

A FEW GUIDELINES FOR SPELLING

To spell words correctly is a challenge common to us who write. This essay presents some rules that can assist a writer in easing the difficulties involved in typically misspelled words.

1. For Words With *ie* and *ei*

Write *i* before *e* except after *c*, or when pronounced *ay*.

friend, siege, cashier, brief, yield

receive, deceive, conceit, receipt, perceive

neighbor, sleigh, rein, weigh, neigh

An exception to this rule is when the *ie/ei* combination is pronounced *ee*.

specie, leisure, caffeine, seize, either

2. Using Prefixes

A prefix is an affix placed at the beginning of a word to modify its meaning. Prefixes do not change the spelling of the word they're added to, even if the first letter of the word is the same as the last letter of the prefix.

bi + weekly = biweekly
co + operation = cooperation
dis + regard = disregard
hyper + active = hyperactive

Sometimes, however, a hyphen is used to differentiate between two meanings:

recreation or re-creation
reread or re-read

A hyphen can also make words easier to pronounce:

co-author, co-habitation, de-activate, pro-active

Few more examples of commonly used prefixes:

Prefix	Meaning	Example
a-	without; in or on	atop, aboard
di-	two or twice	diatom, dialogue
ex-	out of or out	ex-girlfriend, exclude
inter-	between	intercollegiate, international
mal-	bad; poor	malnutrition, maladjust
poly-	many	polygamy, polygon

3. Using Suffixes

Suffixes are placed at the end of words serving to form a new word, or as an inflectional ending.

- *Remove the unpronounced e* at the end of the word, if the suffix starts with a vowel:

grate + -ing = grating
like + -able = likable
accommodate + -ion = accommodation
unbrace + -ing = unbracing

The final unpronounced e may be left under these conditions:

- i. When the suffix begins with a consonant (**exceptions** include truly, argument, wholly, and ninth):

derange + -ment = derangement
fine + -ness = fineness
bore + -dom = boredom

- ii. To distinguish homonyms:

dye + -ing = dyeing (not dying)
singe + -ing = singeing (not singing)

- iii. To keep the sound of *c* or *g* soft:

notice + -able = noticeable
embrace + -able = embraceable
manage + -able = manageable

- *If a word has **y** as the last letter and the **y** is preceded by a consonant, then change the y to i before adding any suffix. This does not apply to suffixes beginning with i.*

fry + -es = fries (fry + ing = frying)
try + -ed = tried (try + -ing = trying)
beauty + -fy = beautify

Verbs ending in y preceded by a vowel do not change their y before s or ed:

monkey + -s = monkeys
destroy + -s = destroys (destroy + -ed = destroyed)
stay + -ed = stayed (stay + -s = stays)

- *Double the final consonant before adding a suffix when:*
 - i. a one syllable word ends with a consonant going before by a vowel, and
 - ii. when a multisyllabic word ends in a consonant preceded by one vowel, with the accent on the last syllable [and the suffix beginning with a vowel].

hit + -er = hitter
god + -ess = goddess
sip + -ing = sipping [one syllable words]

forget + -able = forgettable
occur + -ence = occurrence
refer + -ing = referring [two syllable words]

Do not double the final consonant when:

- i. the final consonant antecedes two or more vowels, or another consonant, and
- ii. the suffix begins with a consonant.

wait + -er = waiter
bail + -ing = bailing
foul + -ed = fouled [final consonant preceded by 2 vowels]

clear + -ness = clearness
 fear + -ful = fearful
 contain + -ment = containment [suffixes begin with consonant]

Few more examples of commonly used suffixes:

Prefix	Meaning	Example
-ate	operate upon	generate, stipulate
-cian	having a certain skill	mathematician, musician
-dom	state of being	martyrdom, boredom
-ence	state of, quality or condition	eminence, diligence
-ess	female	lioness, waitress
-ous	of or characterized by	polygamous, generous

4. Forming Plurals

Most nouns become plural by adding *s* to their singular forms (mops, the Wagners, papers, flowers).

- When nouns end in *f* or *fe*, change the ending to *ve* before adding *s*:

life – lives; thief – thieves; wife – wives; leaf – leaves

Exceptions include chief – chiefs; belief – beliefs

- When nouns end in a *y* preceded by a vowel, add an *s* to achieve its plural form:

toy – toys; ploy – ploys; valley – valleys

- When nouns end in a *y* that follows a consonant, change the *y* to *i* and add *es*:

homily – homilies; anomaly – anomalies; company – companies

To become a better speller requires time, practice, and patience. It is quite helpful to know the correct ways in which words are pronounced. Additionally, learning about the roots of a word provides one with more preciseness on how and when such word should be used – this, in turn, improves the

memory one has of such a word. Create lists of words you frequently misspell, each list with no more than ten words. Meticulously read them, and then write each word on a piece of paper. Check to see if you made any mistake, in which case you simply repeat the process. Lastly, practice writing regularly. There is little point in improving your spelling skills if you do not write.

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