

THE GRAMMAR OF SPELLING

Third Edition

6th Grade

by Matt Whitling

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THE GRAMMAR OF SPELLING

Isaac Watts

The Knowledge of letters is one of the greatest blessings that ever God bestowed on the children of men. By this means we preserve for our own use, through all our lives, what our memory would have lost in a few days, and lay up rich treasure of knowledge for those that shall come after us.

By the arts of reading and writing, we can sit at home and acquaint ourselves what is done in all the distant parts of the world and find what our fathers did long ago in the first ages of mankind. By this means a Briton holds correspondence with his friend in America or Japan and manages all his traffic. We learn by this means how the old Romans lived, how the Jews worshiped: We learn what Moses wrote, what Enoch prophesied, where Adam dwelt, and what he did soon after the creation; and those who shall live when the Day of Judgement comes may learn by the same means what we now speak and what we do in Great-Britain or in the land of China.

In short, the art of letters does, as it were, revive all the past ages of men and set them at once upon the stage and brings all the nations from afar and gives them, as it were, a general interview: so that the most distant nations and distant ages of mankind may converse together and grow into acquaintance.

But the greatest blessing of all, is the knowledge of the Holy Scripture, wherein God has appointed his servants in ancient times to write down the discoveries which he has made of his power and justice, His providence and grace, that we who live near the end of time may learn the way to heaven and everlasting happiness.

Thus letters give us a sort of immortality in this world, and they are given us in the Word of God to support our immortal hopes in the next.

Those therefore who wilfully neglect this sort of knowledge, and despise the art of letters, need no heavier curse of punishment than what they choose for themselves, to live and die in ignorance both of the things of God and man.

If the terror of such a thought will not awaken the slothful to seek so much acquaintance with their mother-tongue, as may render them capable of some of the advantages here described; I know not where to find a persuasive that shall work upon souls that are sunk down so far into brutal stupidity and so unworthy of a reasonable nature.

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THE GRAMMAR OF SPELLING

INTRODUCTION

Classical Grammar Teachers need a curriculum that outlines the grammar of spelling and provides an effective methodology for teaching this subject. In the lower grades our goal is to guide students along a phonetic track that carries the basic principles of reading into the spelling arena. Words are grouped based upon their common graphemic structure in order to aid the student as he learns to spell base words accurately. Sight-word and homophone lists are incorporated in order to cover important additional words that do not conveniently fit within a given graphemic group. The program for 4th-6th grades is structured around five general and useful spelling rules that are taught and then reviewed.

CLASSICAL?

A distinction between two different types of rules has been emphasized in this text. The first type consists of the numerous phonetic generalizations that pertain *en masse* to what we call base words. These are rules which have to do with syllabication and vowel sounds, and how that sound or syllable arrangement can affect the spelling of a given word. The second type of rules are those which deal predominantly with the addition of suffixes to a base word. The difference in how these two types of rules are handled becomes evident at the practical level.

The phonetic generalizations for base words, which are taught in the lower grades, are not presented overtly. Instead, these generalizations serve as the structure around which the weekly word lists have been arranged. These words are to be studied and their spellings memorized. Students are not, however, drilled on the actual linguistic generalization itself, but instead on the words that apply to that generalization. The reasoning behind such an approach is that students at this stage of the classical model are predisposed to memorize lists of words and their spellings with a good measure of enjoyment. Even though these “poll-parrots” would also easily memorize a spelling rule or generalization, in most cases they are not yet ready to apply these rules effectively. This is simply a component of the stage in which these younger students find themselves. For this reason, in the first through third grades, the emphasis is on a particular list of words that have been arranged in such a way as to lend themselves to a consistent pattern of spelling. The main focus for these students is on the words themselves, not on the philosophy of why the words are spelled the way they are.

As the student matures into the Pert (logic) stage he is again taught “with the grain.” Pert aged students are naturally inquisitive as to why things are so and whether people or words are acting according to a certain order. Students at this level are overtly presented with a rule. They are then given instruction regarding the application of the rule and the exceptions which must be observed. With this new knowledge of why words are spelled the way they are, the student in the pert stage can logically attack a word and conclude that it either does or does not follow a particular rule or that the rule has no application to the word at hand.

There are still other words to which these rules do not apply. Such words must be committed to memory by children while they are in their “memorization prime,” the Poll-parrot stage. Words of this nature should be drawn from the various subject areas that the student is already studying, thus providing meaning and context to an otherwise isolated word list. Homophones are incorporated in a sequential and straight forward manner to help organize the teaching of some of these crucial words.

CUMULATIVE LISTS

Teachers often lament that students in their classes can master a list of twenty spelling words for the test on Friday and then proceed to misspell the very same words the next week in their compositions. So, how ought we to solve this problem? In all academic pursuits one factor that dominates the retention arena is motivation. Are the students motivated to do well in spelling? Are they motivated to remember lists of words at one week intervals, always keeping in mind that spelling words are like the wind, prone to come from unseen bellows and then disappear as quickly as they came? Our goal as teachers is of course that our pupils would retain the information that we teach. But do we communicate this desire to our students by the way that we structure their spelling instruction? What we often see is an inconsistency between our desired outcome and the methodology we employ to bring about that end. Our answer to this problem is to give cumulative tests in spelling.

Cumulative tests simply incorporate past spelling words on future exams. This is how it works. Each week a group of spelling words is introduced; let's say twenty. The students will practice those twenty words in and outside of class in the way they normally would. The difference is that on test day a number of review words will appear on the test as well. We typically have five review words. By requiring the students to keep in mind the spelling of past words we are communicating to them the "real life" principle that spelling is cumulative. In order to help our pupils keep track of the words that they will be held accountable for, a cumulative list is sent home at the beginning of the week. Each week the twenty new words will be added to the cumulative list in order to update it. Words will accumulate in this manner for as long as the teacher deems reasonable. Initially it might be best to "clear the table" at the end of each quarter. If our calculation is based on the numbers used in this example the students would be responsible for a maximum of 200 words at the end of a 10 week quarter.

