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Spell to Write and Read FAQ

1. Who can benefit?

Spell to Write and Read works for one student or many and is suitable for:

All ages (young or old)

All ability levels (struggling, average, gifted)

All learners (visual, auditory, vocal, tactile)

All backgrounds (native English speakers, English as a foreign language)

The streamline, but complete, foundation organizes English in a way that works with all levels of spelling from K-12. Teachers fill in gaps in their own education with a direct, uncluttered program.

2. Why should I teach *Spell to Write and Read* (SWR)?

The heart of literacy is the word. *SWR* presents early the keys to unlocking English words. Phonograms and spelling rules are introduced quickly but mastered with repetition and application over time. The instruction given to the youngest child holds up to the highest levels of the language.

3. What is taught in this program?

Spell to Write and Read is an historically successful, award-winning, comprehensive, K-12 spelling-first approach that leads a student into writing and reading in the most natural way.

The program delivers early, direct, systematic, intensive phonics.

Early: first and fast exposure to the “essential” keys that unlock written words

Direct: straightforward, precise instruction

Systematic: scientifically ordered, not incidental

Intensive: one or more times a day

Phonics: links together written symbols with their sound(s)

4. How does *Spell to Write and Read* teach reading?

Spell to Write and Read teaches English first things first. It progresses from the known to the unknown: sounds of speech, penmanship, spelling, logic, composition, and reading.

Sounds of speech: A six months baby will babble all the sounds in all the known language of the world. You can expose him to the sounds in English by saying the 70 Basic Phonograms.

Penmanship: Train him to say, shape, and see the phonograms. With younger children big motor skills or finger tracing set the stage for later work with pencil and paper.

Spelling: Show how to blend the phonograms to create words sight last from teacher dictation.

Logic: Repeat together rules as they apply to words taught.

Composition: Each student composes oral or written sentences using new and review words.

Reading: Have him read his original sentence. This sets the stage for reading simple books.

Spell to Write and Read teaches the mechanics of reading before expecting a student to comprehend other authors. It moves from high frequency beginning words to high school level. Ideally, these words are covered by the end of fourth grade and reviewed in fifth. This establishes the foundation for a lifetime of an expanding vocabulary.

5. What materials are required to teach this program?

The teacher needs all five items in the *Spell to Write and Read Core Kit*:

SWR's overall teacher's manual: Provides the big picture (getting started and digging deeper)

Phonogram cards and CD: The code for written sounds [phono (sound) + gram (write)]

Wise Guide for Spelling: Two thousand spelling words with instructions for the teacher

Spelling Rule Cards: An aid for mastering spelling rules

Each student and teacher needs a *Learning Log*: Primary (K-2) or Black (3rd +). The teacher builds a master. The students write new spelling words and complete charts to prove the rules.

6. What does a typical day look like?

All students start the year with phonogram work and two reference pages described in the SWR general teacher's manual. The rest of the year, the spelling list in *Wise Guide* drives what to do when. Over the week, a teacher will dictate the new words and assign some generic ways for students to practice using them. *Wise Guide* suggests specific reinforcement activities with these particular words. For example, students may practice adding prefixes or suffixes to create derivatives.

Enrichment activities vary and make the program more enjoyable. Bonus activities include all aspects of language arts. The primary focus is spelling which this program covers in a comprehensive manner. Spelling work plants seeds for all other aspects of language arts. It sneaks in touches of grammar and vocabulary expansion. It sets the stage for building great composition skills.

Teachers who have taught *Spell to Write and Read* to many children, over a period of years, confess still delighting in new discoveries each time they teach the program.

7. How long will a lesson take? Is instruction required daily?

Spell to Write and Read has built in flexibility. In general, you should allot about thirty minutes a day for direct teacher/student interaction. Teachers can easily adapt a plan with more concentrated work on some days and light review on others.

It is helpful to do some phonogram work daily at every level of the program even if only for a minute or two. A student experienced with the program can review the full deck of phonograms in that time. A new learner could do a fast drill on a selected number of cards.

