Spelling ...



Classic spelling error 1 *ie* or *ei*

Skill requirement

Knowing when to use ie or ei when spelling words.

Typical error

Our nieghbour saw a theif enter our house.

Correction

Our neighbour saw a thief enter our house.

Explanation

If you learn this simple rule you will have few problems sorting out when to use *ie* and *ei*. (The second line of the rhyme is critical.)

Put i before e except after c

If the sound that you want is ee as in bee.

Let us apply this rule to *neighbour* and *thief*. In *thief* we can hear the *ee* sound so we put i before e. In *neighbour*, however, we do not hear the *ee* sound (but rather an α sound) and so we don't put i before e.

While the rule generally works, there are still some exceptions: for example, *caffeine*, *counterfeit*, *seize*, *species* and *weird*.

Exercise 1

Insert *ie* or *ei* in these words by using the above rule. Check your answers in the back of the book.

br___f

ch___f

conc ve

dec ve

gr f

h____ght

misch f

perc____ve

rec____pt

rel____f

th____r

w___ght



Skill requirement Correctly adding the **suffix** -ous to words ending in -our.

Typical error His humourous reply was greeted with much laughter.

Correction His humorous reply was greeted with much laughter.

Explanation If a word ends in -our we usually drop the u before adding the suffix -ous:

thus, humour becomes humorous.

Exercise 1 Add the suffix -ous to these words. Check your answers in the back of the book.

clamour dolour rigour valour vapour vigour

Classic spelling error 3 Their, there and they're

Skill requirement

Distinguishing their, there and they're.

Typical error

Their going to pitch there tent over they're.

Correction

They're going to pitch their tent over there.

Explanation

They're is actually a **contraction**: *they are* without the letter *a*, which has been replaced by an **apostrophe**. We really should not pronounce this contraction to sound like *their* or *there* but with a greater emphasis on *they* (so that *they're* rhymes with *layer*).

They are becomes They're

Say to yourself these two words and their contraction:

they would and they'd

Notice how the word *they* still sounds like *they*. Now practice saying *they* are and *they're*, keeping the *they* sound in *they're*. If you do this, you will be less likely to confuse the spelling.

The word *their* is a **possessive pronoun**; it shows possession (ownership) or a close relationship and is followed by the related thing or the thing 'possessed' (a **noun**) as in these examples.

Because it was cold, they put on their coats.

Their parents are on holidays.

It may help you to remember that *their* refers to people possessing things if you think of the fact that people have heirs, and *heir* is part of *their*. (Rhymes such as *Their heir is Clare* can be helpful.)

The word *there* is an adverb indicating a place, time or existence as in the examples below. It might help to remember when to use *there* if you think of the phrase *here* and *there*. Those words have a similar spelling and a similar function.

Let's go there sometime.

'There is the fracture,' said the doctor, pointing to the X-ray.

She paused there and waited for a reaction.

There is another point that I would like to make.



Exercise 1

Insert they're, their, or there in these sentences as appropriate. Check your answers in the back of the book. **a** _____ is the ball that we lost yesterday. **b** ____ hobby is slot-car racing. c They have put ____ bags in the car. **d** I hope _____ allowed to go to the dance. e _____ will be plenty of opportunities to go swimming. f We will leave when ready. g _____ going to the Exhibition on Monday. h If _____ is anything I can do to help, please let me know. i ____ jackets are over __ j They are finding that ____ is little satisfaction stacking shelves so ____ hoping that



Similar words

If you have problems sorting out their, there and they're or were and where or your and you're, focus on one of the words and its meaning and get that firmly imprinted in your mind. The other word(s) will then fall into place more easily.

____ next job will be better.

Classic spelling error 4 Were and where

Skill requirement

Distinguishing between were and where.

Typical error

Were where you going on your bike?

Correction

Where were you going on your bike?

Explanation

If you are in the habit of confusing were (a **verb**, which rhymes with sir) and where (which rhymes with hair), then concentrate on just one of the two words and try to fix its correct use in your mind. For example, it helps to actually put the h sound in where, so practise saying where as if you are saying hair with w in front of it. You will realise that where actually sounds quite different from were. Where is also the same word as in somewhere, everywhere, nowhere.

