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Foreword

The English writing system is complex. Many sounds can be spelled in more than one way, as when the “short e” sound is spelled as *e* in *get* but as *ea* in *bread*. Although the English spelling system is complex—more complex than that of languages such as Finnish or Italian—it is not totally illogical (Kessler & Treiman, 2001, 2003). For example, the *ea* spelling of “short e” is more common before *d*, as in *bread* and *head*, than before consonants such as *m* and *n*. As another example of the systematic nature of written English, the final “t” sound is spelled differently when it is a past tense marker, as in *rapped*, than when it is not, as in *rapt*. Children who learn these patterns will produce some misspellings, given the nature of English, but their errors will be reasonable and interpretable. How can we help children learn the patterns?

One approach has been to assume that children will learn to spell as a result of learning to read. In this view, direct teaching about spelling is not required. Instruction in translating from spellings to sounds, together with practice in reading, will transfer to spelling. But this is not necessarily so. In typical phonics instruction, which is based on translating from letters to sounds, children are taught for example that *ea* is pronounced as the “long e” sound, as in *clean* and *steam*. Children who have the idea that this letter group makes just this one sound will not then use *ea* to spell “short e” in certain environments, leading to misspellings of words like *bread* and *head*. We cannot assume that instruction and practice in spelling-to-sound translation, via reading and phonics, will teach children all they need to know about sound-to-spelling translation.

Another approach has been to treat learning to spell as a process of rote visual memorization. Children are given lists of words, selected on the basis of their high frequency or wide utility, and are asked to memorize their spellings. In such an approach, children are not encouraged to analyze how the spellings of words are related to the words’ pronunciations and morphological structures. Children get the idea that letter sequences must be learned by rote. Children taught this way do well on common words whose spellings they have learned, but have difficulty knowing how to approach less common words.

Switch on to Spelling offers a different approach. The idea here is that spelling needs to be taught directly. We cannot assume that children who are good readers will necessarily be good spellers. Children need to learn to divide spoken words into sounds and translate from sounds to spellings. They need to learn that each sound they hear is not always associated with a single letter or letter group. Many sounds have more than one possible spelling, and it is important to be alert to these variations. Students also need to learn that they can often determine which spelling of a sound is most likely to be correct by considering the position of the sound in the word, the nature of the surrounding sounds, and other factors. The body of skills and information that is required for spelling is large, and educators cannot assume that children will master all of it on their own. They need to be taught explicitly. *Switch on to Spelling* offers techniques and materials for helping children do this, and it should benefit many children.

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Introduction

Before I began working in the literacy field, I held a number of false beliefs about literacy and about how children develop literacy skills. I assumed that most children went to school and learned to read relatively easily and that those who didn't were lacking something — intelligence, experience with books, support from parents and so on. I have since discovered that many children have reading difficulties despite lacking none of these things. I also assumed that if children learned to read well they would also be able to spell just as well — that spelling was a by-product of reading. When my own children went to school I discovered to my amazement that this was not necessarily the case. Why could one of my children read and spell anything once he had seen it in print, while the others read words accurately but wrote them the way they sounded? This phenomenon of the good reader/poor speller is well documented in literacy research and it sparked my interest in working in the field of spelling development.

For the past 12 years I have been working in New Zealand classrooms with students acquiring literacy skills. I have worked with students aged from five to 15. Some were just starting school and only beginning to work with written English; others had been at school for several years but were still struggling to read and spell. Despite the fact that New Zealand classrooms provide rich oral and written language experiences, a considerable number of students still fail to learn to read and spell adequately for the needs of today's world. This is a serious issue, not only in New Zealand but also in other English-speaking countries, which face the same problem. As Wren (2002) says, 'While literacy rates really have not changed substantially in recent history, the demand and need for literacy has increased markedly. Literacy is essentially a prerequisite for success now, and in the future, the ability to read will be an increasingly indispensable skill' (pp. 4–5). Our economies will depend more and more on the literacy skills of the people working to support them.

Literacy is about more than reading, however. As Waters, Bruck and Malus-Abramowitz (1988) point out, 'To become literate, the child must become proficient not only in reading but also in spelling' (p. 400). Accurate spelling is necessary to communicate ideas accurately in writing. While some students acquire reading and spelling skills with ease and others acquire neither with ease, there is also a group which has spelling-only difficulties. Why is this? Do they have spelling problems for the same reasons as the poor readers/poor spellers? It was questions like these that led me to try to find out how children learn to read and spell, which has in turn influenced the work I have done with students struggling to acquire literacy skills and subsequently has led to the development of this resource.

Working with 11 to 15-year-old students with reading and spelling difficulties prompted me to examine the nature of their problems. A factor that was common to all of them was that they could not read words they did not instantly recognise and they could not spell words they did not have stored in visual memory. These older students had quite inadequate expectations and inaccurate knowledge about the relationships between sounds and letters and they did not know how to use word-level information to read and spell unfamiliar words. The belief that one

letter should represent one sound was firmly entrenched and made obvious when they tried to decode words, one letter at a time, and write each sound with one letter when they were spelling words. They had over-learned the idea that letters 'make' sounds; that **a** says 'a', **c** says 'k', and so on. Not only does this not work for many words in written English (like *circle*, *cycle*, *cent* where there is no 'k' sound at the beginning of the word and *again*, *water*, *watch*, *cake*, *train*, *great* where the letter **a** is not writing the short 'a' sound and where more than one letter writes a single sound) but it creates a barrier to understanding the way sounds and letters *really* work together. These students lacked understanding of how written English works, which led me to wonder whether the way we teach the alphabetic nature of written English is part of the problem.