Most weeks will involve new spelling dictation and application work with the new words. *SWR* gives you the pool of information to teach. *SWR* recommends the quantity of words per level, per week. You build the actual schedule to fit your needs.

8. How do the two teacher books work together for building lesson plans?

A. The overall *SWR* manual gives the big picture with detailed instruction for such things as how to start the year, teach penmanship, teach phonograms, evaluate skill levels, dictate new words, and

introduce various reference pages. Most lesson plans for the year are organized around the new words being covered that week in *Wise Guide*. If the preliminaries in *Wise Guide* say to introduce a specific reference page, you turn to the SWR manual for details on how to do so. The full scope of the rule is explained there. The two books work together to help the teacher adapt the principles to a large range of abilities.

A program that serves many diversified needs has to have some flexibility. The books do not say: “On Monday, you need to spend 15 minutes covering” *SWR* gives a sample beginning of the year lesson plan for a primary beginner and a third grader. Then, it gives a general guide of how to customize specific lesson plans to fit any situation. (*SWR* p.228.)

All ages start a new year building the Consonant/Vowel Reference Page. Understanding of the concepts presented grows each year. You can adapt the actual presentation to your situation.

- A beginning non-reader can watch the teacher at the board and echo the correct responses.
- A first or second grader can fill in his own chart in his Learning Log in a day or two.
- A student in upper grades can build the full reference page in maybe 30 minutes.
- Mixed levels can work together with the non-reader echoing while others say and write.

Wise Guide tells you **what** reference page to teach **when** in relationship to where you are in the spelling list. The *SWR* manual gives you scripted ideas on **how** to teach it. It provides advanced suggestions and answers commonly asked questions. You, as the teacher, determine **how long** to spend. You determine **how deeply** to dig. The *SWR* manual gives guidelines for making those decisions. Notes that say “advanced” mean that you can wait on that until later unless a student asks.

Most Reference Pages in the log are built a word or two at a time over the course of the year. For example, *Wise Guide* will tell you when to introduce the SH Page which covers the rules for spelling /sh/. It tags new spelling words that can be added to the SH chart. The *SWR* master guide, in one central location, covers the ins and outs of the more complex rules. It often lists of all the words that will apply in the order of when they are taught. The teacher can see the full picture in one place while teaching students to internalize the spelling rules by application over time.

9. How do I plan a weekly schedule?

Spell to Write and Read does not have a prescribed daily schedule. Plan your schedule by the week. The beginning of the year has some start up steps (*SWR* Steps 11-12). After starting with the actual spelling list (Step 13), the lesson plan revolves around the new words for the week.

1. Daily: Phonogram work. Select some or review all. Vary the approach.
 - a. Read the phonograms: Hold up cards one by one. Students see and say them.
 - b. Spell the phonograms: Say sounds of each phonogram. Students echo and shape them.
2. As Needed: Reference Page work in student Learning Log (his personal textbook).
 - a. All levels start the year building the Consonant Vowel Page. Time needed will vary.
 - b. Add other reference page work as instructed by the specific spelling list.
3. As desired: New Spelling Dictation. Adapt the plan that works best for you at the time.

Each list has three sections: preliminaries, new words, spelling enrichments. The teacher planning preliminaries include a note about phonograms, rules, and reference pages. All of these do not need to be covered in depth the day that you first dictate the new words. You can teach all the new words in one day or spread out new spelling dictation over the week.

4. After teaching new words: Spelling Reinforcements. The new words need to be read, quizzed, and applied. Select generic reinforcements from *SWR* Step 13 or specific reinforcement ideas provided with each individual spelling list. Reinforcements touch on all aspects of language arts. Find joy in playing with the words. Teachers who have taught *SWR* over a period of years still delight in making new discoveries along the way.

10. What type of support is available for *Spell to Write and Read* teachers?

Spell to Write and Read has a wide support network.

