

# What are Spelling Sentences?

*A Guide for Helping Students to Write Better Sentences*

---

## DEFINITION

A spelling sentence is a sentence written by a student that: 1) contains at least one of the spelling words being studied that week; and 2) is at least nine words in length.

Spelling sentences should be checked so that they do not contain any spelling, punctuation, or grammatical errors.

### Sample sentences:

Nicole is going to quit the circus tomorrow **because** she doesn't like the traveling.  
—*Brianna McDowell*

Jack's pet **frog**, Lizzy, couldn't go to the movies because they didn't allow pets.  
—*Kyle Schossow*

*A spelling sentence should represent a student's best writing.*

UNIT 31  
along  
always  
because  
belong  
bought  
brought  
draw  
frog  
long  
mall  
off  
strong  
talk  
tall  
walk  
water

---

## WHY WRITE 'EM?

There are two reasons why I think it is helpful for students to write spelling sentences every week.

For one, a sentence is the foundation on which almost all written language is created. If you cannot write a complete sentence, you won't be able to write a paragraph. If you can't write a paragraph, you won't be able to write a story or produce a report. Creating well-written sentences is the key.

Another reason is the fact that in order to get good at just about anything, you have to practice. The more you practice, the better you get. If it works for baseball, soccer, and softball, it will work for writing. By practicing every week, you'll develop your writing talent so that creating exciting sentences will become as natural as catching a fly ball or shooting a free throw. All sports stars will tell you that they started playing when they were young and then got better by practicing.

---

## WHAT TO DO

Choose a word from the list. Concentrate on the word you want to use. Picture it in your mind. Think, think, think. Add details to the picture you are seeing. (If you don't like the picture you've created for this word, wipe the slate clean and make a new picture.)

Now, describe what you are seeing. Write down what you just said. Bingo! You've got yourself a spelling sentence.

To make it special, try these ideas:

### **Use a large vocabulary.**

Try verbs other than *saw, had, like, went, got*, etc. Use new and exciting words. Exciting words produce exciting sentences. Check your a dictionary or thesaurus for ideas.

### **Add details to your sentence.**

Begin by describing the nouns you used. Think about size, age, condition, location, color, emotions, and feelings. If you wrote about something that happened, see if you can add why it happened.

### **Work at it.**

Sometimes it just takes asking more of yourself. Give your sentences your very best effort.

*Remember: There is not much reward without effort.*

---

## WHAT NOT TO DO

Do not begin your sentences with the words I, My, or We.

“I have...”

“We saw...”

“My friend...”

It's best if you don't write about yourself. Writing about yourself limits you to your own little world. Think and write about other people (not your friends!), other places, and other things.

*Note: Any spelling sentence which begins with the words I, My, or We will be scored as a zero.*

Do not write about the first thing you think of when you picture a word. If it came that easily into your imagination, it will come just as quickly to other students. Keep playing with words and seeing them in new situations.

Do not write sentences in which people are talking or saying things. We will be working on writing conversation later.

---

## SCORING A SENTENCE

To begin with, I score each sentence individually. It starts out at three points. If, after reading it, I see that it is a creative sentence, I add a point. If I see a weak, sad little sentence, I deduct a point.

Points are then taken off for mistakes such as spelling, capital letters, grammar, punctuation, or missing words. (Sometimes a sentence makes no sense at all, and I can't give it any points. The best you can receive for a sentence is four points.)

Let's check some sentences.

It was a **sunny** day.

This sentence quickly goes from 3 points down to 2 because: 1) it isn't very creative; 2) does not provide many details; and 3) contains less than nine words. However, it didn't have any mistakes. Final score: **2 points**.

Some people in our class are **busy** doing thier homework.

This more creative sentence jumps to 4 points to start with. It loses 1 because "their" was not spelled correctly. Final score: **3 points**.

---

## GRADES

Five spelling sentences at 4 points each gives us a possible score of 20 points. (You really have to work at it to score 4 points for each sentence, but it can be done.)

In addition to the score you'll receive for the quality of your sentences, you'll also be given an effort grade (E, G, S N, or U) for how well your paper was organized and how neatly it was written.

<u>SCORE</u>	<u>GRADE</u>
19-20	A
16-18	B
10-15	C
5-9	D
0-4	F

Things I look for on your assignment:

- ✓ Name/#
- ✓ Date
- ✓ Heading
- ✓ Margins
- ✓ Writing neatly
- ✓ Skipping spaces between sentences
- ✓ Numbering sentences
- ✓ **Boldfacing** spelling words

---

## CLOSING

I'm really looking forward to not only reading your first sentences but witnessing the progress you're going to make as writers over the next few weeks. Good luck and happy writing.