



Language

Using Word Sorts in the Word Study Block

Grades 6-8

Rationale

- ✚ Spelling instruction can be easily incorporated into the Word Study block where students turn their attention to the meanings of single words. Attending to spelling patterns using word sorts is a great way to accomplish this kind of instruction.

Goal

- ✚ To utilize student ability grouping within the word study block to practice spelling patterns using word sorts

Standards

- ✚ **L.6.2b** Spell correctly.
- ✚ **L.7.2b** Spell correctly.
- ✚ **L.8.2c** Spell correctly.

Objectives

- ✚ Students will analyze their own patterns of misspellings.
- ✚ Students will complete sorts to improve their spelling knowledge and identify patterns for generalization.

Materials

- ✚ Spelling test with analysis sheets (print one for each student)
- ✚ *Optional:* Correct spelling strips (print one strip for each student sheet)
- ✚ Group sheets of words for sorting (one sheet for each student or student pair)
- ✚ Cardstock (to paste the sorted words on)
- ✚ *Optional:* Grouping labels (to place around the classroom) – you can print these or write your own on chart paper or even on the chalkboard.

Procedures

- ✚ Tell students that when you were a kid, everyone in your class knew whether he or she was a good speller or a bad speller. **"That might happen in your class too, but guess what...whether you are a good speller or bad speller *really* depends on the word you're trying to spell, right?"**
- ✚ Ask students to share some of the words that are hardest for them to remember the spelling of. They might mention individual words, or patterns in words. Be sympathetic to these spelling confusions. Then say, **"Well, the great news is that we can learn to spell lots of ways by looking for patterns in words, and today, that's just what we're going to do!"**

- ✚ Hand out spelling test sheets with analysis. Tell students that you want to see how they spell some words to find out what patterns are difficult for them to remember. If students start to get nervous, tell them that no one but them will ever see their tests, so they don't have to worry.
- ✚ Read the words aloud, one by one, providing enough time for the students to write down each word. Remind students to spell the word the best way they can. If you need to, for clarity, read the word in a sentence. (Try not to give the definition of the word.)

channel	“Change the <i>channel</i> to another show.”
fable	“Every <i>fable</i> has a moral at the end.”
spiral	“She drew circles around in a <i>spiral</i> pattern.”
capture	“The goal is to <i>capture</i> your opponent’s men.”
pitcher	“The baseball <i>pitcher</i> stood on the mound.”
torture	“Walking on my sunburned feet was <i>torture</i> .”
curtain	“Can you please open the <i>curtain</i> ?”
orphan	“The family adopted a boy who had been an <i>orphan</i> .”
certain	“She was <i>certain</i> she saw a ghost.”
laboratory	“The scientist works in a <i>laboratory</i> .”
secretary	“Her <i>secretary</i> canceled all her appointments.”
cemetery	“There are many old tombstones in the <i>cemetery</i> .”

- ✚ When students finish, write the correct spellings of each word on chart paper. Then have students copy the correct spellings onto their pages, or use the printed words to paste onto the Correct Spelling column.
- ✚ Next tell students that many of them will have spelled at least one word wrong. But explain that they didn't spell the whole word wrong. For example, you might say: **“There is no one in here who started spelling the word *channel* with a z, right? Not with an h either. In fact, most of you started it with a ch, used an a in the middle, one or two ns, and then either el, le, or al, right? So you only spelled part of the word wrong - a tiny part! In this next column, for each word you spelled wrong, I want you to write just about the part of the word that you spelled wrong, in your own words.”**
- ✚ Give students 2-3 minutes to work. As they do, post the Group Labels around the classroom wherever makes sense. You want to allow students to congregate in sections of the classroom according to their groups. You might set up 4 or 8 tables, or areas of the classroom, if there is floor space or table space available.
- ✚ When they finish, allow students to identify the trouble spots in each set of words:
 - words 1-3: *le/el/al* confusion
 - words 4-6: *ure/cher/sure* confusion
 - words 7-9: *ain/en/an/in* confusion
 - words 10-12: *ary/ery/ory* confusion

- ✚ Then allow each student, table by table, to choose a group according to the number of words in each section that they misspelled.
 - If you see that groups are very uneven,
 - you can choose to give two groups the same set of words
 - ask students to choose their second most misspelled group
 - sort students randomly (as this is a demo lesson, it will still show some results. if you do this, let the teachers know you did and how they should sort their students in the future).
 - There may be a few students who spelled every word correctly. Place them in Group 4, which is the most challenging set of spellings (in the Derivational relationships).
- ✚ Have students work in small groups of 3-4 to complete their word sorts. Every student or student pair in each group should have the same sort (one for each student) and they can talk as they sort.
- ✚ When they finish, they should attempt to come up with a way to remember which words get which spellings.
 - NOTE: there is not always an orthographic rule. In fact, there will not be a rule for when to use en vs. an vs. ain. Still, students should think about it to solidify the spelling patterns of these and other related words.
- ✚ Have students share their "rules" or ways to remember how to spell the words.
- ✚ **Closing:** Ask volunteers (or, if time, each student) to share a word they just learned how to spell and, if they like, to spell it aloud without looking, noting what they used to remember the spelling of it.

Tips

- ✚ You may want to collect the tests for analysis with teachers after the session.
- ✚ After the session, debrief with teachers: What did the students learn as they participated in the session? What did they seem to notice? What patterns did they miss? Why? All of this is good data for planning the next word study session.

Correct Spelling Strips

Correct spelling	Correct spelling	Correct spelling	Correct spelling
channel	channel	channel	channel
fable	fable	fable	fable
spiral	spiral	spiral	spiral
capture	capture	capture	capture
pitcher	pitcher	pitcher	pitcher
torture	torture	torture	torture
curtain	curtain	curtain	curtain
orphan	orphan	orphan	orphan
certain	certain	certain	certain
laboratory	laboratory	laboratory	laboratory
secretary	secretary	secretary	secretary
cemetery	cemetery	cemetery	cemetery