

Spelling Strategies

If spelling does not come easily to you, it may be of some comfort to know that you are not alone. There are many policing students who are also grappling with spelling and proofreading skills.

There are a number of strategies that you can adopt to improve your spelling skills:

Strategy 1 Get hold of a dictionary (not American) and a notebook. Look up words and add them to the notebook to create your own list of problem words to practise.

Strategy 2 Use the computer spellchecker to your advantage. When you edit your work, the spellchecker will identify any mistakes. Add them to the list in your notebook. Don't let the spellchecker do the work for you. If your computer adds a wiggly red line under a word that is wrongly spelt, have a go at typing it correctly. If you're not sure what's right, keep changing the letter combination and/or look it up in your dictionary. When it's correct, the line should disappear.

It's a mistake to rely entirely on the spellchecker because it can't pick up words that are correctly spelt but have the wrong meaning in the context of your sentence (homophones). For example, the spellchecker will not underline in red *their/there* or *where/ were* or *two/to/too* when they are in the wrong place because they are all accepted words in the spellchecker's dictionary (See Strategy 9 and the list of Commonly Confused Words for help with these).

Strategy 3 Use flash cards of a reasonable size to write all the words on your personal spelling list. It often helps to write in colour - use a different colour to highlight a syllable or letter(s) that trip you up. sep **ar** ate sub **po** ena.

Strategy 4 **Look - Cover - Write - Check**

Look at the word you are learning to spell. Note the difficult parts of the word. Is it the middle sound that is likely to trip you up or the ending? Are there smaller words in it that will help you to remember it?

Cover the word.

Write it out.

Then **check** your spelling.

Repeat the process a few times until you can write it without error. The Look Cover Write Check method is basic but it works. Test yourself again in ten minutes time. Try again in an hour, then in 24 hours. You are trying to commit your words to long term memory.

Strategy 5 Say the word to yourself as it sounds - no one else knows what you're saying in your head (thank goodness) so say the word as it sounds

eg sub-**po**-ena je **well**-er-y a-**lig**-n-ment **Wed**-nes-day.

Strategy 6 Break the word into syllables. A syllable is the letter or letters that form one sound (beat or clap) in a word. Each syllable will contain at least one vowel or the letter 'y'. You can hear syllables when you pronounce a word slowly. The "breaks" in the pronunciation are the syllables.

If you say "police" slowly you will hear that it has 2 syllables- po-lice.
Likewise, officer has 3 syllables- of-fic-er.
So miscellaneous may look beyond hope at first glance but it actually
breaks neatly into 5 syllables mis-cell-an-e-ous.

Strategy 7 Look at the base word, then the 'add on' at the front (prefix) or ending (suffix).
dys-functional mis-demeanour in-admissible
manage-ment person-al il-licit

Strategy 8 Look for short words within words.
defend-ant

Strategy 9 Use a story, the sillier the better, to remember a word. For example, when you need to write **assault**, you can say to yourself "What an ass-hey you little toad!" which becomes
a u little toad
ass a u l t
ass ault
assault and you'll never get it wrong again!

sergeant - is often spelt wrongly. My story is about an officer who wears serge pants and gets ants in them. In our grandparents' day, people wore trousers made of serge - a strong cotton material. So remember that the serge/ant had ants in his serge pants.

separate - A golfer was playing on **par** but he **ate** too much and the seams of his pants **se par ate d**. Groan - yes, I said the sillier the better! If it works, it's worth it.

Strategy 10 The way you prefer to learn will make a difference to which spelling strategy will work best for you. If you are strongly **visual** you probably like to take in information through overheads in a lecture and to take notes. You may also like to learn from what you *see*. You want to see a video clip or read instructions on how a new appliance works before using it or perhaps you easily remember car numberplates. Working with flash cards and writing out the word 3/6/10 times may suit you.

You may, however, prefer to take in information by **hearing**. Maybe you listen and have good recall of what a lecturer says, or you understand more from *hearing* what the presenter says about the weather report on TV, than from *seeing* the writing and the weather map. It may be more helpful for you to make a tape of whatever words you want to learn and listen to them as you wash up or put the headphones on while you go for a run. Record the word, pause (this is so you have time to spell it while you're listening to the tape), then record the spelling.

Strategy 11 Homophones or homonyms are those bugbear words that sound the same but are spelled differently. Your lecturers will be pleased if you can distinguish between

their/there and they're.	hear/here
where/wear and also were	too/to/two
whether/wether/weather	sight/cite/site

Remember that the spell checker on your computer will not identify when you have spelt them wrongly because they are all actual words. See list of **Commonly Confused Words**.

