

## How to Improve Spelling

Learning how to spell words correctly can be very frustrating, especially in English, where there is no easy set of rules to follow, and words are often spelled completely differently from the way they sound. Many people have learning disabilities that make spelling even more of a challenge. If you struggle with spelling, you may want to get tested to see if you have such a disability. In the end, a spell checker or voice recognition program may be necessary for you to improve your spelling.

In college, you will type your essays on a computer. The computer will catch words that appear misspelled and underline them in red. When you right-click on the underlined word, a box will appear with suggestions for how to correct the word. However, the computer cannot always know what you are trying to say. It may lead you to choose the wrong word for your composition. It is best to look up the words you are unsure of in your dictionary.

The following comical poem illustrates the problem of relying solely on spell check.

**Candidate for a Pullet Surprise** by Mark Eckman and Jerrold H. Zar

**Eye halve a spelling chequer  
It came with my pea sea  
It plainly marques four my revue  
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.**

**Eye strike a key and type a word  
And weight four it two say  
Weather eye am wrong oar write  
It shows me strait a weigh.**

**As soon as a mist ache is maid  
It nose bee fore two long  
And eye can put the error rite  
Its rare lea ever wrong.**

**Iran this poem threw it  
I'm shore your pleased two no  
Its letter perfect awl the weigh  
My chequer tolled me sew.**

### Spelling Log

One way to become a better speller is to understand why you continue to misspell a word. A Spelling Log can help you trace any patterns of error so that you can determine *why* you have trouble with spelling. If most of your errors are due to oversight, then you will know that you need to read over your work carefully (**proofread**) to catch such errors. Perhaps your errors are due to mispronounced words. If you are pronouncing words incorrectly, and spelling them accordingly, your errors will reflect this incorrect pronunciation. For example, many people do not hear the "t" at the end of the word *start*. As a result, they misspell the word *start* as *star*, which is a valid word, so the computer will not notice it as an error. Charting the reasons behind your spelling errors will give you the power to make a change.

## Spelling Log

For every word you misspell, go through the following **five-step process**:

1. Write the word the way you have misspelled it.
2. Write the correct spelling of the word.
3. Write *why* you misspelled the word.
4. Write what the word means *in your own words*. If you look the word up in the dictionary, be sure to paraphrase the definition by using your own language.  
You are more likely to remember what a word means if you use your own words.
5. Write the word in a new sentence.

Example:

1. **Wooden** (misspelled word)
2. **Wouldn't** (corrected spelling)
3. **Wrong word** (wooden is an actual word, just not the right word)  
**Mispronounced word** (I didn't hear the "t" at the end of *wouldn't* and left it out).
4. **The contraction of would not; a possible negative action.** (definition in my words)
5. **I wouldn't go to that party if I were you.** (new sentence)

How can you tell why you misspelled a word? Here are the most common causes.

- 1...**oversight** → we know how to spell the word but make a careless error in haste. Example: **teh** → **the**
- 2...**wrong word** → we confuse two words that sound alike.  
Example: **threw** → **through**
- 3...**word form** → we use the wrong form of the word we want.  
Example: **accurate** (adjective) → **accurately**(adverb).
- 4...**mispronounced word** → we spell a word the way we say it, but we're not saying it correctly. Example: **instink** → **instinct**
- 5...**phonetic spelling** → we're pronouncing a word correctly, and spelling it accordingly, but the word is not spelled the way it sounds.  
Example: **sellabrashun** → **celebration**