Yahoo *SWR* Support Group:

See www.bhibooks.net > Related Sites & Links > *SWR* Support Group

SWR Teacher-Training Seminars around the country:

See www.bhibooks.net > *SWR* Basic Classes or *SWR* Advance Classes

Training DVD's:

- *Hidden Secrets to Language Success* (2 volumes)
- *You Can Do It: Showing You How to Teach *SWR* to Your Children*
- *An Introduction to *SWR*: A Blueprint for Language Arts Success*

YouTube clips:

See www.bhibooks.net> Related Sites and Links> clips from *Hidden Secrets* DVD plus links to spelling dictation examples

If it is possible for you to take a *SWR* Seminar, you will benefit richly. Even if you take a class, it is best to start work with the materials on your own first. The training will be more meaningful if you do. Most teachers leave the class feeling affirmed and motivated. They pick up pointers that reinforced what they were already doing and develop stronger confidence and excitement. The experience of being a student taught this way reinforces the power of what a teacher can give to a student. For some teachers, a training class is a dramatic breakthrough.

11. Do I need to take a seminar to teach this program?

Spell to Write and Read is easy to use once you understand the methodology and get your feet wet with the program. Some initial studying and work needs to be done on the teacher's part to be prepared to teach. However, once you start using it with your students, the program falls into place and makes a lot of sense.

Many educators do well just by picking up the book and doing their homework. *Spell to Write and Read* explains well enough that a teacher can catch on if she reads the materials carefully and follows instructions. The seminars help bring the program to life, walk you through the steps, model the teaching process, and answer your questions as you learn.

12. Why does *Spell to Write and Read* take teacher time up-front to learn?

There are two basic reasons that this approach requires extra start-up work for the teacher.

1. Most adults today never learned the concepts that *SWR* teaches. Did anyone ever show you the five reasons for a silent final E at the end of English words? Can you see a phonogram and instantly say all the sounds it can make in the order of frequency?
2. Students need exposure to these concepts quickly. Most programs teach only a partial list of the tools of the language in a pokey fashion. The material they teach is presented slowly over a long period of time, concentrating on one small aspect at a time.

For example, most phonics programs start teaching only one sound per vowel. The student may be taught O with many example words: hop, mop, top. What happens when he then tries out his new knowledge and reads the sign on the door as /op-en/. You tell him that the word is “open.” Suddenly he feels insecure. What else have you not told him?

One hundred English words appear in 60% of what we read and write. Fifteen of these words have a single vowel O. Eight of them do not make the short vowel sound. Four make the long sound (so, go, no, over). Four make the broad sound (to, do, two, who). Teaching O with just one sound may feel easier for the teacher at first, but it creates unnecessary insecurity and confusion for the trusting child. *SWR* students learn all three sounds in isolation from the beginning.

SWR exposes students in a non-threatening way to word essentials within the first six weeks. Over time, they learn to apply these concepts to specific words until the process becomes second nature. This proven, classic approach makes learning more natural and less frustrating for the student. The teacher provides quick exposure so she can create on a more reliable foundation in a non-threatening manner.

13. How can I lay a foundation with very young children eager to learn?

It is ideal to set the stage at a young age. Many parents repeat phonogram sounds or play the Phonogram CD for a baby. As a child grows, they segment the sounds of words, and blend them back together. Say it slow /m-o-m/. Say it fast, “mom.”

In time, start showing the phonogram cards. Say the sound(s) and teach him how to make the letter(s) for himself. Start with big motor skills. Expose him to the tools that he will need later to successfully write and read. Create the desire. Read aloud to children daily. Plant seeds. When they start to sprout, water them.

14. Can I include my preschooler who wants to work beside his older brother?

Yes! They both can work on the backbone of the whole program: the phonograms (the letter or letters that represent the sounds of speech) and the basic spelling rules. The preschooler can hear and pick up a great deal of the phonograms.

SWR teaches the direct link between the image and the sound. A student will learn to see the “ch” phonogram card and instantly say the three possible sounds it makes in order of frequency. This is simple enough that one family has a parakeet that learned to join the children saying the sounds.