There are different views about the best methods for teaching students to master the complexities of written English, and there is considerable debate about the instructional approaches used to teach children to read. Whatever the view on the teaching of reading, there is no doubt that students need a detailed understanding of how written English works if they are to become accurate spellers. Written English is a cipher in which alphabet letters and letter patterns represent individual sounds in words. Students cannot learn to read and spell in an alphabetic writing system until they discover this alphabetic principle — that the role of the letters of the alphabet is to write down individual sounds in words. They certainly cannot learn to understand the complex orthographic system of English if they believe that one letter makes one sound and that the links between sounds and letters are straightforward and easy to understand.

Research studies by Baron and Strawson (1976) and Treiman (1984) suggest that readers and spellers employ different processing styles to read and spell words. Their description of 'Chinese' (those who develop their knowledge of print by remembering what words look like) and 'Phoenician' processors (those who build up their knowledge of words through sound-spelling pattern links) has strongly influenced my understanding of the reasons for students' spelling problems. The instructional approach I have used in this book is aimed at providing both 'Chinese' and 'Phoenician' processors with instruction that will make sense, whatever their processing style. I believe we have failed many 'Phoenician' spellers because we have not taught to their processing strengths. 'Phoenician' processors seem to respond well to instruction based on the alphabetic principle. I have found that beginning students and older students with reading and spelling difficulties find it easier to understand how written English works when they work from the sound *of* words, to the sounds *in* words, to the letters and spelling patterns that write these sounds, to understanding how morphemes and spelling rules and conventions influence both the spellings and meanings of words. This is, of course, the way an alphabetic language works.

There seems to be an expectation that students will be able to work out the alphabetic principle from their knowledge of what words look like and this belief underpins many instructional approaches. Memorising lists of words each week is a widespread practice for the teaching of spelling (Allal, 1997; Brann and Hattie, 1995; Fresch, 2003). This approach is based on the belief that once students have developed knowledge of what words look like, they will be able to discover

the relationships between spelling patterns, sounds and meanings and they will transfer this knowledge to reading and spelling unfamiliar words.

Developing a large store of words that can be retrieved from memory is certainly important for automatic and efficient spelling. However, knowledge of what words *look like* does not always help students read and spell unfamiliar words. Being able to read and spell the word *said* will not help a student to read *maid*, or to spell *bed* correctly. Many students who readily remember what words look like do seem to be able to work out the relationships between sounds and letters through access to the visual images of words, but not everyone is able to work this way. For many, knowing what words look like is insufficient for understanding how they work. What happens to students who do not easily develop visual representations of whole words? What happens to students who, despite having a store of the images of whole words, still fail to work out how parts of these words relate to sounds and meaning? These students will struggle to read and spell unfamiliar words because they cannot work out the alphabetic principle or they do not understand the orthographic and morphological frameworks of written English.

Knowledge of the alphabetic principle is a foundation for reading and writing English. Instead of teaching students about alphabet letters and assigning a sound to each one, it is much more logical to teach this alphabetic principle — to teach the sounds of the language and show students how these sounds *can look* when they are written down. Teaching from sounds to letters rather than letters to sounds makes it possible to teach these relationships logically and avoids the one-sound/one-letter trap. I have worked in many classrooms using this approach and it has consistently raised students' literacy skills at all year levels. What has been most rewarding is that the students it has made the most difference to are those with the most difficulties. Explicitly teaching the sounds of English and slowly developing knowledge of how these sounds are written in words has demystified the English language for those who are most puzzled by it.

Although knowledge of the relationships between sounds and letters is critical to the development of literacy, it 'is not the only prerequisite to literacy. Children also need to know the contexts in which various mappings occur' (Treiman, Tincoff, Rodriguez, Mouzaki and Francis, 1998, p. 1524). Students need to learn that there are often reasons why a particular spelling pattern is used in a word. They could learn, for example, to choose an *oy* spelling pattern to spell the 'oy' sound when it comes at the end of a syllable and to use the *oi* pattern elsewhere in a word. This is just one of many conventions that would help students choose the correct spelling patterns in words, if they knew about them. In order to use these spelling conventions, however, the students must first of all be able to hear syllables and sounds in words and must have knowledge of the possible spelling patterns they *could* choose from. Students must develop good phonological awareness skills in order to use their emerging sound-letter knowledge in their spelling and reading attempts. Students' experiences with print will then begin to highlight some of the orthographic and morphological structures of written English and some of the rules and conventions that influence how sounds and words are written. This is *what* students need to learn. *How* it is taught is the key to success.

Purpose of this book

Beginning spellers and the majority of struggling older spellers do not have access to a large store of sight-words they can recall from visual memory, but most of them can think of words they know orally and they can learn to break these words into sounds and then learn to write down each sound in the word. They then need to learn when to use particular spelling patterns. This is the basis of the approach used in *Switch on to Spelling*. Students learn to break a word into sounds and then they build their knowledge about how these sounds could be written in words. They then learn how morphemes can affect spelling pattern choices and how knowledge of rules and conventions will help them choose the correct spelling pattern for the word. The book is separated into three stages so that phonology, orthography, morphology and rules and conventions are taught in a scaffolded and sequential manner. The assessments for each stage will allow you to select the appropriate level for your students, which means you can match instruction to meet learning needs. It is possible to work across all stages at once with a particular student or group of students, depending on their needs.

