Spelling Rules and Techniques

Common Spelling Rules

1. Use *i* before *e* except after *c* or when sounded like “ay” as in neighbour and weigh.
   - *i* before *e* relieve, believe, sieve, niece, fierce
   - *e* before *i* receive, deceive, sleigh, freight, eight
   - exceptions seize, either, weird, height, foreign, leisure

2. Generally, drop a final silent *e* when adding a suffix that begins with a vowel. Keep the final *e* if the suffix begins with a consonant.
   - desire, desiring; remove, removable
   - achieve, achievement; care, careful
   - exceptions words such as changeable, judgment [can also be spelled judgement], argument, truly

3. When adding *-s* or *-ed* to words ending in *y*, ordinarily change *y* to *i* when the *y* is preceded by a consonant but not when it is preceded by a vowel.
   - comedy, comedies; dry, dried
   - monkey, monkeys; play, played

4. If a final consonant is preceded by a single vowel and the consonant ends a one-syllable word or a stressed syllable, double the consonant when adding a suffix beginning with a vowel
   - bet, betting; commit, committed; occur, occurrence

5. Add *-s* to form the plural of most nouns; add *-es* to singular nouns ending in *-s*, *-sh*, *-ch*, and *-x*.
   - table, tables; paper, papers
   - church, churches, dish, dishes

Spelling Techniques

1. Traditional
   - Look it up
   - Learn the rules
   - Study a list of commonly-misspelled words
   - Write out troublesome words over and over

2. Latent Study (visual)
   - write the word in the centre of a card
   - highlight the troublesome area by using another colour
● put the card in your line of vision for at least a week

3. Nonsense words (auditory)
   ● have someone dictate a list of nonsense words -- or unfamiliar words -- to heighten your awareness of the relationships between spelling and sound

4. Phonics (auditory)
   ● learn basic sound-spelling patterns of English
   ● break words into syllables and “sound out” each syllable

5. Delayed Copying - SEE, SAY, HEAR AND FEEL (visual, auditory and tactile)
   ● look at the correctly-spelled word
   ● look away and pronounce it
   ● write it from memory, noticing how your hand moves
   ● visualize a blackboard and you writing the word in white chalk
   ● check the original to see if you are correct

6. Tracing (tactile)
   ● trace the word with your fingertip
     ● in sand
     ● on sandpaper
     ● on your palm
     ● on the subway walls