

6 Word Prediction Strategies for Struggling Students



TABLE OF CONTENTS:

Introduction:3

Strategy 1: Level the Playing Field for Young Writers.....4

Strategy 2: Offer Visual and Auditory Supports for English Language Learners.....5

Strategy 3: Assist Poor Spellers.....6

Strategy 4: Provide Alternatives for Students with Handwriting Difficulties.....7

Strategy 5: Assist Students with Physical Disabilities.....8

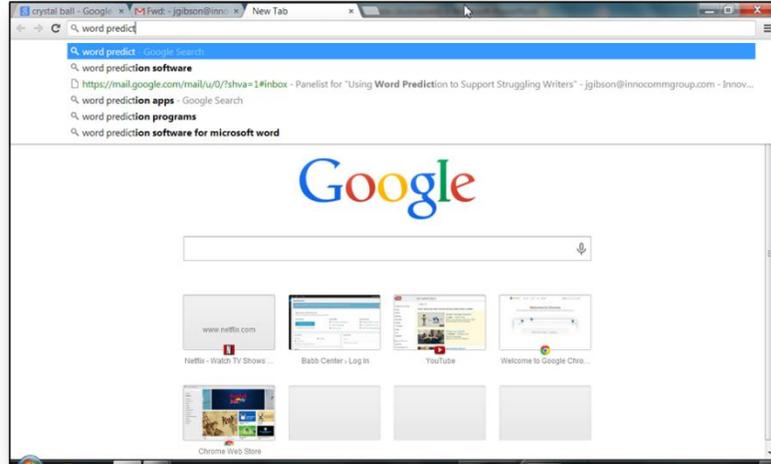
Strategy 6: Provide Opportunities for Early Correction9

About:.....10

Introduction

Word Prediction is an electronic support that predicts words based on what you type. Believe it or not, most people use word prediction every day. Whether sending a text message or performing a Google search, word prediction helps individuals to type more accurately.

While basic word prediction is great, specialized word prediction software goes far beyond what Google and smart phones offer by including advanced features such as phonetic spell check, confusable word support, the ability to have words read aloud, and much more.



These advanced supports are great for a variety of users including students with learning disabilities, individuals with physical disabilities, English Language Learners, and even poor spellers. The strategies contained throughout this guide come from a variety of professionals in the assistive technology field and will help to ensure those that need word prediction the most can find success. Enjoy!

Strategy 1:

Level the Playing Field for All Writers



Young students progress at different speeds that vary based on a number of factors. Because of this, many students require supports to help “level the playing field” to perform at a level similar to that of their peers.

In the book *Outliers*, Malcolm Gladwell sites a study that shows a disproportionate number of professional hockey players in Canada were born in the first half of the year.

It seems odd at first, until you consider that the best players come from the best junior hockey teams, and that those players are groomed for hockey from a very young age. If players are put on better teams based on their ability at a young age, it is understandable that students who turn 6 in January would be better than students who turn 6 almost a year later in December. The January birthday students may have had an additional year’s worth of practice. That amounts to 15-20% of their life!

This same phenomenon exists in education. Some students in K-3 just haven’t had as much experience with writing as others. Because of this they may be behind. As Kimberly Byrne, Assistive Technology Practitioner in Orange County Florida, explains, “typing with word prediction helps level the playing field for students who struggle with spelling and typing speed. Many elementary students with handwriting deficits haven’t yet learned to type proficiently, but if their handwriting is illegible, it’s the only option. Word prediction can help speed up their typing.”

“Even with additional time as an accommodation, it can be hard for them to keep up with their work...”

Kimberly offers tips for using word prediction with younger students such as asking them to try spelling the first 2-3 letters of a word correctly before using the support. This not only helps to make word prediction more accurate, but also assists students in learning to type words correctly. Another tip she lists is to turn on word prediction features such as “speak when mouse hovers over the word” so that students know they are choosing the correct word before inserting it into their writing.

