Spelling is the forming of words from the right letters in the right order. To spell accurately, you must have three qualities:

1. You must know how to spell the word, either from memory or by using the dictionary.

2. You must write the word correctly on the paper.

3. If you do not write it correctly the first time, you must catch the error when you proofread.

Guidelines

1. *Double or Nothing* — When a short vowel word ends in a single consonant preceded by a vowel (as in "pop"), double the final letter before adding a vowel suffix (-ing, -er, -ed, etc.). Example: pop + ing = popping. In words of more than one syllable, double the last consonant if the last syllable is accented. Example: refer + ing = referring. (*Note*: The second "r" in "reference" is not doubled because the accent shifts to the first syllable.) Do nothing to the root word if it is a short vowel word ending in two consonants preceded by a vowel as in "dusting," or if the root word has more than one syllable and the accent is not on the last syllable as in "entering."

2. *Drop Silent E* — When a long vowel word ends in silent "e", drop the silent "e" before adding a vowel suffix. Examples: hope + ing = hoping; advise + able = advisable. Do not drop the silent "e" when you must maintain a soft "c" or "g" sound when you add -able or -ous suffixes. Examples: notice + able = noticeable; change + able = changeable. Some long vowel words do not end in silent "e," so just add the vowel suffix. Examples: beat + ing = beating; bleed + ing = bleeding.

3. *Change Y to I* — Change Y to I when adding a suffix except for "-ing". Examples: carry + er = carrier; carry + ing = carrying; lucky + ly = luckily. Adding a "y" to words requires the same rule as when adding a vowel suffix. Examples: pot + y = potty; dust + y = dusty; shine + y = shiny; bone + y = bony.

4. *IE Rule* — "I" before "e" except after "c" or when sounded like "a" as in neighbor and weigh. Examples: chief, receive, believe, freight. The following words are exceptions because of other phonetic considerations: science, deity, ancient, either, neither, height, leisure, seize, their, weird.

5. *Just Add Consonant Suffixes* — Don't double or drop anything when adding consonant suffixes, but you change "y" to "i". Examples: glad + ly = gladly; pave + ment = pavement; commit + ment = commitment; dizzy + ly = dizzily.

6. *Noun Plurals* — Following are guidelines for changing singular nouns to plural nouns:

   a. Add "s" for most nouns.

   b. Add "es" if the noun ends in "ss", "sh", "ch", or "x". Examples: dress + es = dresses; ash + es = ashes; church + es = churches; box + es = boxes.

   c. Change the "y" to "ie" before adding "s" only when the "y" is preceded by a consonant. If the "y" is preceded by a vowel, simply add "s". Examples: attorney + s = attorneys; valley + s = valleys; family + s = families; city + s = cities.

   d. Words ending in "f" or "fe" usually require only an "s" to make a plural. However, some of them require that the "f" or "fe" be changed to a "v" or "ve" before adding "s". Use the proper

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pronunciation as your guide. Examples: reef + s = reefs; belief + s = beliefs; life + s = lives; half + s = halves.

e. Word ending in “e” require only an “s” if the “o” is preceded by a vowel; if it is preceded by a consonant, add “es”. The exception is musical terms. Examples: radio + s = radios; potato + s = potatoes; soprano + s = sopranos.

f. Hyphenated compound words require the principal word to be made plural. Compound words that are not hyphenated require the “s” to go at the end of the word. Examples: brother-in-law + s = brothers-in-law; court-martial + s = courts-martial; cupful + s = cupfuls.

g. Beware of irregular plurals. Examples: child + s = children; ox + s = oxen; deer + s = deer; madam + s = mesdames; monsieur + s = messieurs; fungus + s = fungi; alumnus + s = alumni; alumna + s = alumnae; thesis + s = theses.

h. Add “s” to letters, signs, and figures when forming a plural. Some styles allow the mere addition of an “s” to figures. Examples: t + s = t’s; + + s = +’s; 3 + s = 3’s; 80 + s = 80s.

i. Add “s” only to most proper names. Add “es” to names ending in “s” or “z”. Examples: Johns, Jennys, Smiths, Martinezes, Joneses.

7. *Apostrophes* — Apostrophes are used when forming contractions and genitive (possessive) case.

   a. In forming possessive case, add “‘s”f the word does not end in “s”. Examples: Tom + ‘s = Tom’’s; dog + ‘s = dog’s; children + ‘s = children’s; men + ‘s = men’s.

   b. In forming possessive case, add only an apostrophe when the word ends in “s”. Some grammarians suggest adding “‘s” to some words because of pronunciation. Examples: players + ‘s = players’; cities + ‘s = cities’; boss + ‘s = boss’s; Keats + ‘s = Keats’s.

   c. In forming possessive case, add “‘s” to the last word of compound words or word groups. Examples: sister-in-law + ‘s = sister-in-law’s; someone else + ‘s = someone else’s; George Hemming Jr. + ‘s = George Hemming Jr.’s.

   d. In forming possessive case, add “‘s” to all names when individual ownership exists and only the last name in the list when joint ownership exists. Examples: Al’s and Sue’s cars; Al and Sue’s car.

   e. When forming contractions, put an apostrophe in the place of the missing letters. (Caution: Do not confuse contractions with possessive pronouns, as in “their” and “its”.) Examples: I am = I’m; they are = they’re; it is = it’s; will not = won’t; cannot = can’t.

8. *Mnemonic (memory) Devices* — Keep a list of words you commonly misspell and write a sentence for each one. In the sentence, mention the word and suggest either the misspelling or the correct spelling. Example: “A rat separates ‘separate’.”

9. *Phonics* — Learn about phonics, the sounds of the language. Be familiar with long and short vowel sounds, consonant sounds, including hard and soft “c” and “g” sounds. Be able to break words into syllables.

10. *Confused Words* — Be aware of commonly confused words. Examples: Its, it’s; to, too; their, there, they’re; accept, except; then, than; no, know; quiet, quite; insure, ensure; assure; affect, effect.

11. *Proofread* — Proofread everything you write, looking for errors in spelling and construction.

12. *Dictionary* — Use a dictionary. Use it often whenever you have doubts about spelling.

13. *Classification* — Classify words under the rules. Most words fit into the rules. Once you have classified the words, memorize the exceptions, using a memory device. It is much easier to learn a few exceptions than it is to memorize the entire dictionary.