The instructional approach in this book is based on three principles:

1. Teaching students to understand the nature of the alphabetic cipher of written English.
2. Explicit teaching of the knowledge and skills students require in order to read and write unfamiliar words in English.
3. Teaching students to apply their knowledge and skills to writing and reading situations.

This book offers teachers a model for teaching the process of how written English works. It supports the learning needs of all students, whatever their processing styles, because it is based on teaching the alphabetic principle — the foundation of how written English works. Many teachers realise that simply giving students lists of words to learn is insufficient for developing efficient and accurate spelling skills. The results of a national survey of current spelling instruction in the United States undertaken by Mary Jo Fresch (2003) suggests that teachers ‘... are aware of more recent research on developmentally appropriate practice but do not necessarily implement those ideas’ (p. 819). Is this, as Templeton and Morris (1999) suggest, because teachers do not know enough themselves? ‘... many teachers express concern that they do not have a strong foundation either in how to teach spelling or in the nature of the spelling system ... This knowledge base may be as tenuous for the experienced teacher as it is for the novice’ (p. 103).

This book will help you teach students the knowledge and strategies they need in order to discover the logic and structure that exists in written English, whatever your own level of knowledge.

Organisation of this book

Chapter 1 sets out the foundation of the instructional programme, providing a detailed description of the principles that underpin it with reference to current research on the teaching of spelling.

Chapter 2 discusses the spelling curriculum and the importance of assessment in determining students' instructional level. This chapter also offers suggestions for incorporating spelling into your daily classroom schedule and with other classroom activities.

Chapters 3–5 focus on the three stages of instruction. Chapter 3 covers Stage 1, which focuses on teaching all the sounds of English and on developing the phonemic awareness skills that will allow students to work with these sounds in words. Students are taught to identify each sound, to isolate it in a word and to manipulate sounds to make new words. They are also taught how to write each sound using a simple spelling pattern. Stage 1 also introduces students to some simple morphemes so that even beginning students realise that not only are words made up of sounds that can be written down using letters and letter patterns, but they discover that sometimes spelling patterns are chosen because they have a particular meaning (for example, the **ed** suffix indicates past tense). Students are also taught early proofreading skills and strategies for learning sight-words.

Chapter 4 covers Stage 2, which continues to teach and practise phonemic awareness skills but has a strong focus on developing a wider knowledge of the orthographic structure of written English. The sounds that can be written with many different spelling patterns are the focus of the teaching of orthography in Stage 2 and students learn to write the same sound in a variety of ways. Students also learn some simple rules and conventions that influence correct spelling and they expand their knowledge of the morphemes they worked with in Stage 1. They also continue to develop their proofreading skills and their store of sight-words.

Chapter 5 covers Stage 3, which focuses on expanding students' knowledge of the orthographic structure of written English. Students work with all the most common spelling patterns for the sounds of English. They also learn the conventions for when to use particular spelling patterns, where such conventions exist. They learn to use the most common rules that influence the spelling of many words in English and continue to develop their knowledge of simple morphemes — what they mean and how to spell them. Proofreading strategies are expanded along with a continued focus on extending the store of words that can be spelled from memory.

Appendix A offers practical suggestions for decoding unfamiliar words, using word-level information.

Appendix B offers practical suggestions for applying knowledge of sound-letter relationships to spelling unfamiliar words.

Appendix C provides a range of assessment tasks that can be used to determine students' needs, to inform instruction and to monitor students' progress and the success of your instructional programme.

Appendix D provides suggestions for developing and expanding student's phonemic awareness skills. These are suitable for use across all age groups.

Appendix E contains details of resources mentioned throughout the book.

Appendix F contains masters for the following items:

- vowel picture cards
- long vowel spelling pattern cards
- signpost letters
- the key for the sound-spelling charts (activity sheets 2.1–2.8)
- proofreading cards described in the proofreading section of Stage 3.

Good spellers understand *how written English works*. For some, this knowledge appears to come from exposure to words but for others, the structure and logic behind written English remains a mystery. For these people, there is a lot more to learning to spell than simply being exposed to text and learning lists of spelling words each week. They need explicit instruction that explains how sounds and letters work together and they need knowledge and understanding of the rules, conventions and morphemes that influence spelling choices in words. This will not only help them to spell unfamiliar words but will also assist their early reading development. If students are taught *how written English works*, they will be able to read and write both familiar and unfamiliar words and meet the first challenge along the path to literacy.



Throughout this book, when you see a letter or letter pattern with speech marks around it (short 'a', 'sh', 'ow', 't' etc.), it means you should pronounce the sound, not say the name of the letter(s). If the letter is in bold it means you should say the name of the letter.

For example:

"Apple contains a short 'a' sound."

"These words all contain short or long a sounds – apron, apple, act, angel."

"Can you find a p in hop?"

"Can you hear the 'p' sound in happy?"

7. The 'ow' sound

Purpose and goals

Students will learn:

- to identify the 'ow' sound in words
- to be able to write the 'ow' sound one way
- that the 'ow' sound can be written **ow** or **ou**
- to spell high-frequency words containing the 'ow' sound from memory.

