Spelfabet 100 pseudoword spelling test

A pseudoword is a potential word in a given language, as it has allowable sound and spelling combinations, for example, "flernish" is an English pseudoword, but "wstoepfteg" is not, as it doesn't sound or look remotely English.

Pseudowords are great for testing encoding skills/spelling, because they eliminate the possibility that the test words have been memorised as wholes, and require learners to sound out (i.e. use their phonemic awareness and knowledge of phoneme-grapheme correspondences) to spell all the words.

For young children and older ones who haven't been able to build their vocabularies through reading, most of the words in English are pseudowords. None of us know every word in the language – think of how many weird words are allowed in Scrabble. Learners usually don't mind writing pseudowords - from their perspective, they have to do it all the time. Try putting a few pseudowords into a search engine, and you'll find that most of them mean something to someone, somewhere. "Google", "blog" and "selfie" were all pseudowords not long ago.

I'd love your feedback on the following pseudoword test. There are no norms for this test, it's just intended as a tool to explore what a learner does and doesn't know about spelling, and to assist with choice of Spelfabet workbooks/materials. I usually try two or three words from each section and then if it's clearly too easy, skip up to the next section, till I find a group of words that contain spellings the learner doesn't know.

Before we do this test, I usually tell kids that I'm going to ask them to write some alien names and words from an alien language written in English. Sometimes I draw a few aliens – four eyes, six tentacles, some slime etc, and since my drawing skills are atrocious, kids laugh, which helps make the task seem less formal and stressful. Then off we go. No need for special equipment or expensive test forms, just pencils and paper, plus a way to block the view of other people's work for anyone inclined to copy.

Three-sound words

I start with just one letter = one sound in three-sound pseudowords (CVCs or Consonant-Vowel-Consonant words):

1. **pab**
2. **jeg**
3. **kib**
4. **cag**
5. **fom**
6. **zun**
7. **vit**
8. **sen**
9. **hod**
10. **wup**
11. **yim**
12. **rab**
13. **lud**

If a child can't do these, and is going to use the Spelfabet workbooks, they should start at the beginning of workbook 1.

If they can spell the above words, try the following pseudowords with consonant digraphs:

14. **kesh**
15. **cham**
16. **coth** or maybe **koth**
17. **fung** or perhaps **phung**
18. **jeck** or perhaps **geck**
19. **riss** or perhaps **wriss**
20. **zoll**

If they can't do these, start from p 25 in Workbook 1.

Four sound words

If they can do all the above pretty well, then try these pseudowords with CVCC word structure:

21. **halch**
22. **weps**
23. **yolve**
24. **rilm**
25. **vulk**
26. **renk**
27. **zant**
28. **wust**
29. **lomp**
30. **yuft**
31. **rax**, as in "I bought at new rax" (make sure you give this example sentence, to make it clear that this is a singular noun like "tax" not a plural or 3rd person verb like "tacks").

Kids who can't do these should start at the beginning of workbook 2. If they can do these, try some past tense pseudowords:

32. These aliens like to vick. Have you ever **vicked** before? Vicked (rhymes with ticked)
33. On Fridays they like to yeg. They have **yegged** every Friday for 2 years. Yegged.
34. They also like gopping so they **gopped** along the street. Gopped.

If these words cause a problem, start at page 31 in workbook 2. But if the above past tense pseudowords are written correctly, try some CCVCs.

35. **bram**
36. **plock**
37. **tweb**
38. **drung**
39. **crig**
40. **glat**
41. **quep**

42. **stish**
43. **snod**
44. **swun**

If these are a problem, try Workbook 3. But if they can spell CCVCs, try some "long" vowel spellings in both open and closed syllable pseudowords:

Vowel spellings

The possible correct answers multiply here because each sound has several spellings, so if you like, ask the learner to write each word more than one way if they can think of extra possibilities.

45. **prave** (as in save) or **praive** (as in waive)
46. **chay** (as in day) or **chey** (as in they)
47. **zite** (as in bite) or **zyte** (as in byte) or **zight** (as in fight)
48. **ji** (as in hi) or **jy** (as in my) or **jie** (as in pie) or **jigh** (as in high) or **jye** (as in bye)
49. **spode** (as in node) or **spoad** (as in toad) or **spowed** (as in showed)
50. **trow** (as in slow) or **troe** (as in toe) or **tro** (as in fro)
51. **froo** (as in moo) or **frew** (as in chew) or **frue** (as in blue)
52. **woon** (as in hoon) or **wune** (as in June) or **wewn** (as in strewn)
53. **thewt** (as in newt) or **thute** (as in cute)
54. **sheeb** (as in dweeb) or **sheab** (as in reap) or **shebe** (as in grebe) or perhaps **shieb** (as in chief)
55. **dwee** (as in free) or **dwe** (as in we) or perhaps **dwea** (as in sea) or even **duee** (as in duane)
56. Someone got **graked** (as in faked) or **graiked** (as in grained)
57. Someone got **trimed** (as in timed) or **trymed** (as in rhymed)
58. Someone got **choned** (as in throned) or **choaned** (as in moaned)
59. Someone got **prooped** (as in drooped) or **pruped** (as in duped) or perhaps **prouped** (as in souped-up)
60. Someone got **treeced** (as in fleeced) or **treased** (as in creased) or maybe **treaced** (as in peaced)

