



Spelling

SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVING SPELLING SKILLS

The misspelling of words in your writing tells your reader that you are not concerned with the quality of your work. Even if you have interesting ideas, they might not be communicated effectively if you misspell words. Here are some suggestions to help you to improve your spelling skills.

1. Use a dictionary. When you write the rough draft of a paper, circle the words which you are unsure of, and then look them up in your dictionary when you write your final draft. Look up any word you are not sure how to spell.
2. Study the guidelines and lists in this appendix, as well as in Appendix 5: Confusing Word Pairs and Groups. Although looking up misspelled words in a dictionary is an excellent idea, it is not enough. You need to know the guidelines as well. Then you can begin to make real improvements.
3. Learn to pronounce words correctly. Again, using a dictionary can help you. Here is a list of words misspelled because they are often mispronounced.

Unnecessary Letter Added

athletics	NOT <i>athletics</i>
disastrous	NOT <i>disasterous</i>
lightning	NOT <i>lightening</i>
height	NOT <i>heighth</i>

Necessary Letter Omitted

accident ally	NOT <i>accidently</i>
environ ment	NOT <i>enviroment</i>
extra ordinary	NOT <i>extrordinary</i>
gover nment	NOT <i>government</i>
lib rary	NOT <i>libary</i>
supposed to	NOT <i>suppose to</i>
used to	NOT <i>use to</i>

Letters Transposed

irrelevant	NOT <i>irrevelant</i>
perform	NOT <i>preform</i>

4. Try not to rely on pronunciation too much, however. The same combination of letters can be pronounced differently in different words. For example, *ough* sounds like an *f* in *tough*, but *ough* is a silent *gh* in *through*. Accurate pronunciation does not always tell you how to spell a word, so you must rely on your dictionary. And you must memorize!
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EXERCISE 2 ▶ Begin your list of words you misspell. Add words to your list from corrected writing assignments, worksheets, and exercises in this book. Study the list and refer to it when you proof-read your papers for spelling.

List of Commonly Misspelled Words

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 11 _____ |
| 2. _____ | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 15. _____ |
| 6. _____ | 16. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 17. _____ |
| 8. _____ | 18. _____ |
| 9. _____ | 19. _____ |
| 10. _____ | 20. _____ |

IE OR EI

You must know the difference between vowels and consonants in order to learn the basic spelling guidelines.

The vowels are *a, e, i, o,* and *u.*

The consonants are *b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, z.*

The letter *y* can be either a vowel or a consonant, depending upon its sound in a word. For example, in *why*, the *y* has the vowel sound of *i*. In *yogurt*, the *y* has the consonant sound of a *y*.

The combination of vowels *ie* or *ei* can sometimes be confusing. In *believe* and *receive*, the *ie* and *ei* sound alike, but the combination of letters is different in each word.

Use *i* before *e*, except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay* as in *neighbor* or *weigh*. Look at the following examples:

i before e

- belief
- chief
- piece
- relieve
- wield

ei after c

- deceit

continued

deceive
perceive
receipt
receive

ei pronounced as ay

beige
eight
freight
sleigh
weight

Words with a *shen* sound are spelled with an *ie* after the *c*:

conscience
sufficient

There are some exceptions to these guidelines. It is best to memorize the following spellings:

Exceptions

either
leisure
neither
foreign
height
seize
society
species
their
weird

FINAL E

Many words end in a silent *e*. Two are *write* and *shine*. **When adding an ending that begins with a vowel to a word ending in a silent *e*, drop the final *e*.** Look at the following examples:

argue + ing = arguing
arrange + ing = arranging
become + ing = becoming
come + ing = coming
continue + al = continual
excuse + able = excusable
fame + ous = famous
guide + ance = guidance
value + able = valuable

When adding an ending that begins with a consonant to a word ending in a silent *e*, keep the final *e*. Look at the following examples:

accurate + ly = accurately
arrange + ment = arrangement
hate + ful = hateful
time + less = timeless