Materials

Whiteboard or chalkboard

Activity sheet 1.32

Cardboard for making word cards

Procedure

You could introduce the 'ow' sound and its spelling patterns this way.

Make up two cards — one for the **ow** pattern and one for the **ou** pattern, plus flashcards the following words. A mnemonic that helps students remember the sound associated with the patterns is to draw a drawing pin under the patterns and ask students what they would say if they stood on a drawing pin — ow!

\ / ou ⊕	\ / ow ⊕
-------------------------	-------------------------

about	allowed	around	down	found	house
how	now	out	town	loud	cow
clown	cloud	mouse	frown	brown	drown
proud	mound	shower	crown	shout	

Colour-code the 'ow' patterns and draw a drawing pin under each one. For example:

\ / about ⊕	\ / down ⊕
---------------------	--------------------

Today we are going to read some words that all have an 'ow' sound in them, the sort of sound you might make if you stood on a drawing pin. Ow!

Write the ow pattern on the board with a drawing pin underneath it.

We can write the 'ow' sound another way as well, like this

ou

Draw a drawing pin underneath this pattern as well.

I'm going to give you each a card that has an 'ow' word on it.

Hand out the cards, one to each student, and tell them what their word says. Put each one into a sentence.

Each student says their word, then holds the card facing away from them.

Now I want you all to stand up and show your cards to each other. I want you tell other people what your word says.

Students stand up and walk around the room, and tell others what their word says.

Now I want everyone to stop and have a careful look at their words. Everyone who has a word where the 'ow' sound is written like this [hold up an **ow** pattern card] needs to come and stand together over here. Everyone who has a word where the 'ow' sound is written like this [hold up an **ou** pattern card] needs to come and stand together over here [away from the first group].

So now we've found two ways of writing the 'ow' sound.

Let's all read the **o-w** 'ow' words together.

Everyone reads the cards the **ow** students are holding.

Now let's all read the **o-u** 'ow' words together.

Collect the cards, then ask the students to sit back down.

Who can remember the word they had on their card?

As students tell you the words, write them up on the whiteboard.

Who could be a word detective and come up and circle the letters that write the 'ow' sound in their word?

Read each word and one student at a time circles the 'ow' spelling pattern in each one.

Practice

Use activity sheet 1.32 to search for the 'ow' sound and the two patterns for writing it.

Reading and writing extensions

The focus for working with this sound is to help students find words in their reading and writing experiences that contain the 'ow' sound. They then must learn to recognise the spelling patterns that write this sound. Reading text offers many possibilities for this sort of sound-to-letter work. When students are writing, they may use the incorrect spelling pattern in their spelling attempts. Congratulate them for writing the sound in the word and tell them we use the other spelling pattern for 'ow' in this word. See if they can remember what it is and if they can't, just write in the correct 'ow' spelling.

Sight-word development

Display these words for students to access during writing time.

out	shout	about
how	now	down
town	house	around
found	allowed	ground

king	length	long	rang	ring	wrong
sank	single	sink	skiing	swung	tank
thank	thing	think	triangle	trunk	young

4. The 'ow' sound

Purpose and goals

Students will learn to:

- identify and isolate the 'ow' sound in words
- write this sound in unknown words using one or other of its common spelling patterns — **ow** or **ou**
- develop sight-word recall for high-frequency words that contain this sound and be able to write these words using the correct spelling pattern.

Materials

Whiteboard or chalkboard

Activity sheet 2.38

Procedure

You could remind students of what they already know about this sound in the following way.

Call out the words and choose students to help you spell them on the board. Write them in two separate lists according to whether they have an **ow** or an **ou** spelling pattern.

now	about
cow	our
how	round
down	house
town	out

All these words have one sound that is the same. Can anyone tell me what that sound is? Yes, it's the 'ow' sound.

Look at the words in the first list. How have we written the 'ow' sound in those words?

If necessary, write the words in Elkonin sound boxes to illustrate the 'ow' sound and spelling patterns.

We've used the **ow** spelling pattern to write the 'ow' sound in these words.

Now look at the words in the second list. How have we written the 'ow' sound in those words?

That's right, we have used the **ou** spelling pattern to write the 'ow' sound in those words.

Can anyone think of some more words that have an 'ow' sound in them?

Write the words on the board as the students give them to you, in the correct list.

A student who is thinking of the **ow** spelling pattern might give you words such as *show*, *know*, *grow*, and so on. If this happens you need to explain what they have done.

I can see that [Jimmy] is thinking of the **ow** spelling pattern and he has thought of a word that has this pattern. Listen to this word — *show*.

Write the word on the board and circle the **ow** pattern.

sh (ow)

Can you hear that the **ow** pattern is writing a long 'o' sound in *show*?

[Jimmy's] word has taught us something new. We've found out that the **ow** pattern writes two sounds. What are they?

Yes, the 'ow' sound in *now* and the long 'o' sound in *know*.

We're just thinking of words that have the 'ow' sound in them today.

Who could be a word detective and come up and circle the spelling patterns that are writing the 'ow' sound in these words?

Well done. We've found lots of words that use the **ow** and **ou** spelling patterns to write the 'ow' sound.

