

## Six Spelling Strategies

## Spelling

Although it's tricky, good spelling is not impossible. While some people spell better than others, it is not because they have some magic ability, but because they have certain mental habits. Most people are not even aware of these habits, but almost anyone can learn and practice them.

### 1. Visualizing Words

Good spellers can visualize almost any word, imagining the word as though it were written out letter for letter in their heads. Most people do this easily with simple words such as *cat* and *hat*, but not always with more difficult words.

Do you automatically visualize words and their spelling? If not, practice with a few words that are hard for you to spell.

- Look at a word in print. Study its spelling for a moment and read it aloud.
- Close your eyes and spell it out in your head, letter for letter or syllable for syllable.
- Look at the printed word again and make sure you've spelled it correctly.

Practice this technique for a minute every time you encounter a difficult word.

### 2. Checking Your Pronunciation

Many people misspell words because they mispronounce them and then spell them according to the incorrect pronunciation. This is often the case with such words as *nuclear*, *realtor*, and *cavalry*. This is also the case with words that have syllables often skipped or added in speech, such as *probably* (often pronounced *PRAHB lee* instead of *PRAHB uh blee*) or *mischievous* (often pronounced *mis CHEE vee uhs* instead of *MIS chuh vuhs*).

When you misspell a word, look up its pronunciation in the dictionary.

- Before looking up the word, make sure you are familiar with the dictionary's pronunciation key. Phonetic respelling is standard in most dictionaries, and you can usually find the key.
- Find the word and look at its phonetic respelling.
- Are you pronouncing the word correctly? If not, practice saying the word out loud, one syllable at a time, and study the spelling of each syllable.

### 3. Using the Dictionary

The dictionary is your most valuable spelling tool. In addition to containing the correct spelling of every word, it also contains information about etymology, or word history. Knowledge of word roots, prefixes, and suffixes improves your spelling by helping you realize the relationship between certain word parts, their meanings, and how they are spelled.

For example, the word *vital* comes from the Latin word *vita*, which means "life." If you know this root and its spelling, then you might recognize it in the word *revitalize*, which means "to bring back to life." Recognizing the root might help you remember that the word is spelled *revitalize* and not *revidalize*.

When you look up a word in the dictionary, take an extra moment to look at its etymology and think about other words with the same roots, prefixes, and suffixes.

## Six Spelling Strategies (cont.)

## Spelling

### 4. Developing and Using Memory Devices

When a word gives you trouble repeatedly, make up a little rhyme or saying that you can repeat every time you write it.

For example, if you misspell *hear* as *hear*, remind yourself "I HEAR with my EAR." If you misspell *calendar* as *calender*, try saying out loud, "calen D-A-R" and repeat it ten times. The next time you want to write that word, repeat the saying to remind yourself how the word is spelled.

### 5. Proofreading

Many people misspell words out of carelessness rather than ignorance. Take the time to read over your writing before you hand it over to your readers, and correct any misspellings you've committed in haste.

### 6. Keeping a List

Keep a list of words that you have trouble spelling, and add to it when you find misspellings marked on your homework or learn a new word with difficult spelling. Review the list periodically, especially before you begin writing something.

Here is a list of words that many people misspell.

#### Commonly Misspelled Words

abbreviate	column	exaggerate	literature	possibility	specifically
accidentally	committee	exceed	loneliness	prejudice	strategy
achievement	courageous	existence	marriage	privilege	success
amateur	courteous	experience	mathematics	probably	surprise
analyze	criticize	familiar	minimum	psychology	syllable
anonymous	curiosity	fascinating	mischievous	pursue	sympathy
answer	decision	February	mortgage	realize	symptom
apologize	definitely	financial	necessary	receipt	temperature
appearance	dependent	origin	nix	receive	through
appreciate	description	fourth	ninety	recognize	throughout
appropriate	desirable	fragile	noticeable	recommend	tomorrow
argument	despair	generally	nuclear	reference	traffic
associate	desperate	government	nuisance	rehearse	tragedy
awkward	development	grammar	obstacle	repetition	transferred
beginning	dictionary	guarantee	occasionally	restaurant	truly
believe	different	guard	occurrence	rhythm	Tuesday
bicycle	disappear	height	opinion	ridiculous	twelfth
brief	disappoint	humorous	opportunity	sandwich	undoubtedly
bulletin	discipline	immediately	outrageous	schedule	unnecessary
bureau	dissatisfied	independent	parallel	scissors	usable
business	efficient	indispensable	particularly	seize	vacuum
calendar	eighth	irritable	permanent	separate	vicinity
campaign	eligible	judgment	permissible	sergeant	village
candidate	eliminate	knowledge	persuade	similar	weird
certain	embarrass	laboratory	pleasant	sincerely	yield
changeable	enthusiastic	license	pneumonia	sophomore	
characteristic	especially	lightning	possess	souvenir	