

# Cued Spelling - How To Do It

*Based on Keith Topping's Work*

## **Before You Start:**

In most cases, the speller should be able to read a bit, know at least some names and sounds of letters, and be able to write so the tutor can read it. Those who can't write might still be able to do Cued Spelling by using a typewriter or computer, letter cards, or plastic letters.

## **What You Need:**

Pen or pencil, dictionary, piece of card, scrap paper, Cued Spelling flowchart, Cued Spelling diary, Cued Spelling collecting notebook.

## **Time To Spend:**

At least 5 words per day for 3 days of the week. Time spent each day varies with words chosen by speller and how well he or she does, but allow at least 15 minutes.

## **Part A – per session**

### THE TEN STEPS

1. CHOOSE WORD Speller (tutee) chooses words, 5+ each day
2. CHECK Speller checks right spelling in dictionary then writes word neatly in diary.
3. READ (a) Read word Together (b) Reading Alone by speller
4. CHOOSE CUES Speller decides how to remember word, by sounds, chunks, mnemonics, other
5. SAY CUES Pair say Cues together
6. DEMONSTRATE Helper writes word as speller says Cues speller then checks word with diary
7. CUED TRY Speller writes word as helper says Cues
8. SELF-CUE Speller writes word while also saying Cues
9. TEST Speller writes word as quickly as possible
10. READ Speller reads word alone

## **Part B - per Session SPEED REVIEW**

At the end of each day's session of the Ten Steps on 5 or more words, the helper (Tutor) reads out all the day's words in a different order. The speller writes them as quickly and correctly as he or she can - then checks the words are right with the diary.

## **Part C - per Week MASTERY REVIEW**

All the words for each week should be reviewed as in B (i.e. at least 3 lots of 5 words). If you have time, it is worth going over the whole diary so far, or perhaps the last few weeks' words.

## **Part D - Throughout THE 4 POINTS**

### **1. Cover**

From Step 6 to Step 9, the helper should make sure that any other examples of the word are covered up, so the speller can't just copy.

### **2. Check**

Spellers always check their own try and should see their own mistakes when they check with the Diary. The helper does not point out mistakes - except when the speller checks but still doesn't notice a mistake. The Spelling Diary MUST only have words spelled exactly right in it.

### **3. Mistakes**

From Step 6 to Step 9, at every Step any words written wrongly should be well crossed out by the speller.

For any mistake in the Ten Steps, go back to the Step before and do it again.

For any mistake in Speed Review (B), go over the Ten Steps again for that word. A different Cue could be used at Step 4.

For any mistake in Mastery Review (C), decide for yourselves what you want to do about it. You might want to carry that word forward to the next week.

Helpers should not moan about wobbly writing. Where a written word is hard for the helper to read, the helper should ask the speller to write it again.

### **4. Praise**

The helper praises (say "good" or "well done" and smiles) the speller at least for:-

1. The speller putting his or her own mistake right before check with example
2. Getting each word right at Step 9 TEST
3. Getting each word right at Speed Review (B) or Mastery Review (C).

### **Cued Spelling: Mnemonic Strategies**

**RULES** - some spellings do follow logical rules (like "i before e, except after c" - which most people remember). The learner may be helped by rules like this, but (a) make sure you've got them right, and (b) keep them simple and few in number.

**WORD IN WORDS** - just breaking words up into bits like syllables helps us to remember them, but if you can break them up into smaller words that mean something, it's even easier to remember them. Words like shep/herd, care/taker and water/fall are like this.

**FRONTS AND BACKS** - quite a lot of words have the same sort of start or finish. Starts and finishes can be looked at closely in a set of words that start or finish the same. Starts (like "sta-", "pre-", "un-") are often not as hard as finishes (like "-tion", "-ate", "-ous", "-ght").

**FAMILIES** - words which have the same fronts and backs can be put in groups or families. Sorting out the words into families can be a game, perhaps even with a little prize for the winner. You can do this with words that have the same middles, too. You might think of other ways of sorting words into families or categories.

**MAKE A PICTURE** - if you can make up a picture in your mind about a word, this will help you remember it. (Like thinking up a picture of two people getting married (wed) on a Wednesday to remind you how to spell the name of that day). Some of your mind pictures or "visual images" will seem really silly - but this is good, because if they are funny you will remember them better.