Practice and reading and writing extensions

You could use activity sheet 2.38 to focus students on using either the **ow** or **ou** spelling patterns for writing words with an 'ow' sound in them. If this exercise is too easy for some students you could ask them to read a page of text from a book and search for words that contain the 'ow' sound and then to write the words in two lists depending on whether the 'ow' sound is written with an **ow** or **ou**.

You can use dictation to encourage students to think about the spelling of the 'ow' sound. If the following sentences are too easy, use the sentences from activity sheet 2.30 for dictation. Some students may be ready to learn when to use these different spelling patterns in words. Stage 3, Topic 7 provides teaching notes for this convention.

Dictation sentences

Dictate these sentences to the students and ask them to underline all the words that have an 'ow' sound in them. Write the correct sentences on the board for them to check afterwards. Students then help you circle the spelling patterns for the 'ow' sound.

Wow, it's a brown cow!

I am going for a ride around the town.

It takes one hour to drive to our house from here.

Sight-word development

about	round	allowed	around	hour	our
proud	crowd	brown	cloud	count	doubt
frown	fountain	mountain	however	loud	ourselves
power	pounce	pound	sour	tower	wound

model barrel camel
panel travel

Students could find the words that can be used in different ways and use them in sentences.

I will *label* my clothes before school starts.

The apple has a sticky *label* on it to show the country of origin.

Words where the **le** pattern is part of the **ible** and **able** suffixes are usually adjectives and are made by adding these suffixes to root words (*horrible, terrible, comfortable, acceptable*).

Sight-word development

Use any high-interest words from the previous lists. Group them according to their spelling pattern for the 'l' sound and their function in words — adjective, noun or verb.

8. The 'ow' sound

Introduction

This sound has been covered in both Stage 1 and Stage 2. If students are beginning at Stage 3 and have not worked through the earlier lessons, you may need to refer to Stage 1, Topic 5, and Stage 2, Topic 6. There are also a variety of practice activities to accompany these earlier lessons.

Purpose and goals

Students will learn:

- to review the two spelling patterns for the 'ow' sound
- which spelling pattern to use when the 'ow' sound is in different positions in words
- to expand their vocabulary knowledge and sight-word recall for words that contain the 'ow' sound.

Materials

Whiteboard or chalkboard
Activity sheets 3.46 and 3.47

Procedure

You can review students' prior knowledge about the 'ow' sound and its two common spelling patterns in the following way.

Today we are going to be working with the 'ow' sound.

There are two common spelling patterns for writing the 'ow' sound. Who can remember what they are?

If students cannot remember them, you could brainstorm words that have an 'ow' sound in them and write them on the board in two lists according to their spelling patterns.

Write the two common patterns on the board.

ow ou

We are going to find out when to use these two spelling patterns in words.

I am going to put some words on the board and I want you to break them into syllables.

coward	mountain	power
found	now	council
cow/ard	moun/tain	pow/er
found/	now/	coun/cil

What pattern have we used to write the 'ow' sound when it is at the end of a syllable?

That's right, the **ow** spelling pattern.

If you hear the 'ow' sound at the *end of a word* or at the *end of a syllable*, you should use the **ow** spelling pattern to write it.

Can you think of more words that have the 'ow' sound at the end of a word or the end of a syllable?

If students have difficulty thinking of them, give them the first word in each of these word lists.

cow	cow/ard	cow/boy	cow/er	cow/er/ing
how	how/ever	how/dy		
now	now/a/days			
bow	bow/er	bow/ing		
pow/er	pow/er/ful	pow/er/less		
row	row/dy	row/ing		
tow/er	tow/er/ing	tow/ered		
vow	vow/ing			

You are looking for words that have an 'ow' sound at the end of a syllable or root word, for example:

cow — cow/ard, cow/boy, cow/girl, cow/er, cow/er/ing,

not count/, count/ing, where the 'ow' is in the middle of a syllable.

Make sure students don't give you words with an **ow** spelling pattern that is writing the long 'o' sound — *yellow*, *window*, *low*, and so on. If they do, just tell them:

It has the **ow spelling pattern but it's writing a different sound! You've found the **ow** spelling pattern writing the long 'o' sound.**

If any students ask why words like *town*, *frown*, *growl* have the **ow** pattern when it is not at the end of a syllable, put these words in a separate list on the board and say you will explain that soon.

Can you see that the 'ow' sound is usually spelled with the **ow** pattern when it is on the end of a syllable or the end of a whole word?

When the 'ow' sound is inside a syllable it is usually written with the **ou** pattern. However, there are two groups of words that use the **ow** pattern to write the 'ow' sound inside a syllable. Let's find them.

Help me spell these words.

Write them on the board.

ground	loud	house
mouth	pouch	mount
pounce	town	frown
growl		

Highlight or rewrite the 'ow' sound and following consonants (the rime).

<u>ground</u>	<u>loud</u>	<u>house</u>	<u>mouth</u>	<u>pouch</u>
<u>mount</u>	<u>pounce</u>	<u>town</u>	<u>frown</u>	<u>growl</u>

Now I want you to work in pairs to see how many words you can think of that contain the *sound patterns* I have highlighted — 'ound', 'oud', and so on. For example:

oun — mount, count, counter, mountain, fountain

ounce — pounce, bounce, council, counsellor

Try putting different letters before each sound pattern (**b**, **k**, **sh**, **bl**, **fl**, and so on).