INSTRUCTIONS

The sixth grade speller focuses on each of the five spelling rules (see page 95) for one week each. There are typically four exercises to complete for each lesson. The students may complete these all on one day, or they may be divided up so that one exercise is done each day before the test (tests are given on Fridays). Here are some hints on working through each week's list:

THE RULE: Read through the rule at the top of the page. Discuss what the rule means and how it is used by showing examples to the students. Lead the students in a chant of the rule to help them memorize it. The students should be informed at this time that they will be required to write this rule from memory as part of their spelling test on Friday.

EXAMPLES: Give the students a moment to complete the four examples below the rule. Write the examples on the board and have a student complete them for the class.

Exercise #1 HEAR, REPEAT, & COPY: Read the first word to the students. They should look carefully at the spelling of the word as they listen to you read it. The students are then to repeat the word in unison and write it neatly in print on the blank directly to the right of the word.

Exercise #2 ALPHABETIZE: The students are to alphabetize the spelling words by using the oval to the right of each word. The ovals should be numbered to indicate the alphabetical order of the words.

SPELLING EQUATION: Each word should be broken down into an equation consisting of the base word plus the suffix equaling the complete word as shown in the two examples. These equations should be printed in alphabetical order on the blank to the right of each word.

Exercise #3 FLIP-N-WRITE: The students should look carefully at the word on the front of the sheet, keep the spelling in mind, flip the paper over, and write the word in cursive on the blank. Do not allow the students to fold their papers and copy without flipping!

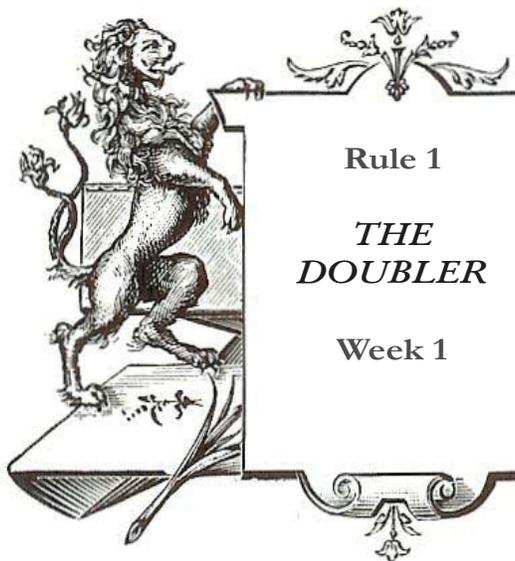
Exercise #4 CAPITAL PRINT: The students are to carefully and neatly print each spelling word in capitals. This provides an opportunity to see the words in a much different format than they are used to, requiring a bit more care and checking to insure that the words are indeed spelled correctly.

PRACTICE WORKSHEETS: Additional worksheet pages (page 99ff) are included in order to provide practice in applying and understanding each rule fully. These sheets should be completed during the week that a given rule is being learned.

STELLA GROUP: After all five rules have been taught there will be an optional Stella Group box on the back of each sheet. As an extra motivation for my very gifted spellers I formed the Stella Group (Star Group). In order to be a Stella Group Member you must earn three 100%'s in a row on spelling tests. Once you are in the group you have the privilege of receiving five additional words (extremely difficult ones) per week as long as you are a member. Another perk is that all Stella Group Members are exempt from completing the CAPITAL PRINT portion of the worksheet each week. As soon as a member misses any word on a spelling test he is out of the group, and he must begin anew to accumulate three more perfect scores in order to reenter the society. This helps to keep things interesting for those competitive spellers who tend to be difficult to challenge.

After all of the lists in this grade have been taught, turn to the appendix at the back of this book for ideas to integrate spelling with other subjects.

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Name: _____

Rule 1
THE DOUBLER

Week 1

If you have a single vowel word to add a vowel suffix to, Double the lone consonant, but not x or w.

Underline the base word, circle the suffix, and write the word on the blank.

- 1. pan + (ing) = panning
- 2. mix + ed = _____
- 3. map + ed = _____
- 4. swim + ing = _____

Copy each word, alphabetize using numbers, then write the equations in alphabetical order (print).

- 1. wrapping _____ bat + ing = batting
- 2. batting _____ 1 blow + er = blower
- 3. winnable _____ _____
- 4. blower _____ 2 _____
- 5. trappings _____ _____
- 6. dropping _____ _____
- 7. splattering _____ _____
- 8. unflappable _____ _____
- 9. swimmingly _____ _____
- 10. fittingly _____ _____

-
- 11. glowing _____ 1 glow + ing = glowing
 - 12. sowed _____ grin + ed = grinned
 - 13. sewed _____ _____
 - 14. snapping _____ _____
 - 15. knowable _____ _____
 - 16. grinned _____ 2 _____
 - 17. slipperiest _____ _____
 - 18. saddening _____ _____
 - 19. mugged _____ _____
 - 20. maddening _____ _____

Flip & Write
(cursive)

CAPITAL PRINT

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

Understanding Rule 1 **The Doubler**

1. A single vowel word is a word with only one vowel (pan, kid, clap).
-These words have more than one vowel: dream, dive, shape
2. A vowel suffix is a group of letters added to the end of a word that begin with a vowel (-ed, -ing, -est, -ist, -ism).
-These are consonant suffixes: -ful, -ly, -ness, -hood
3. A lone consonant is a single consonant at the end of a word (man, dog, pan).
-These are not lone consonants: cake, dish, fill, soft