

## How to learn spelling patterns by L.C.W.C. / S. O. S.

A simple method which delivers technical progress but also instils confidence, which matters!

*In the delighted words of one 9 year old: "This is brilliant! Now, spelling makes sense!"*

**L.C.W.C.** is the justifiably well-known **Look Cover Write Check** method.

**S.O.S.** is less well known, but is **Simultaneous Oral Spelling**. (Kirk 1983 pp. 247-250)

Together, they provide rapid, solid learning of English letter patterns - and how spelling really 'works'.

### ***This is how it goes:***

Find the patterns on which your student needs to work in their own writing. (The student must 'own' the spellings and must also come to see their 'mistakes' as useful.) Explain the method fully, for the same reason.

For an example: let us suppose a student writes 'nise' instead of 'nice'. This is a mistake involving a common spelling pattern - the "i - c - e" pattern. It is so common that we need to work on it and will now do so.

**Note: We will use letter names at all times. This is absolutely fundamental.** In this example, the "i - c - e" pattern is therefore called the "eye - see - ee" pattern - it is NOT called the "ice" pattern.

Letters, here, are always referred to by their names, not by the sound they (sometimes!) make.

Next we make a small list of words which contain the **eye – see - ee** pattern.

For example:

nice

twice

notice

police

rice

spice

We learn these words, and this letter pattern, by LCWC / SOS. This is what you do:

- **Remember the pattern.** All these words contain the **eye - see - ee** pattern. (That's all. No tricks!)
- **LOOK** at the first word and **say the letters (& word) aloud.** (Say: "enn" "eye" "see" "ee" "nice")
- When you're confident you've got it, **COVER** it up so you can't see it. (Copying is pointless!)
- **WRITE** the word out, **saying the letter names aloud as you do** - say "enn" "eye" "see" "ee" "nice".
- Say "enn" as you write **n**; "eye" as you write **i**; "see" as you write **c**; "ee" as you write **e**.
- And finally **CHECK.** Have you written it correctly? (If not, don't panic, just go back to the beginning.)

Do this for all the words on the list, remembering that **they all contain the same pattern, and that there are no tricks.** Just remember the "eye see ee" pattern (in this case). That's all you have to learn.

**Always write the word from memory. Never just copy.** This makes sure your brain is engaged in the spelling.

**Always say the letter names aloud as you write them.** This makes sure you identify each letter clearly, and at the same time as you write it.

**Always have the pattern by letter names in mind as you write each word.** That's all you have to learn!

**Very important note:** How each word sounds makes no difference whatsoever; the pattern stays the same. The sound it happens to make in any particular word is neither here nor there. We are not thinking sounds. This is absolutely fundamental. Mentioning sounds will be unhelpful at best, profoundly confusing at worst. For example, in this list *police*, *notice* and *nice* all sound different. Never mind! Say nothing about it. Nothing at all. It does not matter, and it will not help. Such inconsistency of sound will turn up with many letter patterns. Ignore it altogether. Just work on the patterns of English, one by one by one. Keep it simple!

We are presenting the pattern to be learned as a visual item, and we are reinforcing it as a motor item by writing it. This is visuo-motor learning, and it will make sense, and stick.

Visuo-motor learning does not refer to sound, so is not a phonic method, but do not be alarmed on that account. 'Sounding out' is notoriously unreliable as the sole, or even main, way to address spelling, especially for many of the most common English words. Students need to meet, understand and own different methods by which they may attack spelling. Meeting this one will not, and does not, confuse them.

[Here](#) you will find a list of common spelling patterns for use with LCWC/SOS.

<http://www.hugokerr.info/hugo/teaching-resources/>

Reference: Kirk, Ursula (ed.) (1983) *Neuropsychology of language, reading and spelling*. London. Academic Press.