

Word Study and Handwriting Instruction: A “Symbiotic” Relationship

Teachers can use the letter strings that build common orthographic units they are teaching in word study as the content of explicit instruction for efficient and legible letter formation. This integrated instruction of structural elements of the written word (e.g. the <-ing> suffix or the <ea> grapheme) can become internalized as “integrated movement patterns” that simply flow from the hand in a legible script. Besides reinforcing key structures of the written word, children who effectively learn an ergonomically sound script in this way will continue with that script into adulthood.

This and the following page provide examples of integration of the old Chancery script that Melvyn Ramsden uses in his *Real Spelling Manual* and in his 1992 book *“Putting Pen to Paper”*. Ann Whiting and Dorothy Morison who have had enormous success by building instruction on this aspect of Real Spelling kindly shared these examples with WordWorks.

For this brief introduction to “Real Script” I have also included two pages from *Chapter J* of the *Real Spelling Manual* to give a sense of what is to be found in that resource. I encourage you to study these resources and to investigate this linking of handwriting and word study instruction further.

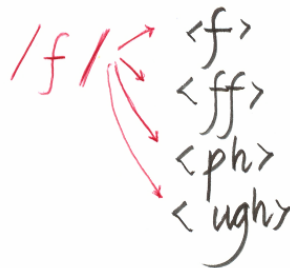
Consonant Suffixes

ly ly ly ly ly ly
 fy fy fy fy fy
 ment ment ment
 some some some
 ness ness ness
 ship ship ship
 less less less
 ledge ledge ledge

Vowel Suffixes

ion ion ion ion ion
 ed ed ed ed ed
 ate ate ate ate ate
 ing ing ing ing ing
 we we we we we
 ice ice ice ice
 ian ian ian ian
 er er er er
 est est est est
 or or or or or
 able able able able
 ible ible ible ible
 ish ish ish ish
 ism ism ism ism
 ous ous ous ous
 ose ose ose ose

Learning and practicing the graphemes for the



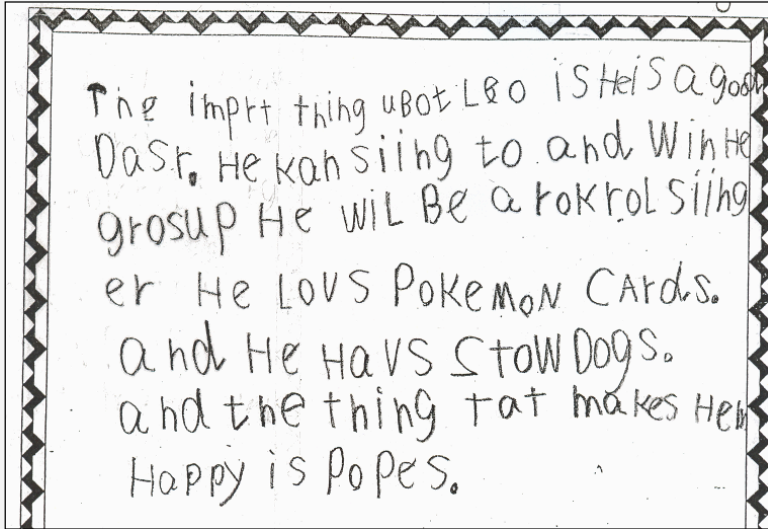
ph ph ph ph ph ph
 photo+graph+er → photographer
 photo+graph+ic → photographic

ugh ugh ugh
 cough+ing
 ugh ugh ugh
 cough cough
 cough+ing → coughing
 cough+ed → coughed

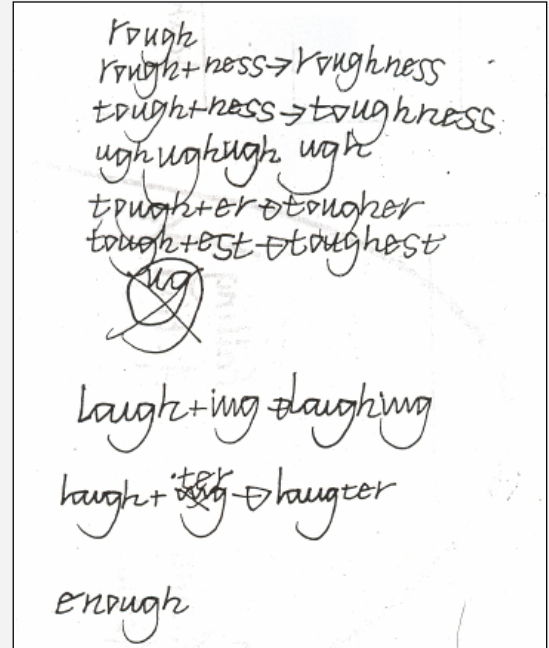
f f f f
 fish fish
 fish+es → fishes
 fish+ing → fishing

Example progress of a student:

Stating point...



