How can I engage with my child as they develop strategies to become an effective speller?
Most children pass through the stages of spelling...in their own time.

The teacher’s role is to identify the stage and assist the learner to the next stage.
### 5 developmental stages of spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>characteristics</th>
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</table>
| Pre communicative| Writing cannot be read by others  
                    Random strings of symbols  
                    No indication of letter-sound correspondence                                  |
| Semi-phonetic    | First attempts at letter-sound correspondence  
                    Initial consonants, one letter representing one word  
                    Sometimes one or two sounds in the word represented  
                    A letter name sometimes used /Some sounds evident                            |
| Phonetic         | Paying attention to all sounds  
                    Writing can usually be read by others  
                    There may be a match between all essential sounds  
                    Letters used to represent dominant sounds heard  
                    Nasal consonants may be omitted (wet for went)  
                    Past tense represented in various ways (d,t,id)                                |
| Transitional     | Visual and morphemic strategies become more important  
                    More aware of common patterns. Can be correct letters but in wrong sequence. Vowels are heard in every syllable |
| Conventional     | Not everyone reaches this stage                                                  |
Brains detect patterns in learning
Therefore it is more effective to teach spelling...
..pattern by pattern NOT word by word
Why can’t we teach spelling according to sounds only?

- English spelling is tied to meaning NOT sound
- E.g. *sign* comes from *signal*. Therefore the ‘*g*’ stays when we write *sign* even though we don’t say it. To take the *g* out would change the derivation of the word meaning.
- This is the strength in English spelling- it helps us to spell.
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Strategies for Solving words</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By Sound (phonemic strategies)</td>
<td>Words we can sound out - using sound to letter knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Look (visual strategies)</td>
<td>Words we remember by seeing them and using them a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Meaning (morphemic strategies)</td>
<td>Words where I know the units of meaning and can combine them</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By connections (linking strategies)</td>
<td>Using existing knowledge about a word to figure out a new word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By Inquiry (research strategies)</td>
<td>Using reference materials to learn more about words (dictionaries, lists etc)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Example: to, too, two

- **To**- high frequency word, use visual memory
- **Too**- sound pattern (zoo, moo)
- **Two**- morphemic knowledge linked to the meaning of 2. (twin, twice, twenty, between)
Teaching Spelling

- Spelling is a tool for writing—taught explicitly as part of the writing component in English.
- Spelling is part of the English syllabus.
- Teachers follow the syllabus as it was written developmentally.
- Teachers are teachers of spelling all day every day.
- They help students to be word watchers in all KLA’s.
- All 5 strategies taught K-6.
- Begin with authentic texts—reading and writing.
Not looking for scores!

Test scores don’t reveal the developmental stage of the student

Assessed through writing samples to identify developmental stage and next teaching point
Testing does not improve learning.
Teaching improves learning.

‘The only people who do well in spelling tests are those who do well in them – the benefit is to their self-esteem rather than their spelling ability. They were already good spellers’.

‘The people who don’t benefit from spelling tests are those who are poor at spelling. They struggle with spelling before the test, and they struggle after the test. Testing is not teaching.’ (Adoniou, 2013)
If I don’t test, how do I know what a child can spell?

A child’s independent writing is the best indication of their spelling.
Spelling Strategies

- Sound – focusing on sound
- Visual – focusing on the way words look
- Meaning – thinking about word meaning
- Connecting – making connections with other words
- Checking – using live, print or electronic resources
Sound strategy
thinking about the sounds you can hear in the word

Prompts

• Say the word slowly, listen carefully; write the sounds in order.

• Clap the syllables, listen and write the word syllable by syllable. Make sure you have represented each sound with a letter or letters.

• Say the word in parts, write down each part.
Visual strategy focusing on the look of words

Prompts
- Think about how the word looks; try several different patterns.
- What do you often see at the end of words?
- What other letters could you use to write that sound?
Meaning strategy
thinking about word structure and meaning

Prompts

- Think about the meaning. Does it give any clues to the spelling pattern?
- Begin with the base word.
- Think about adding endings to words.
Connecting strategy
thinking about what you know about one word to work out a new word

Prompts

• Does this word remind you of any other words you know? Why or How?

• Is there any other word that looks or sounds the same? Can you use this information to help you spell this word?

• Do you know a memory trick to help you with this word?

• Does this word have an oral or visual twin? (homophone, homograph)
Checking strategy
making use of other resources: live, print and electronic

Prompts

• Is there a chart or word wall that can help you with the spelling of the word?

• Is there someone in the room that can help you with that word?

• Try to locate the word in a dictionary.

• Type the word on the computer and select an option from the spell check suggestions.
Here are two examples of charts prepared after several discussions with primary students:

**Effective spellers**

- Have a go at spelling words when writing.
- Use the word wall to help them to spell words.
- Say the word slowly and listen to the sounds.
- Think about other words that have similar letter patterns.
- Break words into parts (chunking).
- Re-read their writing to check the spelling.
Effective spellers

- Say the word out loud to help them to write the word.
- Break words into parts (chunking).
- Think about letter patterns they know, to help them spell other words.
- Think about the base word and then the parts that are added to it.
- Use some spelling generalisations.
- Use a range of strategies when trying to spell an unknown word.
- Listen to the sounds and then check the look or meaning of the word.
- Use memory tricks to help them remember words.
- Use charts such as *Different ways to write the same sound* to help them have a go at spelling words.
Strategy ladder

- Sound out all the parts of the word.
- Clap out the syllables and make sure you put in letters to show each syllable.
- Try writing the word until it looks right.
- Think of different letter patterns.
- Think of words which may sound the same or look the same.
- Think of what the word means; does it help?
- Look in a dictionary.
- Look for the word on the word wall.
- Ask a friend.
- Use a prompt, such as the Different ways to write the same sound chart (available at www.curriculumpress.edu.au/effectivespelling).
Gentry and Gillet (1993) ‘Teaching kids to Spell’
Pinnell and Fountas Word Matters
Teaching Spelling K-6 NSW Dept of Ed Curriculum Support Directorate 1998(download from Smart Data)
Rowe and Lomas (1996)‘Systematic Spelling’