



NATIONAL LITERACY ASSOCIATION

# The Guide to Literacy Resources

## Collins Spellchecker



'It does what is says on the tin' might be the best review for this small, useful gadget. You type in a word to check its spelling. The machine then gives you a list of alternatives and you choose the correct one by scrolling down the list.

The idea of scrolling down is a good one for young people as they are forced to look at one word at a time (unlike in a block of text) and discriminate between the options. It is almost as if they are sounding out. So it's not just a 'here's the right answer and get on with it' device.

Based on the data from the Collins Dictionary, I can see that this would be very useful for KS2 and KS3 pupils in their writing. It is and very easy to use, small and neat (and in a 'cool' black – very adult-looking - with an intuitive keyboard).

Correct spelling in writing is a problem for many young people – and their teachers. Do you allow children to write freely and then go back and revise their work (children usually hate re-drafting and it can become counter-productive and create frustration) or is there a way of checking spelling and finding appropriate vocabulary as you go along? This device is versatile enough to be used with either of these philosophies and is quick enough for writers not to become discouraged.

Its features include phonetic spell correction (even if they are unsure of the first letter of the word they can find correct versions – try that with a traditional dictionary!) and the ability to distinguish between easily confused words. English is full of homophones and this is a challenge to most traditional checkers (chequers?!). A large letter C flashed on screen to alert users to this function and definitions are offered to distinguish between words.

It's not just an output device though. Young writers can create and save their own words – perhaps problem words – and teachers could make good use of these for assessment for learning.

You could use it with cross words – it has a ‘solver’ function and will help with anagrams and tricky word puzzles, so language can become fun as well. Of course there are games on the device, but these are clearly focused so there is no problem with fearing that no real work is being done.

At £17.99, it’s not a cheap device for every child in the class, especially as it only really performs one function, but it could be something that parents would like to help with as it would be an invaluable device for homework and with parents helping young people with their writing. However, if you wanted to justify cross-curricular budgets it does contain a 10 digit calculator as well!