**RELATIONS** - two words that look different can still sometimes be related (or "associated") in some way. If you can relate a word you don't know to one you do know, you then might remember them together - right! Like: "b icy cle" - "fridge". But the learner must be able to remember the second word (e.g. fridge) easily. It is usually easier to remember there is a link between words than remembering there is not a link or relationship between words.

**SHRINK AND GROW** - with some words, you can remember a short hard bit of it or just some initials for each part, like "par" in "separate". Often it helps to "grow" the initials into new words, to give you a saying or rhyme to remember. Like: b / e / a / u / tiful = big elephants aren't ugly. Another example: n e c e s s a r y - has 1 collar & 2 socks.

**FIX & STRETCH MEANING** - it helps if we really understand what those hard words mean. The learner might choose them because they seem interesting, but talking about the full and exact meaning and use for while will make the word even more interesting, and help fix it in the learner's mind.

**FUNNIES** - as much as you can, work jokes and other silly and comic things into what you do with Cued Spelling. Funny things are much more likely to be remembered.

**RHYME AND RHYTHM** - rhyme is very good for helping you remember, like in "i before e except after c". If finding a rhyme is too hard, try to get some rhythm into the mnemonic so it is easier to say. You could even try singing some of the words!

**HIGHLIGHT** - we only usually get one bit of a hard word wrong. Try highlighting the hard bits with colours (perhaps green for easy bits, red for hard bits). Or just use capital letters or underline:- e.g. stationEry

Different learners must find out by trying which of these ways works best for them. Different learners will find different ways better. The helper must not push the learner into a particular way, especially not into the way that feels easiest to the helper!

Your Cued Spelling will not do much good if the learner doesn't get lots of practice with writing as well. To become a better speller, you need to practice writing, wherever you are. The learner needs to write shopping lists, leave notes and messages, write letters and requests, and so on. Find reasons to write and audiences for writing.

This list may give you some ideas, but helpers often have good ideas which are too complicated for learners to remember. It's better if learners think up their own ideas, if they can. They will have to remember them quickly and easily if they need to use the hard word when writing, so the ideas must be "short and sweet".

### **Remember**

1. KEEP IT SIMPLE
2. LET THE LEARNER DO WHAT'S EASY FOR THEM
3. FIND LEARNERS REASONS TO WRITE

## **Cued Spelling: Mnemonic Ideas**

Sometimes Cued Spellers think of really clever and imaginative ways of remembering spellings. These mnemonics often seem very strange, but they make sense to the Speller who thought them up! It is very difficult to teach someone how to think up mnemonics, because one that works for one person may not work for another - you have to think up your own, that are memorable for you.

Some mnemonics that were thought up by 7 to 9 year old children are printed below. These are only intended as examples to give you an idea of what can be done - do not think that they will necessarily be any good for you to use yourself.

1. beautiful - big elephants aren't ugly (in fact, they are beautiful)  
(mnemonics may only refer to that part of the word that the Speller finds difficult)
2. because - big elephants cannot always use small escalators
3. caught - cats always use great heavy toilets
4. dictionary - names:- DIC TION ARY (Dick and Harry shun the third person!)
5. ghost - ghosts hate oranges, sausages, tea
6. graphs - giant rabbits are pretty hopeless skippers
7. lasagne - little apes sit and gobble nuts energetically
8. piece - a piece of pie
9. professor - 1 frog and 2 snakes
10. question - queens undress everywhere so they're in our news
11. special - some people eat crabs in a lavatory

Lots of these mnemonics are quite funny - no teacher could have thought of them! - and some were illustrated. This helped the Spellers to remember. Some seem very complicated, but remember that in Cued Spelling you don't have to be able to read or write down the mnemonic Cues, only be able to say them. In the long run you will remember the word after you have forgotten the Cue. But don't make the Cues too complicated!

