

What Makes an Effective Speller?

“An effective speller draws upon the entire rich linguistic tapestry of a word to spell it correctly. The threads of this tapestry can be identified as phonological knowledge (including phonetic awareness), orthographic knowledge, morphological knowledge (which includes semantic knowledge), etymological knowledge and visual knowledge.”

Adoniou (2014, p. 145)

Spelling Shed combines the elements Adoniou discusses to create a curriculum which equips learners with the skills they need to become effective spellers.

Phonological Knowledge

Phonological knowledge is knowing the phonemes (sounds) in English and the graphemes (letters) to represent them.

around

Orthographic Knowledge

Ortho meaning **correct** and *graph* meaning **to do with writing**.

Orthographic knowledge allows learners to understand which letter sequences are possible in order to become effective spellers.

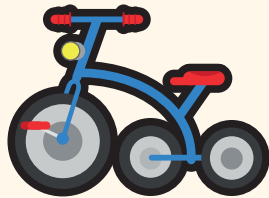


For example, at a glance we can tell that *ighdea* is probably an incorrect way to spell *idea*. We know this because the grapheme ‘igh’ does not usually appear at the beginning of a word.

Morphological and Etymological Knowledge

Morphology is the study of the form of words while etymology focuses on their origins.

Once you know, for instance, that *tri* means **three**, you can deduce that a triangle has three sides and that a tricycle has three wheels.



Etymology explains why a word is spelled in a certain way.

Take **photograph** as an example.

Ph is a Greek spelling of the phoneme /f/.

Photo is the Greek root meaning light.

Graph is the Greek root meaning writing.

Together, a photograph is an image *written* with light onto the paper.

Memorized Words

We build up a mental lexicon, a store of words we know and are committed to our visual memory.

The phonology, morphology, etymology, and orthography of the words helps us to build this bank of memorized words.

