

Symbol Imagery

For fluent reading and spelling, it is necessary both to be able to make phonetic judgments about words, and to be able to recognize and spell words that do not play by phonetic rules. Many words in our language have spellings that are not predictable using phonics, or have several possible ways to spell them.

These words are stored in our visual memory for easy access and are accessed and recognized using a process called symbol imagery, in which we remember what the words look like. When spelling, we compare what we write on the paper to the picture in our mind. If the pictures don't match we think, "That doesn't look right," and try again. When reading, symbol imagery allows us to recognize words with unusual spellings, and allows us to recognize very common words without having to "sound them out."

Some students have weak or inefficient visual imagery and visual memory. When dealing with words that are phonetically "unfair," they have difficulty recalling how the word should appear in print. When they read, there is a dependence upon context, they frequently confuse words that look somewhat alike, they do not recognize words from one page or even one paragraph to the next, and they try to sound out common words that they should recognize on sight. Their spelling may be phonetically accurate (for example, "Krismis" for "Christmas"), but are spelled wrong because they can not remember which of several options is correct. Letter patterns that do not "play by the rules" are particularly difficult. They leave letters, but not necessarily sounds, out of their spellings, or switch letters around ("jugde" for "judge").

Lindamood/Bell Learning Processes has developed a program (Seeing Stars) to stimulate symbol imagery. Strengthening symbol imagery expands and stimulates the brain's visual memory, and enables more fluent reading and spelling. For symbol imagery deficits, as with many learning difficulties, there is *Hope*.

For further information, please refer to the website, www.LBLP.com.