



ONE CHILD, FOUR MODES, HER OWN SCHOOL WORDS

Kaya asks to do spelling on her tablet.

That is not a sentence we expected to write about spelling practice. Kaya has Down syndrome, a moderate learning disability and difficulties with mobility. She has used Spelling Live since the first build. It was not adapted for her afterwards — she is one of the reasons it works the way it does.

Written by Manoj Shah, who built the app. Kaya is his daughter, and this is published with her family's consent.

A picture first, always

Kaya is a strongly visual learner. When a new word appears she asks for the picture before anything else — before the sound, before the letters. That is why the app has no fixed route through a word. The modes can be done in any order, at any pace, and none has to come before another.

On a good day she will run all four. On a hard day we do **Pick it** and stop, and nothing in the app treats that as a failure.



Writing *sock* — one of the five words from that week's dictation.

How the week actually runs

01 · Pick it With pictures

Recognising a word before being asked to produce it. This is how every new word starts.

02 · Trace it Letter overlay on

Handwriting, with support. Her writing is not where we want it yet, but it is better — and we can see where.

03 · Dictation Heard, written, photographed

The app reads the words, she writes them on paper, and she takes the photo — her favourite part.

04 · Coins Then the games

Balloon Pop, and lately Word Search with help. The coins are what she works for.

“I did it!!”

Unprompted, from the next room. That is the entire reason any of this exists.



The scaffolds she leans on

None of these are headline features. Each one is the difference between a task she can try and one she cannot.

THE ONE WE WOULD NOT WANT TO LOSE

Flash

Tap Flash and the word fills the screen in large letters for a few seconds, then disappears and she writes it. It matters most in dictation. Holding a word in mind long enough to write it is the step that usually breaks down for Kaya. Flash gives the word back for a moment without telling her the answer.

FADE IT, DON'T REMOVE IT

1s

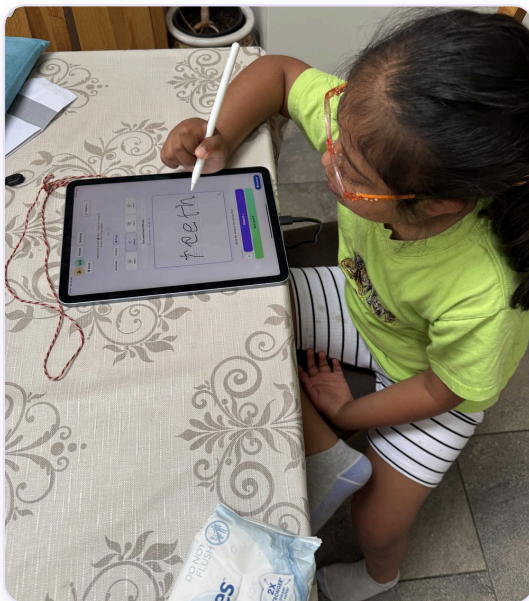
2s

3s

5s

8s

The time can be changed, so the help is reduced slowly as a word becomes familiar, instead of taken away all at once.



A stylus on glass, marked like any other writing

For a child with mobility difficulties, an Apple Pencil on a tablet is often easier to control than a pencil on paper. The app marks that writing just as it marks everything else. It showed several letters she was forming wrongly, again and again. Those are the ones we now work on with the trace overlay.

Overlay off, when she's up to it

She can write without the trace, but she needs an adult beside her and it is slower and harder. Because the overlay can be turned on and off in a moment — and locked so it stays put — we can offer her the harder version safely.

Writing freehand with the trace overlay switched off — a stretch, not the default.

Small things that matter more than they should

The slower voice

A word read at normal pace goes past her. The same word slowed down does not.

A shorter keyboard

She types, but not on a full QWERTY keyboard. The smaller set of letters is what makes typing possible.

Nothing is gated

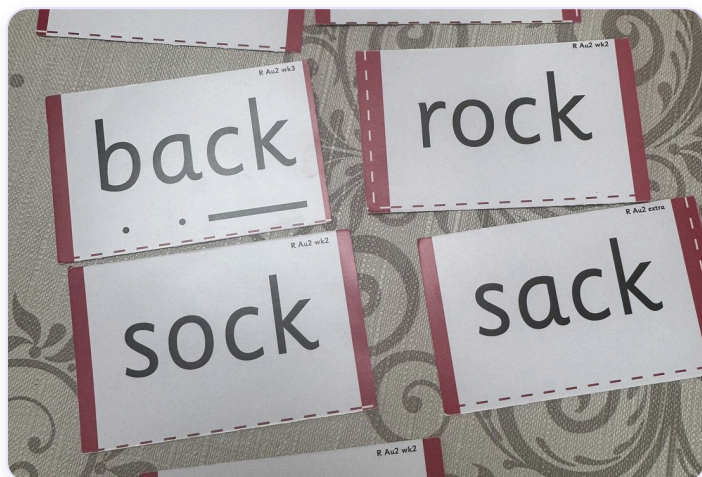
No mode unlocks another, so a session can be made shorter to suit the day.

