

THE LEARNING WORKSHOP'S Reading and Spelling Program

Did you know that there are an estimated 88,500 words in printed school English? And, did you know that the 26 letters of our alphabet can produce about 577 different possible combinations of letters and sounds? Learning to read and spell is no small achievement for any child, but for the child with learning disabilities, with his disorder and related visual and auditory problems, reading and writing those 88,500 words is almost certain defeat. *Unless he is taught strategies to help him learn.*

Remedial therapy in reading and spelling are linked and should be seen as a single unit. In other words, when teaching your child a new reading word and showing him how to decode it, he should also have practise in writing the new word, learning how to spell it and committing the spelling to memory.

Stage 1 of this program starts with the foundational ability to recognise the sounds of letters. It is *critical* in the development of reading skills that your child is able to identify the individual letters of the alphabet, and knows the *sounds* associated with each letter. Once this is known, your child must then be able to sound out and read various simple combinations of letters, whether they make sense or not. With these skills established, he must be able to segment a word (break it up into sounds) and write those sounds down in the correct sequence – he must spell the word correctly. Some words cannot be sounded out to make sense e.g. t-h-e-r-e. These are called sight words and can make up as much as 70% of a reading passage. These words must be known by sight, without hesitation. Sometimes children are able to read words correctly in isolation, but have difficulty with those same words when they are amongst other words in sentences. It is important that your child is able to apply his knowledge of sounds, words and high frequency sight words by reading and writing them in sentences.

The exercises in **Stage 1** will help to improve your child's basic reading and spelling skills. These exercises are:

- Letter Sounds 1
- Nonsense Words 1
- Real Words 1
- High Frequency Sight Words 1
- Sentences 1
- Spelling Whiz

For this program to be successful, it is important to follow the instructions carefully. Work through the exercises at your child's own pace and **do not** move on to the next exercise until your child is confidently reading or spelling the words correctly.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR READING

- ◆ On Day 1, ask your child to read each letter or word, working down each column, until the end of the sheet.
- ◆ If he reads correctly, put a tick in column 1. If he is incorrect, or does not know, put a dot in column 1. Do not correct him or help him during this stage.
- ◆ When he has completed the sheet, go back to those he had problems with and show him how to read them.
- ◆ *Do not test him again on the same day.*
- ◆ Repeat the process again on Day 2 and then again on Day 3, putting a tick or a dot in columns 2 and 3 respectively.
- ◆ On Day 4 and any day following, test only those words or letters with dots in their columns.
- ◆ As soon as there are 3 *consecutive* ticks next to each letter or word, each tick earned on a different day, you may move on to the next exercise.
- ◆ A completed exercise may look something like the following:

Day	1	2	3	4	5
and	✓	✓	✓		
boy	•	✓	✓	✓	
girl	•	•	✓	✓	✓
come	•	•	✓	✓	✓
did	✓	✓	✓		
can	✓	✓	✓		
like	•	✓	✓	✓	
help	•	•	✓	✓	✓
go	✓	✓	✓		
man	✓	✓	✓		

A number of perceptual skills are called into play when spelling a single word, and consequently, you may find that your child progresses faster with reading than with spelling. When helping your

child with spelling, it is worth remembering that LD children learn best when *multisensory* methods are used for teaching, that is, engage as many of your child's senses as you can during each activity. Remedial therapists often plan lessons which stimulate the visual, auditory, kinaesthetic and tactile senses of the child. The *Spelling Whiz* is designed to learn spelling words through this method.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR SPELLING

Day 1

- ◆ Use the words from the reading exercises and write them down for your child in the first column.
- ◆ Now work with one word at a time. Say the word out loud, slowly, emphasizing the sounds. Ask him to repeat it. Tick the column.
- ◆ Say the word slowly and clap each part of the word, determining how many syllables there (how many claps). Write the number of syllables in the column.
- ◆ Use different colours to write the word in syllables e.g. *chil dren*. Leave a space between each syllable.
- ◆ Write the word in the air using the whole arm, making big arm movements. Tick the column.
- ◆ Ask your child to write the word on the table with his finger, or on the carpet, or let him scratch the word on his arm. You can also use sand or sandpaper. Tick the column.
- ◆ He must now write the word three times over in the next column, each time in a different colour and tracing over the word each time.
- ◆ Move on to the next word in the list, and repeat all the exercises.
- ◆ At the end of the list, fold the page along the dotted line so that the words are hidden from your child and test him.
- ◆ Allow him to mark his own work, comparing his words with the correct words in column 1.

Days 2 and 3

- ◆ Repeat the whole exercise using the same words.

Day 4 and any days following

- ◆ Repeat the whole exercise using only those words he spelt incorrectly in his tests.

Many LD children score very well in spelling tests, but fail to transfer this knowledge in their written work and end up spelling those same words incorrectly when required to use them in a written task. It is *very important*, when learning his spelling, for your child to practise these words in written sentences. Read out each sentence in the exercise above (Sentences 1) and ask your child to write them down. Any words which are spelt incorrectly should be taught using the *Spelling Whiz*.

In **Stage 2** of the program, your child will be taught how to decode words effectively using easy-to-remember rules. This reading skill will equip him with the ability to approach an unknown word confidently, to break it up into parts or syllables, to correctly sound out these word parts and then to blend them together into a meaningful word. Some children develop decoding strategies over time with little direct teaching, but most LD children need one-on-one teaching to help them learn these strategies. By using the activities in this part of the program, your child will quickly learn this skill, and he will soon be able to decode and read all those words he struggled with before. More spelling words and exercises are included in this stage. Interestingly enough, "only 12 words make up one quarter of all those we read and write. 100 words form half and 300 account for approximately three quarters of all the words we use." (*Keda Cowling, Kelsey Cowling: Stareway To Spelling*) Improving your child's ability to spell – and read – these words will make a huge difference to his confidence and literacy skills.

If you are interested in receiving Stage 2 of the Reading and Spelling Program, please contact our Remedial Therapist.

Stage 3 of the reading program concentrates on improving your child's reading fluency. When children have fluency problems their reading is slow and laboured. They read word-by-word with little expression and seldom have understanding of what they have read. In order to understand what he is reading, your child needs to read at an acceptable speed. While automatic recognition of words (Stage 2) is important for reading fluency, it is not enough to maintain an understanding of the reading material. Accuracy *and* a sufficient reading rate must go hand in hand. Activities in stage 3 will improve and increase your child's eye span, improve his reading rate, and consequently, will also improve his comprehension.

It is likely that your child comes home from school with a list of spelling words to learn for a test. One way of committing spelling to long-term memory is to write the word as often as possible, using a variety of techniques, so a number of different activities to reinforce spelling words and word lists are included in this stage.

If you are interested in receiving Stage 3 of the Reading and Spelling Program, please contact our Remedial Therapist.

Remember, a child with a learning disability *can* learn. But he cannot do it alone. He needs you to make the difference in his life. Used consistently and systematically, this program *will* improve your child's reading and spelling skills. You *will* see results.

This reading and spelling program has been put together using the following sources:

- ◆ *Cowling, Keda & Cowling, Harry. Toe by Toe. West Yorkshire: K & H Cowling, 1993.*
- ◆ *Cowling, Keda & Cowling, Kelsey. Stareway to Spelling. West Yorkshire: Keda Publications, 2002.*
- ◆ *Gould, Lynn. How Can I Help This Child? A handbook for understanding and helping children with learning disabilities. Shuter & Shooter, 2005.*
- ◆ *Harwell, Joan M. Complete Learning Disabilities Handbook. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2001*