individual spelling rules (e.g., sail vs sale, peek vs peak). In Year One, I will introduce spelling rules that apply to one-syllable words and also introduce suffixes for some words (e.g., adding a suffix to a word ending in the consonant-vowel-consonant pattern). Many homophones will be covered during Year Two – in the long vowel sound lessons.

Please feel free to email me if you have any questions about the program: jetted4@gmail.com.

An observation: I started developing the spelling lessons for my own son in Winter/Spring early 2010. One thing I have noticed along the way is the strong association that he has developed between the colors and the rules to which I have assigned them. Sometimes when Ethan is reading a sign or the instructions to something, he will say, "look, that's a blue word" or "that one is a purple word". In testing him on the first dozen rules he had learned, I found that for the couple of words where he got stuck and wasn't sure how to spell them, when I suggested he go through each of the colors out loud and see whether the word he was trying to spell sounds like it fits into the rule for that color, he was able to cycle through all of the rules he had learned quite easily color by color in order to find the rule (or rules) that applied and then figure out how to spell the word correctly. It seems like my goal of improving the recall of spelling rules by attaching them to colors (which are inherently fairly easy for children to remember) is succeeding.