

The Basic Concepts of Teaching Spelling by Word Families

You may have used the concept of rhyming words that have the same letter endings to help your students learn to read. For example, you may have introduced the word *at*, then also shared *cat*, *bat*, *sat*, and maybe even *scat*. Unfortunately, you have never had any source book for finding all the rhyming words with the same spelling patterns. [NOTE: In the latest academic jargon word families are now called "rimes." The consonants, consonant blends, and digraphs that precede the word family (or rime) are now called onsets. Use whatever term you wish with your students. In this book, I generally use the terms *base*

or *word family* rather than the new jargon word "rime."]

The Patterns of English Spelling (formerly *Word Families Plus*) is now available to be used as a source book so that you can teach any word family. This is not just a simple collection of word lists. This book consists of complete patterns to help your students (and quite often parents and teachers!) see patterns that exist and to lock in on those patterns with their "computer" brains. For example, I believe that if you can teach your students (or anyone) the word *at*, you can also teach them:

bat	bats	batted	batting		
cat	cats				
scat	scats				
flat	flats	flatted	flating		
pat	pats	patted	patting		
spat	spats				
mat	mats	matted	matting		
rat	rats	ratted	ratting		
batter	batters	battered	battering	battery	batteries
flatter	flatters	flattered	flattering	flattery	
matter	matters	mattered	mattering		
battle	battles	battled	battling		
cattle					
rattle	rattles	rattled	rattling		

OR, for a more sophisticated example, from the word **act** you can build:

act	acts	acted	acting	active	action
fact	facts				
tract	tracts				traction
attract	attracts	attracted	attracting	attractive	attraction
distract	distracts	distracted	distracting		distraction
extract	extracts	extracted	extracting	extractive	extraction
subtract	subtracts	subtracted	subtracting		subtraction
contract	contracts	contracted	contracting		contraction

1. **thins** A painter sometimes **thins** his paint with turpentine. **thins**

2. **pinning** Are you good at **pinning** a tail on a donkey? **pinning**

3. **sinning** Is it a sin to misspell **sinning**? **sinning**

4. **spinning** Have you ever seen a **spinning** wheel? **spinning**

5. **shins** It's no fun to get kicked in the **shins**. **shins**

6. **skinned** Trappers **skinned** the animals for their furs. **skinned**

7. **winning** I enjoy **winning** a lot more than I do losing. **winning**

8. **inner** Your **inner** voice that tells you right from wrong. **inner**

9. **be** I wish you would **be** more careful **be**

10. **begins** I hope this **begins** to make some sense to you. **begins**

11. **chins** When Jim is in the gym, he **chins** himself 10 times. **chins**

12. **we** Do we know where **we** are going? **we**

13. **bee** It's no fun to be stung by a **bee**. **bee**

14. **see** What do you **see** when you close your eyes? **see**

15. **tree** Did George Washington chop down a cherry **tree**? **tree**

Now is a good time to talk about homophones, words that sound exactly alike but have different meanings as well as different spellings.

in / inn We found an **inn** and went **in** to have a meal

I / eye / aye I got a black **eye** because I forgot to say, "**Aye, aye**, sir" to the captain.

be / bee / Bea Could it **be** that Aunt **Bea** was stung by a **bee**?

we / wee / oui **We** heard a **wee** French lad answer yes by saying, "**Oui, oui**, madame."

see / sea / si Can you **see** the **sea** from the window? **Si, si**, señor.

In some cases, words sound the same due to a dialect, such as a Southern dialect:

pin / pen You use a pin to hold things
You use a pen to write with. Pigs are kept in a pen. You can wear a pin.

The Fifth Day

On the fifth day we begin with Lesson 5

Give the following words in sentences as shown or make up your own sentences. Remember, after each word is given, you should write the word correctly on your dry erase board and let your students immediately correct any mistake that they might have made

1. **thinned** We **thinned** the carrots and the beets for grandpa. **thinned**

2. **thinner** Jack Sprat was quite a bit **thinner** than his wife. **thinner**

3. **sinner** If you've never committed a sin, can you be a **sinner**? **sinner**

4. **spinner** I put a little **spinner** above my hook when I go fishing. **spinner**

5. **fins** Fish have **fins** instead of legs. **fins**

6. **Mr. Skinner** Hey, mister! Have you seen **Mr. Skinner**? **Mr. Skinner**

7. **winner** You're a **winner** and not a loser. **winner**

8. **be** What do you want to **be** when you grow up? **be**

9. **inning** How many outs in an **inning**? (6! 3 for each side) **inning**

Before giving the correct spelling of beginning, check your students' papers to see if they have learned to spell this word.