

CHAPTER 6 TEACHING TIP

SPELLING CONSCIOUSNESS

You can help students develop spelling consciousness by using a test-study approach to spelling. In a test-study approach, you test students before you give them opportunities to study the words. This is different from assigning twenty or so words, telling students to study them throughout the week, and testing the words on Friday (study-test approach). The test-study approach we will describe here helps students develop both spelling and spelling consciousness abilities.

With this method, you dictate sentences to students. Students have copies of the sentences with certain target words omitted. For the example sentence below, you would read, “Our *family* was in a *hurry* to leave, so we *forgot* to lock the door. (Note: You read the entire sentence, then read the target words again, giving students time to write each one.)

Our _____ was in a _____ to leave, so we _____ to lock the door.

Students spell the target words the way they think they should be spelled. This is the *test* part of the test-study spelling procedure. Next, on the short line above their spelling attempts, students write “C” if they think they spelled a word correctly or “I” if they think they spelled it incorrectly. This is a test of their *spelling consciousness*.

Click on [Lesson 12](#) to see an entire sample lesson.

After making their decisions, students look at a printed or electronic copy of the sentences in order to compare their spellings against dictionary spellings. Out of several

sentences that test, for example, twenty words, students can graph (Use this link to see the [Spelling Words Graph](#)) the number of words they spelled correctly without studying them formally, and they can fill in another graph (Use this link to see the [Spelling Awareness Graph](#)) to indicate how many correct decisions they made about how they spelled the words.

These are correct decisions:

- 1) The student spelled a word correctly and marked it with a “C”
- 2) The student spelled a word incorrectly and marked it with an “T”

These are incorrect decisions:

- 1) The student spelled a word correctly but marked it with an “T”
- 2) The student spelled a word incorrectly but marked it with a “C”

Students may check their own spelling and their decisions by carefully examining how *they* spelled the word versus how it is spelled on the correct copy you supply. (Note: You could check their spelling attempts, but students quickly learn to be accurate and honest about checking their own pre-tests. You can check the post-tests after students study the words they missed on the pre-test if you feel more comfortable doing so.)

A nice feature of the test-study approach is that students *immediately know which words they need to study and which ones they do not*, once they check their attempts against the spelling list or sentences you provide giving the correct spelling. *They study only the words misspelled on the pre-test.* You can dictate the same sentences again as a post-test after students have a few days to study words they missed on the pre-test.

Between tests, students can concentrate where the effort is needed (on the words they

initially misspelled), using whatever strategies they already know or that you teach them to use when studying words.

Students enjoy making decisions about the correctness of their spellings, and generally their Spelling Awareness Graphs show rapid growth in spelling and spelling consciousness. Students can use a spreadsheet program such as *Microsoft Excel* or *AppleWorks* to list and create their own graphic representations of both their spelling and their spelling consciousness progress each week, and they can use a database program to create their own dictionaries of known spelling words.

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