Students share the words they have brainstormed. Check that the words they suggest do actually contain the rimes — **outh** works for *mouth* and *south* but not for *youth*; **own** works for *down* and *crown* but not for *flown* and *own*.

Which two sound patterns (rimes) have you found that often use an **ow** spelling pattern to write the 'ow' sound *inside* a syllable?

Yes — the '**own**' and '**owl**' words. Most other words use the **ou** spelling pattern when the 'ow' sound is *inside* a syllable.

Note that the word *crowd* is an exception to this pattern and there may be others. Students must just learn it as a one-off word that does not follow the usual convention.

Help me fill in this cloze sentence with what we have learned about writing the 'ow' sound.

When the 'ow' sound is at the end of a syllable or the end of a word, we use the _____ spelling pattern.

When the 'ow' sound is inside a syllable, we usually use the _____ spelling pattern.

The **ow** spelling pattern can be used inside a syllable for words that end in _____ and _____ rimes.

When the 'ow' sound is at the end of a syllable or the end of a word, we use the **ow** spelling pattern.

When the 'ow' sound is inside a syllable, we usually use the **ou** spelling pattern.

The **ow** spelling pattern can be used inside a syllable for words that end in 'own' and 'owl' rimes.

Practice

Students who need more practice working with this sound could use some of the activities from the earlier stages. They could also work with Elkonin boxes to help highlight these patterns.

For example: Call out these words and students tell you how many sounds in each one. Draw Elkonin sound boxes for each word. Students then write the spelling patterns for each sound in the sound boxes.

drown	d	r	ow	n		
thousand	th	ou	s	a	n	d
mouse	m	ou	se			
crowd	c	r	ow	d		
pound	p	ou	n	d		
rowdy	r	ow	d	y		

More words for Elkonin boxes

counter	c	ou	n	t	er	
loud	l	ou	d			
growl	g	r	ow	l		
fountain	f	ou	n	t	ai	n
mountain	m	ou	n	t	ai	n
pounce	p	ou	n	ce		
tower	t	ow	er			
frown	f	r	ow	n		
sprout	s	p	r	ou	t	

Dictation

A mouse was found drowned in a flower pot after a heavy shower of rain.

I've lost count of how many times I have found your towel on the ground!

The dog gave a loud growl when it saw the cat come round the corner.

The cat pounced on the mouse as it ran down the curtain in the lounge.

Students underline all the words containing an 'ow' sound. They then circle the 'ow' spelling pattern in each word.

Use activity sheets 3.46 and 3.47 to practise working with this sound and its spelling patterns and applying strategies for deciding which pattern to use.

The ow spelling pattern — one spelling pattern, two sounds

Introduction

The **ow** pattern can be used to write more than one sound. Many students will not need extra practice to work with this spelling pattern and the two sounds it commonly represents. Some students, however, may benefit from the following lesson.

Purpose and goals

Students will discover that:

- the **ow** spelling pattern commonly writes two different sounds — 'ow' and the long 'o'
- the **ow** spelling pattern is commonly at the end of words or syllables, no matter which sound it is representing.

Procedure

Put these words into Elkonin boxes and circle the **ow** spelling patterns.

shower	sh	ow	er			
yellow	y	e	ll	ow		
elbow	e	l	b	ow		
flower	f	l	ow	er		
throw	th	r	ow			
tomorrow	t	o	m	o	rr	ow

What are the two different sounds that the **ow** spelling pattern is writing?

Yes, it writes a long 'o' sound in *yellow, elbow, throw, tomorrow* and an 'ow' sound in *shower and flower*.

Dictation for the sounds of the ow spelling pattern

When the wind *blows*, the petals from the *yellow flowers* float *around* on the *mountain*. They look like a *cloud* from *below*.

1. Underline all the words that have an **ow** spelling pattern — *blows*, *yellow*, *flowers*, *below*.
2. Write down the words that contain the 'ow' sound — *mountain*, *flowers*, *around*, *cloud* — and highlight the 'ow' spelling patterns (**ow** and **ou**).
3. Write down the words that contain the long 'o' sound — *blows*, *yellow*, *below*.

Reading and writing extensions

The spelling patterns for the 'ow' sound are easy to remember. Students may need help to apply the strategy of deciding where in the syllable the sound occurs to choose the appropriate pattern. They will also have to remember that words that end with 'own' or 'owl' will usually use the **ow** pattern. Students should search text when they are reading for 'ow' words and explain why the spelling patterns have been used. They could use this sound as a proofreading target and check their writing to ensure they have followed the conventions for spelling the sound correctly.

Sight-word development

coward	vow	sour	snout	spout
shouted	shower	scour	scouted	powder
pound	pounce	powerful	ouch	ounce
loudly	lout	hound	lounge	mountainous
fountain	flounder	founder	drown	doubt
crouch	couch	council	counter	bounty
boundary	bower	blouse	around	aloud
allowed				

9. The 'oy' sound

Introduction

If students have already worked through Stages 1 and 2, they should know when to use the two different 'oy' patterns. You could use these words as a quick spelling test to decide how secure the knowledge is across your class.

voice	toy	hoist	joyful	enjoy	appoint
boys	boil	coin	choice	join	loyal
spoil	moist	enjoying	annoying	poison	ointment
enjoyment	exploit	employer	oil	voyage	

If many students do not spell the 'oy' sound correctly in these words, teach this lesson to the whole class. If there are only a few students who make errors, teach them in a small group.

