

## Making choices about interventions: Paired Cued Spelling

RTI champions and RTI teachers can use the information on this page to help them decide whether this intervention can be used to meet the needs of their target pupils. It highlights key information from a study which employed peer-assisted learning in order to improve pupils' spelling. The **Using the intervention** resource (overleaf) provides more detailed information if you decide to use the intervention with your pupils.

### What is the focus of this intervention?

Spelling

In this intervention, pupils are taught methods and strategies to help improve the accuracy of their spelling using a cued spelling method combined with peer-assistance. This is applicable in literacy sessions and in different subject contexts.

### What was the age of the pupils involved?

This intervention has been successfully used with Year 5-6 pupils and the techniques are applicable to Y7 pupils whose literacy is not yet strong enough to access the secondary curriculum with confidence.

### Which tiers could this intervention be applied to?

Whole  
Class

Pairs/small  
groups

1:1

As the intervention is beneficial for pupils of all abilities, it is suitable for whole-class use, meaning it has potential as a tier 1 intervention. Alternatively, it could be used as a tier 2 or 3 intervention with the teacher working individually with pairs of learners. It has also been successfully used as a homework activity involving parents/carers.

### What is the likely impact?

Paired cued spelling has a positive impact on pupils of all abilities. Studies have shown:

- spelling gains of up to 0.65 years in 6 weeks;
- most learners (up to 84%) feel they are better at spelling; and
- pupils are able to discuss, learn and remember various strategies they could use when unsure of how to spell a word.

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## Using the intervention: Paired Cued Spelling

### What do teachers and learners do?

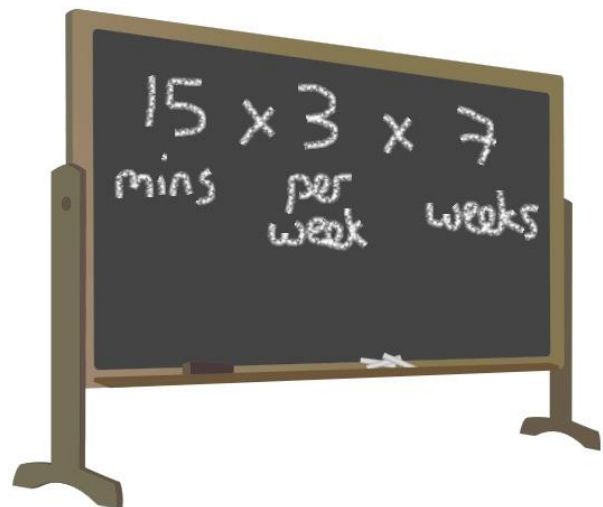
#### Overview of the intervention

The intervention involves pupils working in pairs to learn the spelling of words during 15 minute sessions three times a week over a period of six to eight weeks. The teacher first assesses the pupils' spelling using a standardised test, then uses the results to pair pupils who are weaker at spelling with pupils who are stronger. The strongest member of the pair is assigned the role of 'helper', while the weaker member is given the role of 'speller.' Both helpers and spellers benefit.

For each session, the teacher provides the pupils with two words to learn which illustrate a phonological or grammatical rule of the week. The teacher does not make the rule explicit, but allows the pupils to discover the rule for themselves through investigation and discussion.

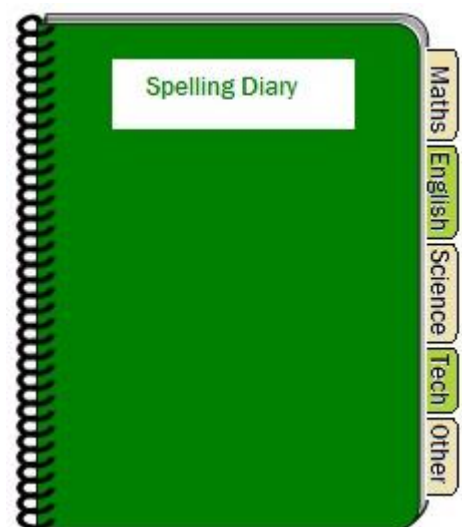
Once the words have been learned, the spellers then choose other words they think will be useful for them to learn and work on these with their helper using a ten-step procedure. At the end of the session, the helper gives the speller a test in order to assess the short term recall of the spellings covered in that session.

#### Paired Cued Spelling Sessions



#### The ten steps

1. Pupils select a word or are given a word to learn.
2. Pairs enter the word into their spelling diaries or exercise books.
3. Pairs read the word together.
4. Speller and helper choose a cue together from a long list provided by the teachers (for example, seeing smaller words within bigger words, such as 'a rat' in 'separate' or making a picture in your mind, such as two people getting 'wed' on Wednesday).
5. Pairs repeat cues aloud.
6. Speller says cues while helper writes word.
7. Helper says cues while speller writes word.
8. Speller writes word quickly and says cues aloud.

