

# Welcome to



Word study is an approach to teaching spelling which focuses on talking about words and on making links between oral language and spelling patterns. Word study teaches children to observe similarities and differences between words and to use their observations to formulate their own ideas about spelling rules and patterns. Pupils then investigate the use of the words they are using in context, providing a vocabulary rich learning experience which has a directly positive influence on their reading and writing as well as their spelling.

We trialled the approach in our classrooms and were enthused by its effect on the way the children learned. To support this work, we developed planning and resources to facilitate teaching our UK curriculum using word study.

We've been inspired by a simple but effective approach which has promoted greater spelling and vocabulary awareness in our pupils. We hope you will be too.

## What is it?

Word study builds on knowledge about words which the children have already acquired through phonics teaching, and expands it to develop critical thinking, word observation skills, vocabulary enrichment, discussion and reading skills. The children use the skills to describe words, spelling patterns and meanings; developing a knowledge of words and the way they work as they do so. It's exciting because it pulls together skills we know work in other learning environments, and develops opportunities for children to talk about words and language in meaningful contexts. It is suitable for all of Key Stage 1, 2 and beyond, supporting skills from using phonics to developing etymological awareness.

## How does it work?

Word study teaches pupils the skills they need to look in detail at words. Word study lessons are based around talk and discussion activities which promote children's observation and use of words in a sequence of lessons and activities. As well as being very actively involved in their learning, pupils are given tools and techniques to learn how to learn about spelling, rather than remembering lists. As they develop through school, pupils' understanding of the way words work progresses from a sounds or phonics based approach, through an appreciation of how patterns work in language, to a deeper understanding of the ways in which the meanings of words and their component parts add structure to the words themselves.

Word study investigations begin with noticing simple similarities and differences between words, and progress to children developing their own opinions about why words follow certain patterns, based on their observations. Many of these investigations are based around word sort activities, where the children classify words according to observable features. Pupils use terminology they are familiar with from phonics lessons to do this.

Following on from these investigations, pupils are given challenges based on the word patterns they have noticed. These challenges enable children to develop mastery of their use of the spelling patterns by using and applying them in a wide variety of ways. Once these are established, the spelling patterns and rules are reflected in future lessons where possible, to consolidate learning. These challenges also provide opportunity for vocabulary enrichment activities, supporting a word rich classroom environment and developing skills which complement reading and writing activities.



## What about the statutory word lists?

There are always going to be some words that just need to be learned; but Word Study teaches children that over 80% of our words follow predictable patterns. Where words do need to be learned by rote, a familiarity with word study techniques helps children to focus on the structure of irregular words. In addition, the ability to talk about and discuss the ways in which irregular spellings differ from expected patterns helps children to learn and remember those lists more effectively.

## Assessment

Children are assessed against their ability to use a spelling pattern rather than against a list of learned words. The emphasis is on using words in context so they are remembered. There are some commercially available Word Study assessment schemes which provide data for planning specific interventions.

# Interested?

Look at our resources on [wordstudyspelling.com](http://wordstudyspelling.com).

There are plans, word sort resources and links to

research and other information. Everything is free to use.

## Word Study

## Learning Sequence

### Investigate



Be a word detective.  
Say what you already know.  
Do a word observation.  
Sort the words.  
Say why you have sorted them.  
Test to see if your sort works.



### Challenge

Find other similar words.  
Find out what the words mean.  
Act out the meaning.  
Create a rule about the words and explain it to others.  
Use the words in some writing.

### Reflect



Say what you have learned about the words.  
Play games to make sure you can use them properly.  
Use the words even when they're the ones you're writing on.

## Word Observation

**sound**

Soundtalk the word.  
What do you know about it?  
How many sounds are there?  
What types of phonemes are there?  
What can you say about the vowels?  
What do you notice about the consonants?  
If the word made of more than one word?

**pattern**

How many syllables are there?  
Are any other words spelled the same way?  
Does it have a prefix or suffix?  
Which syllables are emphasized when you say the word?  
What are the beginning and end sounds in each syllable?

**meaning**

Is this word used very often?  
What is the root part of the word? Can you think of any other words with this root word?  
If it has one, what does the prefix or suffix tell you about the word's meaning?  
Do you know what the word means?  
How would you use this word?

**Word Study**

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## Which sort of sort?

**Closed Sort**  
Your teacher will tell you some categories that you need to sort your word cards into. It might be ways of spelling, the word, what the word means, what is pronounced or lots of other things. You need to look carefully at the words on the cards and decide which category each one fits into. Remember to find out lots about the words.  
If a word doesn't fit with any of the ways your teacher has asked you to sort, it is an 'oddball' word and needs to go on an oddball pile.

**Open Sort**  
You will have some word cards but you won't be told how to sort them. You need to do some careful word observations or differences between the words which will help you to decide how to sort them. Remember to think about what the words mean as well as how they are spelled to help you think of ways to put them together.

**Listening Sort**  
A list like a closed sort but instead of looking at the word cards you will have the words read to you by a teacher or a work partner. You need to listen to the word, decide which category it should be in and then write it down, write it. You will work with a teacher or friend to check the way you have sorted and spelled the words.

**Speed Sort**  
This will probably be a closed sort but you have to do it as fast as you can! Speed sorts are great for helping you practice looking at words and remembering them.

**Talk**  
Talking about your sorts is a great way of sharing what you are learning with others. You'll work in pairs most of the time.

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Sarah Walker [sarah@wordstudyspelling.com](mailto:sarah@wordstudyspelling.com)

Sian Ellis [elliss@meadowdale.leics.sch.uk](mailto:elliss@meadowdale.leics.sch.uk)