Study the use of where in these examples.

Where are Tom and Hannah? They could be anywhere!

This is where they are hoping to build a house.

Does anyone know where the car key is?

Where were you when the fire engines arrived?

Exercise 1

Insert *where* or *were* in these sentences as appropriate. Check your answers in the back of the book.

- a Do you know ____ my biro is?
- ${f b}$ They ____ going to the soccer match.
- c What ____ they wanting to know?
- d There is a news agency ____ the bakery used to be.
- e The bricks used to build a barbecue.
- f The vines _____ destroyed by the hail.
- g ____ can the cat possibly be hiding?
- h If I you, I would eat more fruit.
- i The shops ____ crowded.
- j I don't know ____ the tennis balls are.



Skill requirement

Correctly adding the **suffixes** -ed and -ing to words ending in y.

Typical error

I think the baby cryed because she was triing to tell us that she was hungry.

CorrectionExplanation

I think the baby cried because she was trying to tell us that she was hungry.

If a word ends in y, we leave the y when adding -ing (so cry becomes crying, study becomes studying) but we change the y to i when adding -ed or -es (so cry becomes cries and cried, study becomes studies and studied).

cry becomes crying, cries, cried

study becomes studying, studies, studied

fry becomes frying, fries, fried

deny becomes denying, denies, denied

Exercise 1

Add the suffixes *-ed* and *-ing* to these. Check your answers in the back of the book.

accompany baby
carry dry
hurry marry
ply rally

parry supply

busy

ferry

Classic spelling error 6 *Your* and *you're*

Skill requirement

Distinguishing between your and you're.

Typical error

If your certain that you're sister will not mind, then I will borrow her racquet.

Correction Explanation

If you're certain that your sister will not mind, then I will borrow her racquet.

You're is a shortened form of you are. When words are shortened this way, we say that they are contracted (which means drawn together because the Latin tract means to draw, as in tractor or retract). The **apostrophe** in you're indicates that the a has been taken out. We should actually pronounce the you in you're as you (so that you're rhymes with fewer). So, you're rhymes with fewer; your rhymes with floor.

Your is a **possessive pronoun**, and there is the same difference between *your* and *you're* as between *their* and *they're* (see S-Cla 3 on page 134).

Exercise 1

Insert *you're* or *your* in these sentences as appropriate. Check your answers in the back of the book.

- a I enjoyed looking at _____ photos.
- **b** _____ assistance has helped us to finish on time.
- **c** When feeling better, let's go to the beach for a holiday.
- **d** Is this book?
- e When is _____ birthday?
- f What is ____ fastest time for the 100 metres?
- g ____ welcome to stay for as long as you like.
- h When will parents be arriving?
- i the sunshine of my life!
- j If _____ parents will allow you to come to the camp, _____ welcome to come with us.



Skill requirement Recognising and including silent letters when spelling words.

Typical error She has neumonia.

Correction She has pneumonia.

Explanation Some words have a silent letter (one that we do not pronounce), so it is easy to forget to include them when we write. In *pneumonia*, for example, the letter

p is not sounded when we say the word.

One reason that silent letters exist is that often the words derive from other languages that have a different alphabet and different pronunciation. *Pneumonia*, for example, is based on a Greek word. As well, many of our words come from older versions of English where words were once pronounced differently. Once the printing press was invented (1440), spelling became fairly

fixed, even though pronunciation changed.

Exercise 1 Write out these words and then underline the silent letters in each. Check your answers in the back of the book.

doubt. dough campaign hymn knell gnaw knuckle knight knob lamb nought neighbour rhythm receipt sign solemn spaghetti wrap

wrath wring

Helpful Hint

Phonetic spelling

Should we change our spelling so that it is *phonetic* (based on pronunciation)? There are many problems with that idea. One is that different people still pronounce words differently so there would be no consistency. Another is that we would lose the relationship between words in the same word family. For example, the Greek *pneuma* means *wind*, *air*, and that helps us to understand such terms as *pneumonia* (a disease of the lungs), *pneumatic drill* (a drill using compressed air), *pneumatic tyre* (an air-filled tyre) and many other scientific and medical terms based on *pneuma*.

