



Literacy Research Center and Clinic
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Developmental Spelling Inventory (DSI)

What is the Developmental Spelling Inventory?

The Developmental Spelling Inventory (DSI) is an informal assessment that examines a student's spelling knowledge to better understand how they think about words. Rather than focusing only on whether words are spelled correctly, the assessment reveals patterns that show how a student's orthographic knowledge is developing.

At the Literacy Research Center and Clinic, every student completes the Developmental Spelling Inventory as part of the core assessment process.

What does it measure?

The DSI provides information about a student's knowledge of:

- Letter-sound relationships
- Orthographic patterns
- Syllable patterns
- Affixes and derivational relationships
- Developmental stages of spelling

These results help identify how students use sound, pattern, and meaning to spell words.

Why do we use it?

The Developmental Spelling Inventory helps tutors identify a student's current stage of spelling development and understand which word study concepts have been mastered and which require further instruction.

How do the results inform instruction?

Tutors use the results to:

- Plan individualized word study instruction.
- Select spelling and phonics patterns for instruction.
- Strengthen connections among reading, spelling, and writing.
- Monitor growth throughout tutoring.

Why it matters

Spelling development reflects much more than memorizing words. The Developmental Spelling Inventory helps tutors understand how students are learning the English writing system so instruction can be targeted to meet their individual needs.