Problems here suggest that work is needed on the patterns in Workbook 4. But if these are mostly correct, other vowels might be the problem, so try:

61. **clarp** (as in tarp)
62. **quer** (as in her) or **quir** (as in stir) or **querr** (as in err) or **quirr** (as in whirr)
63. **plaw** (as in claw) or **plore** (as in more) or **plor** (as in for) or **ploor** (as in poor) or **plour** (as in pour) or **ploar** (as in roar) or **plaur** (as in dinosaur)
64. **prall** (as in fall) or **prawl** (as in crawl) or **praul** (as in Paul) or maybe **prorl** (as in whorl)
65. **jow** (as in cow) or maybe **jowe** (as in Lord Howe Island)
66. **glound** (as in ground) or **glowned** (as in clowned)
67. **proy** (as in boy)
68. **sploil** (as in boil)
69. **zair** (as in hair) or **zare** (as in care)
70. **slear** (as in hear) or **sleer** (as in beer) or **slier** (as in tier) or **slere** (as in here)

If these are the problem, these patterns are tackled in Workbook 5. If not, try:

71. **jance** (as in dance) or possibly **janse** (as in manse)
72. **twerse** (as in verse) or **twirse** (as in twirl) or **twurse** (as in purse)
73. **vause** (as in pause) or **vauze** (as in gauze) or maybe **vawse** (as in hawse, a part of the bow of a ship)
74. **glonze** (as in bronze) or **glonse** (as in flense)

75. **zounge** (as in lounge)
76. **boothe** (as in smoothe) or maybe **buthe** or **bewthe** (but I can't think of any similar words)

These final consonant spellings are tackled in Workbook 6, along with a lot of homophones (e.g. wear/where, throne/thrown) and spelling overlaps (e.g. the different sounds represented by the letter A in cat, last, want, all).

Multisyllable words

If your learner can spell most of the abovepseudowords, she or he is probably needing to mostly work on multisyllable words, which you can check with these pseudowords:

77. A thing that flots is a **flotter**
78. Let's all go **glonking**
79. Let's all go **vuzing** (as in US fuzing) or **voozing** (as in snoozing) or **vusing** (as in using)
80. Let's all go **clepping** or **klepping**(as in stepping)
81. I found two **thritches** (as in witches) or maybe **thriches** (as in riches)
82. Don't touch it, it **blexes** (as in flexes)
83. I found a yoaf/yofe, and then another one, so now I have two **yoaves** (as in loaves) or **yoves** (as in cloves)
84. Do you think it's getting **sharter** lately? Sharter.
85. That is the **breenest** (as in greenest) / **breanest** (as in cleanest)thing I ever saw in my life. Breenest.
86. We have to wait for it to **drappen** before we pick it. Drappen (as in happen)
87. I bought a new **truttle** (as in bottle) or possibly **truttel** (as in chattel).
88. We had a **squessful** day (as in stressful)
89. They started to gatter him, and he didn't like being **gattered** (as in shattered)
90. Look at that **kire** (as in fire) or **kyre** (as in tyre) or **kyer** (as in dryer)
91. Look at that **ture** (as in cure) or **tewer** (as in skewer)
92. They were felling **rotchy** (as in blotchy) or **wrotchy** (as in wrong) or **rhotchy** (as in rhotic)
93. That's the **slarchiest** thing I ever heard
94. They found two **medloys**
95. It was very **grellow** (as in yellow) or maybe **grelloh**
96. They went **frining** (as in dining) or **phrining** or perhaps **friening** or **phriening**
97. They went **frinning** (as in grinning) or **phrinning** or perhaps **frynning** or **phrynning**
98. Nobody was **drairing** (as in chairing) or **draring** (as in caring)
99. Its zame (as in fame) or zaim (as in aim) was extraordinary, it was very **zamous** (as in famous) or **zaimous**
100. They started to dwerry (as in berry) and they **dwerried** for two hours.

These patterns and others like them are tackled in Workbook 7. A student who gets these mostly right but still makes a lot of mistakes on vowels in multi-syllable words might find Workbook 8 useful.

I'm still trying to finish workbooks 9 and 10 - one school holidays when other priorities are out of the way.

I'd love your feedback on this 100 pseudoword spelling test, so if you use it, please tell me what you think/discover, and especially anything you think could be improved.

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