Homophones 1

Commonly confused homophones

Skill requirement

Distinguishing between **homophones** (words that sound the same).

Typical error

I new that you would bring your knew skateboard.

Correction

I knew that you would bring your new skateboard.

Explanation

In Greek, homo means the same and phonos means sound (as in megaphone). Thus, homophones are words that sound the same, such as knew and new.

It is easy to confuse homophones, though different people confuse different sets. One strategy is to choose *one* of the homophones and concentrate on fixing its meaning in your mind. Once you are sure of the meaning of that word, it will be easier to work out how its homophone should be used.

Memory tricks are helpful. So, for example, if you tend to confuse *new* and *knew*, say to yourself,

I knew Kay at kindy.

(The *k* at the start of each word forms an image that helps you to remember.)

Exercise 1

Obviously there are lots of sets of homophones. These are the main ones that regularly give problems. Memory tricks are provided to help you sort out the homophones. Study the memory trick for any that you personally find confusing. (If the memory trick does not work for you, try to work out your own memory trick.)

adolescence/adolescents

The adolescent smelt the scent of the rose.

Adolescence—the teenage experience.

complement/compliment

The complement has arrived so the team is now complete.

Compliments are nice.

formally/formerly

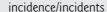
How does one dress for a school formal? Formally!

If it happened in former times, it happened formerly.

heard/herd

If you used your ear, you may have heard

A herd of nerds. (Now that's absurd!)



One accident is a single incident (an event), so four separate accidents are four different incidents.

The frequency at which something occurs is the incidence (for example, one in 1000 or one in 10,000).

lead/led (both rhyming with fed)

When the horse was fed, we led it out of the shed.

Lead is a heavy metal. It has more letters in it than led and so is heavier.

(The verb to lead changes to led in the past tense, just as to feed becomes fed.)

miner/minor

A miner mines the earth.

Are the changes to the plan minor or major?

pray/prey

A hawk has eyes that spot the smallest prey.

I pray each day I won't go astray.

principal/principle

The Principal of the school is your pal. (He is the principal, or main, teacher.)

Sir Frank Whittle invented the principle of the jet engine.

role/roll

I played the role of a mole in the play.

He read the *roll* of honour from a scroll.

steal/steel

You'd have to be hungry to steal a meal.

Under my heel I could feel the cold steel of the wheel.

to/too

The choo choo choo choo choo

Took too too too too long

To make the trip to Wollongong.

weak/week

I'd love a good steak 'cos I really feel weak

We've been paddling out on the creek for a week.



From the pair of homophones provided for each sentence below, select the correct one to insert in the sentence. Check your answers in the back of the book.

adolescence/adolescents
A dance was organised for the in the area.
Many people acquire their driving licence during
complement/compliment
We all appreciate being paid a when we have done something well.
This is only the first delivery; the of your order should arrive this afternoon.
formally/formerly
He was $___$ known as Wilhelm, but changed his name to William when he came to Australia.
On arriving at government house, the guests were introduced to the governor
heard/herd
A of water buffalo crossed the river.
Have you the saying, 'A stitch in time saves nine'?
incidence/incidents
Fortunately, the of measles dropped dramatically when immunisation was introduced.
After three involving bullying in the playground, the boys responsible were suspended.
lead/led
Mercury and are regarded as heavy metals.
Laura unhitched the reins and the horse to the stable.
miner/minor
The damage to the house from the storm has been relatively
Grandad was an underground coal at Ipswich.
pray/prey
They went into the chapel to
The leopard stealthily stalked her
principal/principle
The by which I try to live my life is 'Do unto others as you would have them
do unto you.'
The criterion for the job is that you must have good computer skills.
role/roll
In addition to everything else that she does, she has taken on the of treasurer for the club.
Grandad is listed on the honour at the War Memorial.

142 978 1 4202 3062 8 English Toolkit • • • •

k steal/steel

bridges are painted regularly so that they do not rust.

The defendant confessed that he did _____ the laptop.

I to/too

Do you think it is _____ far to drive in one day?

They are going _____ Norfolk Island for their holiday.

m weak/week

After being lost for two days without food and water, the hikers felt very _____.

