

The Porchester Parent/Carer Guide to Spelling

We follow a 5-step approach to teaching spellings at Porchester. Our approach focusses on teaching the syllables and phonemes (sounds) in each word.

Step 1 – say it – We say our spelling words clearly in our and slowly using our ‘spelling voices’. This step support children to hear each part of a word, including those we sometimes skip in normal speech (e.g. when saying ‘Wednesday’, we often don’t hear the ‘nes’ part of the word).

Step 2 – snip it – We clap out the **syllables** in each word. This step supports children to break up longer words and therefore spell them more easily.

Step 3 – sound it and spell it – We then listen for the **phonemes** (sounds) in each syllable and learn which letter or letter groups spell them. This step allows children to focus on one sound at a time whilst spelling.

Step 4 – target it – We then spot the tricky parts in each word (e.g. ‘nes’ is the tricky part of the word Wednesday). This step allows children to focus on irregular spelling patterns and recognise which parts of the word they will need to focus on.

Step 5 – lock it – Finally, we practice spelling the words many times throughout the week using different methods (writing in our books, quizzing on whiteboards, look-cover-write-check, and through the activities provided on the weekly homework sheet). This step allows children to consolidate their learning through repeated practice.



What is a syllable?

A **syllable** is a beat in a word. Every time your mouth opens to make a sound when saying a word, that’s one syllable.

Think of it like claps or chunks in a word.

👉 For example:

- **Cat** has 1 syllable (cat)
- **Tiger** has 2 syllables (ti-ger)
- **Elephant** has 3 syllables (el-e-phant)

A good trick: Have your child put their hand under their chin and say a word slowly. Every time their chin drops, that’s a syllable!

Understanding syllables helps children:

- Sound out words
- Break up longer words to spell them more easily
- Recognise patterns in spelling

What is a phoneme?

A **phoneme** is the **smallest sound** you can hear in a word. It’s like a single sound unit that makes up words when we speak.

👉 For example:

- The word **cat** has 3 phonemes: /c/ /a/ /t/
- The word **ship** also has 3 phonemes: /sh/ /i/ /p/ (Even though it has 4 letters, **sh** is one sound!)

Phonemes are **sounds**, not letters. Some phonemes are made with two letters, like:

- /ch/ in *chop*
- /th/ in *this*
- /ee/ in *feet*

Knowing phonemes helps children:

- Break words into sounds
- Match sounds to letters
- Spell tricky words more confidently