Appendix A

Strategies for decoding unfamiliar words

1. Highlight or ask students to identify one-sound/one-letter patterns (*c-a-t*).
2. Highlight or ask students to identify digraphs (*sh-o-p*).
3. Highlight or ask students to identify letter strings (*l-igh-t*).
4. Highlight or ask students to identify spelling patterns that represent sounds or morphemes (*play, train, jump-ed, peach-es*)

1. Highlight one-sound/one-letter patterns

Example 1: Words where each letter represents one sound

The student is trying to read *I sat down on the big stump*.

They can read *I sat down on the big* but cannot read *stump*.

You could say,

This is a word you haven't seen before. Every letter in this word is writing just one sound. See if you can say the sounds you think each letter might be writing in this word.

Help the student sound through the word, one letter at a time, then blend the sounds together.

s-t-u-m-p stump

Example 2: Words where each letter represents one sound but with a less common pronunciation for some letters

The student is trying to read *I have ten cents*.

They can read *I have ten* and they attempt to read *cents* by beginning with a 'k' sound.

You could say,

I'm going to tell you something about the letter *c* in this word.

You are used to it writing a 'k' sound, but in this word it is writing a 's' sound.

What do you think this word would sound like if you gave the letter *c* a 's' sound?

Help the student sound through the word, one letter at a time, then blend the sounds together.

's'-e-'n'-t-'s' cents

That's right! Now you have learned something about the letter *c*. In some words, it can sound like a 's'.

If you have already taught the soft *c* patterns, you could highlight the *ce* pattern when the student stops at this word.

Look at the first two letters in this word. Can you remember learning about the soft *c* sound? How will you know if the letter *c* is going to write a 's' or a 'k' sound?

That's right, if the letter *c* is followed by an *e*, an *i* or a *y* it will usually be writing a 's' sound. This word has a *ce* pattern so the *c* should sound like . . . ? Yes, a 's'.

Sound out this word now, using the 's' sound for the letter c.

Help the child sound through the word, one letter at a time, then blend the sounds together.

's' 'e' 'n' 't' 's' cents

2. Highlight digraphs

The child is trying to read *The mouse hid in my shoe.*

The child cannot read *mouse* or *shoe*.

You could say,

This is an interesting word to read because sometimes two letters work together to write just one sound.

The letter **m** writes the first sound. What do you think that will sound like?

Yes, a 'm' sound.

The next sound is written by the letters **o** and **u** and they are writing an 'ow' sound: *m-ow*.

The last sound is written by the last two letters **s** and **e** and they write a 's' sound: *m-ow-s*.

So, the word is . . . Yes, *mouse*.

What can you read in this sentence now?

The mouse hid in my . . .

The last word has got only two sounds in it and they are both written by two letters working together. Can you remember the sound that **sh** usually writes?

No? Well, I'll tell you — a 'sh' sound.

The next sound in this word is written by the last two letters, **o** and **e**, and they write an 'oo' sound: *'sh'-'oo'*.

So the word is? *Shoe*.

Read the whole sentence to me now.

The mouse hid in my shoe.

3. Highlight letter strings

The child is trying to read *The sun was very bright.*

The child cannot read *bright*.

You could say,

Can you see the letters **igh** in the middle of this word?

Even though there are three letters, together they write only one sound — the long 'i' sound.

See if you can sound out this word now.

Each of the other letters just writes one sound.

b-r-i [long i]-t bright. That's right.

Read me the sentence again.

The sun was very bright.

4. Identify spelling patterns

Example 1: Words that contain patterns that have many different pronunciations

The child is trying to read *My friend gave me a pie. I ate it on the field.*

The child may be able to read the first sentence but gets stuck at *field*.

You could say,

I want you to look at the words *friend* and *pie*.

Can you see a spelling pattern that is the same in both these?

Yes, they both have an *ie* pattern.

What sound was this pattern writing in *friend*?

f-r-ie-n-d

Yes, a short 'e' sound.

What sound was this pattern writing in *pie*?

Yes, a long 'i'.

I'm going to tell you something else about this pattern. It also writes the long 'e' sound. What would the word that starts with *f* sound like if you pronounced the *ie* pattern as a long 'e'?

f-e [long e]-l-d.

Yes, *field*.

You have learned to read this pattern in three different ways now.

friend — short 'e'

pie — long 'i'

field — long 'e'.

Let's keep reading.

Example 2: Words containing morphological cues

The student has read *The boy jumped over the dog* as *The boy jump over the dog*.

Have a look at the end of this word *jumped*. What are the last two letters?

Yes, *ed*.

Can you remember what those letters usually mean when we add them to the end of a word?

They tell us that something has already happened. In this word, these two letters sound like a 't'. What does the word say?

Yes, it says *jump-t*.

Read the sentence again.

The boy jumped over the dog.

Do you think this is something the boy is doing now or do you think he has already done it?

And what is the clue in the sentence that tells us he has already done it? Yes, the *ed* ending on the end of the word *jumped* tells us it has already happened.

Appendix B

Strategies for writing unfamiliar words

In order to write words that they do not have in their print memory, students must be able to do a number of things.

