

Frequently Asked Questions about Placement



FAQ #1: Do level numbers correspond to grade levels?

Since *All About Spelling* is mastery-based, the level numbers do not correspond to grade levels. For example, Level 1 doesn't have to be completed in first grade. Placement for spelling is based on the student's knowledge of spelling rules and concepts rather than grade level, reading level, or the words a student has memorized.



FAQ #2: Why do most students start in Level 1?

All About Spelling is a building block program—each level builds upon the previous one. The rules and concepts learned in Level 1 are applied in Level 2, and then those are applied in Level 3, and so on. To prevent any gaps in knowledge, we suggest that most students start with Level 1.



FAQ #3: What if my student needs remedial spelling?

Struggling spellers of any age should begin in *All About Spelling* Level 1. This ensures that there will be no gaps in your child's learning. You can move as quickly or as slowly as your student needs. If you are working with an older student, he probably understands some of the concepts but not others. In this case, very quickly skim the parts that he already knows and slow down on the parts that he needs to learn.



FAQ #4: How can I use Level 1 with an older student?

All About Spelling can easily be adapted for use with older students. See page 15 for useful tips on using Level 1 with older students.



FAQ #5: Can I start higher than Level 2?

All About Spelling Level 2 focuses on learning the syllable types, when they are used, and how they affect spelling. This information is foundational for higher levels of spelling. Three syllable rules are introduced in Level 2, and then more in Level 3 and up. For this reason, we generally don't recommend starting higher than Level 2.

If you think your student might be able to start at a higher level, please visit our [Scope and Sequence](http://bitly.com/SpellingScopeSequence) webpage (<http://bitly.com/SpellingScopeSequence>) to review the concepts taught at each level. Your student must know all the rules and strategies from each previous level to start in a higher level. If you decide to begin with a higher level, you would need to purchase the Student Packets from all previous levels if you want to have those cards for review purposes.

You can also try [sample lessons](http://bit.ly/SpellingSampleLessons) from each level (<http://bit.ly/SpellingSampleLessons>).



FAQ #6: Why should I wait until my student can read?

There are three main reasons to delay spelling instruction until after your student has begun reading.

1. While learning to read, students pick up basic skills that will enable them to spell more easily.
2. It is easier to decode words than it is to encode words.
3. Reading helps a child establish a visual memory of many words, which makes spelling much easier.

On the other hand, it is important not to wait too long to begin spelling instruction. You want to teach spelling before your child needs it for other subjects so he has skills and confidence as early in his school career as possible.



FAQ #7: What if my student can't read yet, in spite of instruction? Can we start spelling instruction?

Some students are actually able to wrap their minds around spelling more easily than reading. These students are usually very analytical, and some of them have tried to learn to read so many times that they are frustrated with the whole process. Most often, their previous reading programs have let them down and they feel like they've hit a wall. In these cases, begin with *All About Spelling* Level 1 even though the student can't read yet. Then add in reading instruction when your student is ready to try again. Learning to spell through this unique approach can be the key for learning to spell *and* read.

Using *All About Spelling* Level 1 with Older Students

Step 1

Adjust the First Few Levels to Your Child's Needs

Most older children should begin *All About Spelling* with Level 1. The words in Level 1 are easy to spell, but many students have not learned the concepts behind them, and these concepts are crucial for success throughout the program. For example, most struggling students will know how to spell *cat*, but they don't know **why *cat* is spelled with a c instead of a k**. They obviously don't need to practice spelling the word *cat*, but they may need to learn the concept so they can apply it to words like *emergency* and *concentrate*. The beginning levels fill in important gaps like this.

Here are some other Level 1 concepts that older learners may not be familiar with but that will be a huge help when they get to higher-level words:

- The **sounds of the vowels**, including the letter *y*. (Does your student know all four sounds of the letter *o*?)
- How to **segment words**
- How to **make words plural**
- The difference between an **open syllable and a closed syllable**

Step 2

Consider How You Present the Program

To help older kids understand why it's important to start with Level 1, try comparing the program to something they can relate to, like video games or swimming lessons. Your child may understand that even though the first level of a game (or of swimming lessons) may seem easy, that doesn't mean he should jump ahead to the fifth level. But it does mean that he can go quickly through the earlier levels, learning what he needs to know so that when he does get to the higher levels, he isn't overwhelmed by **having to learn too much at once**.

Anna Gillingham, co-founder of the **Orton-Gillingham approach**, put it this way: "Go as fast as you can, but as slow as you must."

With older learners, you will probably go much faster than you would with a younger child, but be prepared to slow down if you reach a concept that your child doesn't understand. Your goal is to achieve **mastery**.

Step 3

Have Your Child Teach a Concept Back to You Using Letter Tiles

When your child can teach a spelling concept back to you, it's a good sign that he or she has mastered a concept or group of words and is ready to move on. But if your child has to stop and think it through or seems challenged, spend more time on that particular lesson.

Customize the Lessons for Your Child

Older children will need to have the program customized to meet their needs, with specific customizations determined by a child's prior spelling knowledge. [Download this PDF](#) for ideas on how to customize the first sixteen lessons of *All About Spelling* Level 1 (<http://bit.ly/First-Sixteen>). Of course, you may need to use different customizations for your students, but this PDF will give you some ideas to get started.

Still have questions?

Please contact us! We'd be happy to help with placement. Call us at 715-477-1976 or email us at support@allaboutlearningpress.com.