

Misspelled Word(s) of the Day - Day 4 - Every and Family
by Dr. Kelli Sandman-Hurley, Dyslexia Training Institute

Reminder: The purpose of Misspelled Word of the Day is not to try to make everyone a perfect speller, the purpose is to learn from misspellings and then teach the student the misspelled word of the day while instilling an understanding of written language in general. The intention is not to teach students to spell every word in the English language, of which there are more than one million, the intention is to teach the student to think about words differently and learn to question, and understand word structure.

So, drum roll please....this week's misspelled words of the day are: <*evry> and <*famly>. I love these mistakes because they are so easy to explain and once properly understood, they help the child deeply understand the difference between spoken syllables and written syllables.

The fact is our spoken syllables often do not match our written syllables. English is not a syllabic language, it is a stress-timed, morphophonemic language. The reason people have trouble spelling these words is because they have been erroneously taught to listen for the sounds in the words. English orthography doesn't work that way. We are all guilty of trying to get around this by over-enunciating these words to the point where they don't even resemble the original word. But this is not teaching them how to spell (or read) these words.

Instead we should be teaching them to *understand* the spelling. Let's start with <every>. Ask the student what <every> means or have them use it in a sentence. Then point out to them that the base is <ever> and point out the connection between the meaning of <ever> and <every>. The rest is simple, show the student the word sum ever + y → every. Pronunciation changes but spelling does not – this is an integral concept.

Next up, the troublesome word <family>. Talk with the student about what <family> means. Are you <familiar> with your <family>? Aha! That is why the <i> is there. Both words are part of the word family with the bound base <famil>.

famil + y

famil + i + ar – now we know why that <i> is there.

famil + i + ar + ity

un + famil + i + ar

un	<famil>	y	es			
		i	ar	ity		
				ize	ed	
					ate	
						ion

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So, stop over-enunciating, it's not helping and it's certainly not going to help the student understand the spelling. Instead talk about word's meaning first, then identify the word parts and study the pronunciation shifts while also noting that the spelling doesn't change. Here are some more words to try out on your own: <different> and <bakery>.

Homework: If you have a student that misspells these words, do this exercise with them and report back!