The list below shows 100 of the most often misspelled words:

their	to	there	they	then
your	clothes	looked	people	pretty
because	thought	and	beautiful	it's
something	named	came	name	tried
swimming	first	were	than	two
let's	mother	another	through	some
woman	animals	started	that's	would
said	wanted	bear	from	frightened
cousin	alright	happened	didn't	always
interesting	sometimes	friends	children	an
until	our	asked	off	through
running	believe	little	things	him
went	where	stopped	very	morning
here	many	know	with	together
now	decided	friend	money	when
its	bought	getting	going	course
again	heard	received	coming	too
for	February	once	like	they're
surprise	before	caught	every	different
school	jumped	around	dropped	babies

If you would like to print this list, use this printable version below.

Why not try some of the following activities to help your class remember these words?

#### Activities

- 1) Make a class dictionary, which children can refer to when they are writing.
- 2) Ask the children to create some mnemonics to help remember the spellings of the above words.

When you have made your mnemonics, show them off! Decorate the classroom with them, so that the children can easily refer to them if they forget them.

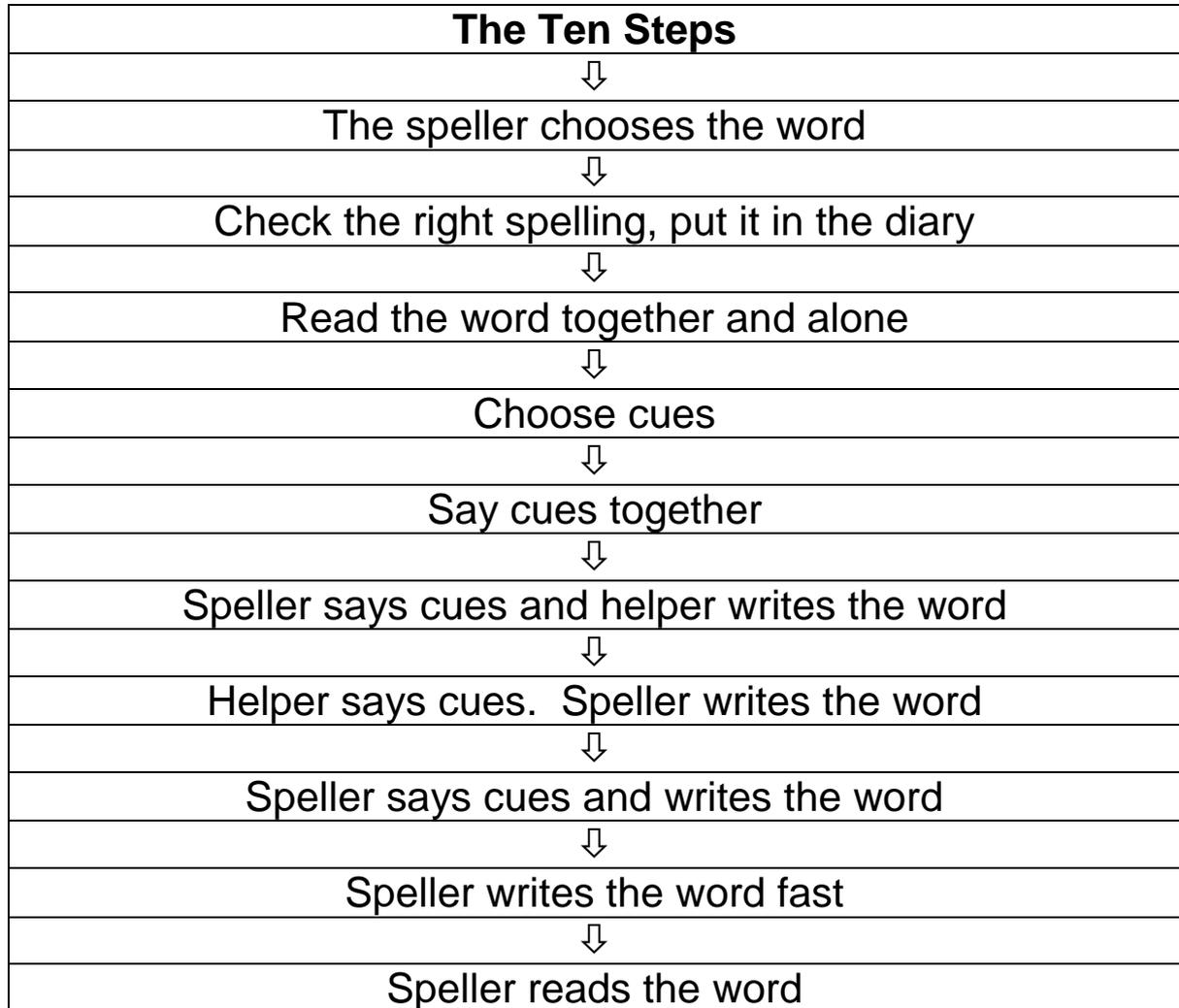
**There's always a lie in believe.**

Cue Spelling Cues

<p><b>RULES</b></p> <p>"i before e, except after c"</p>	<p><b>WORD IN WORDS</b></p> <p>shep/herd care/taker water/fall</p>	<p><b>FRONTS AND BACKS</b></p> <p>Starts (like "sta-", "pre-", "un-")</p> <p>finishes (like "-tion", "-ate", "-ous", "-ght").</p>
<p><b>FAMILIES</b></p> <p>station nation frustration elation relation</p>	<p><b>MAKE A PICTURE</b></p> <p>island</p>  <p>An island is land surrounded by water</p>	<p><b>RELATIONS</b></p> <p>Know or no? know - knew</p> <p>(knowledge is the key to success)</p>
<p><b>SHRINK AND GROW</b></p> <p>like "par" in "separate". n e c e s s a r y - has 1 collar &amp; 2 socks.</p>	<p><b>FIX &amp; STRETCH MEANING</b></p> <p>Talking about the full and exact meaning and use of the word makes it more interesting, and help fix it in the learner's mind.</p>	<p><b>FUNNIES</b></p>  <p>b – an – an – as</p>