1. Segment and write all sounds in the word

If students have been unable to write all sounds in a word, help them break the word into its sounds and write each sound down for them. Use the Elkonin sound box technique to do this.

For example: The student has written *trn* for *train*. You could say,

Well done, you've written three of the sounds in train. Listen to the sounds in train. 't' 'r' 'a' 'n'.

There's one more sound you need to put in. We need to draw four sound boxes for the four sounds in train.

--	--	--	--

As you emphasise each sound, ask the student to write it in its box. When you get to the long 'a' sound, the student might just write the letter **a**. Rewrite the word *train* underneath the Elkonin box after the student has filled in all of the sounds. Underline the **ai** pattern. You could say:

You've written all the sounds in train now but we use this pattern (ai) to write the long 'a' sound.

t	r	a	n
t	r	ai	n

2. Discover different ways of writing the same sound

For example: A student has written *shout* for *shout*. You could say:

*That's a fantastic spelling for shout. You have heard the 'sh' sound and written it with a **sh**. You've heard the 'ow' sound and written it with an 'ow' spelling pattern and you've heard the 't' on the end and written it with an **t**.*

For older spellers who may have used the **ow** spelling, you could help them link this pattern to other known words. They need to begin to generalise their knowledge to other words they know. You could say:

*There are lots of words that use **ow** to write the 'ow' sound (*now, flower, brown, down*).*

Circle the **ow** part of the word *sh^{ow}t*.

You've written all the sounds in the word shout but you need to use a different pattern for the 'ow' sound. Can you think of another way of writing the 'ow' sound?

If the student is unable to think of the **ou** pattern, just tell them what it is.

We use the **ou** pattern to write the 'ow' sound in *shout*. This **ou** pattern writes the 'ow' sound in other words that rhyme with *shout*." Can you think of any? (*out, doubt, about, trout, drown*).

3. Discover how morphemes and rules and conventions influence the spelling of words

Because many spelling patterns are used in particular positions in words or follow or precede certain letters, students can use these conventions to help them choose the correct spelling patterns for sounds in words. They can discover the common rules and conventions that underpin the spelling of quite a large number of words in English. They can be taught why many words are written the way they are. This information will not be useful to students who are still working on developing phonemic awareness skills and orthographic knowledge. If these students make the errors highlighted below, just tell them the correct spelling for the sounds in the words, without the rationale behind it.

For example: A student has written *The man had a loud voyse*. You could say,

You have written the word *voice* very cleverly! All the sounds are there and you have used correct patterns for the sounds. The 'oy' sound can be written in two different ways though. Do you know another way we could write this sound?

If the student doesn't know another one, just tell them what it is.

The other way 'oy' can be written is **oi**. And we spell the 's' sound at the end of *voice* with a **ce**.

Continue with the next part if it is relevant for your student's age and knowledge

This is the pattern we use to write the 'oy' sound in words like *voice, choice, hoist*. Listen to these words again and see if you can tell me where in the word the 'oy' sound is. Is it at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the word?

Repeat the words: *voice, choice, hoist*.

Yes, it is in the middle of the word. How many syllables are in these words?

Repeat them again.

They are all one-syllable words. So the 'oy' sound is in the middle of a syllable. If you hear the 'oy' sound in the middle of a syllable, it is usually written with the **oi** pattern. We use the **oy** on the end of a syllable — *toy* has an **oy** pattern at the end of its syllable. Can you think of any other words that rhyme with *toy*? The 'oy' will be spelled the same way — *joy, enjoy, boy, ploy, annoy, ahoy*.

4. Discover that although words might sound the same, they can be spelled differently and their spelling patterns can indicate their meaning

Many words that sound the same (homophones) use different spelling patterns for a common sound. Students' knowledge of the meaning of the word can help them access the correct spelling pattern once they have learned the connection.

For example: A student wanted to write *The lion had a long mane* but instead wrote *The lion had a long main*. If you are sure they have seen the word *mane* in print before, you could say,

The word *main* has different meanings — the one you want to use in this sentence is the hair on the back of the lion's neck. The other means the most important, like 'the main idea'. They are both spelled differently so we know the meaning of each word. You have used the spelling of 'the most important' rather than the hair on the back of the lion's neck. Can you remember seeing the word *mane*, meaning the lion's mane, written down before?

If the student can't remember what the word looks like, show them the different long a spelling patterns and ask them to try writing the word using different spelling patterns that would be appropriate when the long 'a' sound is in the middle of a syllable and near the end of the word, such as **ai**, **ea**, **a_e**. They then choose the one they think would be right and use the dictionary to check if it is correct.

Because the meaning of the word is linked to the spelling patterns used to write it (*main/main*, *paw/pour/poor/pore*), students must first of all have seen the word in print, in context, so they can use the meaning of the word to help them remember what the word looks like in print. If they have not been exposed to the written word in context before, or if they have not made the link between the look of the word and its meaning, it is pointless to ask them if the word *main* in *The lion had a long main* 'looks right' because the word *main* will look just fine. It is, after all, a correct way of writing the sounds in the word *main*.

5. Learn to commit high-frequency words to sight-word memory

Not all students find this easy to do.

Use two or three words that contain the same sound-spelling patterns as part of the students' weekly spelling list. They could colour-code the sound-spelling patterns and then try out different techniques for remembering the visual image of the word. See Chapter 1, Figure 5, for details of different strategies for committing sight-words to memory.