

## The AVKO Variation of Test-Study-Test

Experts on the teaching of spelling commonly claim that the best method of teaching spelling is by having lists of words using the test-study-test method. As good as this method is, it can be improved. What we do, is to us the first step (the pre-test) to determine not which specific words need to be learned but rather which patterns!

Example: Alfred E. Neumann took this pre-test in the 4th grade.

Test Design	Alfred's Spelling
1. looking (1.40)	1. looking
2. mother (1.60)	2. mother
3. banker (2.65)	3. banker
<b>4. light (2.90)</b>	✓4. lite
5. white (3.15)	✓5. wite
6. farming (3.40)	6. farming
<b>7. change (3.65)</b>	✓7. chains
8. forever (3.90)	8. forever
9. center (4.15)	✓9. sender
10. outstanding (4.40)	✓10. outsanding
11. understanding (4.65)	11. understanding
12. placed(4.90)	✓12. place
13. sample (5.15)	✓13. sempel
14. chapter (5.40)	✓14. chatbrep
15. notice (5.65)	✓15. nodiss
16. carried (5.90)	✓16. carryed
17. contract (6.15)	✓17. contrack
18. mountain (6.40)	✓18. muondin
19. location (6.65)	✓19. lowkayshun
20. cottage (7.10)	✓20. coddij

The "good" students in Alfred's class only missed anywhere from two to five words. For them to get an A, all they have to do is learn two to five words. But Alfred has missed 14. If he tries to study all fourteen he probably will only learn two to five words. That still gives him a failing grade and teaches him that he is dumb. However, if we pick just two words that he wants to learn and teach him just the patterns, he could actually learn forty or more words! Example: The just the word *light*<sup>1</sup> can yield for him to study:

right	rights				
fight	fight				
sight	sights	sighted	fighting	fighter	fighters
light	lights		sighting		
night	nights		lighting	lighter	lightest
might					
bright				brighter	mighty
fright					brightest
delight	delights	delighted			
brighten	brightens	brightened	brightening		
frighten	frightens	frightened	frightening		
tighten	tightens	tightened	tightening		
lighten	lightens	lightened	lightening	but bolts of lightning!	

<sup>1</sup>From *The Patterns of English Spelling* p. 428. This book should be in every school library. It is available from the AVKO Foundation.

Rather than just study the traditional way, we prefer to let the student learn from his mistakes when he makes via the sequential spelling technique.

On Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, Alfred's partner (or parent at home, or teacher's aide in the classroom) gives him the following words. After each word is given, Alfred writes the word and says the letters. If he makes a mistake, his partner immediately gives him the correct spelling. Alfred erases the incorrect spelling and writes it correctly. That's all that's necessary.

	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1.	light	lights	lighter	light
2.	fight	fights	fighting	fighter
3.	sight	sights	sighted	sighting
4.	light	lights	lighting	lighter
5.	night	nights	might	mighty
6.	bright	brighter	brighter	brightest
7.	fright	delight	delights	delighted
8.	brighten	brightens	brightened	brightening
9.	frighten	frightens	frightened	frightening
10.	tighten	tightens	tightened	tightening
11.	range	ranges	ranged	ranging
12.	strange	stranger	strangers	ranger
13.	arrange	arranges	arranged	arranging
14.	change	changes	changed	changing
15.	exchange	exchanges	exchanged	exchanging

Notice that although he is only being tested on 10 words with the -ight pattern each day. There are a total of 40 different words he is learning! Alfred hasn't written any one word more than twice, yet he has written the -ight pattern at least 40 times within the context of a real word! And he has written the -ange pattern at least 20 times.

For more on this technique, you might want to read: "How to Develop Your Own Sequential Spelling Tests" on pp. 215-219 in *The AVKO "Great Idea" Reprint Series*.