Strategy 2:

Offer Visual and Auditory Supports for English Language Learners

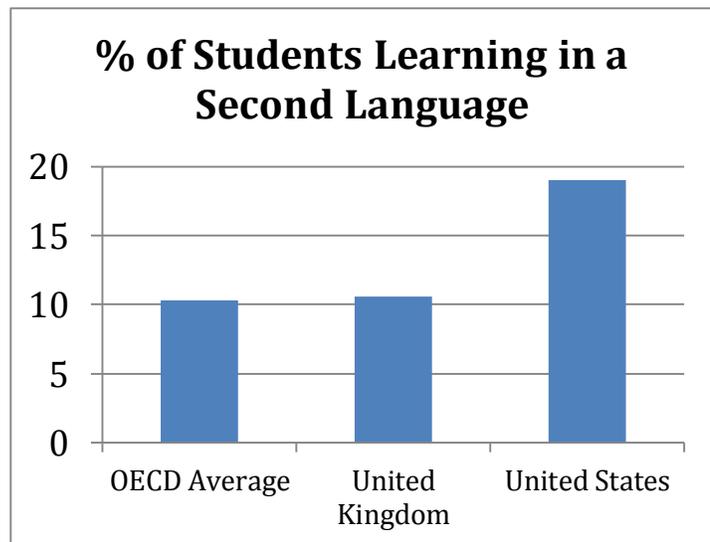


Classrooms are more diverse than ever. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) tracks a number of statistics in developed countries including the United States. According to their reports, approximately 19% of students in the United States are learning in a second language. This is almost double the global average!

With so many students learning in a second language, it is no surprise that a large achievement gap exists between these learners and many of their peers. Software supports such as word prediction can help to close this gap.

Kimberly Nix, Professional Development Manager and ELL Specialist, advises teachers using word prediction with English Language Learners to turn on features such as “speak when mouse hovers over the word” and “speak word when typed” so that students can hear word choices. She goes on to say that students will try to sound out the spelling of words using the pronunciation system of their home language.

Features such as “speak word when typed” allow students to know immediately if they chose the word they wanted. This provides both audio and visual support for word choice.



Strategy 3:

Assist Poor Spellers



Spelling is filled with rules and exceptions that confuse even the most advanced students. Remembering whether “i” comes before “e” or which form of a word to use (e.g. rap vs. wrap) is a skill that can take years to master. To further complicate things, the English language isn’t the best at using the alphabetic principal, which basically means that the sounds of letters are used to make up words. For example,

the word “none” contains a silent “e” at the end making its spelling difficult for many learners.

Luckily, many common features of word prediction can help poor spellers, including:

- ✓ Phonetic supports that assist students who spell words phonetically such as “phone” with an “f.” The ability to add in custom phonemes is also a common option. This is great for students who may speak English as a second language and attempt to spell things using their home phonetic system.
- ✓ The ability to analyze writing styles to better predict words specific to individual users. This allows words that students use frequently to appear more often in the prediction window when appropriate.
- ✓ Dictionary and grammar supports that allow students to ensure they are using the correct form of a word (e.g. their vs. there).
- ✓ Topic Dictionaries that help to “pre-load” word prediction with vocabulary used in topics ranging from dinosaurs to Abraham Lincoln. Many programs even provide the ability to create your own topic dictionaries.

These are just a few of the many options commonly available in advanced word prediction software.

Strategy 4:

Provide Alternatives for Students with Handwriting Difficulties

Students may struggle with handwriting for a variety of reasons. This can include physical challenges, learning disabilities such as dysgraphia, or simply a lack of practice. Regardless of what causes a student to have difficulty with handwriting the result can cause frustration, falling behind in class, or worse.



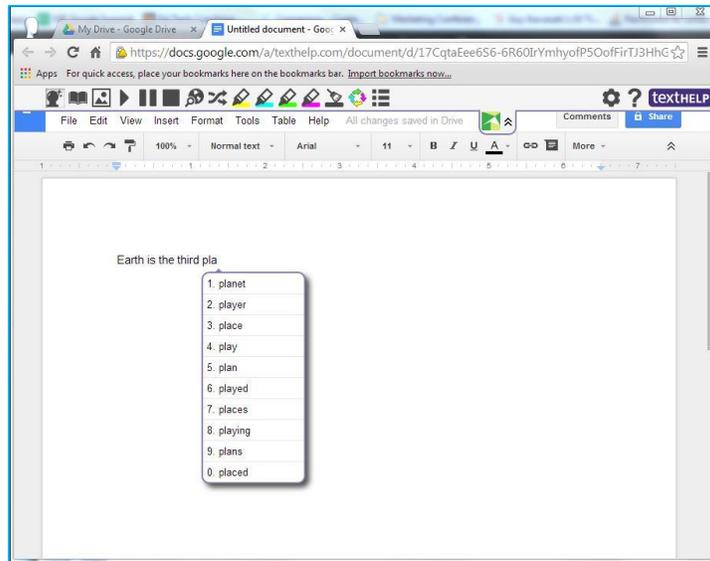
Kimberly Byrne, Assistive Technology Practitioner, who was referenced earlier in this guide, explains how word prediction can assist some of these students:

Often, I see students who have “scribe” listed as an accommodation on their IEP because the student has difficulty with handwriting and typing. By trying word prediction prior to going to the more restrictive accommodation of using a scribe, these students were able to type their writing with more independence and less reliance on staff support.

