

Target Words

Activities that support teaching and learning of commonly misspelt words

It is important that students will not be expected to spell words that they cannot read to a level of automaticity. The Precision Teaching approach may be used to support automaticity in the reading of words and syllables.

Words that have been well mastered can be read accurately at one-second intervals (without resort to phonic decoding). For spelling instruction it is useful to identify words that students have not brought to this level of mastery—we will call these Target Words. Target Words may be identified from high frequency lists, tricky words, words from readers and words that the student misspells.

Having identified some Target Words, a number of strategies may be employed to teach them to automaticity. Frequency Probes may be used to measure and practise speed and accuracy. A small number of words (this may vary but 4–6 words would be enough for starters and this number could be increased) is entered into the probe. Only words that the student can read are entered. Students (individually or chorally) practise reading from the probe. Speed and accuracy are then tested in a timed activity.

For the pupil to achieve sight word recognition at automaticity level, (s)he needs to be able to read the words/syllables at one-second intervals. If a student is achieving below this level, the number of words in the probe is reduced.

If the pupil's rate of reading is not improving after three days the number of words being taught needs to be reduced.