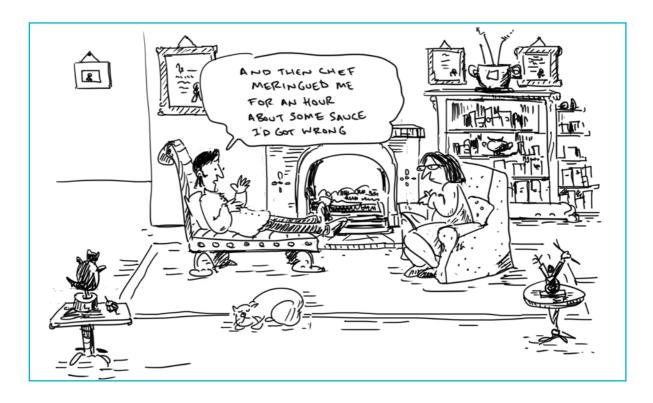
This is the last _____ of school before the holidays.

Helpful Hint

Malapropisms

When people accidentally use a word that is a homophone or close homophone of the correct word (for example, antidote for anecdote), they are committing a malapropism. The term comes from a character in a play, namely Mrs Malaprop in Sheridan's 1775 play The Rivals. Needless to say, Mrs Malaprop's chief trait is that she is always mixing up similar words. Obviously, she is a comic character and the play is a comedy.

For more on commonly confused words, see S-Hom 1 on page 140 and S-Hom 2 on page 144.



Homophones 2

Commonly confused virtual homophones

Skill requirement

Recognising differences between words that sound similar but should really be pronounced slightly differently; that is, they are not true **homophones**.

Typical error

If tomorrow is no hotter then today, then we will not go to the beach.

Correction

If tomorrow is no hotter than today, then we will not go to the beach.

Explanation

In Greek *homo* means *the same* and *phonos* means *sound*. *Homophones* are words that sound the same: for example, *steel* and *steal*. However, sometimes lazy pronunciation or poor hearing can lead to the confusion of words that are actually slightly different. Some people, for example, tend to make no distinction between such words as *then* (which rhymes with *hen*) and *than* (which rhymes with *tan*), but these should be pronounced differently.

If we mix up such similar words, normally we can sort them out if we make an effort to hear the differences and to pronounce the words differently.

Exercise 1

Below are memory tricks for pairs of words that are regularly confused. Say the jingles to yourself, making sure that you can hear the different sound in each word.

accept (sounds like axcept)/except (sounds like xcept)

Accept our acclaim; you played a great game—

except when excitement distracted your aim.

affect/effect

Affections affect affairs.

The effect of the effort was evident.

angel/angle

With that gel in her hair, she looks like an angel.

A musical triangle will dangle at a vertical angle.

breath/breathe

Keep your breath to cool your broth!

Breathe in, breathe out; take a breath and then shout!

choose/chose

Which train will you choo choo choo choose to use?

She chose to pose with a rose!



desert/dessert

The lone s in 'desert' has been deserted by other s's.

Dessert is served up second and it has a second s in it!

home/hone

We home in on a target.

We can hone (sharpen) a bone on a whetstone.

lightening/lightning

Because of all the lightning, the storm was quite exciting.

But now the sky is lightening (growing light), it isn't quite so frightening.

loose/lose

The shoelace is so loose, it's no use!

Every time those guys lose, they blow a fuse!

quiet/quite

Said the mother to her quite bright child: 'I will buy it if you're quiet!'

thorough/through

The rabbit was thorough when digging its borough.

Hugh looked through the window at the view.

Exercise 2

Apply the memory trick that you have learnt to choose the correct word to insert in the spaces in each of the sentences given. Check your answers in the back of the book.

a accept/except

Please this gift as a token of our appreciation.

We have packed everything for the trip _____ the sleeping bags.

b affect/effect

If you fertilise your lawn with this fertiliser, you should notice the ____ within a few days.

High humidity is likely to _____ the stamina of marathon runners.

c angel/angle

Rachel put the paper ____ at the top of the Christmas tree.

We photographed the waterfall from every _____ possible.

d breath/breathe

After racing up the hill, we were all out of _____.

How lovely it is to _____ in the sea air again!

e choose/chose

In the past, parents often ____ a marriage partner for their child.

