

# Spelling Without Battles

Two simple activities for making spelling practice calmer, more fun, and more effective

## Introduction: Why spelling practice becomes a battle

Many children receive a weekly spelling list and then do very little with it until the morning of the test.

Parents often tell me that spelling practice:

- turns into an argument
- is repeatedly postponed
- feels boring or pointless
- causes anxiety or frustration
- ends in rushed, last-minute writing

In my experience, this rarely means a child *can't* learn to spell. More often, it means the way spelling is being practised isn't working for that child.

As a teacher and tutor, I work with many children who dislike spelling practice. Some have learning gaps, some learn differently (including children with dyslexia), and some have simply lost confidence. Most often, children avoid spelling practice because it feels boring, overwhelming, or because previous methods haven't worked for them. When spelling feels boring or pointless rather than a genuine learning opportunity,

**Spelling Without Battles** shares the activities and approaches I use with children who resist spelling practice. It is designed to help parents make practice feel calmer, more manageable, and more positive. The two games below are taken from that resource.

The full **Spelling Without Battles** resource- with more activities and guidance on how to support your child over time – is available in the shop. You will also be able to find the same activities and advice in the Parent Support Hub. The aim is not perfection. It is to help children practise willingly, reflect on what they know, and build confidence as learners.

## Activity 1: Write with Eyes Shut

### What this activity is good for

This activity works particularly well for children who:

- rush spelling without looking carefully
- struggle with letter order
- feel anxious about getting spellings wrong

It is especially helpful for children who learn differently, including those with dyslexia.

### What you need

- Paper, pen or pencil

### How to do it

- An adult writes the target word clearly.
- The child copies the word underneath. Check together that it is correct.
- Cover both versions and ask the child to write the word again from memory. Check this attempt carefully.
- Finally, the child closes their eyes and writes the word one more time before checking against the previous attempts.

Adding dots to letters i and j, or crossing a t or f adds an extra challenge when eyes are shut, which many children find tricky and amusing.

Children will often choose to repeat this final step several times until they are satisfied with their spelling.

If you repeat the activity during the week, you can ask your child if they need to see the work first, or if they feel confident to write it straight away with their eyes shut.

## Activity 2: Target Spelling

### What this activity is good for

This activity works well for children who:

- need movement as part of learning
- enjoy physical challenges
- find it easier to stay engaged when spelling feels active

It is particularly effective for children who become frustrated by sitting still or repeating written work.

### What you need

- Paper, pen, a target (a box or bucket). A list of spellings.

### How to do it

- The child writes one spelling word on a piece of paper. Depending on their confidence levels, they can either look at the word on the list and then write in, or have you call out the word and write it without having looked at it first.
- Check the spelling together.
- If it is correct, move on.
- If it is not correct, encourage the child to rewrite the whole word carefully.
- Scrunch the paper into a ball.
- Throw it at the target.
- Repeat with the next word.

Children can choose how far away they stand, adjusting the level of challenge themselves.

### Why this works

In my experience, children love this activity and often ask to repeat it. They will also frequently make the throwing task harder without prompting — by standing further away, throwing under one leg, or even over their shoulder.

I often talk to children during this activity about their determination, willingness to keep trying, and fearlessness in having a go, even when they miss the target. These are powerful learning skills that can be used in all areas of learning, not just spelling.

### When to use this activity

This activity works well for children who need to move, when energy levels are high, or when spelling practice feels stuck or frustrating

## **Final thoughts**

Spelling practice does not need to be a daily struggle.

The activities in this resource are designed to help children practise spellings in a way that feels calmer, more positive, and more manageable — while still doing the important work of writing and thinking about words.

What matters most is short, focused, regular practice where the child feels supported and where mistakes are OK.

Progress rarely comes from pressure — it comes from feeling safe enough to try.

## **If you'd like more ideas...**

These are just two examples of activities that make spelling practice more fun. Many children need a range of different approaches over time, and part of the process is working out which methods suit your child best.

If you'd like more ideas like these, along with guidance on how children learn spellings and how to support them over time, please consider joining the Parent Support Hub.