



## COMMONLY CONFUSED OR MISSPELLED WORDS

We can trace why words become commonly confused back to one thing—spelling. English spelling comes from a set of conventions or rules that have been agreed upon by dictionary editors. Since English has been a language for around 1600 years, how some words are spelled has changed many times. Regardless of these historic changes and how they often make it difficult to figure out a standardized alphabetic form for many sounds, most English words now have fixed spellings that can be looked up in dictionaries at any time.

Since using good spelling is usually considered a sign that a writer is educated, it is a good idea to work on improving your spelling, no matter how good you are at it. One way to improve your spelling is to read more, keeping a spelling list or journal in which you write down and practice new words. Another way is to own your own college dictionary, using it to look up the spellings and definitions of words you have trouble spelling. Since computerized dictionaries often lead you to use words you may not understand, be sure not only to use the dictionary provided with your word processor, but to use print dictionaries as well. For more specific help in using your dictionary, see **Chapter 13**.

## DID YOU KNOW?

Ever wonder why English spelling is so unpredictable? English has a long history of foreign influence, which not only accounts for many of the unusual spellings, but also often indicates the origin of the word. For example, the words *doubt* and *debt* originally entered English from French influence, but misguided linguists added the silent *b* hundreds of years ago to both words to reflect the words' Latin origins (*dubitare* and *debitum*, respectively). While these alterations might make spelling and pronunciation frustrating (especially for non-native speakers), they reveal the rich history of English.



### 12a

#### Check for words that are always separate

A common spelling error is to run together words that should be written as two. The following phrases should always be written as separate words.

- a lot, all right, even if, even though, going to, in fact, just as, no one, of course

### 12b

#### Check for words that can be written together or apart

The spelling of some words depends on the meaning you intend. For example, *already* means “previously” and *all ready* means “to be prepared.” First, decide upon the meaning, and then choose the correct form by consulting your dictionary.

**Different spacing, different meaning**

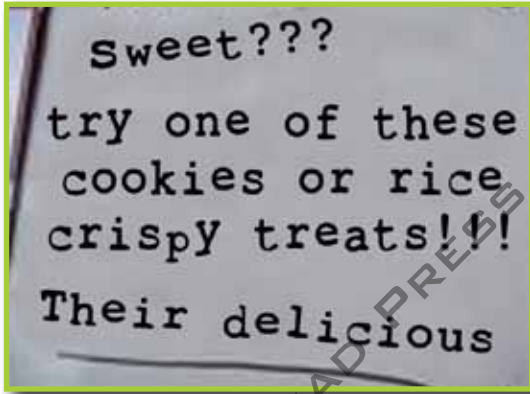
| One word   | Two words    |
|------------|--------------|
| already    | all ready    |
| altogether | all together |
| always     | all ways     |
| anybody    | any body     |
| anyone     | any one      |
| anyway     | any way      |
| awhile     | a while      |
| everybody  | every body   |
| everyday   | every day    |
| everyone   | every one    |
| however    | how ever     |
| into       | in to        |
| maybe      | may be       |
| nobody     | no body      |
| somebody   | some body    |
| someone    | some one     |
| whatever   | what ever    |
| whoever    | who ever     |

**12c****Check for words that are pronounced the same or similarly**

In English, we have many homophones—words that are pronounced the same but have different meanings. Homophones use different spellings, and since this is what distinguishes the meaning, you need to use your dictionary to find the correct word. Here is a list of the most commonly misspelled homophones.

### Most commonly misspelled homophones

|                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| it's (it is or it has)    | its (possessive)                  |
| you're (you are)          | your (possessive)                 |
| they're (they are)        | their (possessive), there (place) |
| who's (who is or who has) | whose (possessive)                |



What's the problem with this sign  
at a bake sale?

Here are some other commonly confused or misspelled words. Learning these will help you become a proficient speller and editor.

