SPELLING ACTIVITIES FOR GRADE 1-4

Activities give the students the needed “deep practice” to spell correctly and are fun ways to motivate them to be interested in learning to spell. These games have been collected from numerous sources. Pages 1-3 are appropriate for grades 1-4 and pages 4-7 are best suited for grades 2-4.

WHOLE CLASS GAMES

Skip Spell
Give each child her own skipping rope and whole class skip spell the words in unison.
Variation: Each child skip spells a word with two people turning the skipping rope.

Mystery Word
Teacher or student volunteer gives clues for the students to find the mystery word (the word you choose) from the poem, story, or the sight word wall list on the board. Give very general clues first (the word has a short o sound) and then give more detailed clues (it has a /st/ sound at the beginning). After each clue the students write down their guess of the mystery word on their slates if they have a guess. They lift their slates up for the teacher to see. If correct the teacher nods and that child can help give a clue if the teacher wishes.

Foot Dictation
Teacher dictates letters or words. Students write with chalk between toes on individual chalkboards or slates.

Fill In
Write simple three-letter words on the BB with the vowel missing and have volunteers fill in a vowel. Have another volunteer or the whole class read the word.
Examples:
B–t  S–e  T_b

Find the correct spelling
Teacher writes a word three different ways on the blackboard. Students read versions, find the correct spelling, and spell word on slates while a volunteer circles it on BB.

Invisible Ink
Teacher writes and says word, then erases it. With their finger, students write the word in the air-while still looking at the space where it was “written.” Have them tell you what the 3rd letter is, the next to last letter... spell it backwards, etc.

Main Lesson Book Word Hunt
Have students turn to a written entry in their main lesson book. Read it together once. Then say, “Place your finger on the word “bread.” Check to see that all have found it, then “Now place your finger on the word with the /fr/ sound in it” (afraid), or has the long u sound or silent e.” etc. Begin with initial sounds and proceed to middle and end sounds as students progress.

Created by Patti Connolly and Janet Langley
**Circle Spelling**
Standing in a circle, all turn to the right- begin walking the circle, spelling one letter per step until the word is spelled, then spell it backwards, while walking backwards. This can also be done in rows behind their desks if enough room is available for them to turn either left or right and walk 5-6 steps forward.

**Transition Minute**
Spell words as a whole class. A student chooses whether the class will spell the word by whispering, shouting, clapping, writing in the air, or on partner’s back, etc. Teacher gives word. Another student spells word on BB then erases it. Whole class spells as instructed.

**Oops**
Teacher erases some of the letters in a written text on the BB or from the list of spelling words before Main Lesson. Students write correct words on slates or in practice books. Volunteers come to board to add the letters with others’ help if needed.

**SMALL GROUP OR PARTNER GAMES**

**Lotto for Small Groups**
The students make up two sets of cards, one set with vowel sounds and one set with pictures of words with those vowel sounds. Example:
Set One: 5 cards, each with one short vowel sound on it.
Set Two: 5 cards, each with a picture of one of the following: hat, pen, mitt, hut, pot.
The game is played with the two sets shuffled together and laid out face up in a grid. The players find the matches (e.g., a short A card with the picture card of the hat). Students can work together to find all of the matches if you don’t care for this kind of competition between students. You could also create sets with multiple sets of short vowel letter/picture matches or create them for vowel combinations, consonant blends, digraphs, etc.

**Go Fish**
Create word cards of at least four different long vowel patterns. For example:
Long E sound: bean, green, be, these, funny, egret...
Long O sound: go, blow, robe, boat, though, open...
Long A sound: cake, eight, sail, bay
Long U: new, boot, cube, truth,
Long I: five, high, cry, tiger
Students deal cards and play just like Go Fish, asking, “Do you have any long O words?” Keep playing until someone has played out all her cards. You could also do this with rhyming words or homophones.

**Back Writing**
Draw letters on the back of your desk partner- partner writes down the letter on slate, chalkboard (if standing in front of it), or on paper. Trade places after 3-5 letters.

**Spelling Bee**
Have students make cards of the spelling words—especially good for non-phonetic (irregular) words. Student #1 draws a card and pronounces the word for student #2, who then writes down the word on paper or spells it out loud. If spelled correctly, the card is hers. If not she is...
shown the card, sees how it is spelled and then the card is placed on the bottom of the pile. Now the roles reverse. One with the most cards wins.

**Bingo**

Each student creates a 3x3 square grid on a slate and teacher chooses long or short vowel sounds, vowel combinations (ai, ee, ea, etc.), consonant blends, etc. to fill the squares in whatever pattern they choose (You choose how many different sounds based on how difficult you want it to be). You can also have them choose nine words from the sight word list to fill the grid with. The teacher creates a pack of word cards so that you have a number of words per specific sound, combination or blend (and other sounds if desired to make it more difficult) on cards and shuffles them. Choose a volunteer to read each card for the class. Another volunteer could write the word on the chalkboard after the students have a few minutes to figure it out for themselves. Then the students “white out” the square that has the sound highlighted if applicable. The students call out “Bingo” if they have three in a row and “White Out” when their whole grid is filled.

