

Teacher Resource · Free resource

Pretest and retest pairs – Year 2

Year group: 2

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling* (2013)

Purpose: Pretest/retest pairs for Y2 common exception words and spelling rules.

How to use pretest/retest

The evidence: A pretest-teach-retest cycle is one of the most effective learning routines in spelling research. Pupils who attempt a pretest before instruction show significantly better retention than those who only study and test.

(Source: Kornell, N. et al. (2009). Unsuccessful retrieval attempts enhance subsequent learning. Journal of Experimental Psychology: General.)

The routine:

Monday pretest — pupils attempt all words without having studied them. Mark together immediately. Each pupil identifies their own errors.

Tuesday–Thursday teaching — focus instruction on the specific patterns in the week's words.

Friday retest — same words in a different order. Pupils compare Monday and Friday scores.

The gap — words from this week reappear in a test 3 weeks later to check long-term retention.

Set 1: Y2 exception words – Group A

Focus: door, floor, poor, because, find, kind, mind, behind, child, children, wild, climb

Monday pretest:

door · floor · poor · because · find · kind · mind · behind · child · children · wild · climb

Friday retest:

climb · wild · children · child · behind · mind · kind · find · because · poor · floor · door

Set 2: Y2 exception words – Group B

Focus: most, only, both, old, cold, gold, hold, told, every, everybody, even, great, break, steak

Monday pretest:

most · only · both · old · cold · gold · hold · told · every · everybody · even · great · break · steak

Friday retest:

steak · break · great · even · everybody · every · told · hold · gold · cold · old · both · only · most

Set 3: Y2 exception words – Group C

Focus: pretty, beautiful, after, fast, last, past, father, class, grass, pass, plant, path, bath

Monday pretest:

pretty · beautiful · after · fast · last · past · father · class · grass · pass · plant · path · bath

Friday retest:

bath · path · plant · pass · grass · class · father · past · last · fast · after · beautiful · pretty

Set 4: Y2 exception words – Group D

Focus: hour, move, prove, improve, sure, sugar, eye, could, should, would, who, whole

Monday pretest:

hour · move · prove · improve · sure · sugar · eye · could · should · would · who · whole

Friday retest:

whole · who · would · should · could · eye · sugar · sure · improve · prove · move · hour

Set 5: Y2 exception words – Group E

Focus: any, many, clothes, busy, people, water, again, half, money, Mr, Mrs, parents, Christmas

Monday pretest:

any · many · clothes · busy · people · water · again · half · money · parents · Christmas

Friday retest:

Christmas · parents · money · half · again · water · people · busy · clothes · many · any

End-of-Year 2 check – full Y2 common exception words

Use at end of Year 2 to assess full statutory common exception words list.

Test words:

door · floor · poor · because · find · kind · mind · behind · child · children · wild · climb · most · only · both · old · cold · gold · hold · told · every · everybody · even · great · break · steak · pretty · beautiful · after · fast · last · past · father · class · grass · pass · plant · path · bath · hour · move · prove · improve · sure · sugar · eye · could · should · would · who · whole · any · many · clothes · busy · people · water · again · half · money · Mr · Mrs · parents · Christmas

Rule pattern pretest/retest

Set R1: Soft *c* and *g* (*ce, ci, cy, ge, gi, gy*)

Monday pretest:

circle · city · cent · pencil · fancy · gentle · giant · gym · cage · rice · grace · giraffe

Friday retest:

giraffe · grace · rice · cage · gym · giant · gentle · fancy · pencil · cent · city · circle

Set R2: Adding suffixes – doubling, drop *e*, *y* → *i*

Monday pretest (pupils write the full word):

run + ing → ? · make + ing → ? · happy + ness → ? · begin + ing → ? · shine + ing → ? · carry + ed → ?

Friday retest:

carry + ed → ? · shine + ing → ? · begin + ing → ? · happy + ness → ? · make + ing → ? · run + ing → ?

Set R3: Homophones

Monday pretest (pupils write the correct spelling for the definition given):

A location: t _ _ _ e (there)

Belonging to them: t _ _ _ r (their)

They are: t _ _ _ ' _ e (they're)

In this place: h _ _ e (here)

To listen: h _ _ r (hear)

Not at school: h _ _ e (home / hole — dictate a sentence)

The entire thing: w _ _ _ e (whole)

The number after 1: t _ o (two)

Friday retest: Same definitions, different order.

Error analysis record

After each retest, note words that 3 or more pupils misspelled.

Word	Common error written	Pattern to reteach	Date

Long-gap retest (3 weeks after initial teaching)

Pick 8 words from any set taught 3 weeks ago. Test without warning.

(Source: Cepeda, N.J. et al. (2006). Distributed Practice in Verbal Recall Tasks. Psychological Bulletin.)

Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Pretest-retest methodology: Kornell et al. (2009); Cepeda et al. (2006). All word lists verified against statutory Appendix 1 document.