

## Why does my child sometimes have trouble remembering how to accurately spell common words?

Question 19 from Helping Your Child Become a Reader  
(Scanlon, Anderson, Barnes, Morse, & Yurkewecz-Stellato, 2024)<sup>1</sup>

There are many words in English that cannot be spelled correctly by simply thinking about the sounds and the letters. For example, the words *the*, *of*, and *you* are likely to be misspelled by beginning writers (perhaps as *thu (or du)*, *uv*, and *u*) unless they have been specifically taught to spell them or they have encountered them many, many times in their reading. Indeed, extensive reading is important for spelling development as the more times learners see and read correctly spelled words the more likely they are to store the spellings of those words in memory.

Note that when children produce sound spellings, it can be useful to point out aspects of the spellings that are accurate. For example, a child who spells the word *of* as *uv* has accurately analyzed the sounds in the word and has represented those sounds with letters that often stand for those sounds. In such a case, on occasion, commenting on the accurate analysis and providing the accurate spelling can be helpful - especially for words that the child uses frequently when writing. For instance, for the *uv* spelling for *of*, you might say, “It does sound like *of* should be spelled that way, but *of* is spelled *o - f*.”

In both spelling and word reading, at the earliest points, children typically accurately spell/read the beginning sounds of unfamiliar words. Later, they tend to represent/identify both the beginning and ending sounds. With reading and spelling experience, they start to represent/identify all the sounds in one-syllable words – although the sounds, especially the vowels, may not be spelled in conventional ways.



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<sup>1</sup> The complete 23 question booklet can be accessed at: [eltep.org/isa-parent-booklet](http://eltep.org/isa-parent-booklet)  
All individual questions and the complete booklet can be shared for non-commercial purposes.