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Years ago, Wanda Sanseri taught a seminar. Right before class started, a student introduced himself as a college professor of linguistics. Wanda felt a sense of pressure, but it was too late to run. In the first session, she held up and said the sounds for “ch.” The audience echoed the three sounds. The linguistics professor suddenly blurted out loud, “It does. Wow!” Later, he told Mrs. Sanseri that he learned more at the *SWR* seminar than in any class he had ever taken. He said that for the first time in his life he now understood his language. While *SWR* teaches what a parakeet can repeat, it is, in the simplest terms, what a professor of linguists needs as well.

15. How can I teach *Spell to Write and Read* with a child who has writing delays?

Exposing good penmanship instruction can be especially helpful. We recommend cursive. See “Penmanship Tips,” a free download at www.bhibooks.net. If need be, start with big muscle movements. A chalkboard is helpful. That gives tactile tension not available on a white board. For now, have him practice spelling dictation up at the board instead of using small motor skills.

16. Can *Spell to Write and Read* help a struggling middle school student?

Here is a sample answer from someone who had this challenge: *I want to thank you for such a wonderful program. I can't begin to express how much it has helped my struggling ten-year-old. My son has gone up two grade levels this year with the program, and his reading has made a drastic improvement. Your program is the best I have EVER seen! I have been telling all of my home school friends about the program and have been explaining to them how it works.*

Meanwhile, I am learning much more than I had ever dreamed. I now think in phonograms all the time (even find myself picking them out on signs and in song books). My husband laughs at me, because I used to dread spelling, and now I sit on the floor with my Wise Guide during family movie time and spell out words and mark them. It's great!

17. How do we place an older child new to the program?

Diagnostic tests help place an older student at his tension of learning spot as well as monitor his overall progress as he works with the program. The first of eight equivalent tests is available as a free download at www.bhibooks.net. All eight tests are in the appendix of the *SWR* book.

You don't have to start at the lowest level words if he has already mastered them. The same principles keep coming up over and over as the spelling levels increase. *SWR* rules are consistent with the language as a whole. That is why the *SWR Core Kit* can cover from K to 12 grade levels in one non-consumable package. Understanding grows with the vocabulary.

18. If my child already knows how to read, why would I want to use *Spell to Write and Read*?

Spell to Write and Read covers words from beginner to college level. Students master the sound code to the point of automaticity. They mentally break words apart and then put them back together, analyzing how they are formed. This foundation prepares them for higher level comprehension skills. Deficiencies with older students trace back to gaps in their initial foundation. Dr. Jeanne Chall says, “Early stress on code learning...not only produces better word recognition and spelling, but also makes it easier for the child to eventually read with understanding” (SWR p.30).

19. Does *Spell to Write and Read* teach spelling rules that apply to my son’s other school work?

Yes, The goal of *Spell to Write and Read* is to use high frequency and commonly misspelled words to learn firsthand how the English language works. No fickle rules are taught. Seeds are planted for a broader vocabulary.

Advanced versions of the Consonant/Vowel Page (a reference page in the student’s learning log), provide alternative words taken from the periodic tables (science), names of books in the Bible (spiritual training), or states in the United States (history, geography). Words with Greek and Latin roots are taught. Learning the roots is an aid for specialty vocabulary in many disciplines like medicine, law, etc.

20. How does *Spell to Write and Read* compare with other reading systems?

Spell to Write and Read students spell their way into reading. Most programs bypass the reading readiness stages in order to get students reading. Such approaches create needless confusion. They require mindless sight word memory and boring basal readers. They leave students in the dark and cause false expectations. They make English appear to be extremely illogical.

Spell to Write and Read builds a solid foundation with a reliable, reversible code for spelling and reading (70 phonograms/ 28 spelling rules). These keys are concise enough for young beginners and yet durable enough for advanced learners. Students apply the code to a vibrant list, including the most commonly used words, starting with the words that real children find easiest to learn.

Spell to Write and Read reaches all types of students, even those who are declared “unteachable” under other approaches. It stimulates the gifted learners and frees struggling students.

Wanda Sanseri’s Oregon Senate Hearing Presentation includes information on how most reading programs fail our nation’s students. She also discusses the way *SWR* provides students with tools for success in both reading and spelling. A transcript of this speech is in Appendix A of *Spell to Write and Read*. It is also available as a free download at www.bhibooks.net.