**Sight Word Tic-Tac-Toe**

Each student needs a slate and chalk (or paper and pencil), and nine markers for covering spaces on her tic-tac-toe board. This can be a small group activity so that each group has a set of nine sight word cards for each round. Select one student in each group to be the leader.

How to play:
1. Each student draws a large tic-tac-toe board on her paper.
2. The leader calls out the first sight word.
3. Each student writes the word anywhere on her board.
4. The leader checks the spellings as students write. Students correct spelling as needed.
5. The leader calls out the sight words, one at a time, repeating the steps above.
6. When all the tic-tac-toe boards are complete, the leader places the cards in a basket.
7. Students take turns drawing a word card randomly and read it to the group.
8. Each player finds that word on his game board and covers it with a marker.
9. Words are drawn and read until one (or more players) have covered three words in a row in any direction. The first player(s) to cover three in a row wins the round.
10. Play a few more rounds with the same boards, with players taking turns as leader.

**OUTSIDE GAMES**

**Phonics Hopscotch**

In each hopscotch square write one consonant blend, sight word, vowel combination, or digraph. Each student takes a turn to throw his stone on a square and say and spell a word that begins with this blend before jumping through the grid.

Variation: Have each child start with the first square and jump over that one while saying a word that starts with that blend. Then the next child jumps over the next square, etc.

**Magic Square**

Create a 3x3 grid on the asphalt with chalk so that the students can easily jump from one square to the square that is farthest away from it. Fill the middle square with a vowel or vowel combination. Example: short A. In the surrounding squares write in eight consonants that can be used to make words with the short A, such as p, n, r, d, b, t, w, l. The students...
take a turn jumping the magic square to make a word. For example, a student can jump from 
\( p \) to \( a \) to \( d \). While jumping she would sound out each letter. Then when she jumps out she 
says the word – \( \text{pad} \). Add consonant blends and digraphs when the students are ready.

**Sight Word Jump Rope**

As a child waits to jump in, the teacher gives her sight words to spell while jumping, one 
letter corresponding to one jump. Once done spelling, the child jumps out and the next child 
jumps in.

### GAMES FOR GRADES 2-4

**Word Scramble or Misspell**

Teacher scrambles or misspells 5-6 of your spelling words before Main Lesson. Students are 
given a few minutes to correctly spell them on their slates or in practice books. Then 
volunteers come to the board to write them correctly. Let other students help if needed.

**Word Stack**

Write a two or three syllable word like “rabbit” on the chalkboard. The students write words 
with the letters of that word (\( \text{bit} \), \( \text{rat} \), \( \text{bat} \), \( \text{tar} \), etc.) on their slates or on the chalkboard. You 
can play this as a two-person game as well.

**Blackboard Team Race**

Two teams are created and stand in back of the room. The first player of each team has a 
piece of chalk in his hand. Teacher says a word, first player from each team runs to spell it on 
the board. A point is given for a correctly and neatly spelled word. Keep play going.

**Guess My Spelling (Hangman, Waldorf-style)**

Teacher chooses a commonly misspelled word for the game. We don’t hang a man (too 
gruesome for us\(^\circ\)). Instead, we choose a seasonal theme (grow a flower, create a Jack O’ 
lantern, etc.). This is a great game when waiting for another teacher to come.

**Partner Work**

Partners test each other with a short list of commonly misspelled words. They use slates, 
sidewalk or practice books to spell each word for each other.

**Dismissing Game**

When dismissing for recess or going home, each student has to spell one of the words to be 
dismissed.

**Fill up/Seven up**

Before the game: The teacher makes up a list or a stack of index cards of words with the 
consonant blends or vowel combinations to be practiced and creates Fill up/Seven up grid.

How to play: Shuffle the cards for random order. The students write in the chosen headings, 
such as \( \text{bl-} \), \( \text{wh-} \), \( \text{oa, ar} \), etc. in the grid in whatever order they wish. Then the teacher or a 
student volunteer chooses a card and reads the word on the card. The students write down 
the word under the correct heading. The object of the game is to fill up the grid. The words 
could have the sounds at the beginning, middle, or end if class is ready for that.
Word Hunt
Students select a book from the classroom library and search for words that fit into their sort.

Word search
Create a word search that contains the word study words for the students to solve. Or have the students make up their own to give to another student to solve.

Crossword puzzle
Create a crossword puzzle that contains the word study words for the students to solve.