### Other commonly confused words

| A                     | A          |
|-----------------------|------------|
| a                     | an         |
| *alot (ungrammatical) | a lot      |
| accept                | except     |
| access                | excess     |
| adapt                 | adopt      |
| adverse               | averse     |
| advice                | advise     |
| affect                | effect     |
| agree to              | agree with |

|            |   |
|------------|---|
| aisle      | isle  |
| allude     | elude   |
| allusion   | illusion  |
| already    | all ready                                       |
| alright    | all right                                       |
| altar      | alter   |
| altogether | all together                                    |
| among      | amongst<br>between                              |
| amoral     | immoral   |
| amount     | number  |
| and/or     | and<br>or                                       |
| angry at   | angry with                                      |
| annual     | biannual<br>semiannual<br>biennial<br>perennial |
| ant        | aunt  |
| ante-      | anti-   |
| anybody    | any body  |
| anyone     | any one   |
| anymore    | any more  |
| anyway     | anyways   |
| assistance | assistants                                      |
| assure     | ensure<br>insure                                |
| ate        | eight   |
| awhile     | a while   |
| <b>B</b>   | <b>B</b>  |
| backup     | back up   |
| bad        | badly<br>poorly                                 |
| bare       | bear  |

|            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| base       | bass             |
| be         | bee              |
| beach      | beech            |
| because of | due to           |
| being as   | being that       |
| berry      | bury             |
| berth      | birth            |
| beside     | besides          |
| between    | among<br>amongst |
| blew       | blue             |
| board      | bored            |
| brake      | break            |
| bring      | take             |
| breadth    | breath           |
| breath     | breathe          |
| business   | busyness         |
| by         | bye<br>buy       |
| <b>C</b>   | <b>C</b>         |
| can        | may              |
| canvas     | canvass          |
| capital    | capitol          |
| cell       | sell             |
| ensor      | censure          |
| cent       | sent<br>scent    |
| cereal     | serial           |
| chord      | cord             |
| chose      | choose           |
| climactic  | climatic         |
| coarse     | course           |
| compare to | compare with     |
| complement | compliment       |

|                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| conscience     | conscious      |
| consequently   | subsequently   |
| continual      | continuous     |
| could have     | could of       |
| counsel        | council        |
| criteria       | criterion      |
| <b>D</b>       | <b>D</b>       |
| dairy          | diary          |
| data           | datum          |
| dear           | deer           |
| decent         | descent        |
| desert         | dessert        |
| device         | devise         |
| dew            | due            |
| die            | dye            |
| different from | different than |
| disinterred    | uninterested   |
| discreet       | discrete       |
| do not         | don't          |
| dual           | duel           |
| due to         | because of     |
| dying          | dyeing         |
| <b>E</b>       | <b>E</b>       |
| effect         | affect         |
| elicit         | illicit        |
| elude          | allude         |
| emigrate from  | immigrate to   |
| eminent        | imminent       |
| ensure         | insure         |
| everyone       | every one      |
| except         | accept         |
| explicit       | implicit       |

| <b>F</b>  | <b>F</b>     |
|-----------|--------------|
| faint     | feint        |
| fair      | fare         |
| farther   | further      |
| fewer     | less         |
| firstly   | first        |
| flour     | flower       |
| for       | fore<br>four |
| former    | latter       |
| formally  | formerly     |
| further   | farther      |
| <b>G</b>  | <b>G</b>     |
| good      | well         |
| gorilla   | guerilla     |
| grate     | great        |
| <b>H</b>  | <b>H</b>     |
| hair      | hare         |
| hanged    | hung         |
| he/she    | he or she    |
| heal      | heel         |
| healthful | healthy      |
| hear      | here         |
| heard     | herd         |
| higher    | hire         |
| his/her   | her or her   |
| hole      | whole        |
| hostel    | hostile      |
| hung      | hanged       |
| <b>I</b>  | <b>I</b>     |
| idle      | idol         |
| if        | whether      |
| illusion  | allusion     |

|                               |                  |
|-------------------------------|------------------|
| immigrate                     | emigrate         |
| immoral                       | amoral           |
| implicit                      | explicit         |
| imply                         | infer            |
| in                            | into             |
| ingenious                     | ingenuous        |
| insure                        | assure<br>ensure |
| in regard to                  | in regards to    |
| *irregardless (ungrammatical) | regardless       |
| it's                          | its              |
| <b>K</b>                      | <b>K</b>         |
| knew                          | new              |
| know                          | no               |
| <b>L</b>                      | <b>L</b>         |
| later                         | latter           |
| lay                           | lie              |
| lead                          | led              |
| learn                         | teach            |
| leave                         | let              |
| led                           | lead             |
| lend                          | borrow<br>loan   |
| less                          | fewer            |
| lie                           | lay              |
| like                          | as<br>as if      |
| literally                     | figuratively     |
| loose                         | lose<br>loss     |
| lots                          | lots of          |
| <b>M</b>                      | <b>M</b>         |
| made                          | maid             |

