

Monster Test Introduction: Assessing Developmental Spelling

WHY? Developmental spelling is important because it gives us a ‘window’ into children’s understanding of how to use print to form words, and how those understandings grow across time. Across time, individuals go through predictable ‘phases’ of developmental spelling. This test can identify the current phase, and show progress across time and across interventions.

WHAT: The ‘Monster Test’ of developmental spelling was designed by Richard Gentry and colleagues in 1985, and has been in widespread use for the past 25 years. This 10-item test is quick to administer, and provides great information for a variety of purposes:

- **Progress Monitoring:** This test helps show progress across time. Because it is quick to administer, it can be given at least at the beginning and end of the year, as a new project is initiated. It is helpful to administer the test even before students are ‘writing’ as that will document that baseline is 0, and will highlight student progress!
- **Tracking Phases for Individual Students:** This test leads to identifying phases of developmental spelling from precommunicative to conventional spelling.
- **Proscriptive Testing:** Knowing the spelling phase can assist teachers and therapists in designing appropriate instructional strategies for groups or individuals.

WHERE: The Monster Test is readily available with a simple internet search, using terms such as / monster test gentry /

HOW: Clear directions for administering and scoring the test are available on the 5-page Monster Test guide. For students who are struggling writers, or are unable to write using typical pencils, try the following accommodations:

- **Slant board, pencil grips, etc.:** Some students who struggle to write can write with more ease using tools such as slant boards, pencils with grips, pencils that provide feedback, etc. Consult the occupational therapist for ideas for specific students.

- **Light-Tech Alphabet Board:** A simple light-tech alphabet board, such as the one shared at www.aacintervention.com can be used. Students simply point to the desired letter, and a scribe writes down their choices.



Light Tech Alpha Bd

- **Computer keyboard, portable writing device, labeler, etc:**

Many students will be able to focus on WHAT to write if they don’t have to labor over the ACT of writing. Thus, portable writers (e.g., The Writer, Neo), computer keyboards, or even inexpensive labelers (e.g., Casio or Brother labeler from Staples, Office Depot, etc.).



Casio Labeler

- **Alphabet on high tech communication device:** Many high-tech communication devices have an alphabet page; if the student is familiar with that page, it can be used.

- **Alternative pencil such as eye-gaze or alphabet flip chart.**

The Center for Literacy and Disability Studies has developed a number of alternative pencils that can be used for administering developmental spelling tests.



Alphabet Flip Board

<http://www.med.unc.edu/ahs/clds/available-for-purchase-1>