- *SWR* establishes from the beginning the basic tools needed for our language. A student who knows the core components of English spelling can build or recognize many words at all levels. *SWR* does not restrict a student to mindless rote memory for every new word.
- *SWR* starts with spelling and not reading. A beginning, non-reader learns to write and say the symbols and the sound(s) they represent. Next, with teacher-guided dictation, he learns to sound out and write spelling words. He is not expected to read a book until after he can smoothly read the spelling words he has written for himself and analyzed.

- SWR presents the language in a way that has few exceptions. Most systems have long lists of rule-breaker words. With only 70 phonograms and a few spelling rules, we can phonetically explain 93-97% of the most frequently used words. We eliminate the need for sight words.
- SWR students of varying levels can often work together without sacrificing students at either end of the spectrum. The principles SWR teaches with first grade words still apply to high school level vocabulary.
- SWR avoids common practices that establish misleading expectations.

21. What is the difference between *Writing Road to Reading (WRR)* and *SWR*?

While seeking to retain the heart of Mrs. Spalding's work, Wanda Sanseri brought her unique experience to the table. She started in high school classrooms as both a regular English teacher and a remedial reading instructor. She discovered *Writing Road to Reading* in 1975 and, after working with it for six years, trained directly under Romalda Spalding. Since then, she has home-schooled three sons through high school, privately tutored all ages (children to adults), field-tested *Wise Guide* in multi-age co-ops, and tutored English as a Foreign Language students. For three decades, she has conducted teacher training seminars using these principles in seventeen states across the nation as well as in Canada and China. She started using *WRR* as her textbook. Over time that grew to the full *Spell to Write and Read* program of today.

Spell to Write and Read works with some of the same outstanding sources that Romalda Spalding used in *Writing Road to Reading*. Both systems draw from:

- The 70 Phonograms (the sound-letter system to the English language)
- The Ayres List (an ability level normed list of high frequency English words)
- A core list of spelling rules inspired by Spalding's professor, Dr. William McCall
- Dr. Samuel Orton's brain research as applied to dyslexic students Mrs. Spalding tutored under his supervision

Wanda Sanseri expanded these basic tools based on modern research. She organized the teacher materials in a user-friendly format and rewrote the spelling rules to make them more precise, lyrical, and complete. She consolidated some rules and filled in gaps by providing a rule for plurals and contractions. She turned an outstanding spelling program into an integrated Language Arts program. She created spelling rule cards and formatted student learning logs.

22. How and why does the word list in *Wise Guide* differ from *Writing Road to Reading*?

First, although both programs contain the full Ayres List, the overall word lists are not identical. *Wise Guide* removed needless duplicates and added additional words from current research. Secondly, the *Wise* words are reorganized to enhance teaching dynamics within the ability levels.

- *Wise Guide* enlarges and updates the word base. In 1915, Leonard Ayres published a list of the 1000 most frequently used English words. BHI sells a book that describes his research (*A Measuring Scale for Ability in Spelling by Leonard Ayres*). Mrs. Spalding used 500 additional words for a total of 1500 words.

- *Wise Guide* omits the needless duplications and updates the list in light of current findings. Computer studies of the 1000 most frequently used words include 300 words not in the century old Ayres List. Wanda added those words plus 200 additional words to make a total count of 2000 words. The final 200 include words that apply spelling rules neglected in the original list as well as “most commonly misspelled words” not already covered.
- *Wise Guide* reorganizes the word list for added teaching opportunities. *Writing Road to Reading* follows the Ayres List in the exact word order that Ayres presented in his study. It seems that Mrs. Spalding thought his ability level word order needed to be rigidly retained.

Wanda remembered Mrs. Spalding confessing that, from a certain point in the program, the teacher should have students build derivatives from the new words. It was a valid suggestion, but the word order did not lend itself to such activities. Mrs. Spalding carefully kept the words in the exact order listed by Mr. Ayres. Sanseri also longed for more natural ways to do this. She studied the research behind the Ayres List. Words were grouped into sections of increasing difficult words. All the words within a particular section are the same level. That meant that she could rearranged words within sections without losing the science behind the list. The shackles fell off.

