



OPTIONS CENTER EDUCATION TOPIC



Brain Gym® Exercises for Spelling

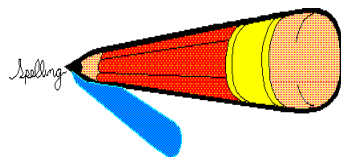
An important part of learning spelling is being able to create and remember visual images. In a very simplistic way, the mind can be used as a "camera" -- 'taking a picture' of something and then 'recalling it' later in the mind.

The Camera Game can be used when the student has spelling words to memorize or is having difficulty with specific words. 1) Begin by writing an entire word on one of the cards. 2) Hold the card in front of the student, keeping it above eye level, which facilitates visual processing. 3) After a few seconds, remove the card, instructing the student to 'take a picture' of the word in their mind. 4) Pause and then say "Print it!". 5) After giving the student sufficient time to write the word down, hold the card up again and have the student check his/her work. 6) Allow them to correct their work and the 'picture' in their mind. 7) Once the student is able to spell the entire word, hold up a second card that has the same word printed on it except one of the consonants or vowels is missing. 8) Instruct the student to fill in the missing letter. 9) Continue to remove one letter of the word at a time until there are no more letters. 10) At the end, when the student has filled in all the missing letters correctly, have the student spell the entire word again and say it aloud correctly.

Another variation of the camera game is the following: 1) With chalkboard or dry erase board with student seated below (must look up to see the board) -- Parent/ Adult writes entire spelling word on the board 2) Student looks at the word and gets mental picture. Parent says "Take a picture!" 3) Parent says "Print it", while student writes the word at the **bottom** of a piece of paper. 4) Student looks up at the board and corrects writing if necessary. 5) Student folds the written word under so it cannot be seen. 6) Student looks at the word on the back, gets another mental image, and closes his/her eyes as Parent erases the first letter of the word. 7) Student looks at the word on the board. 8) Student writes the entire word at the **bottom** of the paper. 9) Student looks at board and corrects writing if necessary. 10) Student folds the written word under so it

cannot be seen. 11) Student looks at the word, gets another mental image, closes his /her eyes as parent erases the last letter of the word. 12) Student looks at the word on the board. 13) Student writes the entire word at the **bottom** of the paper. 14) Student looks at board and corrects writing if necessary. 15) Student folds written word under so it cannot be seen. 16) Student looks at the word, gets another mental image, closes his/her eyes as the parent erases the first letter remaining of the word. The steps are repeated until no letters remain on the board and the student can spell the entire word. When the student becomes more confident, the order of erasure can change. It's generally best to start with erasing the beginning and end letters because our brain remembers the beginning and end of something and the middle last. If the student has any difficulty during the Camera Game, stop and do some Brain Gym® exercises or repatterning.

Source: Milliren, Al. *The Enabled Learner Compendium*. Personal Learning Associates, Normal, IL. 1998.



Three Brain Gym® exercises, The Elephant, The Thinking Cap, and The Owl, can be done specifically for spelling. To do **The Elephant** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 8] 1) bend your knees, point across the room, and put the ear of the arm that is up on the extended arm. 2) Use your ribs to move your whole upper body as you trace a Lazy 8. 3) Look past your pointed finger -- the parent can trace a Lazy 8 on a board or paper on the wall where this would be. The whole body moves as a single unit. 4) Repeat with other arm. The Elephant helps release tension in neck and shoulder muscles. The Elephant also helps with short and long-term memory, thinking ability, integrating vision, listening, and whole-body movement, depth perception, and listening comprehension. It helps specifically with spelling because it enables the student in two ways: allows them to hear separate syllables and words; encoding-blending syllables together to make words. "Drawing" a Lazy 8 with the whole body working as a single unit crosses the midline of the body which integrates the right and left hemispheres of the brain and helps with communication.

The second exercise, **The Thinking Cap** [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 30], is performed by gently unrolling your ears from top to bottom. Looking over a spelling list while doing The Thinking Cap will help with short-term memory, thinking skills, breaking down syllables of words, and enhancing focus of attention. The Thinking Cap "turns on" the ears by increasing auditory recognition, attention, perception, and memory, hearing with both ears together, and relaxes the jaw, tongue, and facial muscles. By affecting the physiology of the body in this way, The Thinking Cap allows the student to focus on language and the meaning of words. Also rhythm, sound, and imagery are simultaneously comprehended.

The Owl [*Brain Gym® Teacher's Edition Revised*, p. 17] is performed alone in the following way: 1) Grasp one shoulder and squeeze the muscles firmly. 2) Turn your head to look back over your squeezed shoulder. 3) Breathe deeply and pull your shoulders back, now look over the other shoulder exhaling with a "hooting" sound, opening the shoulders again. 4) Drop your chin to your chest and breathe deeply (letting your muscles relax). 5) Repeat with hand squeezing the opposite shoulder.



Source: Alternative Health Care, Space Age Interpretations of Age-Old Truths, pg 145

A variation of The Owl can be done with a partner standing behind the seated student. The partner continuously and gently massages the top of the student's shoulders. The following directions are for the student while the partner is massaging his/her shoulders: a) Look forward and then turn head toward the left while breathing

deeply. b) After breathing in, he/she slowly turns toward the right, breathing out deeply and making a long monotone hooting sound. The student can feel a release of tension during the long exhalation. Repeat this procedure with the student starting to look toward the right side. Keep repeating until the desired relaxed state is reached. Then the partner and student can switch roles.

Any kind of tension in the neck and shoulder muscles can cause restriction of blood/oxygen flow to the brain. The Owl releases neck and shoulder muscles. Turning the head while relaxing these muscles helps improve listening comprehension, short and long term memory, and attention span.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

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