

## 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 different 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, voice recognition program, or other such aids may be necessary for you to improve your spelling. Whatever the reason behind your spelling challenges, we are here to help.

In college courses, 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.

Every instructor has a different method for helping you to improve your spelling. The dictionary can be a great tool. For a thorough exploration of the dictionary, see the section of our class website on using a dictionary. The Writing and Integrated Learning Centers have additional exercises and practice in commonly misspelled words. Ask a tutor for more chances to practice.

A common way to enhance your learning and experience pride in your improvement involves creating personal words lists to track your progress. The final pages in this section are for two different words lists—one to keep track of the words you misspell and the other to reinforce correct spelling.

### **Misspelled Words List**

One way to become a better speller is to understand why you continue to misspell a word. A misspelled words list 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, just not the word they mean to use. Charting the reasons behind your spelling errors will give you the power to make a change.

### **Personal Word Power List**

Every time you correct a spelling error, add the correct spelling to this list. You are responsible for spelling the words on this list correctly every time you write.

## Misspelled Words List

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? The following list should help you. Feel free to ask an LIA or tutor if you're still unsure.

- 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**



## Personal Word Power List

Write down each word that you have learned to spell correctly this term. Each time you write something new, scan your writing alongside this list to make sure you have not misspelled one of the words on your list. Since you have spelled these words incorrectly before, and learned the correct spelling, it is your responsibility to make sure you spell these words correctly from now on. Hopefully, you will gain pride and confidence as you watch this list grow.

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| 1.  | 26. |
| 2.  | 27. |
| 3.  | 28. |
| 4.  | 29. |
| 5.  | 30. |
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| 8.  | 33. |
| 9.  | 34. |
| 10. | 35. |
| 11. | 36. |
| 12. | 37. |
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| 21. | 46. |
| 22. | 47. |
| 23. | 48. |
| 24. | 49. |
| 25. | 50. |