<p><b>RHYME AND RHYTHM</b></p> <p>"i before e except after c".</p> <p>c-h-e-c-k</p> <p>— — . . —</p>	<p><b>HIGHLIGHT</b></p> <p>castle</p>	<p><b>Mnemonics</b></p> <p>because - big elephants cannot always use small escalators</p> <p>caught - cats always use great heavy toilets</p>

## Cued Spelling Flowchart

**REMEMBER:** Helper covers previous tries. Speller checks own try. If try is wrong, do step before again. Helper praises.



### Each day - SPEED REVIEW

Speller writes all words for day, fast and checks

Wrong words - do ten steps again

### Each week - MASTERY REVIEW

Speller writes all words for week, fast and checks

Decide what to do about wrong words

# Rules

**The Floss Rule**  
The Rule for Doubling the Last Consonant

If a one-syllable word ends in /f/, /v/, or /s/ after a short vowel, the final f, l, or s is doubled.

thrill, cliff, glass, yell, huff, hill, class, sniff, dress, swell



**The Doubling Rule**  
The Rule for Doubling the Final Consonant

If a base word ends in one short vowel followed by one consonant, the final consonant is doubled before adding a vowel suffix.

winner, sitting, stopped, thinnest, batter, hugged, hotter, beginner



**The Changing Rule**

If a base word ends in one consonant before a final y, the y is changed to i before adding a suffix that does not begin with i.

happiness, emptied, plentiful, penniless, studies, mysterious, skies



**The Rabbit Rule**  
The Rule for Doubling the Middle Consonant

If there is one middle consonant sound after a short vowel in a two-syllable word, the middle consonant is doubled.

cotton, ribbon, tennis, puppet, muffin, button, happen



**The Dropping Rule**

If a base word ends in finale, the e is dropped before adding a vowel suffix.

engaging, excitable, having, becoming, hoped, sensible, stony



# Word in words

rainbow 

rain bow

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cupcake 

cup cake

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popcorn 

pop corn

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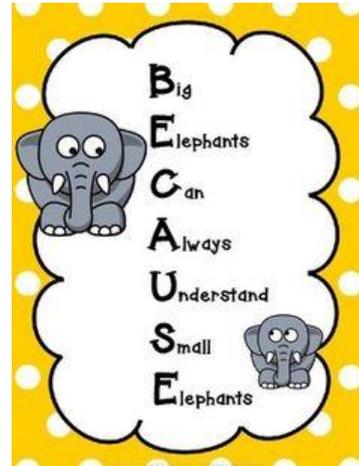
Make a picture