|           |                        |
|-----------|------------------------|
| mail      | male                   |
| main      | mane                   |
| may       | can                    |
| maybe     | may be                 |
| maze      | maize                  |
| meat      | meet                   |
| medal     | metal, meddle          |
| media     | medium                 |
| miner     | minor                  |
| moral     | morale                 |
| <b>N</b>  | <b>N</b>               |
| number    | amount                 |
| <b>O</b>  | <b>O</b>               |
| oar       | ore                    |
| of        | off                    |
| OK        | O.K.<br>okay           |
| off       | off of                 |
| one       | won                    |
| <b>P</b>  | <b>P</b>               |
| pain      | pane                   |
| pair      | pear, pare             |
| passed    | past                   |
| patients  | patience               |
| peace     | piece                  |
| peak      | peek, pique            |
| peer      | pier                   |
| percent   | per cent<br>percentage |
| personal  | personnel              |
| phenomena | phenomenon             |
| plain     | plane                  |

|              |                         |
|--------------|-------------------------|
| pore         | pour<br>poor            |
| precede      | proceed                 |
| pretty       | rather<br>quite         |
| principal    | principle               |
| proceed      | precede                 |
| <b>Q</b>     | <b>Q</b>                |
| quiet        | quite                   |
| quote        | quotation               |
| <b>R</b>     | <b>R</b>                |
| rain         | reign, rein             |
| raise        | rays                    |
| real         | very<br>really          |
| respectfully | respectively            |
| right        | write<br>wright<br>rite |
| rise         | raise                   |
| role         | roll                    |
| <b>S</b>     | <b>S</b>                |
| sail         | sale                    |
| scene        | seen                    |
| scent        | sent, cent              |
| seed         | cede                    |
| seem         | seam                    |
| set          | sit                     |
| shall        | will                    |
| should of    | should have             |
| sight        | cite<br>site            |
| should have  | should of               |
| sit          | set                     |

|                              |                        |
|------------------------------|------------------------|
| site                         | cite<br>sight          |
| sole                         | soul                   |
| some                         | sum                    |
| somebody                     | some body              |
| someone                      | some one               |
| sometime                     | some time<br>sometimes |
| so                           | very                   |
| stationary                   | stationery             |
| steal                        | steel                  |
| suppose to                   | supposed to            |
| sure                         | surely                 |
| <b>T</b>                     | <b>T</b>               |
| take                         | bring                  |
| taught                       | taut                   |
| team                         | teem                   |
| than                         | then                   |
| that                         | which                  |
| their                        | there<br>they're       |
| *theirselves (ungrammatical) | themselves             |
| there                        | their<br>they're       |
| thorough                     | through                |
| threw                        | through                |
| tide                         | tied                   |
| to                           | too<br>two             |
| toward                       | towards                |
| <b>U</b>                     | <b>U</b>               |
| *most unique (ungrammatical) | unique                 |
| *use to (ungrammatical)      | used to                |

| V          | V             |
|------------|---------------|
| vain       | vane<br>vein  |
| W          | W             |
| waist      | waste         |
| wait       | weight        |
| wait for   | wait on       |
| wander     | wonder        |
| ware       | wear<br>where |
| way        | weigh         |
| way        | ways          |
| weather    | whether       |
| well       | good          |
| were       | where, wear   |
| which      | that<br>who   |
| while      | whereas       |
| who        | which<br>that |
| who        | whom          |
| who's      | whose         |
| wood       | would         |
| would have | would of      |
| Y          | Y             |
| your       | you're        |

## EXERCISE 1

*Directions: Correct any problems with commonly confused or misspelled words.*

Who would of thought that a simple hike threw the woods would result in a classic



emblem of Americana? Beginning in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, people from all over started coming too Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga, Tennessee too see “Rock City” and experience it’s natural rock formations. In the 1920s, a businessman named Garnet Carter began developing Lookout Mountain into a residential neighborhood called Fairyland, but his wife had other plans. Freida Carter began exploring Rock City—now her property—and turning it into an elaborate rock garden. Recognizing the potential profit of his wife’s ornate garden, Garnet opened Rock City to the public in 1932. Business was slow, however, so Garnet had to find a way to entice visitors to there garden with more advertising then they currently had. Garnet hired Clark Byers to paint farmers’ barns for free as long as the phrase “See Rock City” was added. Farmers from Michigan to Texas excepted the offer, and the iconic black and white signs on red barns became part of are American landscape. The advertisements had—and continue to have—a significant effect on the Carters’ business; every year, over half a million people see the sites of Rock City, likely having past many of the famous signs on there way to Lookout Mountain.

<http://www.seerockcity.com/pages/Our-Story/>