Today, it is more common for young people to _____ their own partner.

f desert/dessert

The tired explorers were relieved to come across an oasis in the middle of the _____. Would you like lemon shortcake or trifle for _____?



g	hom	ed/	hor	ned
ĸ	HOIH	cui	HUI	ICU

The bomber ____ in on the target.

The students _____ their punctuation skills by doing extra exercises.

h lightening/lightning

The flashed; the thunder roared.

If you paint the rafters a lighter colour, it will have the effect of _____ the room.

i loose/lose

The tooth was so ____ that he could pull it out with his fingers.

It is easy to _____ track of time playing games on the computer.

j quiet/quite

Jessica was very _____ because everyone was asleep.

That is right.

k thorough/through

After a _____ investigation, the detectives revealed that the fire had been deliberately

As the speedboat came _____ the heads, a freak wave almost capsized it.



Attaching prefixes

Skill requirement Knowing how to attach **prefixes** to words.

Typical error dissappear Correction disappear

Explanation In Latin, pre means before. A prefix, then, is a syllable that we attach to the

beginning of a word to change its meaning. Knowing this, we should have no problem spelling a word with a prefix at the beginning of it. We simply take the original word and tack on the prefix. Thus dis + appear results in disappear. A double letter will result only when the prefix used ends with the same letter that the original word begins with, as in words such as immobile (im+mobile),

illegible (**il**+**l**egible), irregular (**ir** + **r**egular).

Exercise 1 Write out each of these words and highlight the prefix in each. Check your answers in

the back of the book.

misplace dissatisfied immature irresponsible misspell illogical independent unable disapprove

innocuous unnecessary

impractical

Prefixes 2

Incorrect negative prefixes

Skill requirement

Choosing the correct negative **prefixes** for words.

Typical error

Your suggestion is quite unpractical.

Correction

Your suggestion is quite impractical.

Explanation

To make the negative versions of words, we often attach prefixes: for example, believable becomes unbelievable but credible becomes incredible. (The logic is that in- tends to be used if the word comes from Latin.) While un- and in- are most frequently used as negative prefixes, there are others. Here are guidelines for which prefix to choose with which words:

The prefix im- is used before many words beginning with m or p (for example, impractical, improper).

The prefix *il*- is used before many words beginning with *l* (for example, illegal, illogical).

The prefix ir- is used before many words beginning with r (for example, irrelevant, irreversible).

Exercise 1

Add a prefix to each of these words to create its negative form. For example, *believable* would become *unbelievable* and *credible* would become *incredible*. Check your answers in the back of the book.

- a done
- b literate
- c movable
- d probable
- e cooked
- f responsible
- g certain
- h replaceable
- i legible
- i articulate

Helpful Hint

Other common prefixes

There are many different prefixes, and sometimes more than one with the same meaning. Here are some common ones: <code>ante-</code> (before), <code>anti-</code> (against, opposed to), <code>bi-</code> (two), <code>di-</code> (two), <code>ex-</code> (out of or former), <code>inter-</code> (between or among), <code>mono-</code> (one), <code>multi-</code> (many), <code>post-</code> (after), <code>poly-</code> (many), <code>pre-</code> (before), <code>pro-</code> (in favour of), <code>tri-</code> (three), <code>uni-</code> (one).



Adding suffixes—monosyllabic words

Skill requirement

Knowing how to add the **suffixes** -*ing* and -*ed* to words of one syllable (monosyllabic words) like *hop* and *hope*.

Typical error

I am hopping that, by hoping from one stall to the next, I will be able to see all the displays in spite of my sprained ankle.

Correction

I am hoping that, by hopping from one stall to the next, I will be able to see all the displays in spite of my sprained ankle.

Explanation

Say the rows of words below from left to right. Listen to the sound and you will realise that the first two words have a *short* vowel sound (as in *hop*) but that the last two have a *long* vowel sound (as in *hope*), caused by the *e* at the end of the word.

hop—hopping	hope—hoping
mop—mopping	mope—moping
cop—copping	cope—coping
lop—lopping	lope—loping
mat—matting	mate—mating
tap—tapping	tape—taping
can—canning	cane—caning

From the list above, you will realise that before we add the suffixes -ing or -ed to words like hop (which does not end with an e) we double the final consonant (p), giving hopping or hopped. (The effect is to keep the vowel sound short.)

