

Spelling

English spelling rules are complex, with many exceptions.

If you find spelling to be a particular challenge, here is one strategy to follow:

As a foundation:

- Practice your spelling
- Keep a "spelling notebook" and list words you commonly misspell or have trouble with
- Keep a list of commonly misspelled English words, or words that may be spelled correctly, but misused (e.g. who's * whose)
- Keep a list of rules for spelling
- This book can also help you build your vocabulary

As regards important documents you send, or turn in to others:

- Spell check the document if it is electronic
Note: Some e-mail software (ie. MS Outlook) can be set to automatically check spelling and grammar before you can send
- Re-read the printed document carefully for errors:
 - Pay attention to words you commonly misspell or that are spelled correctly but misused
 - Note these words in your spelling notebook
 - Have someone you trust and respect review the document.
- This is often difficult for us since often we get comments regarding text as well as spelling. But that is a plus, since we don't have to change the text, but rather appreciate the suggestions and go on...
- If you have a Center for Writing Assistance, take advantage of it

Using Dictionaries: a dictionary contains more than the spelling of a word!

It also contains the spelling of its derivatives: plural forms and participles. Internet resources include

Dictionary.com, <http://www.dictionary.com/> (dictionary, thesaurus, and access to foreign dictionaries)

Merriam-Webster Online, <http://www.m-w.com/> (dictionary, thesaurus, look up feature for bad spellers, word of the day, word games, and access to vocabulary in 230 languages)

Since English is so exceptional in its spellings, any dictionary assists you in finding exceptions to the rules of spelling. Alternative spellings, especially British vs. American, should also be noted.

Spell checkers in word processing:

- Spell check each and every word-processed document as a habit!
- Proof-read each document after spell-checking!
A spell checker will only find words incorrectly spelled. It will not find words correctly spelled but misused.

Common errors:

from and form: a common typing inversion;
of, or: another case of mistaken keyboarding;
to, too, two; there, their; whether, weather: common confusion of usage

Remembering a "spelling":

- Check a dictionary for the correct pronunciation of the word. This will help you remember how to spell the word
- Check for the meaning and history of the word.
This provides additional information
- Practice spelling the word to yourself before you close the dictionary. Write it down or visualize it in your mind's eye.
Check the spelling in the dictionary again to ensure that you have learned to spell the word correctly;
- Learn basic spelling rules (see below)

Adapted from "Steps to Becoming a Good Speller" in *Basic English Revised* by Patrick Sebranek and Verne Meyer.

A Few Key Spelling Rules

- Write "i" before "e" except after "c," or when sounding like "a" as in "neighbor" and "weigh." When the "ie/ei" combination is not pronounced "ei," it is usually spelled "ei."

Examples: fiery, friend, mischief, view,
ie believe

Examples: reign, foreign, weigh,
ei neighbor, weird, receive

- If a word ends with a silent "e," drop the "e" before adding a suffix which begins with a vowel:

state-->stating, like-->liking

- Do not drop the "e" when the suffix begins with a consonant:

state--statement; like--likeness; use--useful

- When "y" is the last letter in a word and the "y" is preceded by a consonant, change the "y" to "i" before adding any suffix except those beginning with "i":

beauty--beautiful; fry--fries; hurry--hurried;
lady--ladies

- When forming the plural of a word which ends with a "y" that is preceded by a vowel, add "s":

toy--toys; play--plays; monkey--monkeys

- When a one-syllable word ends in a consonant preceded by one vowel, double the final consonant before adding a suffix which begins with a vowel:

bat--batted, --bating; prod--prodded, --
prodding

- When a multi-syllable word ends in a consonant preceded by one vowel, and the final syllable is accented, the same rule holds true: double the final consonant:

control--controlled; sum--summary;
god--goddess; prefer--preferred

- But when the final syllable does not have the accent it is at least preferred, and in some cases required, that you NOT double the consonant. (The preference characterizes American English; British English seems to prefer doubling, though it often allows its omission. But a number of words disallow doubling in both American and British English.)

focus--focused; pardon--pardoncd;
worship--worshipped; trumpet--trumpeted; gallop--galloped

<http://www.iss.suffomas.edu/studyguides/spelling.htm>

8. Most words that end with a "sed" sound, are spelled "cede."

precede

recede

concede

Only three words use "ceed."

succeed

exceed

proceed

9. "i" before "e" except after "c" (or when the sound is like an "a" as in "weigh").

receive

field

10. Double the final consonant before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel when the consonant is preceded by one vowel.

big + er = bigger

hit + er = hitter

Do not double the final consonant when it is preceded by two vowels.

heat + ed = heated

read + ing = reading

keep + ing = keeping