6 months later



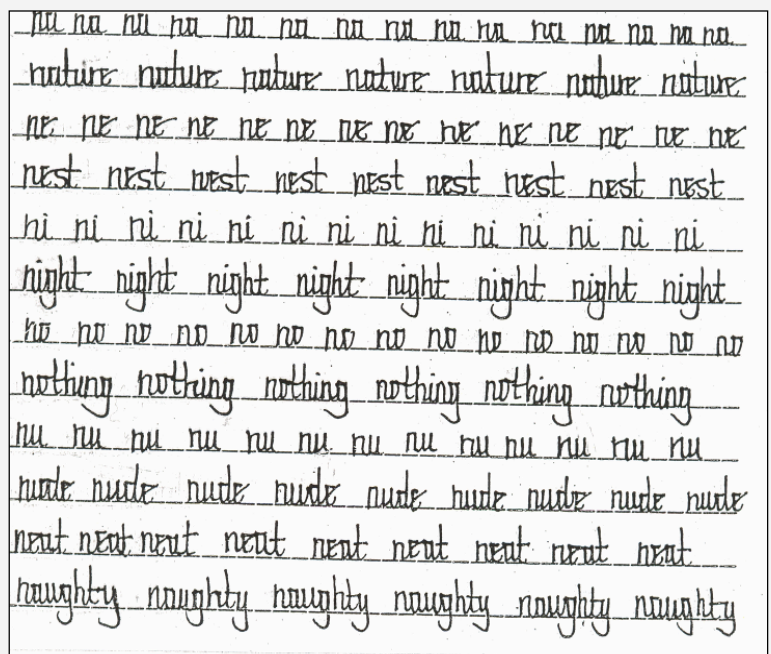
Notice how these samples of this student's practice with script incorporate word sums and common graphemes like <ugh>.

In the sample from a year later, we can see that the student is practicing working with how to flow into a letter after an <n>. Ligatures for <na>, <ne>, <ni>, <no> and <no> are practiced, and then those ligatures are incorporated into words.

The next 2 pages are from Chapter J in the **Real Spelling User's Manual**. This is just a small sample of the kind of support this resource offers teachers.

We also highly recommend Ramsden's **"Putting Pen to Paper"** which is for sale on Amazon.ca.

The following year...



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In the diagram the sign ↓ indicates the starting point and the direction of the pen movement.

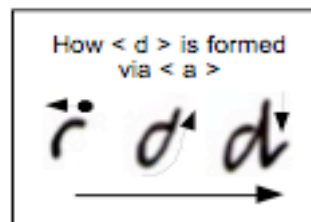
Once your student has established that all ‘lids’ are pushed (or pulled, in the case of lefthanders) then the problem of letter-reversal is usually overcome at a stroke.

Next ask your writer to repeat out loud several times:

“< d > is made out of < a >”

This will, of course, mean that < d >, like < a > will start with a ‘push’ of the pen (a ‘pull’ for lefthanders).

What happens is that the < a > now acquires an ‘ascender’ and the new letter which is formed is < d >.

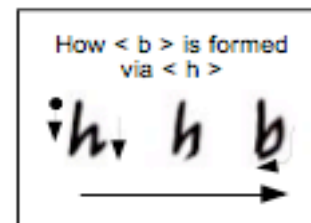


Always talk of the letter < d > as starting off as a letter < a >—each starts by ‘pushing the lid’. In this way it will always be written the correct way round even by students who may otherwise reverse it.

For the next few days ask your student, each time a < d > needs to be written, to say out loud, “< d > is made out of < a >,” and if they are right-handers to start writing it by saying, “Push!” (or “Pull!” if they are lefthanders).

The letters < a > < d > < g > < o > < c > < f > < q > and even the traditional form of < e > all begin with such a ‘lid’. All these letters start in the same way in the same direction.

When the ‘push’ start for < d > is thoroughly established you can also teach the formation of < b >, which is formed from < h >. The letter < b > starts with a long downstroke—it feels absolutely nothing like < d >.




Carry all this through and you will have rescued your student from a frustrating difficulty.

Contrast what you have just done with what follows—how NOT to do it. When I was a young and very inexperienced teacher I took advice on how I could help my young writers to remember which way round to print < b > and < d >. I was having problems because I was guilty of having listened to my trainers who told me to teach early learners to print. *Mea culpa*—I now know better!

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Tell them that they have now discovered one of the great secrets of writing.

 The hand has a sort of memory of its own.

Writers don't have to look at each letter of a part of a word they are writing—you can usually trust your hand to get it right! In the words of one writer, the form is 'grooved' in the writers' tactile memory. It won't be long before your students can make the metaphorical statement of 'doing something with one's eyes shut' a personal reality!

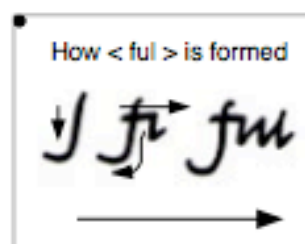
mad	
love	
proper	
nice	
sad	
real	
most	
glad	


You could use a matrix such as this to practise writing the suffix <-ly >.

Tell your students not to worry too much how they write the base word, but when they come to the suffix they should trust their hand and let it 'go on autopilot'.

Students who first encounter the suffix <-ly > as an integrated movement pattern will never write it as <*le >, <*lee >, <*ley > or the like.

Introduce the equally common suffix <-ful > quite quickly after <-ly >. Young word builders will need to use their knowledge of ligaturing from the 'crossbar' of the < f >, completing the morpheme without lifting the pen. Remind them to bounce up high towards the < l > as it is a tall letter.



play	
thank	
use	
cheer	
harm	

As with the <-ly > they can try writing < ful > with their eyes closed to confirm that the hand can be trusted to 'remember' how to write it. They will soon be ready to try another word matrix.

An incidental point worth making at this stage is that the suffix <-ful > is spelled differently from the base word

< full >. It has a different function so it has a different spelling. Sharing this knowledge with students is an opportunity for further confirmation of an important principle of Real Spelling.