On the other hand, when adding -ing or -ed to words that end in an e, such as hope, we simply take off the e and add the suffix, this giving hoping or hoped. (The effect is to keep the vowel sound long.)

Exercise 1

Add the suffix -ing to these words. Before doing so, in each case you will need to double the last consonant or delete the final 'e'. Check your answers in the back of the book.

- a ban
- **b** bike
- **c** knot
- **d** note
- **e** rage
- f shine
- g stop
- h ride
- i trap
- i win

Suffixes 2

Adding suffixes—polysyllabic words

Skill requirement

Adding **suffixes** correctly to words of *more than one* syllable (polysyllabic words).

Typical error

She never admited that she was sufferring any pain.

Correction

She never admitted that she was suffering any pain.

Explanation

Notice that when we pronounce **suf***fer*, we stress the first syllable but when we pronounce *ad***mit**, we stress the last syllable. If the *last* syllable of a word is stressed, we usually have to double the last consonant before adding a suffix (to stop the vowel sound from changing): thus, *admit* becomes *admitted*. (Otherwise, the vowel sound would change and the word would sound like *ad-mite-ed*.)

On the other hand, if the last syllable of a word is *not* stressed, we do not double the last consonant before adding a suffix: thus, **suf**fer becomes suffering. (If we did double the *r*, the word would be pronounced suf**fer**ring.)

(For the same phonetic reasons, the American spelling of words such as *traveling* and *modeling* is actually more logical than the Australian spelling—travelling and modelling!)

Exercise 1

Add the suffix -ing to each of these words. In some cases, you will need to double the final consonant first; in others, you will not. Check your answers in the back of the book.

- a begin
- **b** commit
- c conquer
- d endanger
- **e** forget
- f hinder
- g infer
- h occur
- i refer
- i thunder



Suffixes 3

Adding the suffixes -ible and -able

Skill requirement

Typical error

Correction

Explanation

Knowing when to use -ible and -able endings.

During tennis tournaments, coaching is not permissable—unless there is a rain break, in which case it is allowible for players to talk to their coaches.

During tennis tournaments, coaching is not permissible—unless there is a rain break, in which case it is allowable for players to talk to their coaches.

Our vague pronunciation of *-ible* and *-able* can make it difficult to decide which of the two **suffixes** to use to end a word. It is easier to decide which suffix to use once we know the reason for the difference.

If we examine *allowable*, for example, we can see that the first part of the word (*allow*) is a recognisable word; it does not need the addition of the suffix to turn it into a recognisable word. In such cases, the suffix to add is *-able*. Similarly, we have laughable, suitable, reasonable, treatable and so on. Because *laugh*, *suit*, *reason* and *treat* are English words in their own right, we add *-able*. Note that we also add *-able* if we have recognisable words that end in *e*, such as *believe*, *achieve*, *desire*, *debate*. We simply remove the *e* before adding *-able* (giving *believable*, *achievable*, *desirable*, *debatable*).

With *permissible*, by contrast, what comes before the suffix is not a recognisable English word; we do not pronounce *permiss* as a word in its own right. This is because it is Latin in origin. For such words, we add *-ible*. Similar words are ed*ible*, horrible and possible. We cannot say *ed*, *horr* or *poss* as stand-alone words; they are Latin roots.

Unfortunately, these rules don't work for all words. There are quite a few words where the Latin root forms a recognisable word. In such cases, the overriding factor is that it is based on Latin (or another foreign language) and so -ible is used. Words such as accessible, collapsible, defensible, digestible, fallible, reversible and sensible all require -ible.

Exercise 1

Recognising foreign elements in words is something that develops over time. As a start, study the pairs of word stems below. The first word is an Old English stem, so we follow it with *-able*. The second word comes from Latin or French; so these words require *-ible* to complete them. Write out the words with their appropriate endings. Check your answers in the back of the book.

- a bend, flex
- b unbreak, indestruct
- c understand, intellig
- d suit, compat
- e read, leg