# island



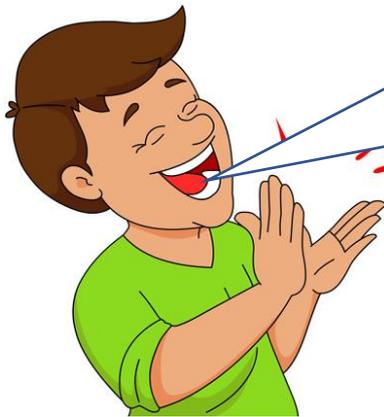
An island  
is land  
surrounded  
by water

## Mnemonics



Clap a rhythm

Clap and say the word to a rhythm.



c-h-e-c-k

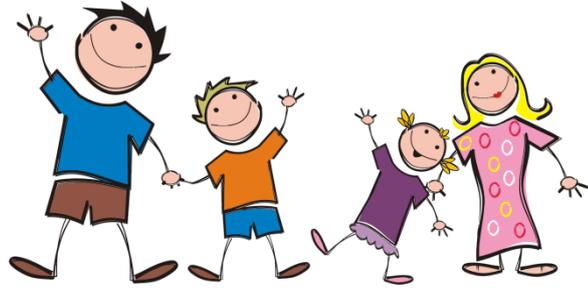
— — . . —

Highlight

Wednes**day**

# Families

Could  
Would  
Should  
Couldn't  
Wouldn't  
Shouldn't



book	boot	food	wood	moon
cute	tune	flume	prune	
glue	blue	cue	true	hue

stew

chew

grew

flew

few

shoe

soup

youth

Chew your food a few times.

My shoe got stuck in wood glue.

Soon a few blue flowers grew.

oat

coat

boat

foam

roam

home

bone

cone

hope

code

snow

bow

show

low

grow

toe		though		
-----	--	--------	--	--

My boat home sat in the foam.

I hope the snow will land on my toe.

How slow do our bones grow?

Can you show the code for the boat?

oil

boil

coin

join

choice

boy

toy

employ

joy

I have a coin to pay for my choice of  
toy.

I joined the boy to boil the water.

hair

chain

hail

sail

hate

plate

same

made

cape

tray

may

stay

play

day

bear

tear

pear

where

there

The **pear** is on the **plate** on the **tray**.

**Where** shall the **bear** **play** **today**?

Her **hair** was **made** a long **cape**.

The hail storm made a tear in the ship's sail.

ear

hear

team

heat

mean

keep

meet

been

deep

teeth

here

me

we

be

pier

piece

thief

chief

With my ears I hear things here and there.

The team's chief found the mean thief.

I eat a piece of meat with my teeth.

Meet me to heat the meat before we eat it.

sky

by

try

my

pie

tie

skies

fries

high

tight

fight

light

time

pride

nice

pine

mine

At night the moon lights up the sky.

I don't like my pie and fries.

What time is the sun high in the sky?

My tie is too tight.

of

often

after

elf

farm

cough

rough

laugh

photo

phone

elephant

stuff

cuff

cliff

staff

I cough when I laugh at funny jokes.

Do you like funny laughter on the phone?

Are you full after you have had enough to eat?

Please cover your mouth before you cough.

jug

jump

jelly

jog

rage

cage

huge

nudge

ridge

badge

fridge



I found a huge jelly in the fridge.

I jump and jog along the ridge.

Jack nudged me to get the badge.

Is the jug in the fridge?

nit

name

pan

shine

tune

gnat

gnome

gnarl

gnaw

knit

knew

knight

know

runner

winner

inn

The **kn**ight **kn**ew the **gn**ome's **gn**ame.

Do you **kn**ow how to **kn**it a **gn**ice mat?

I **kn**ow the **gn**unner who was the **gn**inner.

The **gn**at's **kn**ees were **gn**arled.

sit

star

sit

pens

stand

hiss

pass

grass

kiss

moss

circle

city

cite

cist

science

ancient

scent

cent

In the **city** I **sit** on the **grass**.

I drew a **circle** around the **star**.

**Pass** the **pens** around the **circle**.

The **scent** of the **grass** was **nice**.

**Cued Spelling Diary**

Pupil's Name:		Week Beginning:				Speed review score	Mastery review score	Comments
Supporter's Name:								
Monday								
Tuesday								
Wednesday								
Thursday								
Friday								
Comment:								