

Section 5, Chapter 43:

How to Develop Your Own Sequential Spelling Tests

Those who have tried *Sequential Spelling I, II, III, IV, V, VI* or *VII* (McCabe, 1974) know that the method works. It's simple and it follows solid principles of learning. However, there may be times in which the word family being presented has already been learned by your students. We feel that this isn't necessarily bad and that overlearning is right for many. However, for those teachers who wish to give maximum individualization and to provide maximum learning in the shortest time span practical, we feel that you may wish to use the AVKO SEQUENTIAL SPELLING TECHNIQUE without using the AVKO spelling books.

First the Basic SEQUENTIAL Technique

This technique is based on the concept that the natural way of learning is by making mistakes in which immediate self-correction takes place. This is the way we learned to walk, talk, feed ourselves, ride a bike. Therefore, rather than having the teacher correct the test after it is given, we insist that each student correct each word as the test is given.

To make it easier for students to IMMEDIATELY apply (OR TRANSFER) what they learned from one word to the spelling of another, the words are presented in word family sequences, which has been referred to as "vertical word processing." For example:

all
tall
stall
install
installment
installation

Steps in Giving a Sequential Spelling Test

1. Give the word. Repeat the word. Use the word in a sentence. The very best way is to have the sentences on worksheets with blanks to fill in.
2. Have students repeat the word and/or sentence. With older students this step may be eliminated if it proves too much of a hassle.
3. Have students attempt the spelling. It is essential that each student at least makes an attempt. In order to LEARN FROM A MISTAKE, a mistake must be made. In order to learn to tolerate personal mistakes, mistakes must be made in an atmosphere that allows for mistakes.
4. Show the correct spelling by showing it on an overhead projector or by writing it on a chalkboard.
5. Call out the word and the letters. Each student repeats the word and the letters and corrects his/her own spelling. If a mistake has been made, the student is to erase the incorrect spelling before writing the word correctly. **THE STUDENTS MUST NEVER MAKE A CHECK MARK**

No matter how many words a student may miss during the test, the paper should look exactly the same as that of a student who correctly spelled every word the first time.

PACE IS ESSENTIAL.

The greatest music is boring if it is dragged out. Speed and liveliness of presentation is vital.

6. REPEAT STEPS 1-5 FOR EACH WORD.

1. Teacher gives word.
2. Students repeat word
3. Students write word
4. Teacher gives correct spelling
5. Students correct own spelling before next word is given.

IMPORTANT: Do NOT give the words to the students to study. When students study words for a test and then miss them, they have only learned that they are dumb! Students don't feel dumb if they miss a word they weren't given for study — but if they get one right that they know they didn't know the day before — Wow! They know they have to have some "smarts" after all.

Determining which word families to teach

1. Using any controlled word list, test your students' ability to spell the ending sounds of words by giving them the onsets (initial letters, consonants, digraphs, blends). For example:

pain The first letter in *pain* is *p*. Spell *pain*, as in correcting papers is a *pain* in the neck.

sail The first letter in *sail* is *s*. Spell *sail*, as in to *sail* a boat on a lake.

chair The first two letters in *chair* are *ch*. Spell *chair* as in to sit in your *chair*.

2. After you have found three word families that need to be mastered, make out your list of words that belong to each word family. If you happen to be using any of AVKO's diagnostic tests, you will know on which page in AVKO's *The Patterns of English Spelling* that you can find all of the words already listed for you. If you use other diagnostic tests, all you have to do is use the index of AVKO's *The Patterns of English Spelling* to locate the page on which you can find all the words in the family you have selected.

When you look at all the words listed on that page in *The Patterns of English Spelling*, you may elect to skip some of them. This book was written as a reference tool for teachers at all levels. Hence, little pre-censoring was done. If you don't have the book, you can construct your own by simple trial and error. Just try adding letters in front of the ending and keep the real words that you want to use.

Let's suppose that you used the *Dolch* list⁵⁹ instead of the *AVKO Suggested Order of Diagnosis and Remediation of "SIMPLE" Words* and let's further suppose that you wanted to work with the LONG A sound so you picked the words *rain*, *chair*, and *cake*, which enough of your students could not spell to make it worth your while to develop a special sequence.

⁵⁹ See 220 Dolch Words Are Too Many for Students with Memories Like Mine on p. 51

	Day 1 BASE WORDS	Day 2 ADD -S	Day 3 ADD -ED	Day 4 ADD -ING
1.	rain	rains	rained	raining
2.	train	trains	trained	training
3.	strain	strains	strained	straining
4.	drain	drains	drained	draining
5.	gain	gains	gained	gaining
6.	regain	regains	regained	regaining
7.	pain	pains	pained	paining
8.	Spain	didn't	doesn't	didn't
9.	stain	stains	stained	staining
10.	plain	plains	rainy	doesn't

Because not all words have -s, -ed, -ing endings and because some have -y, -ly, -er, -est endings, etc., there will always be blanks to slip in the irregular demons (repeatedly!) as in the example above. Notice that on Day 1 we only had only base words from the -ain family.

On Day 2 we gave a "review" of the first day by using all the words except *Spain* in the -s form. Note, that each base word generally is reviewed three times: -s, -ed, and -ing forms. The number of times the family sound is reviewed is approximately forty times for even a rather small family or about four times for each word in the family.

On Day 5 we begin a new family, the -air family. Note: There are still a few -ain words left as mastery review. On Day 6 we begin another new family. Often what happens is that the three families being worked on are in three different stages of learning: Introductory, temporarily learned, and the almost-mastered stages.

	Day 5 BASE WORDS	Day 6 ADD -S	Day 7 ADD -ED	Day 8 ADD -ING
	air	airs	aired	airing
	chair	chairs	chaired	chairing
	pair	pairs	paired	pairing
	repair	repairs	repaired	repairing
	fair	fairs	doesn't	didn't
	regaining	stair	stairs	shouldn't
	paining	hair	hairs	pained
	won't	cake	cakes	caked
	staining	take	takes	took
	could	lake	lakes	couldn't

On the next page are blanks that you can reproduce ad infinitum to provide yourself with sequencing patterns. If you would rather not do your own sequencing, you can always try AVKO's. Write to the AVKO Foundation Spelling Division, 3084 W. Willard Road, Clio, Mich. 48420 for a free spelling catalog.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5	Day 6
Base Word	+ -s	+ed	+ing	Base Word	+ -s
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10	Day 11	Day 12
Base Word	+ -s	+ed	+ing	Word	+ -s
1. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
2. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
3. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
4. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
5. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
6. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
7. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
8. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
9. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
10. _____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Note: Tests can be varied in length from five to twenty-five words according to your students' needs, *enthusiasm*, and time available.

For variety, you may elect to mix up the endings so that the students will have to be alert and not just automatically add the -s or the -ed or the -ing as the case may be. For example, one day might have: rain / trains/ strained/ etc., and the next day might be: rains / train / straining / etc.