There are some exceptions to these guidelines. Try to memorize these words:

Exceptions

argument
awful
changeable
courageous
mileage
noticeable

FINAL Y

Words ending in *y* often require a change in spelling when an ending is added to them. **When adding letters to a word that ends in a consonant plus *y*, change the *y* to an *i*.** Look at the following examples:

beauty + ful = beautiful
cry + ed = cried
happy + er = happier
lonely + ness = loneliness
luck + ly = luckily
rely + able = reliable
study + ous = studious

When adding letters to a word that ends in a vowel plus *y*, keep the final *y*. Look at the following examples:

delay + ed = delayed
destroy + ed = destroyed
obey + ed = obeyed

When adding *-ing* to a word that ends in *y*, keep the *y*. Look at the following examples:

cry + ing = crying
study + ing = studying
try + ing = trying

Here are the exceptions to these guidelines:

Exceptions

daily
paid
said

DOUBLE FINAL CONSONANT

Some words ending in a consonant double the consonant when you add letters to the words. Doubling the final consonant or not depends upon the following:

1. The number of syllables in the word
2. The letters preceding the final consonant
3. Which syllable is stressed (receives the accent when the word is pronounced)

When adding an ending beginning with a vowel to a one syllable word, double the final consonant if the last three letters of the word are consonant–vowel–consonant. Look at the following examples:

big + er = bigger (*Big* ends in consonant *b*, vowel *i*, consonant *g*.)
hot + est = hottest (*Hot* ends in consonant *h*, vowel *o*, consonant *t*.)
slap + ed = slapped (*Slap* ends in consonant *l*, vowel *a*, consonant *p*.)
swim + ing = swimming (*Swim* ends in consonant *w*, vowel *i*, consonant *m*.)
slop + y = sloppy (*Slop* ends in consonant *l*, vowel *o*, consonant *p*.)

Do not double the final consonant when the word ends in vowel-vowel-consonant or ends in vowel-consonant-consonant:

pair + ed = paired (*Pair* ends in vowel *a*, vowel *i*, consonant *r*.)
dent + ed = dented (*Dent* ends in vowel *e*, consonant *n*, consonant *t*.)

When adding an ending beginning with a vowel to a word of more than one syllable, double the final consonant if the last three letters of the words are consonant-vowel-consonant and if the stress is on the last syllable. Look at the following examples:

begin + er = beginner (*Begin* ends in consonant *g*, vowel *i*, consonant *n*.)
control + ed = controlled (*Control* ends in consonant *r*, vowel *o*, consonant *l*.)
refer + ing = referring (*Refer* ends in consonant *f*, vowel *e*, consonant *r*.)

PLURALS

Nouns usually form plurals by adding *-s* or *-es* to the singular form. An *-es* is used to add another syllable in order to make pronunciation easier. Look at the following example:

church + es = churches

Add *-es* to form the plural of a noun that ends in *ch*, *sh*, *ss*, *x*, or *z*. Look at the following examples:

bush + es = bushes
address + es = addresses
fox + es = foxes
quiz + es = quizzes (*Quiz* also doubles the *z*.)

Add *-es* to form the plural of a noun that ends in a consonant plus *o*. Look at the following examples:

hero + es = heroes
tomato + es = tomatoes

Add *-s* to form the plural of a noun that ends in a vowel plus *o*. Look at the following example:

radio + s = radios

There are some exceptions to the guidelines for forming the plurals of words ending in *o*:

Exceptions

pianos
solos
sopranos

Add *-es* to form the plural of a noun in which you change the final *y* to an *i*. (See the section on final *y* in this appendix.) Look at the following examples:

beauty + es = beauties

dictionary + es = dictionaries

If a noun ends in *f* or *fe*, change the ending to *ve* before adding *s* for the plural form. Look at the following examples:

leaf + s = leaves

knife + s = knives

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