

Workshop/Intervention, Grades 4-6

Dictation and Spelling

About the routine

Like all of the instructional routines associated with *Open Court Reading* and *SRA Imagine It!*, the routine for dictation and spelling activities is designed to provide the students enough security to relax and engage fully in the activities. By presenting the dictation and spelling activities in the same way every time, students can concentrate on the elements to be learned rather than on learning new lesson formats.

A dictation activity is not a test—it is a learning experience. Students should be encouraged to ask for as much help as they need. The dictation activities must not become a frustrating ordeal. Students should receive reinforcement and feedback.

The proofreading techniques are an integral part of dictation. Students' errors lead to self-correction and, if need be, to reteaching.

Using the *Sound/Spelling Cards*

In the beginning, you should assist students by actually touching the cards and asking for the spellings for the sounds in the word. As students exhibit more confidence in the routine, gradually withdraw this assistance and simply remind them to check the cards. Continue encouraging them to say what spelling they will write.

Spelling the vowels

For the short vowels, you may provide assistance by encouraging the students to say which card they will check. Or you can ask the students which vowel they will use. When you get to long vowels with multiple spellings, have your students say which spelling they will use or have them ask for help if they are unsure. Then tell them the correct spelling. This should proceed swiftly so as not to disrupt dictation.

High-Frequency Sight words

If there are any high-frequency words in the sentence, write them on the board before dictating the sentence or if you have a High-Frequency Word Bank, remind them that the words are there. Review the words and tell students they can refer to the board or Word Bank to help them spell these words in the sentence. High-frequency sight words should not be dictated or proofread sound-by-sound. Encourage students to ask for help when needed.

Sample dictation sequences

There are three lines of dictation in each dictation activity.

Line 1: Sounds-in-sequence dictation

The first line of dictation gives the students the opportunity to spell words sound-by-sound, left to right, checking the spelling of each sound as they write. (Many children write words as they think they hear them, not as the words are actually pronounced or written.)

Ask the students to turn to the appropriate page in their workbooks or have them use their own paper.

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| Teacher: | We are going to write the word <i>am</i> . I am in the house. <i>Am</i> . Say <i>am</i> . |
| Students: | <i>am</i> |
| Teacher: | What's the first sound in <i>am</i> ? |
| Students: | <i>/a/</i> |
| Teacher: | What's the <i>Sound/Spelling Card</i> ? |
| Students: | Lamb. (Teacher points to or touches the card.) |
| Teacher: | Spelling? |
| Students: | <i>a</i> |
| Teacher: | Write the spelling. What's the second sound in <i>am</i> ? |
| Students: | <i>/m/</i> |
| Teacher: | Check the card. Which card is it? |
| Students: | Monkey. |
| Teacher: | What's the spelling? |
| Students: | <i>m</i> |
| Teacher: | Write the spelling. What's the word? |
| Students: | <i>am</i> |

Write or have a student write the word on the board. Proofread the word, sound-by-sound. Repeat the procedure for the other word(s) in line 1.

Line 2: Whole-word dictation

The second line of dictation gives students the opportunity to practice writing words on their own. They hear the word, segment it in their minds, and then write it. Example 1 shows a word with a short vowel. The second example shows how the long vowels may be addressed as the children learn them.

Example 1

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| Teacher: | Write the word <i>at</i> . I am at the door. <i>At</i> . Say <i>at</i> . |
| Students: | <i>at</i> |
| Teacher: | Think about the sounds you hear. Check the <i>Sound/Spelling Cards</i> and write <i>at</i> . |

Write or have a student write the word on the board. Proofread the word. Repeat the procedure for the other word(s) in line 2.

Example 2

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| Teacher: | Write the word <i>see</i> . I see you. <i>See</i> . Say <i>see</i> . |
| Students: | <i>see</i> |
| Teacher: | Ask me which long <i>e</i> spelling? |
| Students: | Which long <i>e</i> spelling? |
| Teacher: | <i>ee</i> . Write the word <i>see</i> . |

When the children have written the word, proofread as usual. Then proceed with the next word.

Line 3

The third line of dictation allows the students to internalize and expand the skills used in previous lines by applying them to writing a sentence. This supports the beginning of independent writing—it is a small step from writing a dictated sentence to writing an original one. Dictation of a sentence in each lesson will also help students learn conventions of writing sentences, such as capitalization and punctuation.

Example 3

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| Teacher: | Write the sentence <i>Sid ran fast</i> . When you write a sentence, you must begin the first word with a capital letter. Also, names always begin with a capital letter. The sentence <i>Sid ran fast</i> ends with a period. Say <i>Sid ran fast</i> . |
| Students: | <i>Sid ran fast.</i> |
| Teacher: | What's the first word in the sentence? |
| Students: | <i>Sid</i> |
| Teacher: | What's the first sound in <i>Sid</i> ? |
| Students: | /s/ |
| Teacher: | Check the <i>Sound/Spelling Card</i> and write the spelling. Remember to write a capital letter. |
| Teacher: | What's the second sound in <i>Sid</i> ? |
| Students: | /i/ |
| Teacher: | Check the <i>Sound/Spelling Card</i> and write the spelling. |
| Teacher: | What is the last sound in <i>Sid</i> ? |
| Students: | /d/ |

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| Teacher: | Check the <i>Sound/Spelling Card</i> and write the spelling. |
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Continue this procedure for the rest of the words in the sentence. Remind the students to put a period at the end. Then proofread the sentence. When sentences contain high-frequency sight words, these words should be dictated as whole words, not sound-by-sound. As the children learn to write more independently, the whole sentence can be dictated word-by-word.

Proofreading

Whenever the students write, whether at the board or on paper, they should proofread their work. Proofreading is an important technique because it allows the students to learn by self-correction and it gives them an immediate second chance for success. It is also the first step in helping children develop the habit of looking critically at their writing and rewriting when necessary.

Students should proofread by circling—not erasing—each error. After they circle an error, they should write the correction above or beside the circle. This type of correction allows you and the student to see the error as well as the correct form. Students also can see what needs to be changed and how they have made their own work better.

You may want to have the students use a colored pencil to circle each error and write the correction. This will make it easier for them to see their changes.

In dictation, you teach the students to proofread their spelling, capitalization, and end punctuation. Later, during the writing process, you will teach them to proofread for usage and mechanics.

Procedure for proofreading

1. Have a student write the word or sentence he or she wrote on the board or on an overhead transparency.
2. Have the other students tell you all the good things about the example. Help them see good things they overlooked.
3. Ask if anything can be made better. The student who did the writing should always be given the first chance to find and correct errors. Then the group as a whole can proofread the work. Remind them to check the *Sound/Spelling Cards*.
4. If your students agree that something can be done better, have the student who did the writing circle the error and write the correction above or beside the circle.
5. Have the other students check their own work and make any necessary changes.

Tips

- When a sentence for dictation contains a high-frequency sight word, dictate the word as a whole word, not sound-by-sound. Write on the board any high-frequency sight words that will be dictated so students can refer to these for help as they write.
- Another option is to have high-frequency sight words displayed on the classroom wall in a High-Frequency Word Bank or on a chart for students to refer to during dictation.
- When dictating words with long-vowel sounds or other sounds with multiple spellings, remind the students that, if they are unsure, they can ask you which spelling to use.

Note: The procedures outlined here pertain primarily to first-grade students who are just beginning to learn to write. The goal is to teach the students to sound out the words in their heads and write the words as demonstrated by the whole-word dictation activities. In second and third grade, although the students start with sounds-in-sequence dictation to refresh their memories, they progress very quickly to whole-word dictation. This is the strategy they will use whenever they write.