

Getting Started with Excellence in Spelling

Each level of The Phonetic Zoo spelling program includes:

- Teacher’s Notes e-book (found on the DVD)
- Spelling and the Brain DVD/CD-ROM
- Set of large flashcards
- Set of small “Zoo” cards
- One level of Audio CDs (A, B or C)

How to Use

You will find that all your materials, along with your own personal CD player and headphones, will fit conveniently in a shoebox. Putting the large flashcards on a ring and keeping the Zoo cards together with a rubber-band or in a small plastic bag will keep them from becoming misplaced.

1. Watch the Spelling and the Brain DVD.

This will reinforce the foundational concepts mentioned above and familiarize you with the “how to” of the program described below. Although there is no reason to prevent your students from watching the DVD with you, there is also no particular reason why they should. The DVD is for the parent or teacher.

2. Present the rule of Lesson One to your student(s), using the large flash card.

The flash cards can be used for two primary purposes: 1) For you to use as you preview and review the lessons with your student; and 2) for your student to use to study independently if he wishes. All the words for all three levels of *The Phonetic Zoo* are contained on the flash cards, so they are useful for working with students of mixed ages and abilities.

Read the rule out loud (from the back of the card), and have your student read and spell out loud the three words on the front of the card which correspond to the chosen level. Briefly discuss how the animal name shown on the front meets the rule of the lesson. The teacher’s notes include a deeper explanation of the spelling rules, some history behind the rule, and additional commentary to add to your understanding of spelling.

3. Give the student the corresponding small Zoo card.

The front of the Zoo card includes the lesson title and animals whose names illustrate the spelling rule. On the back of the card is the rule or jingle that accompanies each lesson. The Zoo cards will serve not only as a reminder of the rule and animals which correspond with it, but also as a motivational tool because as your students progress through the lessons, they will see their animal collection grow.

Students may wish to display their Zoo cards on their bedroom or classroom wall, or they may wish to use the cards as zoo cage doors. Complete instructions and zoo cage templates are included in Appendix 5.

4. Set up the student with headphones, paper and pen.

Why headphones? Students who use this program with headphones will reap the greatest benefits. With headphones, the sound and the experience it provides are close to the ear and to the brain. There are no distractions or auditory interferences. It is a personal and intimate activity, and greatly assists in making the goal of mastering a spelling lesson even more of an individual challenge. They will develop a strong sense of “ownership” of the program, and enjoy the change in routine it provides. Use headphones!

Paper. Students should prepare their paper by numbering 1-15 on the left side, double-spaced (leaving a blank space between lines). Since College Ruled notebook paper usually contains 32 lines, students should be able to fit all 15 words on one side of the paper. It is helpful for the student to write the lesson number and the “time” that it has been done (i.e. Lesson 3, 4th time).

Pen, not pencil. For a detailed explanation on the benefits of pen over pencil, see the article “Convert to Pens” in the Article/Newsletter section of the Support tab at www.excellenceinwriting.com.

Name: _____
Lesson #: ____ Attempt # _____
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____

5. The student listens to the introduction on Disc One, Track One.

The student will need to listen to the introduction just once. Once the introduction is complete, be sure that he knows how to use the CD player to skip to the track he needs for that lesson. Corrections for each lesson are on a separate track. The student can look on the back of the Phonetic Zoo CD case to see which disc and track number correspond to each lesson.

6. The student takes the test.

At first, the lesson may proceed too rapidly and the student might be frustrated by not being able to keep up. Explain that this is normal and encourage him to pause the CD at any time. Each lesson is less than 10 minutes long.

Even if he misspells many words the first time through, don't worry. Tell him to relax. Speed and accuracy will improve with repetition. Place the emphasis on how many are "right," *not* on how many are "wrong." Be enthusiastic about his progress.

7. The student makes corrections on the test using the next track of the CD.

After the student has tried to write all fifteen words, he should attempt to correct those words himself. He should re-write the correction word next to his attempt at the word. Thus, his spelling test will have each word written twice.

Determine a method to mark which words were spelled incorrectly—perhaps a single strike-through or an *X* adjacent to each incorrect word. You may find that your student might not always catch all his errors. That is OK. After he has finished with his corrections, you may like to check as well, and silently write in the correct spelling next to his attempt. Smile a lot, and don't feel you have to continuously point out his errors. Frequency will do its job. Gradually his speed and ability to write the words and letters he hears will improve.

Strong visual learners may be happier to correct their lessons by using the list on the back of the card along with the recorded corrections on CD.

