



USING MNEMONICS TO UNLOCK SPELLING COMMONLY MISSPELT WORDS!

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As an educational therapist for students with dyslexia, I often encounter students who struggle with spelling. Given that dyslexia affects letter-sound correspondence abilities, it can be exceptionally challenging for students with dyslexia to grasp the spelling of some words, especially those which do not follow phonetic rules. Homophones (words sounding similar to each other), it can definitely be a tall order, even for those without dyslexia!

Thankfully, with the help of mnemonics, the arduous journey of helping our students spell can be significantly easier. **Mnemonic are memory devices**, that can serve as memory anchors for our students to remember the spelling of certain words.

PAINTING A MENTAL IMAGE WITH MNEMONICS

One major benefit of using mnemonics is to help create vivid mental images which can enable our students to connect abstract letters to concrete visuals. For example, when grappling with the spelling of the word 'necessary', students can envision a 'shirt' with one 'collar' and two 'sleeves'.

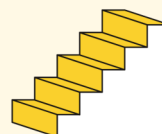
This strategy can also be applied to spelling homophones. For instance, a student can differentiate the spellings of the words '**stair**' and '**stare**' (both sound similar to each other), by imagining themselves climbing up the stairs, into the 'air'. Another pair of homophones '**here**' and '**hear**'. They can associate 'hear' with the picture of an ear to help them to remember the connections to spell the homophones accurately.

necessary



1 collar, 2 sleeves

stair



climb a **stair** into the **air**

here/ hear



you **hear** with your **ear**





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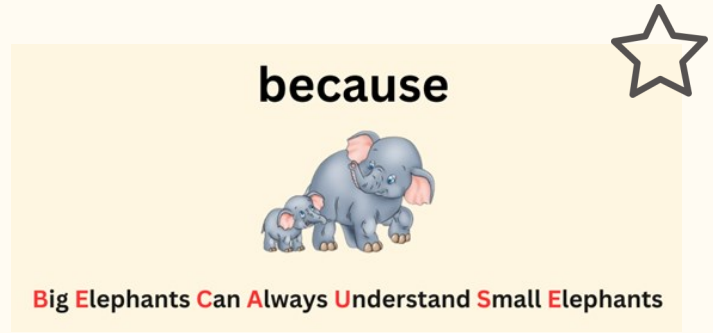


These are some common homophones which you can encourage your student or child to draw pictures of to help them better remember the spellings of the words!

Dessert/ **desserts** → **sweet stuff**
Principle/ **principal** → the **principal** is your **pal**
Stationary/ **stationery** → stationery includes **paper**
Beech/ **beach** → beech **tree**, beach **sea**
To/ **too** → too many **Os**

MENTAL STORIES AS MNEMONICS

Apart from using mnemonics as visual aids, we can also build mental stories to help create a mini-narrative around a word's spelling, making it easier for our students to remember. For instance, a phrase commonly used by educators to remember the spelling of the word '**because**' is '**Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants**'.



Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants

Some other useful mini-narratives to aid in spelling include:



the → **two heavy elephants**
was → **worms are slimy**
believe/ belief → I do not believe a **lie**.
said → **silly ants in dresses**
tomorrow → I will go with **Tom or Row**.
Piece → Have a piece of the **pie**.
Quiet → Please keep quiet about my **diet**.
Qu (spelling pattern) → q is a lonely letter that needs **u (you)**.

Mnemonics are not limited to those listed above and all it takes is a little creativity for more to be generated! Teachers and students even can have some fun together trying to brainstorm various mnemonics to suit students' needs. In this way, long-term retention is promoted as information can be embedded into our students' memory by developing their cognitive schema. With mnemonics, complex and multisyllabic words thus become less intimidating as they are broken down into smaller and more manageable components.

