

SPELLING STRATEGIES

The first thing that you must realize is that nobody can give you all of the rules to overcome the difficulties of English spelling. No experience and no rule can take the place of your dictionary. If you have a general idea of a word's spelling, then you should have little problem looking it up in a dictionary.

The next step is to understand that you have to **work** at improving your spelling. Sometimes you'll have to devise your own way of teaching yourself. Here are six suggestions:

1. Keep a running list of the word that you consistently spell incorrectly.
2. When a paper has been returned to you, look over the corrections from misspelled words. Find out how to spell the words correctly and add them to your list.
3. Underline the difficult letters in a word. Make up devices to help you keep the letters straight in your mind. Most good spellers use "association clues" to help them spell troublesome words – that is, they associate the spelling of the word with something that they can easily remember. Some examples are as follows:

attendance →	think of " attending a dance "
battalion →	think of a " battle against a lion "
definite →	it comes from " finite "
occurrence →	it has " rre " as in " current event
principal →	the principal of a school is a " pal " to you
principle →	it means rule and ends " le " as well
separate →	it's hard to spell and there's a rat in it
stationery →	it means paper and ends in " er " too.

4. Keep looking at your list. Refer to it whenever you have a spare moment or two.
5. Get annoyed if you keep getting the same words wrong. You have to be willing to make an effort and soon the words will be yours – permanently!
6. Use a spell check program – a tool on most word processing programs which allows you to check and correct your spelling mistakes.

You should also familiarize yourself with five basic rules, which are regular enough to be helpful:

1. **"I" before "E"**
 - except after "c" (or when sounded like "a", as in neighbour and weigh.)
2. **Add "ES" instead of "S"**
 - when an extra syllable is pronounced; church → churches; fox → foxes

- when a noun ends in “o” and is preceded by a consonant; potato → potatoes, hero → heroes. (A major exception here is for words that are derived from the Italian language; soprano → sopranos, piano → pianos, solo → solos.)

3. “Y” to “I”

- before adding a suffix when “y” is preceded by a consonant; berry → berries, company → companies
- this rule does not apply to the words which end in “ing”; fly → flying, try → trying.

4. Drop the final “E”

- when a suffix begins with a vowel; dine → dining, note → noting.
- keep the “e” when the suffix begins with a consonant; live → lively, hope → hopeful (except for the words truly and argument.)

5. Double the final consonant

- when the suffix begins with a vowel; “ing”, “er”, “ed”, “est”
- when the word is only one syllable or when the last syllable is stressed; re fer’, o mit’
- when the word ends in one consonant preceded by one vowel; quit, split.

Examples: sin → sinned → sinning
begin → beginner → beginning

6. Frequently confused words

THEIR / THERE / THEY’RE

There: refers to place) “There are three problems”. “I used to live there”.
• There is the opposite of here (same spelling pattern).

Their: possessive pronoun) “Their class is very interesting”. “We found their books”. Their is the possessive for they (like adding r to you = your) ut the y in they becomes an i when you add an r.

They’re: contraction of *they are*) “They’re all taking the same course”.
• The apostrophe in They’re indicates a missing a from *they are*.

ITS / IT’S

Its: possessive pronoun) “Its wheels fell off”. “The tree lost its leaves”.
• Its is a possessive pronoun (like his, my...).
• No possessive pronouns have apostrophes.

it’s: (contraction) “It’s time to go”. “It’s been nice to meet you”.

- It's is a contraction (short for "it is" or "it has").
- A contraction always requires an apostrophe.

LOSE / LOOSE

lose: (verb) "They mustn't lose the game". "I always lose my keys".

loose: (adjective) "A loose shirt is comfortable". "My fan belt is loose".
To lose is the verb—with an irregular spelling (the single O), but the adjective *loose* follows the expected spelling pattern.

AFFECT / EFFECT

affect (verb) The changes don't affect me. Supply often affects price.

effect (noun) That has no effect on me. The effects of war are tragic.

effect (verb) The new government effected many changes.

The verb *to effect* is not seen very often.

Memory Aid: A cause leads to an effect;
 the final letter of the word cause is the first letter of effect.

THEN / THAN

then: (reference to time or sequence of events)
 I planned my essay and then I wrote it.

than: (used in making a comparison)
 Dawson is larger than most colleges.