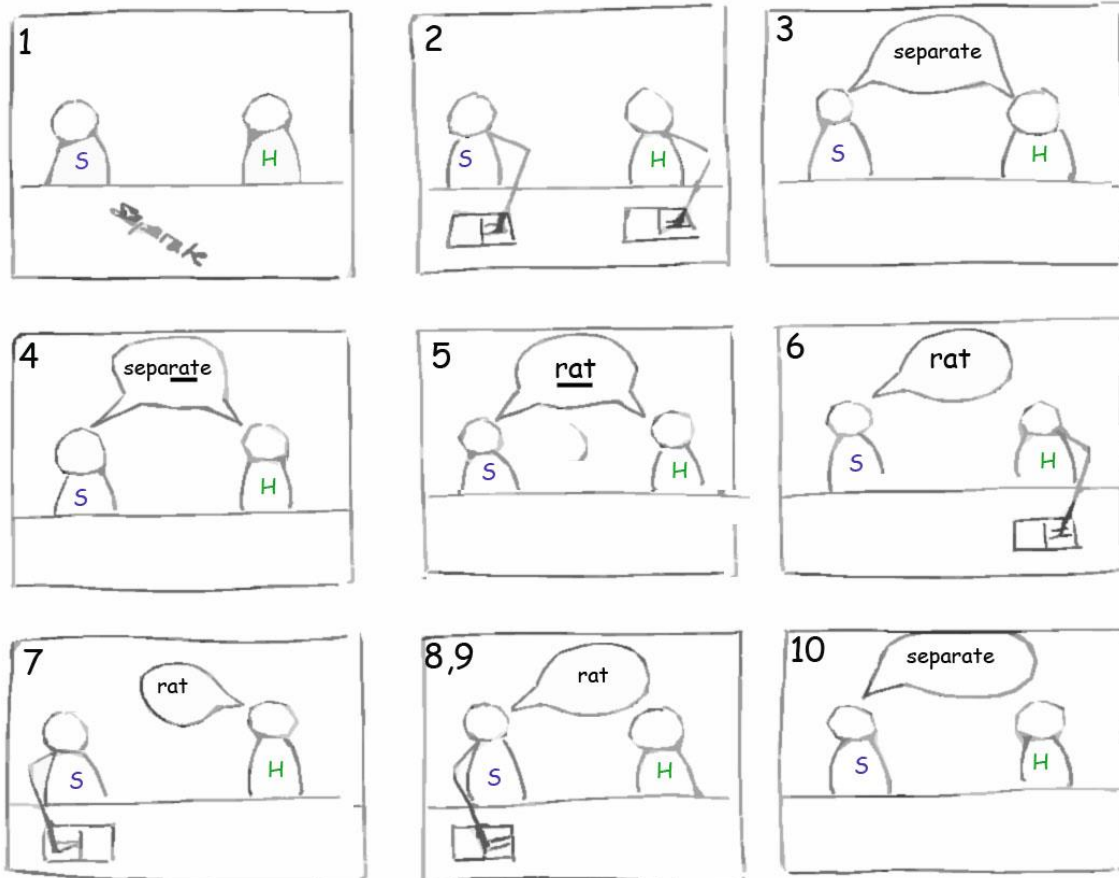


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9. Speller writes word quickly.

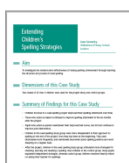
10. Speller reads word aloud.



### Framework for the sessions

The teacher explains and demonstrates these ten steps then discusses the difficulties the pupils are having with some of their spellings before pairing up the weaker spellers with someone who can help them to practise and learn 'difficult' spellings. The teacher repeats the demonstration the next day and also puts up a poster which explains the cued spelling steps.

As the pupils work on their spelling in pairs, the teacher focuses on one or two pairs of learners at a time. The teacher asks the pupils about what they are doing and guides them in making generalisations from the words they are learning to other words with similar characteristics. At the end of the session, the teacher invites the pupils to report back and demonstrate to the class any cues they had found helpful.



Visit this website for a cued spelling teacher case study:

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## What planning is involved?

Teachers first need to evaluate their pupils' spelling skills using a standardised test. They then need to prepare for the sessions every week by providing the pupils with a selection of words that illustrate the phonological or grammatical rule of that week. Teachers across the year group will want to build a bank of challenging subject specific words that pupils need to access the curriculum. Teachers also need to prepare a poster with the ten cue steps.

## What resources are involved?

For the peer-assisted part of the session, both pupils will require a pencil or pen and spelling diaries or exercise books.

The teacher will need to provide a poster that details the ten steps of the activity as a point of reference for the pupils. This may take the form of a flow chart, step-by-step process, etc.

## What are the challenges?

It is important that teachers do not intervene with the sessions unless necessary. Much of the intervention is based on pupils being able to discover and discuss points in the task for themselves. However, the teacher is responsible for keeping the pupils engaged through questions about what they're doing and providing generalisations for the pupils to work from. When the two teacher-given words are learned, the spellers choose new words that they feel would be useful to learn. This choice must be completely free and does not have to relate to the teacher-given words.

## Implications for RTI teachers and RTI champions

### School RTI champions

- The intervention is carried out with two pupils at a time, but studies show that pupils of all abilities benefit. Could the **Close Case Analysis tool** help you and your colleagues to decide whether the target pupils' needs would be best met by a whole class (tier 1), tier 2 (small group) or tier 3 (one-to-one) delivery of this approach?
- In some studies, the intervention is carried out three times a week for six weeks; in other studies the intervention period spans eight weeks. You may want to use the **Determining Frequency/Duration of Interventions tool** to help you support the target pupils' teacher(s) in deciding how many sessions the pupils should experience over the intervention period.
- Observing teachers delivering an intervention is likely to help ensure they deliver it as effectively as they can. Could you work with colleagues to decide who could best provide supportive observation and feedback?

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## RTI teachers

- The teacher provides each pair with two words per session from a collection of words based on the phonological or grammatical rule of the week. Could you work with your RTI champion to identify suitable words for each session?
- The intervention involves teachers stepping back and letting pupils work things out for themselves. To what extent do your pupils take a more independent approach to their learning? You could work with colleagues or your RTI champion to identify the pupils' strengths in working without intensive teacher direction and possible challenges they will encounter. How can these challenges best be overcome?
- The intervention develops pupils' spelling skills. How can you best set up collaboration with other subject teachers so that pupils can learn key words which can be applied in a range of subject areas? You could create and use a range of subject specific words which are important for accessing the curriculum.

## References

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