One success story that sticks out for me was a 4th grade general education student with a learning disability whose handwriting was mostly illegible. He had difficulty with letter formation and writing on the lines, in addition to organizing his thoughts. His handwriting was the equivalent of a 1st grade student. When provided with access to a computer for typing and using the word prediction, screen masking, and text-to-speech tools in Read&Write Gold, he was able to write a 6 paragraph essay with an estimated grade level of 4.7.

Strategy 5:

Assist Students with Physical Disabilities



A key feature of word prediction software is its ability to reduce the number of keystrokes required when typing. For example, the word 'computer' consists of 8 letters which would typically require 8 keystrokes to type it. Using word prediction software, users could potentially type this word in under 3 keystrokes depending on factors such as what software is being used, the context of the sentence, and so on. This is a huge benefit for students who may have physical disabilities that limit their ability to type or write.

In a recent head to head study comparing word prediction software, it was demonstrated that up to a 60% reduction in keystrokes could take place when using word prediction to type. In this study, using the word prediction in Read&Write Gold from Texthelp resulted in the greatest overall reduction by a large margin.

In addition to reduction in keystrokes, accurately predicting words is also important. As with keystroke reduction, Read&Write Gold led the way in this area as well. The study demonstrated that words predicted were accurate an average of 97% of the time. A full copy of the report can be found by visiting <http://www.texthelp.com/north-america/research/product-research/>.

Students using word prediction can reduce their number of keystrokes by up to 60%!
Gibson & Horn, 2013

Strategy 6:

Provide Opportunities for Early Correction

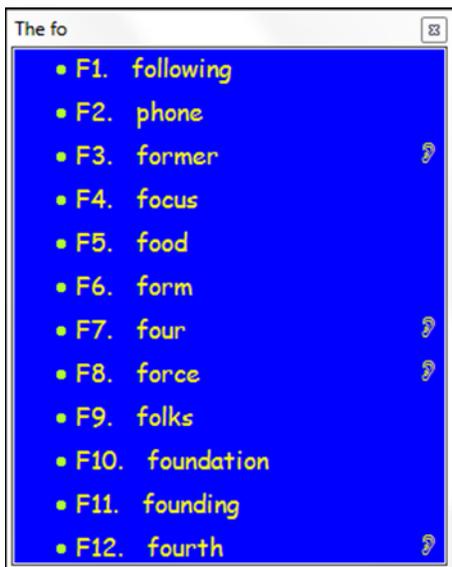


There's an old saying that says "practice makes permanent." While not always accurate, there is something to the statement. For example, if students continually misspell the same word over and over before being corrected, it can become extremely difficult for them to start spelling it correctly. This same scenario can occur in everything from writing and speech to even swinging a golf club. Because of this, it is important that students learn to do things correctly the first time

around or quickly be given corrective feedback when an error occurs.

According to Jason Gibson, Doctoral Candidate at the University of Kentucky and co-author of the previously mentioned study, word prediction software promotes errorless learning by always predicting correctly spelled words. When turned on, features such as "predict one word ahead" can provide suggestions for the next word before the student even types a letter. Having access to such tools allow students to learn how to spell words correctly during the writing process as opposed to being corrected and forced to "un-learn" how to spell it later.

Below is an image of the word prediction window in Read&Write Gold Version 11 that works in common applications such as Microsoft Word, Google Documents, and more.



Watch a short video of Word Prediction in action by [CLICKING HERE!](#)

About:

The Author - Jason Carroll



Jason is the Product Marketing Manager for North America at Texthelp Inc. He previously served as an Educational Technology Consultant and is a popular speaker at state and national conferences on Assistive and Instructional Technology. Follow him on Twitter [@jkcarroll!](https://twitter.com/jkcarroll)

The Company - Texthelp

Texthelp provides literacy software solutions for individuals, K-12, higher education, and publishers. Our goal is to provide technology that enables all learners, from children to adults, with learning difficulties, to read, write, study, and communicate with ease and independence.



Give Word Prediction a Try Now!

Now that you know several great ways to use word prediction, what are you waiting for?

Simply visit www.texthelp.com/trial and choose the Read&Write product that best fits your needs (PC, Mac, Chromebook/Google Apps, or iPad)