

WORDS OFTEN CONFUSED & SPELLING

INTRODUCTION

- No one is born a speller. We do not automatically know how to spell CAT.
- *Spelling is arbitrary.* The meaning of words are assigned by society and are not automatically built into them.
- Certain sounds will have specific meanings, and we will spell these sounds with a particular lettering system so that we can all communicate.

PRACTICE SPELLING

- Because no one is born knowing how to spell, it is important for all of us to practice spelling and memorize the differences between certain words.
- Spelling is learned by practice and attention.

IMPORTANCE OF SPELLING

Why do we need to know the differences between commonly confused words and how to spell properly?

1. Effective communication.
2. Professionalism (resume errors).
3. Word spell check does not always catch mistakes.

Example: Instead of “Dear Sir and Madam” the letter said “Dear Sir and Madman.”

MEMORIZATION STRATEGIES

- We are going to talk about memory strategies, create our own lists of commonly misspelled words, and come up with some memory strategies for commonly misspelled words.
- Several memory strategies work very well for remembering word spellings.

(List the three strategies on the board as you discuss them)

1. PROCESS OF ELIMINATION

- **WHERE:** has the word here in it—refers to a place, **WEAR:** has the word ear in it—you wear earrings, and by process of elimination we can reason that **WERE** is the past tense of the verb to be.

2. RHYMES

- One of the most common is to remember them by making up a rhyme. Who remembers the nursery rhyme Humpty Dumpty? It's easy to remember because of the rhyme.
- We can use this strategy to help us remember how to spell certain words.

EXAMPLE

Two commonly confused words are **THEN** and **THAN**. **THEN**, rhymes with **WHEN** and tells when something happened. Since I know that **THEN** is **WHEN**, I know by the process of elimination that the word **THAN** makes a comparison. The rhyme helps me to know one, and elimination leads me to the other.

3. VISUAL ASSOCIATIONS

- Create visual associations between a word and its meaning to memorize it.

EXAMPLE

ARE and **OUR** are often confused. I remember that **OUR** means that something belongs to us because the “O” is like a big circle that brings people in. It is our school, our city, etc. Then I know that **ARE** means “to be.”

ACTIVITY

Now that we've talked about some memorization strategies, let's use them.

HAVE STUDENTS:

1. Create a personal list of commonly misspelled words. (Direct students to the table topper.)
2. Discuss the words students identify or ones you prefer to point out and give a strategy.
(If students ask for help with a word for which you do not have a memory strategy, ask the class for suggestions and remind them that there isn't a hard and fast rule—often you have to find the tip that works for you.)

EXAMPLES (Tips for words they may need help with. Use your own favorites, if you like.)

- **THERE**: has the word here in it—refers to place
- **THEIR**: has an i in it that can be drawn to look like a stick figure which connects to possession, it also has the word HEIR in it—heir to the throne
- **THEY'RE**: they are—should be spelled out in academic writing anyway
- **ACCEPT**: the c's are encompassing (In Harry Potter the Accio spell brings things)
- **EXCEPT**: the x excludes something (In Harry Potter, Expelliarmus repels)
- **WEATHER**: has the word eat in it (when the weather is nice you can eat outside) vs. **WHETHER**
- **PIECE**: has the word pie in it (you can have a piece of pie) vs. **PEACE**
- **PRINCIPAL**: has the word pal in it (your principal is your pal) but it also means main or primary versus **PRINCIPLE** (rule of conduct)
- **AFFECT**: is an action and means influence
- **EFFECT**: if you can put a the in front of it use effect, means result
- **COURSE**: has a U in it (you take courses at the University which also has a U vs. **COARSE**)
- **TOO**: extra O (tooooo many o's) means also and very
- **TWO**: number
- **TO**: for all other meanings
- **COMPLIMENT**: has an I in it and I like compliments
- **COMPLEMENT**: means to complete—and all the Es match and complete each other
- **DESERT** versus **DESSERT**: two "s's" are twice as sweet or you'd rather have two servings of dessert and there are two "s's"

CONCLUSION: Develop memory strategies that work for you and don't always rely on Word
COLOR KEY

BLUE TEXT refers to something that should be written on the board for the workshop.

GREEN TEXT is for added emphasis or is for something important but that is hard to spot in a big block of text.