Concentration
Play with another person or by yourself. Use the word cards for the week. Place the key words under each of the headings. Set aside the oddballs. Shuffle the rest of the word cards. Lay the word cards face down in a pattern of rows and columns. Player 1 turns over 2 cards and places them back in their spots so the other player can see them. Player 1 then reads and spells both word cards and checks to see if they have matching spelling patterns. If they do, Player 1 keeps both cards. If the cards have different spelling patterns, Player 1 turns them back over in the exact place and her turn ends. Then Player 2 takes a turn flipping, reading, spelling, and trying to match two more cards. The player with the most matching pairs wins. If time, shuffle the cards and start over.

Word-O
Student takes a word from a spelling sorting list and makes a new word by changing one letter. For example: tub → cub, take → cake, why → who, spit → spot. (A source for word sorts is Words Their Way)

No Vowels/No Consonants
Students rewrite their spelling sorting lists putting dashes where there are vowels. Example: here→h-r hear→h - - r
Then they write the list putting dashes where there are consonants. Example: here→ -e-e hear → -ea-

Spelling Word Scramble
The object of this game is to unscramble a spelling word from the word list. The game can be played with another person. The scrambler takes a spelling word list card from a pile placed face down in the center of the desk, or chooses one from the spelling list and scrambles the letters of the word. The scrambler should write the mixed up letters on his slate or paper. The scrambler shows the scrambled letters by holding up the slate or paper. The scrambler continues to show the mixed up letters until the speller unscrambles the spelling word. No hints are allowed. Then the other person gets to be the scrambler. Play continues until all spelling words from the list have been scrambled and unscrambled.
Anagrams
Show the students how a word can be formed by rearranging its letters, such as tip to pit, or keep to peek. Write keep on the BB and have the students read the word, then have them close their eyes and write the new word. You can also take a word and jumble up the letters to make a new word such as stable to tables.

Pyramids
Begin the pyramid by writing a vowel on the BB. Then each person adds a letter on either side of the vowel to make a word. This is a great filler game when waiting for another teacher to come. It can be played as a partner game as well. Here are two examples:

O
ON
ONE
ONCE
SPINE

Hink Pink
This game is good for spelling and vocabulary building. Hink pinks are one-syllable words that rhyme. You write down the "definition" of the hink pink and the students figure out the hink pinks. For example, if the clue is "a plump feline," the hink pink is "fat cat." Google images of Hink Pinks for examples.
You can move on to Hinky Pinkies (two-syllable words that rhyme), Hinkety Pinketies (three syllables, e.g., "when military boats have a race" = "armada regatta"), and Hitinkety Pitinketies (four syllables).

Homophone Rummy
Two or more students write homophones on index cards. Students deal out cards and find as many matches as they can until the deck is gone. As a student gets a match, she will place her homophone pair face up on the floor for everyone to see.

Gypsy Word Teller
Students stack their word cards face down. First player pulls a card and puts it on her forehead not looking at the word. Her partner will give one-word clues until the person holding the card on her head guesses the word. Then it's the partner's turn.

Battleship
Play just like the real game–students arrange about ten spelling words going down or across. Make sure they are not touching. As the opponent makes a guess, the 2nd player checks her sheet to see if a letter is in that spot. If it is, then the opponent will mark that letter on her guess sheet. If it’s a miss, then she places a dot in that square so she won’t call it again. When one player thinks she has sunk a ship, say the word out loud and then circle it to know that it has been sunk.

Phonogram Connect Four
See http://mrstsfirstgradeclass-jill.blogspot.com/2013/02/phonogram-connect-four.html

Slate Partners
After teaching a vowel digraph that has two different sounds such as /oo/, the teacher whispers a word that has either the “oo-boot” sound or the “oo-foot” sound into each

Created by Patti Connolly and Janet Langley
child’s ear and the child spells the word on his slate. Students move around the room finding a partner who has a word with the same /oo/ sound while whispering their word. Then the students pair up around the room and say their words one pair at a time. You can do this with the two /ou/ sounds and the two /ow/ sounds as well.

**Word Riddles**
Prepare in advance a set of cards, each with a noun on it from your list of spelling words, so that each child who comes to the front will have a word. Call children one at a time to the front. Each child becomes that noun and thinks of clues to describe the noun. Help each child to give the class clues, one at a time, about who or what she is. For example, if her word is barn, she might say:

- I am home for some animals.
- I am often painted red.
- You can see me on a farm.

All of the other students write the word on their slates. When a student wants to guess the word, she must raise her hand, wait to be called upon, and then spell the word correctly on the board. All check that the student spelled the right word correctly.

**Team Spelling**
This is a great game to help students learn to be cooperative and supportive! Before you begin, have a list of spelling words or words closely related to the spelling words. Each student needs a slate and chalk. All children have their slates and chalk ready. Call out one word at a time from your list. Ask the students how many sounds they hear. Each student along the row writes the letters that make up the beginning, middle and ending sound of the word. Have these students come to the front of the classroom and arrange themselves in the correct order of sounds. The rest of the students spell the whole word on their slates. Have the students check their work with each other.

The last three games were adapted from http://www.spelling-words-well.com/index.html