



'Need to know' planning unit

HFV - Cross curricular words - Learning words -
Having a go

Generic unit

Objectives:

- To further develop strategies for learning to spell new words
- To further develop strategies for rehearsing words
- To learn to spell the words...

Choosing 'Need to know' words

Need to know words are any words that children will 'need to know' how to spell to make their lives easier in the very near future. They could be any words that they will need to use a lot in their independent writing. Often they will be high frequency words or cross curricular words. Possible groups of words could include: past tense verbs, numbers, shapes, colours, months, maths word problem vocabulary, words relating to history, science, geography, school trips or anything other words that the children will be using a lot and that they can't already spell. Once you have decided on a basic theme, collect together a selection of possible words that you suspect that some children probably can't already spell (or that you know from previous assessments and planning annotations that they can't spell). During the revisit, assess and adapt session(s) you can fine tune, whittle down or add to this list and personalise it to particular children.

Revisit, assess and adapt – suggested activities

Play Countdown – a reading rehearsal game. Start a timer, choose a child to soundtalk then blend to read a word. Ask the whole class to soundtalk and blend the word out loud. Repeat with new words as quickly as possible. When all words are complete stop the timer.

Keep a note of words that any children find hard to read. Words that are hard for particular children to read are likely for them to be even harder for them to spell.

Look at each word again and ask children what the word means. You could ask them to think for a short period of time then choose a child to answer. You could ask children to discuss briefly with a partner or a small group and then feedback to the class. You could ask children to write (or draw) the answer quickly on their whiteboard. For some types of words children could point

(e.g. colours) or act out. If the meaning can be explained easily on one word, the whole class could answer together.

Keep a note of words that some children don't know the meaning of. They may be perfectly capable of learning to spell these words but if they don't know what they mean, they are unlikely to use them so knowing how to spell them won't be much use. If they are words that they will need to know soon (e.g. cross curricular words from a topic that they are only just embarking on), consider working on building these words into children's vocabulary more securely before getting stuck in to learning to spell them. If they realistically, aren't going to use these words much in the near future, leave learning these words until a later date when they will need them.

Carry out informal whiteboard spelling tests, including words that you are unsure whether some children may be already able to spell.

Decide (or ask the children to decide) on a final list (or lists) of words that are appropriate for children in the class to work on learning during this unit.

Obviously, the list(s) may not be appropriate for everyone in this class. If children are not yet able to try learning any of these words then try to find related phonically regular words for them to learn. Bear in mind though, that this is a 'need to know' unit. Children are learning these words because they will 'need' to know them to make their lives easier in other lessons. Children that won't be able to spell these words (because they aren't learning them will need scaffolding in place to support them in these other lessons (e.g. word cards, word mats, displays, peer support, adult support etc). If some children can already easily spell a number of the words on the most challenging of the lists, encourage them to personalise their lists and include other related words that challenge them a bit more but make sure that they are still words that they will use regularly in the near future.

Teach & Practise – suggested activities

Model looking at one of the words to be learned. Say it out loud, segment it, look at how it is spelt and see which are bits are easy to work out with phonics, colour code any tricky bits. Remind children of all the different strategies that they know for learning words and discuss whether there are particular strategies that could help with this word.

Encourage children to work, either on their own or with a partner or in a small group with adult support. Ask them to go through all the words in the list that they are working on, highlight the tricky bits, think about strategies that might help them to learn the words and then set about learning the words (you might need to give them access to a range of classroom resources based on how they wish to try to learn the words.

Model playing rehearsal games with words from the lists.

Children play rehearsal games with words from the lists.

Apply and assess – suggested activities

Ensure children have work in front of them in which they are likely to have used the words that they have been learning within this unit. Ask them to look through their work and find instances where they have used the words and then check the spelling of these words carefully against their original lists, marking each letter. Encourage them to keep a track of how many words from the list they have used correctly in their independent writing. Record this. If any children haven't used many words, give them the opportunity to repeat this assessment activity a few days later and give lots of reminder opportunities in the meantime.

Informal whiteboard spelling tests can give a quick overview of which children can spell which words but they don't tell you anything about whether they will be able to spell them in their own writing rather than just within a spelling session.

Applying across the curriculum

In any lessons where children are likely to need to use the words they have been learning, give them lots of reminders that they are expected to try to spell the words on their list correctly. Remind them also that they will be looking back through their work in a subsequent spelling session to look for examples of these words being spelt correctly.

In shared and guided writing model getting excited about finding opportunities to spell the words from this unit and model really thinking about the word rather than just guessing it.