IGCSE English Language

Technical Skills: Spelling

Why bother to spell properly?

- I cnduo't bvleiee taht I culod aulaclty uesdtannrd waht I was rdnaieg. Unisg the icndeblire pweor of the hmuan mnid, aocdcrnig to rseecrah at Cmabrigde Uinervtisy, it dseno't mttaer in waht oderr the lterets in a wrod are, the olny irpoamtnt tihng is taht the frsit and lsat ltteer be in the rhgit pclae. The rset can be a taotl mses and you can sitll raed it whoutit a pboerlm. Tihs is bucseae the huamn mnid deos not raed ervey ltteer by istlef, but the wrod as a wlohe. Aaznmig, huh? Yaeh and I awlyas tghhuot slelinpg was ipmorantt! See if yuor fdreins can raed tihs too.

Spelling matters because…

- Correct spelling is easier to read and understand.
- It creates a positive image about the writer – intelligent, knowledgeable, has attention to detail and cares about his or her written word.
- The writing is more credible and the subject matter is likely to be taken more seriously.
- Spelling correctly sets a good example for others and encourages them to maintain high standards for themselves.

Spelling Rules for English (1)

achieve   believe   chief   friend   grieve   hygiene

But

ceiling   conceit   deceive   perceive   receipt

So the rule: *i* before *e* except after *c*

beige   freight   weight   neighbour   vein

And, e before i in words rhyming with 'hey'

Exceptions to the rule include:

ancient   caffeine   either   neither   foreign   height
leisure   weird   seize

Spelling Rules for English (2)

ride + ing = riding
surprise + ing = surprising
hope + ing = hoping

But

like + ness = likeness
entire + ly = entirely

And

true + ly = truly
argue + ment = argument

So the rule: drop the final *e* when adding an ending that begins with a vowel; keep the final *e* if the ending begins with a consonant; drop the final *e* if the word is preceded by a vowel.

Spelling Rules for English (3)

supply + es = supplies
baby + es = babies
try + es = tries

But

try + ing = trying
study + ing = studying

And

obey + ed = obeyed

So the rule: change *y* to *i* when adding an ending; keep the *y* if the ending is *–ing* and if there is a vowel before the *y*.

Spelling Rules for English (4)

paper + s = papers
flower + s = flowers
box + es = boxes
brush + es = brushes

But

company + es = companies

And

Sunday + s = Sundays

So the rule: to make a word plural add *s*, or *es*; if the word ends in consonant + *y*, change the *y* to *i* and add – *es*; keep the *y* on plural proper nouns.

Spelling Rules for English (5)

admit + ed = admitted
stop + ing = stopping
flap + ed = flapped
begin + ing = beginning

But

counsel + ing = counseling
despair + ed = despaired
delight + ful = delightful

So the rule: double the final consonant before a suffix with a vowel if a single vowel precedes the consonant or the consonant ends a one-syllable word or a word with an accented final syllable.

Where to go from here…

There are many more rules to govern spelling and just as many exceptions to the rules. So do you have to just memorize the rules? (that would be deadly dull, so find other ways to improve your spelling)

You can:
Look in spelling books or on the Internet for ways to improve your spelling.
www.spelling.hemscott.net/index.html

Play Scrabble with someone that can spell well (use a Scrabble dictionary, too).

Check over your work for spelling mistakes. If you create documents on the computer, do not rely on spell check.

Do not settle for spelling mistakes in your work. If you make a mistake, look up the correct spelling (or ask someone) and write the correct word out. Use the correct word in a sentence, or challenge yourself to use it in a sentence before the end of the day.

Challenge yourself to spell the commonly misspelled words, either by yourself or with a friend.

Spelling resources

INTERNET SUGGESTIONS:

www.davidappleyard.com/english/spelling.htm

www.gcse.com/english/spell.htm

www.bbc.co.uk/skillswise/topic-group/spelling

http://homepage.ntlworld.com/vivian.c/TestsFrame.htm

Spelling resources

- Worksheets created by Eddis Tutorial Services, LLC.

- Reading good books to improve spelling and vocabulary (see book lists for IGCSE English Literature, for example)

- Wordsearches, crossword puzzles, word games like hangman