8. The student takes the test every day until he achieves 100% twice in a row.

Our goal is excellence in spelling. 100% twice in a row ensures mastery of each list. Interestingly, this goal is not usually discouraging to students. Instead, it becomes a challenge to pursue.

9. Personal Spelling (Lessons 5, 10, 15, 20, 25, 30, 35, 40 & 47)

This is a vitally important part of the *Excellence in Spelling* program. Every fifth lesson is a Personal Spelling lesson. The flash cards for these lessons have blank spaces, and the verbal instructions on the CD direct the student to collect words during Lessons 1-4 for use with Lesson 5, Personal Spelling. These words are to be gathered from errors in written compositions as well as vocabulary from other language arts curricula. For your convenience, Appendix 3 contains extra word lists based on additional spelling rules, and Appendix 4 lists 240 frequently misspelled words. These are also excellent choices for Personal Spelling lessons.

10. The Final Exam

There is a Final Exam at the end of each level. Each is quite long, using words from each rule. The scoring guide indicates whether the student has accomplished the goals of the program and is ready to progress to the next level, or should repeat this same level again. In preparation for the final exam, you may want to "spot check" the student with words from different lessons, using the flash cards to help. The instructions for taking and evaluating the final exam are included in the teacher's notes.

How does the Phonetic Zoo Teach Spelling?

Why do we call it *The Phonetic Zoo*? Well, for a couple of reasons. When you have a room full of crazy and unpredictable people, you might say, "It's a zoo in there!" Our English spelling rules are about as crazy and unpredictable as any language on earth, and in trying to master them, one might feel that they are like wild animals—crazy, illogical and challenging. Since children love animals, the stranger the better, we managed to find for each lesson a few animals whose names match the spelling rule, jingle or hint. Thus, *The Phonetic Zoo*.

Good spelling demonstrates literacy, education and intelligence. It is important. These days, spell checkers on our computers can save many an embarrassment, but a computer is not always available, nor is it a replacement for full comprehension. Consequently, spelling remains an important skill, and the *Phonetic Zoo* can help your students to achieve Excellence in Spelling.

To teach *The Phonetic Zoo* you will need:

Name: Sally Smith	_____
Lesson # 1 Attempt # 2	_____
1. brain	brain
2. played	played
3. chained	chained
4. railway	railway
5. pail	pail
6. sailed	sailed
7. train	train
8. painful	painful
9. tray	tray
10. paint	paint
11. raisen	raisin
12. trailing	trailing
13. grain	grain
14. always	always
15. contain	contain
# Correct: 13	

- Spelling and the Brain DVD
- These Teacher's Notes
- 5 Audio CDs, labeled Disc One through Disc Five (Level C has six CDs)
- Set of large flashcards
- Set of small Zoo cards

Although you can begin immediately by reading the *How to Use this Program* section, be sure to plan a time to watch the *Spelling and the Brain* DVD to familiarize yourself with this method of spelling instruction.

A Multi-Sensory Approach

The Phonetic Zoo is based on Mrs. Anna Ingham's effective "Blended Sound-Sight Program of Learning." Mrs. Ingham discovered fifty years ago, long before psychologists and educators began to talk of "auditory learners" vs. "visual learners," that all students learn best when what they see is reinforced by hearing, and when what they hear is reinforced by being seen. Thus the "blending of sound and sight" is the most effective educational approach to language arts study.

With determination and persistence, Mrs. Ingham has fought the great battle against whole language extremists in Canada, almost single-handedly, and schools that have used her program consistently have virtually eliminated reading problems. We have attempted to develop a spelling program which effectively recreates Mrs. Ingham's Sound City spelling rules using the theme of animals and a zoo.

Although not all of the possible spelling rules are presented in *The Phonetic Zoo*, enough of them are provided in a fun way that students will learn to look for patterns and discover other rules as they explore spelling. This program provides your student with enough rules to be successful, but not too many to be discouraged.

A Brief Review of Basic Neurophysiology:

Spelling is the correct retrieval of sequentially stored, virtually random bits of information. Therefore, there are two activities involved in spelling: correctly storing information in the brain, and correctly retrieving that information. Those who teach spelling should not only understand how the brain works, but must also use that understanding to create an optimal learning approach for children who may have very different learning styles.

The brain acquires information through the sensory pathways: sight, hearing, touching, tasting and smelling. Once information gets to the brain, it is stored when brain cells (neurons) send electrochemical impulses to other brain cells. Connections are made and "circuits" then reinforced by three variables: frequency, intensity and duration. In simpler terms, humans learn best by seeing, hearing or feeling things that are either very frequent, very intense or very long-lasting. There is no other way.