Sanseri eagerly examined the words in each division and asked questions on grammar, diction, and vocabulary development.

What words in this section can...

- take a common prefix or suffix?
- take a plural or past tense ending?
- combine to build compound words?
- be turned into LY adverbs?
- provide practice in alphabetizing?
- illustrate vivid verbs and nouns?
- highlight basic parts of speech?
- form synonyms or antonyms?
- link to a common contraction or abbreviation?
- prompt original stories (character, setting, conflict, resolution)?
- relate in word meaning (seasons of the year, colors, numbers)?

Wise Guide gives two pages of lesson plan ideas for each set of twenty words. Each set has tailored follow-up activities many students can work on independently. For example, one column of spelling words can all be used as nouns. The student can read each noun and categorize it as a person (*boy*), place (*home*), thing (*book*), or idea (*time*). At other times, she suggests that a student can turn each noun into its plural form using the plural spelling rule.

She grouped the ten most commonly used prepositions into one lesson. She grouped verbs that could be turned into past tense following our ED spelling rule. She watched for homographs, words that could have two unrelated meanings, and suggested that the students write the word and draw a picture of the two meanings. With “saw” the sketches could be of eyes (I saw you.) and a carpenter saw (I saw wood.)

Other activities combine art and grammar. For example, a graphic way to teach adjectives is to

draw the difference an adjective can make. Consider how this might work in a list that includes words like: *egg, brown, large, more, cooked*. The students can draw and label: *brown egg, large egg, more eggs, cooked eggs* (*Wise Guide* p.49).

Two sections of words have easy to learn deaf signs. If you want to teach these, the end of the week test can be given in deaf signing. The teacher silently shapes the word in her mouth as she shows the sign. The student imitates her and then writes the word.

The key personal pronouns are early level words. Sanseri put them into an orderly column: *I, me, you, he, him, she, her, it, we, us*. This opens the door to teach subject/object pronouns either at that time or later. Sometimes she selected words that have common opposites. The teacher can vary the spelling quiz by saying, "Write the new spelling word that is the opposite of young."

A favorite activity is grouping related spelling words together and composing original sentences using new and review spelling words. This progresses to building original paragraphs or even writing stories. For a story, the class brainstorms together. What spelling words could establish the location of the story? What words could give us the characters involved? What words point to a conflict? What words could be a part of the resolution? In the process, the students are learning to understand how to combine words as well as spell them correctly and read them.

The wide variety of optional spelling enrichments help the child master the new words as they do something engaging. It sure beats just saying, "Now take your words and copy them five times."

23. Why has *Spell to Write and Read* won so many awards?

This time-tested method is not only excellent for beginning readers, but also for remedial students behind in reading and/or spelling. It has produced amazing breakthroughs with students who had been declared unteachable. It has given talented and gifted readers, a confidence in their language and the tools to better expand their vocabulary.

The integration of all areas of language arts simplifies your teaching. When working with younger elementary students, there is no need for separate curricula for penmanship, grammar, composition, vocabulary and spelling. *SWR* covers it all!

It teaches to all language centers of the brain simultaneously. It trains the brain to retain. (See Free Downloads at www.bhibooks.net/multimedia.html > Multi-sensory_chart.pdf).

Thrilled teachers spread the word about *SWR* so that others can enjoy the same benefits they experienced. A second generation teacher recently contacted Mrs. Sanseri. Her family ran a curriculum consulting business when the daughter was growing up. She tagged along at multiple homeschool conventions. Now she is teaches her own children at home in Atlanta. *Spell to Write and Read* is the only curriculum that she plans to never replace.

Spell to Write and Read equips you to become an exceptional teacher of the most important educational subject you can teach. Language instruction is the foundation on which all other academic disciplines rest. Even a student's spiritual growth is hindered if he cannot read the Bible with ease.