



The Logic of Spelling

In science fiction movies, a character only has to have one abnormal physical trait to be recognized as an alien. For example, in the Star Trek series, the alien character Spock has pointy ears. Since humans are pattern-seekers, we immediately notice this tiny disruption in the pattern of the human head.

This same ability to notice patterns in words is one reason why some students are strong spellers. They take notice of the visual patterns in the words they see on the page.

VISUAL MEMORY

Visual memory plays a part as well. Students with strong visual memory, who can notice and remember the pattern of a word, are naturally good spellers. They do not need to see a given word many times before they visually memorize the pattern.

When a word is a part of a student's visual memory and he sees the word spelled incorrectly, it stands out. Just like Spock's ears, the student recognizes that something doesn't look "right."

MORE THAN PATTERNS

Effective spelling ability is not just about patterns and memory. Development of phonemic awareness and a good grasp of phonics are also essential processes. A student who has the ability to hear and pull apart the individual sounds in a spoken word (phonemic awareness) and can then match

those individual sounds to letter symbols that make the sounds (phonics) will have a good start on spelling.

However, even this is not all there is to it. Beginning spellers who have a good grasp of phonemic awareness and phonics will spell words in the most logical manner, but many sounds we hear in words can be spelled in a variety of ways. Unfortunately, the English language is not always logical, much to Mr. Spock's irritation!

Just imagine what it would be like to try to explain to Spock that the vowel in *heard* and *beard* is spelled the same way. Before he grabs his ears in frustration though, we can explain to him that many times words are spelled using patterns that seem illogical at first, but make sense if you know the origin of the word.

In addition, even the most complicated or odd word contains at least some part that matches with the spoken sounds, so the student can start with what is logical and work from there. Students can learn to analyze the sounds that do match and then visually memorize the remainder of the word.

At some point, when the word moves into a student's visual memory, a given word will simply not look "right" if the pattern doesn't match. Some words contain sounds that can be spelled in multiple ways. One helpful technique a student can

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density
stance, water
tion or name
n.
or an individual
p. 2. a sample,
ght, or at-
spell/down,
spell/er, n. 1. a person
book to teach spelling.
spell/ing, n. 1. the order in which
2. a group of letters composing a
spell/ing bee/, n. a spelling com
spe-lunk-er (spi lung/kar), n. a
aves. end), v., spent, spe
pend (l

Phil's Story



Our son needed help with spelling. Though he did well in school in general, he had long-struggled with knowing how to spell correctly. We had tried various interventions over the years, but at the age of 13 he was still testing in the 10 to 20th percentiles on standardized tests for spelling.

When we presented the idea of another round of intervention to our son, he reacted very negatively. I wasn't exactly sure why he was so unhappy about the prospect. Perhaps he felt embarrassed about his struggle, or perhaps it was a negative experience in the past with tutoring.

The day came to go to Langsford for our first meeting with his tutor. I still remember sitting in the waiting room together observing others who were in and out and being concerned about what our son was feeling. He seemed to be the oldest one there at that

moment—another potential hit to his teenage ego. I wondered how he would react to his first session.

To my delight, he came out of his first session smiling and never once complained about attending his twice-a-week sessions. He looked forward to them!

The secret to Langsford success for our son was the combination of rapid skills building by having intensive training in spelling and high quality tutors whom he enjoyed. Langsford has truly mastered the art and the science of their work.

I am happy to report that our son received straight A's for the second semester of his Freshman year! (Only one B on the first semester). His academic confidence is on an upward trajectory, and we give Langsford credit for doing their part to help him with his spelling.

Don't be left out of the Langsford loop!

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Read our blog for a peek inside Langsford: www.langsfordblog.com

Would you like to see your Langsford story in the next Langsford Letter? Just send your letter and a picture of your former Langsford student to our nearest office.

Website Spotlight

Spelling and Vocabulary Website

www.spellingcity.com



How do you spell “relief”?

Spelling words.....Your child gets new ones every week. You want to practice them with Sally or Joey. But there's dinner to make, laundry to do, the phone is ringing....what's a parent to do? If you haven't figured out how to clone yourself, you might want to try SPELLINGCITY.COM. This website is not only a lifesaver for you, it's fun for your child! All you have to do is quickly type in Sally or Joey's words in batches of up to 10 words. Your work is done! This website will quiz

your child for you! A simple click on the icon that says Spelling Test and your child will not only hear the word, but a sentence containing the word. The site will then grade the quiz and let your child know which words were spelled correctly and which need more practice. This website has many other resources to access, but is worth checking out for the spelling test feature alone. Give it a try. Everyone at your house will be happier. “Relief” has never been spelled easier!

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use that takes advantage of pattern recognition is to write down the word in the various ways and see if one of them looks familiar.

TECHNOLOGY IS NOT THE ANSWER

At first, people thought spell check software might eliminate the need to learn how to spell but they soon found out this isn't the case. The student must spell well enough to get close to the spelling for the software to create a list of options, and then he needs to be able to choose from that list. Spell check is simply the technological way of making the job simpler. The skills needed to use it most effectively, however, remain the same.

Spelling is an important skill worth developing. A student who is not confident will not want to write. Students with large vocabularies who struggle with spelling may choose very simple words when expressing themselves in writing, which means their intellectual abilities are often hidden.

While spelling can sometimes be complicated and even illogical, it can be managed. Even someone as logical as Spock can do it.

Langsford Learning Acceleration Centers has a free list of common word patterns parents can use to help their children get a good start on spelling. Contact us for your free copy.



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& learning for life!

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Langsford Learning Acceleration Centers, with locations in Louisville, Kentucky, and Cincinnati, Ohio, has served children and adults since 1992. We have proven results teaching phonological (phonemic) awareness, phonics, reading, spelling, reading and listening comprehension, and handwriting using specialized, research-validated approaches.

From enrichment to remediation, we have extensive experience training the foundations associated with independent learning, including helping individuals with learning disabilities, auditory processing disorder and dyslexia.

- **Multisensory, one-to-one learning sessions**
- **A customized plan of action**
- **Diagnostic assessment**
- **Highly-trained, year-round staff**

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Fun!**

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