

## Creating Good Spellers

Imagine trying to learn how to walk without falling down or learning how to play a piano without ever hitting a wrong note. It can't be done—learning to do anything well involves taking risks and making mistakes. Learning to spell is no different. It is a process involving trial and error.

Parents of young children are understandably concerned when they see writing with spelling errors. However, it is important to remember that spelling errors are a natural part of learning to express oneself in writing. Teachers often call the misspellings of young children “invented,” “temporary,” or “phonetic” spelling to express that misspellings are merely a stage in development—a necessary, temporary step in the path toward conventional spelling. **Here are four tips for creating good spellers:**

- **Read and write at home.**

Research shows that the single greatest way to help your child develop ability as a speller is to expose them to more words in a stress-free environment. Reading together at home for fun, and providing opportunities to write lists, postcards and short letters, gives your child opportunities to practice and develop skills as a writer.

- **Ask your child's teacher about spelling**

There are times when correct spelling is essential, and there are other times when early or rough drafts will include misspelled words. Your child's teacher can explain the spelling component of their reading and writing program and how you can support it at home.

- **Look for steady progress in correctly spelled words.**

Many young children will know how to spell less than a dozen words correctly in the first year or two of school. Though their writing may still have many errors in the first or second grade, you should be able to see steady progress in the amount of words that are spelled correctly.

- **Don't focus on correct spelling too much.**

Just handling a pencil is a very hard task in terms of hand-eye coordination for young children. If everything they write is viewed as “wrong,” they will soon see writing as drudgery, or a task that dooms them to failure. Ironically, when adults try to make a child's writing perfect, they usually end up creating a reluctant writer—a child that avoids writing and therefore misses the very practice needed to become a better writer and speller. Instead of pointing out all the mistakes and misspelled words in your child's writing, try instead to focus on and praise his or her efforts and ideas and you may be surprised at how much more writing your child does and is willing to do. Always start with the positive by pointing out what you like and then restrict yourself to one or two suggestions for improvement. With lots of writing practice, more correctly spelled words will begin to emerge in the writing.