Top tips for teaching
Skill 5: Tricky Words (Irregular spellings)

Tricky words: words that contain irregular sounds or sounds not yet taught

1. Identify the tricky part
   - Help your learners to understand that it is often only part of a ‘tricky word’ that is actually ‘tricky’.
   - They should practice looking at a tricky word and identifying the part of the word that is not following the rules e.g. ‘do’: It is worth pointing out that the <d> is making the sound we would expect (/d/), but the <o> is making an /oo/ sound.

2. Look, Say, Copy, Cover, Write, Check
   - **Look:** Often people check the spelling of tricky words by seeing if it ‘looks right’ when written. When learning to spell tricky words it can be useful for learners to put boxes around letters and think about the overall shape of the word. They should pay particular attention to the size of letters (tall, small and fall letters).
   - **Say:** think of the word ‘Wednesday’. Many of us will say (at least in our heads) ‘Wed-nes-day’ to help us remember the spelling. Saying a word how it is spelt can help children remember how to read and write the tricky part!
   - **Copy:** Write out the tricky word to be learnt, make sure it has been copied correctly!
   - **Cover:** Cover up the word so that the correct spelling can no longer be seen.
   - **Write:** Try to write the word from memory. Think about its shape and pronounce the word as it should be spelt.
   - **Check:** Compare the correct spelling with the word written from memory. Is it correct?
   - It is worth repeating the last two steps a couple of times, seeing if the word can be written correctly 2 more times.

3. Other useful methodologies for learning Tricky Words.
   - **Word wall:** We would encourage teachers to have a display of tricky words in their classroom – add tricky words to the display as you teach them to your class. Ensure regular revision is completed.
   - **Mnemonics:** this is a technique that helps learners remember tricky words by associating a sentence where the start of each word correlates to letters in the tricky word e.g. r-h-y-t-h-m (rhythm helps your two hips move)
   - **Other memory tricks:** Word associations can be helpful to learn the spellings of tricky words e.g. stationary or stationery (we can remember that stationery is the office supplies by associating the e with an envelope)
   - Read through pages 19 and 20 of the Jolly Phonics’ Teacher’s Book for ‘additional helpful hints for spelling’