The photo is hers

A small thing. She owns a step of the process, and she knows it.

One week, end to end

The same five words: from the cards that came home in her bag, to a marked page, to a decision about what to teach next.



1. School's words, photographed straight in. No retyping, and no parallel word list that differs from what her class is teaching.

2 / 5 correct

1. luck luck



2. back lock



3. rock roak



4. sock rock



2. The dictation test, marked. The app read her handwritten page and scored it 2 out of 5 — and recorded what she actually wrote.

ASKED FOR	SHE WROTE	MARK
luck	luck	✓
back	lock	✗
rock	roak	✗
sock	rock	✗
sack	sack	✓

The middle column is the point

Knowing Kaya got three wrong tells us very little. Knowing she wrote *rock* for **sock**, and *lock* for **back**, tells us the first letter is the problem and that the **-ock** and **-ack** endings are mostly secure. That is something a teacher can act on — and it came from a photograph of a page.

And it can be overruled. Any row can be changed with a tap, and the text edited if a letter was misread. This is early handwriting from a child with a disability, which is the hardest thing for vision AI to read. An adult stays in charge of what goes into the record.

WHY THIS IS IN OUR ENTRY

Spelling Live is not a specialist SEN product, and we would not want it judged as one.

What we would say is this: a child with Down syndrome, a moderate learning disability and limited mobility uses it on her own school words, across four modes, and asks to do it. The accessibility work behind that — the trace overlay, Flash, the shorter keyboard, the slower audio, the gentler feedback, the picture-first route into a word — is there for every child using the app. Kaya is the reason we know it works.



THE SAME LOOP, FURTHER UP THE SCHOOL

Aarav always passed the test. The mistakes came afterwards.

He did well whenever he knew which words were coming. Weeks later he got the same words wrong. What changed that was spaced repetition, and meeting each word in more than one way.

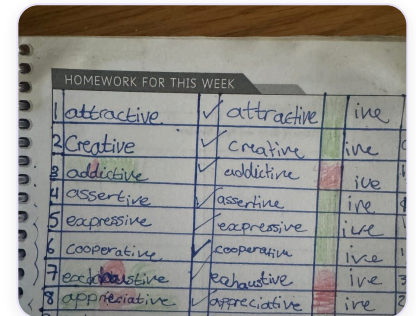
Aarav was in Year 5 for this work and starts Year 6. Manoj's son, published with his family's consent; the log book and sheet are already on our blog.

It starts as a log book, not a list

Ten spellings come home in a book each week. Photographed straight in, they become the week's practice. One week, as the school set it:

attractive creative addictive assertive expressive cooperative
exhaustive appreciative offensive impressive

Ten words to learn, or **one pattern** set on purpose. And *-ive* is the easy half: he went wrong on the letter before it, writing *offensive*. Spotting that was a parent's job.



One week's spellings, straight from the book.

The one that got away

15 / 16

Sixteen words marked from the photographed sheet. The report does not start with the score. It starts with **insistent**, and what he wrote.

“-ent” written as “-ant”. The app names the rule: both endings sound like “-unt”, so the wrong one is easy to pick. A fifteen-second conversation, not a re-test.

Then widen it. He got *courageous* wrong, so “-ous words” typed into **Get words on any topic** built a list to practise — *simultaneous* and the rest.

Finding tricky Most-missed words first

WORD	MISSED	GOT RIGHT	MEANING	SPELL
insistent	1	1	0	

See wrong answers
Wrote: "insistant"

Most-missed first. One miss out of sixteen still surfaces, with the wrong answer kept next to it.

The same word, seen in more than one way

Crossword

The clue, not the word

From his own list: definition, blanked sentence, then plain meaning.

Word Lock

His idea, and Ring too

The crossword-style definition, the word hidden until he spells it.

Meaning & Synonyms

Similar, and opposite

A plain-English meaning, or synonyms and an antonym. He uses both a lot.

Maze, Climb, Boggle

Arcade, and a leaderboard

He plays these for a Hall of Fame place, and saves Boggle for his aunt.

He is as happy spelling aloud as typing — **Say it** takes the spoken word. He reports bugs, too: he caught the Meaning hint giving the answer away, which the code now checks for and masks. **And the words keep coming back:** spaced repetition returns them weeks after the test. Game attempts are **never** counted in the report.

“We know he has got it when he corrects his mother's spelling of *liaison*.”