

Spelling Games

Here is a range of fun games that you can play, all of which will help with spelling skills. Also included is a list of words that are drawn from the government's guidance notes for Key Stage 1 and 2 spellings. To play WORD CHASE and SPELLING BEE this list is essential. It is not necessarily needed for the other games, but parents might like to encourage their children to use or consult the list for help or inspiration! You will need paper and a pen to keep score in these games.

CROSSWORD: Shuffle all 100 letter cards and deal out 7 cards to each player. Each player places their 7 cards face up on the table. The rest of the pack is put in the middle of the table in a pile and the dealer turns the top card face up. The player to the dealer's left starts. This person needs to make a word that is at least 3 letters long, from the letters on his 7 cards and using the letter that is in the middle of the table. If for example there is a, 'N' in the middle of the table, the player can lay down an 'A', an 'I' and an 'L' to make NAIL. He would then score the sum of the points on these cards, so in this instance 35 points. The player then replaces the three cards he has played with three cards from the top of the middle deck. The next player would then add their word to the word in the middle of the table, using at least one card on the table to link their word. For example, if the first player has played NAIL then the second player could add an 'E' and a 'G' after the 'L' to make LEG, scoring 22 points. If the player can't think of a word, they take an extra card from the middle deck and that is the end of their turn. The game ends when all the cards run out and the person with the highest score wins.

CROSSWORD RACE: The same as the CROSSWORD game above but when you work out a word that you can put down, you can put it down straight away instead of waiting for your next go. This makes the game competitive.

CROSSWORD LAP: The same as the CROSSWORD game but you can put letters on top of other letters, for example, the word placed as SIDE could have an 'H' placed on top of the 'S' to make HIDE.

A player can only lay a letter on top of another if they can make a new, correctly spelt word and as long as it doesn't make other words in the crossword incorrect.

WORD CHASE: Players choose their own 7-letter word from the Word List provided. Players should write down their word for reference. Keep the word secret, as the aim of the game is to collect 7 cards that spell this word. The dealer should deal out 7 cards face down to each player, and then place the pack face down in the middle of the table with one card face up to start a discard pile. Each player keeps their hand hidden and takes it in turn to pick up a card either from the top of the pack or from the discard pile and then throw one card away (into the discard pile). First to spell their own word with the cards in their hand wins.

WORD GRAB: 100 letter tiles are spread face down on the table. One after another, players turn over one tile so all players can see the tile. As soon as any player spots a word that can be made from some or all of the upturned letters, they call out that word, pick up the tiles required to spell the word and arrange them to display the word in front of themselves. If any player can make an anagram of an entire word belonging to any other player, or can make a new word by adding newly over-turned letters to an existing word, they can shout out this new word (at any stage in the game) and claim the necessary letters. The player who has claimed the word then continues by turning over a new tile. This continues until all the tiles have been turned over. For example: A player spots that 4 of the upturned letters in the middle can be used to spell MEAT. They call out the word, pick up the letters and place MEAT in front of them, but another player calls out the word TEAM. That player then claims the tiles and displays the new word in front of themselves. The second player then turns up a new letter in the middle. Play continues with new letters being turned up one after another. An S is revealed and a player shouts STEAM. Taking TEAM from its previous owner and S from the middle, they then display STEAM, but someone else notices that there is an upturned R available and quickly calls out STREAM, then displays that word and turns over a new tile. Please note that each word needs to be 4 or more letters and the basic meaning must change when a letter is added. If 2 players shout out a word simultaneously, neither may use it and the word is void for the rest of the game.

The existence, spelling or meaning of a word may be challenged and if, on reference to a dictionary, the word is found to be incorrect, the letters are returned to the middle face up.

The game ends when there are no more cards left in the middle or if no more words can be made. Each player totals the numbers on the letters they have in front of them at the end of the game. The player with the highest score wins.

GRID LOCK I: Place the letter cards in a 4 by 4 grid. The players then write down as many words as they can using the letters. Each letter can only be used once. The winner is the person with the most words on their list. For more complex games, a 5x5 or 6x6 grid can be used.

GRID LOCK II: Place the letter cards in a 4 by 4 grid. The players then write down as many words as they can using the letters, BUT the letters need to be connecting (i.e. be side by side, above or below, or touching diagonally) to make a word. Each letter can only be used once. The winner is the person with the most words on their list. For more complex games, a 5x5 or 6x6 grid can be used.

SPELLBOUND: Shuffle the cards and place the 4 top cards, face up, next to each other as shown in the example below:

E C R F

Then deal 14 cards to each player. The remaining pack should be left face down in the middle of the table. This is the draw pack.

The object of the game is to make words (of at least 4 letters) by adding your cards to columns of letters already on the table. Players take turns to play a letter card above or below any of the cards already on the table as long as they can think of a word that it might eventually make. So, if there is a C on the table, a player with an A can place it above and call, for example, ACORN, or place it below and call CARD. The letter cards that the players place next may complete a word previously called out by any player, or aim to form a completely new word. For example, the next person has an L, which he puts below the F and calls FLAN. If the next player has an O, he can place it under the L and call FLOWER.

Letter cards may be placed on any column at any point during the game, above or below the letters already on the table, provided that they start or continue a word. If a player does not have a card to play, he draws one from the draw pack, losing the chance to play for that round. Whenever a player completes a word (i.e. when they believe it is not possible to add more letters to make a longer word), they collect and keep the cards that make up that word and takes another go. Claims that a word is complete can be contested if another player believes more letters can be added to that particular word. If in doubt, check the dictionary. A card from the draw pack is put in place of the removed column to start a new word, so that there are always 4 columns to add letter cards to. Please note that proper nouns, plurals of singular words already played, abbreviations and acronyms are not allowed in the game. Every other word is allowed as long as it is in the dictionary. The game ends when a player has placed all their cards on the table, or when none of the players have a card to play and the draw pack is finished. All players add the points of the cards they are left with and count them as negative points. The sum of the points of the cards forming words they have collected count as positive points. The result of adding positive and negative points is the final score for each player. The player with the most points is the winner.

SPELLING SPRINT: All cards should be laid face up on the table. The referee then says “Go”. Players must write down as many 4-or-more letter words as they can using the letters shown on the tiles in 2 minutes. When the referee says “Stop”, players count how many words they have made and the player with the most words wins.

SPELLING BEE: This game needs a minimum of 3 players. One person acts as spelling master and reads out words from the spelling booklet for players/teams to spell. First to spell 10 words correctly wins.