

Ten Tips for Better Spelling



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- In general, **memorizing** rules isn't the best way to learn spelling.
- Most rules have many exceptions, and you can't learn to spell every word.

I. A well-known spelling rule:

- *i* before *e*, except after *c*,
- or when sounded like “*ay*”
- as in *neighbor* and *weigh*

Here are some words that follow the rule:

- ***ie words:*** *believe, field, relief*
- ***cei words:*** *ceiling, deceit, receive*
- ***ei words:*** *freight, reign, sleigh*

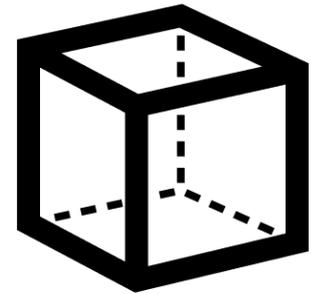
Some exceptions: *either, foreign, height, leisure, protein, weird*

“*ci*en” words are other exceptions: *ancient, efficient, and science*

2. “Silent e helps the vowel say its name.”

This means consonant-vowel-e pattern words have a long vowel sound

- *Rat/rate*
- *Hid/hide*
- *Cub/cube*
- *Quit/quite*
- *Scrap/scrape*
- *Spin/spine*
- *Bit/bite*



3. “When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking.”

This means when there are two vowels next to each other, the first is usually long and the second silent. That is why it is:

- *team*, not taem
- *coat*, not caot
- *wait*, not wiat

Remembering this will help you put the vowels in the right order.

4. Making nouns plural:

- Most nouns just add *s*: *books, sprouts*
- Nouns ending in *ch, sh, s, x, or z*, add *es*:
boxes, buses, prizes
- Nouns ending in a vowel and *y* add *s*: *boys, keys, days*
- Nouns ending in consonant and *y*, change *y* to *i* and add *es* : *babies, countries, spies, easier*
- Nouns that end in *f* or *fe*, those letters become *ves*: *(loaf) loaves, (thief) thieves, (elf) elves*

(Making nouns plural, continued)

- Most nouns that end in o, add s: *pianos, videos, kangaroos*
- Some nouns that end in a consonant and o, add es: *potatoes, heroes, volcanoes*

Exceptions to plural rules:

- Some English words change a vowel when they become plural: *goose/geese, man/men, mouse/mice, tooth/teeth*
- Some nouns don't change at all: *fish, deer, sheep, species*
- A few nouns have plurals left from Old English: *child/children, ox/oxen*



5. Break the word you are trying to spell into syllables, look for prefixes, suffixes, and root words.

Try to spell each part . Look for similarities to words you know.

- dis-ap-pear-ing
- tra-di-tion-al
- kin-der-gar-ten

6. Make up a memory aid.

For example:

- *dessert/ desert*: dessert has an extra s for sweet
- *separate* has a *rat* in the middle
- You lose the e from *argue* when you spell *argument*

7. Some people make up silly sentences in which the first letter of each word spells the problem word.

- **chili**: cats have interesting little ideas
- **physical**: please have your strawberry ice cream and lollipops
- **persuade**: place everyone's raw sauerkraut under a deviled egg

The sillier the sentence, the easier it is to remember!

8. Make sure you are pronouncing words correctly.

- The word is **candidate**, not canidate
- **Jewelry** is correct, not jewelery
- **Library** not liberary
- The month is **February**, not Febuary
- **Our/hour** are pronounced the same, not like are



9. Make a list of words you find difficult and keep the words on the list until you learn them.

10. Don't rely on spellcheckers!

They miss errors, especially when you use the wrong word, but spell it correctly.

For example, the computer found no errors in either of these sentences:

- “Eye mite knead sum knew shoos four Jim,” Hairy tolled hour Ant an.
- “I might need some new shoes for gym,” Harry told our Aunt Ann.

And finally:

When you choose a word suggested by the computer from the pull-down menu, make sure you pick the word you mean.

Use the built in dictionary and check if you are not sure!

Easily Confused or Misused Words

- Some words sound so similar, it's easy to confuse them when writing. Spell check won't find these mistakes!
- There are many reference lists and the built-in dictionary and thesaurus in your computer will help, if you use them.
- Using them is the best way to learn the words!

A few examples:

- *All right/alright* “It is not all right to use alright”
- *All together/altogether* Two words means people or things that are being treated as a group. The second means ‘entirely.’
- *Beside/besides* *Beside* is a preposition meaning next to. *Besides* is an adverb that means also.

- *Emigrant/ immigrant* One emigrates from a place; one immigrates to another place. When you emigrate, you become an immigrant.
- *Few/less* *Few* is an adjective that means smaller in number, used for countable objects. *Less* is an adjective that means smaller in amount or degree.
- *It's/its* *It's* is a contraction for it is. *Its* is the possessive form of *it*.

- *Passed/past* *Passed* is the past tense and past participle of *pass*. *Past* refers to time gone by; it is also a preposition meaning beyond some other point
- *Quit/quiet/quite* Remember the spelling rules. When you can pronounce them, you will know the difference
- *Who's /whose* *Who's* is the contraction for *who is*. *Whose* is the possessive form of *who*.
- *You're /your* *You're* is the contraction for *you are*. *Your* is the possessive form of *you*.

Pet Peeves:

- *People who* not *people that*
- *Then* refers to a time, *than* is used in a comparison
- *Would have*, not *would of*
- *Supposed to* not *suppose to*

Errors from student papers:

- *Clothes/cloths* *Clothes* are what you wear; they are made of *cloth*.
- *Lose/loose* *Lose* is a verb meaning you no longer have something. *Loose* is an adjective meaning not tight.
- *Fill/feel* *Fill* ,a verb, means to make something full. *Feel* is also a verb but it means to touch something.

More student errors:

- *months*: 12 in a year
mouths: on your faces
mounds: to climb something
- *later*: a time after now
letter: alphabet or a note
- *listen*: hear
lesson: learning