

TUTORS TALKING

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All About Spelling

Spelling is not a reflection of intelligence! Not all adults have perfect spelling skills. In fact, many have developed bad spelling habits over the years. The nature of communication today with social media and texting has led many to ignore English capitalization and punctuation rules, and increased use of abbreviations.

Spelling words in English can be challenging work! One of the main reasons for this is that many words are not spelled as they are spoken. This difference between spelling and pronunciation can cause a lot of confusion. The following strategies will help your learners to tackle this subject, and successfully learn how to spell correctly.

— Alison



Why use rules?

The rules of spelling are not consistent and there are plenty of exceptions, but they are still worth studying. Rules can help to:

- ↳ Explain how new words are built using prefixes and suffixes.
- ↳ Show connections between unfamiliar words and words you may already know.
- ↳ Take the mystery out of spelling by showing patterns among seemingly unrelated words.
- ↳ Identify specific speech patterns that can offer clues as to how a word is spelled.

Read as often as you can

Every language has common combinations of consonants and vowels. Repetition will make these more familiar, and it's easier to learn the spelling of a word that you already recognize.

Learn important lists

- The 220 sight words: These can account for up to 50% of most texts.
- The 100 most misspelled English words. See Appendix B.

Look for patterns and word groups

The human brain is very good at spelling patterns. If you present it with examples of words that contain a similar letter combination, it is possible to learn English spelling rules indirectly.

Recognize prefixes and suffixes

The English language is full of common prefixes and suffixes. These are letter combinations that change the meaning of a word in a consistent way.

- Prefix: at the start of a word
For example: *re-* means to do something again, as in *review*, *regenerate*, *reiterate*.
- Suffix: at the end of a word.

Spell out loud

Sometimes spelling a word aloud can make it easier to learn for those who find it difficult to write letters on paper. Create a list of words you want to learn and practice spelling them aloud.

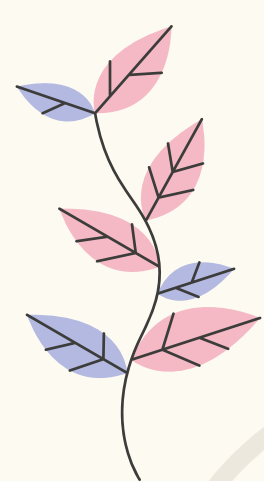
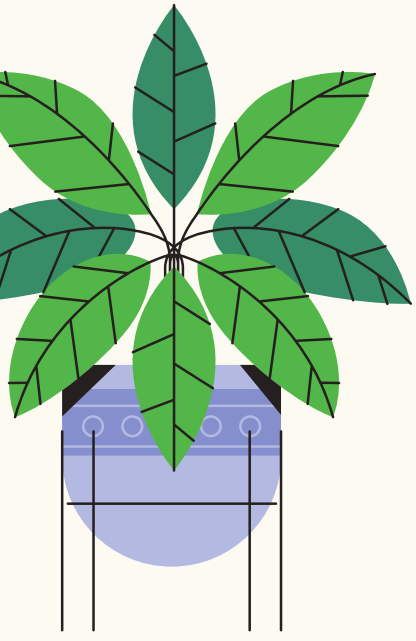
Use mnemonics

Words that are hard to spell can sometimes be made easier by using visual or auditory cues. For example:

- necessary: it is necessary to have 1 collar and 2 socks.
- because: Big Elephants Can Always Understand Small Elephants
- Stationery or stationary?: e for envelope, a for at rest.

Write, write, write!

The only way to really learn a word is to use it. If you look up the spelling of a word, write it down several times in a row, and do it again a day or two later. Also consider writing a blog, a journal, emails, etc. – anything that keeps you writing!





Appendix A

The "Ough" Poem

The following poem provides an excellent example on the confusion that can be caused by the inconsistent pronunciations of the same letter combination.

The "Ough" Poem

I wanted bread, so I made some dough,
The flour looked like soft white snow.

↳ pronounced – doe, long 'o'

I baked the dough to cook it through,
and took it out at half past two.

↳ pronounced – throo

But the crust was just too tough,
I chewed and chewed the awful stuff.

↳ pronounced – tuff, short 'u' sound

After a while, I gulped and coughed,
Why wasn't my bread nice and soft?

↳ pronounced – cofft

I thought, was it the farmer's plough,
that ruined all the wheat somehow?

↳ pronounced – plow

I sighed, walked to the shops and bought,
A loaf of bread, softest sort.

↳ pronounced – bawt

Appendix B

The 100 most misspelled words

The following is a list of 100 of the most frequently misspelled words. Practice spelling them correctly.

acceptable
accidentally
accommodate
acquire
acquit
a lot
amateur
apparent
argument
because
believe
calendar
category
cemetery
changeable
collectible
committed
conscience
conscientious
conscious
definite(ly)
disappear
disappoint
drunkenness
embarrass

equipment
exhilarate
exceed
existence
experience
February
foreign
fourth
gauge
generally
grammar
grateful
guarantee
harass
height
hierarchy
ignorance
immediate
independent
indispensable
intelligence
its/it's
judgement
knowledge
leisure

library
lightning
maintenance
manoeuvre
memento
millennium
miniature
mischievous
noticeable
occasion
occasionally
occur/occurred
occurrence
official
parallel
parliament
pastime
pigeon
possession
preferable
principal/principle
privilege
questionnaire
receive
recommend

referred
reference
relevant
religious
restaurant
ridiculous
rhythm
sandal
schedule
scissors
sensible
separate
special
success
to/too/two
tomorrow
their/they're/there
twelfth
tyranny
until
vacuum
vicious
weather/whether
weird
you're/your

The beloved i before e Rule

Except when your neighbour
Keith receives eight counterfeit
beige sleighs from five feisty
caffeinated weightlifters!

