

Perhaps the most important difference between the traditional approach to spelling and the AVKO (Audio-Visual-Kinesthetic-Oral) approach is that we use tests as a **learning** device and **not** as a method of **evaluation**. I believe that the natural method of learning is learning from mistakes, and that is why I want children to correct their own mistakes **when** they make them—so they can learn from them.

We developed the *AVKO Sequential Spelling Tests* to utilize the word family approach sequentially and to apply the very simple techniques of having students correct their own mistakes **when** they make them—not hours, days, or even weeks later.

**Use a Dry Erase Board
or Something Similar to
Give
AVKO Sequential
Spelling Tests**

The First Day

On your first day of using Sequential Spelling 2, share with your students:

I have some good news and some bad news. First the bad news. Today and every day until we finish this book, we are going to have a spelling test. The good news is that each one of you will correct your own paper. But before we start, I want each of you to take out a sheet of paper and put your name on it. Did you spell your name correctly? Good. That's my first test. My next test is like a doctor's test. It's not for a grade so don't worry about it. Okay? Now write the following sentence:

***My brother has a nephew
who is older than he is.***

If any of your students shows signs of struggling with the sentence, just ask them to try to spell the word **nephew** only. If they still find it difficult to put down anything, ask them to just put down—in any order—some of the letters that might be in the word *beginning*.

Now collect their papers.

On the 5th day, you will be able to demonstrate that your students who couldn't spell **nephew** on the first day were able to correctly spell it without ever having seen or studied the word. And remember that according to Harry Greene's *The New Iowa Spelling Scale* (1954) only 1% of all public school 3rd graders can be expected to spell this word and just barely 63% of all public school 8th graders can spell the word **nephew**! We will expect that you will point that out to your students on the 5th day.

If your students have their own copy of the *AVKO Student Response Book for Sequential Spelling*, have them open their books to page 3. Note the location of Day 1. It is in the *middle* column of page 3. Day 2 is in the middle column on page 5. Day 3 is in the middle column on page 7. Day 4 is in the middle column on page 9, and so forth. Please note the AVKO motto on the bottom of these pages:

**Mistakes are
Opportunities to Learn**

The reason for this arrangement is to prevent children from copying the base word that they had the day before and then just adding the -s, -ed, or -ing ending as the case may be. Just as children don't learn by copying from others, they don't learn by copying from themselves.

If you do not use the student response books, you can have your students take out

After the Seventh Day

After the seventh day, I include a 25 word spelling test. Some days the tests are easier than others, but don't panic on days like the 126th day when the word *arrangements* is presented

REMEMBER: My learning philosophy is *not* concerned about teaching the spelling of any one word *per se*. I am concerned with the teaching of basic sounds for both spelling and reading. In the case of words like *range*, *ranges*, *arrange*, *arranges*, *arrangement*, *arrangements*, I feel that teaching the *-ange* ending, the plural ending and the suffix *-ment*, as well as the initial consonant sounds and consonant blends, is important

REMEMBER: Encourage your students to **speed** through these tests. Give the word. Put it in a sentence. Say the word. Spell the word. Have the students (if you can) trace the corrected spelling as they spell it aloud in group chorus. Go on to the next—but make sure your students make an attempt at the spelling *before* you give the correct spelling. **Copying** your spelling does **not** help them learn. **Correcting** their own misspelling **does**

Immediate Feedback

The most common mistake made in administering the *AVKO Sequential Spelling Tests* is to give the entire test and then correct. This method just **won't** work.

- Give each word separately.
- Say the word. Give it in a sentence.
- Let the students attempt the spelling.
- Give the correct spelling. Let students correct their mistakes.

- Then give the next word. Repeat the process of immediate student self-correction.

Grading

If you desire to give grades for spelling, I would recommend that you give tests for grading purposes separately. You may then grade your students on their learning of the spelling of the sounds—not the words. Sequential Spelling gives permission for parents (and teachers) to duplicate (for their students only) the tests that come after the 40th, 80th, 120th, 160th and 180th days. Read the sentences to your students. All they have to do is fill in the blanks. Notice that you are not testing on the whole word. You are testing only on the spelling patterns taught. (That is why the initial consonants or blends are given to the student.) NOTE: You can use these as pre-tests, as well as post-tests, to show progress. How you grade these tests is up to you. I recommend that 0-2 wrong = A, 3-4 = B, 5-6 = C, and 7-8 = D.

If your students get more than 8 wrong, I recommend going back over the process to help them learn what they are missing

Questions most frequently asked concerning Sequential Spelling

1. What are those asterisks (*) and exclamation marks doing next to some words?

The asterisks merely serve as a reminder to the parent/teacher that the word so marked has a **homophone** (same pronunciation, different spelling), has a **heteronym** (same spelling, different word and different pronunciation), or does not follow the normal pattern. For