A student who is strong visually will be more able to learn spelling from textbooks and worksheets, since his visual pathway may be the most reliable and visual input will be the most accurate for him. A student who is strong auditorily will be more able to learn spelling from hearing the rules and words, something that a textbook is unable to facilitate. A child who is strong kinesthetically wants to feel and move, anchoring information to the brain through the body.

Most toddlers are primarily kinesthetic, secondarily auditory and lastly visual in learning style. Most older people are exactly the opposite. For young students just learning to read, write, spell and do arithmetic, auditory input is still extremely important, and must not be neglected by the teacher. Unfortunately, textbooks and worksheets are exclusively visual, and often do not provide the most efficient method of study.

Spelling is Sequential

Words consist of letters, but if you do not have your letters in the correct order, your spelling is incorrect. Virtually every teacher or parent has seen children who will write a word like: "waer" or "gril" or "turtel," in which they did get all the letters, but because the order was wrong, the word is hard to decipher. Spelling is sequential because the order of letters (not just getting the right ones) determines the word. How can sequence be taught most effectively?

When you see a word, "special" for example, you are forced by nature to see it all at once. Since the letters go into your brain simultaneously, there is no sequential storage of the information. Vision is a global sense. There is a spatial storage, but not a sequential one. Consequently, if a student has even a mild dyslexia or difficulty in processing abstract visual information, we cannot be assured that the information is being stored properly (i.e. correct sequence) in the brain. All the letters are seen at the same moment.

However, when a word is spelled out loud, s - p - e - c - i - a - l, the letters go into the brain one at a time, in a precise sequence. In fact, it can *only* be received in sequence. Therefore, since spelling is sequential in nature, auditory input is the best possible way to accurately store spelling information in the brain. Words correctly stored will more likely be correctly retrieved.

Coupling the auditory, letter-by-letter sequencing with the presentation of letter groups and the unique sounds they make, *The Phonetic Zoo* effectively helps students learn to spell.

Maximizing Frequency

Information is stored in the brain through sensory stimulation, given with frequency, intensity, and duration. As the same type of stimulation is given again and again, the neural connections which store that information are strengthened and, with enough frequency, the connections become permanent and learning is complete. In teaching spelling, the real trick involves the accurate transmission (and reception) of the information with enough frequency to make the knowledge permanent and second nature. However, consistency is difficult to attain.

Thus, the use of audio recordings, combined with flashcards and dramatic images, provides for a consistent and organized presentation of information, in a format that allows individual study and an individualized rate of progress through the materials. Students can listen repeatedly, hear the same thing consistently, do the same test each day and continue until a perfect score has been achieved. For the best possible effect, require that the score of 100% be achieved twice. This will ensure that each student, through maximized frequency, learns the lessons thoroughly.

How long will it take to complete all 47 lessons?

This will vary greatly from student to student. We do not suggest any specific time line for completion, but we do insist on a goal of complete mastery. Therefore, the student should continue to repeat the same lesson everyday until a score of 100% is achieved twice in a row. Some lessons are harder than others. While one student may achieve the 100% score twice in three or four days, others may take five, seven, even ten or more days. This is not a problem. Simply do a lesson every day and you will see progress. With one lesson every week, the program lasts an entire year. For slower students, it may last even longer.

Using the Zoo cards to review past spelling rules as they apply to new words will help students retain the spelling information stored in their brains. A template to create a phonetic zoo, which uses the small Zoo cards as cage doors, is located in the Appendix. By displaying the zoo in a classroom, teachers will have a ready-made review center easily accessible to students looking for spelling reminders.

Support

If you have any problems or questions as you begin to use *The Phonetic Zoo* materials, don't hesitate to give us a call or send a question or comment by email. We are committed to your success with this program, and we will do everything in our power to assist you in implementing it effectively. Periodic updates will be emailed or published in our newsletter, and if you have an idea, experience, problem, or have a question to share, send it in! These teacher notes are the product of this kind of dialog.

As we correct errors and make updates to the printed material, we will keep you informed, sending replacement material as it may be appropriate. If you ever scratch or lose a disc, we will happily replace it for a minimal fee; just call the Excellence in Writing office. If you purchased this program from a retailer other than Excellence in Writing, drop us a line with your address, phone and email so that we can keep in touch directly. Our goal is continued support.

Guarantee

If you use this program and your students do not dramatically improve their spelling, we will happily refund your purchase price. If you just don't like these materials, for any reason whatsoever, you may of course return them for a full refund. Your satisfaction is our guarantee.

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