This is how to remember which *there* and *where* to use:

There:

There and **where** indicate place. They both have 'here' inside which also indicates place.
eg Put it **where**? Over **here** or **there**.

There is also used to introduce more information and will be connected to a verb such as is/was or are/were.

- eg **There is** a circuit class in the gym at 7pm.
- There's** plenty of food.
- There are** two Holden utes in the garage for a service this morning.
- Were there** any drugs found during last night's bust?
- Is there** enough room?
- Are there** spaces at the table?

Their:

'**Their**' is possessive and shows ownership or belonging.
eg **Their** essays were well written.
It was **their** turn to do the washing up.
It was **their** first arrest.

Write **the** first, then the 'ir' → their.

Some students associate the 'i' in '*their*' with the 'i' in *mine* as *I* and *mine* both suggest ownership or belonging.

They're

This is probably the most straightforward because it is a contraction of 'they are'.

They're is right if you can use 'they are' in your sentence.
eg They're (they are) going the wrong way.

On to **APOSTROPHES** which look like this ' '. Get the hang of apostrophes so your is unambiguous and looks professional. Keep the reader in a good mood.

Apostrophes have several uses:

- Apostrophes show a **contraction** of two words into one such as
 - they're from they are
 - won't from will not
 - would've from would have

The apostrophe usually indicates where letter(s) have been left out.

Its is an important word that is sometimes confusing.

The only time it is written with an apostrophe is when **it's** really means **it is**.

Eg It's (it is) going to rain. It's (it is) time for the lecture to start.

The pronoun **its** does not need an apostrophe because it is already possessive - the ownership is built into the word in the same way it is built into my, his, her, their, our and your.

Eg His radio was broken. Its battery was dead. They knew its function.

- Apostrophes are also used to show that a particular thing **belongs** to somebody or something (the 'owner'). For example, if we want to show that an essay belongs to a student, we write

Here is the student's essay, instead of the old fashioned sentence
Here is the essay of the student.

Similarly, we can say

The pub is only a stone's throw away,
instead of The pub is only a throw of a stone away!

Add an apostrophe in the right place in these examples:

- The coat of the girl becomes the girl's coat
- The pay of an hour becomes an hour's pay
- The order of the sergeant becomes _____
- The novels of Stephen King _____
- The guns of the officers _____

Did you put the officers' guns?

Apostrophes are also needed for things that are not technically owned but are still in possession of someone or something. So, for example, if an offender steals a car for a joy ride and then, after pursuit by police, hits a wall, we would say:

The offender's car hit the wall.

It also applies to concepts, so we say

A prisoner's rights were violated.

The rule is **'THE OWNER' ALWAYS COMES BEFORE THE APOSTROPHE.**

The owner's shoes
Jeremy's shoes.
The horse's shoes.

A quick formula to show where to put an apostrophe showing ownership is

1. **Always ask who or what "owns" the object, place or person.**
2. **Write the answer, put a box around it**
3. **Add an apostrophe outside the right side of the box.**
4. **Add an 's' if it's needed.**

For example, The essays of the student

1. Question: Who owned the essays?

2. Answer The student

3. Add ' outside box The student'

4. Add 's' if needed The student's essays

Note-This also works if there is more than one 'owner'.

For example, use the formula to check where to put the apostrophe when writing *the dogs kennel*, where *more than one dog* shares the same kennel.

1. Who or what "owns" the object / the kennel?

2. Answer:

3. Add ' outside box ,

4. No extra 's' is needed → ' kennel is crowded.

The same approach works for collective terms like sheep crowd, men, and women. Write the whole word, box it, then add 's if needed.

Example: The 's roar ...

What about The refuge...?

If you were reporting about an incident at a refuge for women, an apostrophe would be needed to show that the refuge belongs to .

1. Who "owns" the refuge?

2 & 3. Answer: ,

It does not belong to the *womens* because there is no such word in the dictionary. The 'owner' is women.

4. Add 's' 's refuge.

Try coats are expensive.

1. Who "owns" the object?

2. Box the answer

3. Add ' ,

4. Add 's' if needed

Note that with names that end in 's', the additional 's' is often optional.

Correct

The Jones' house

Jesus' followers

Coles' supermarket

Seen and heard but incorrect

The Jones's house

Jesus's followers

Coles's supermarket

Practice: Correct these sentences by adding apostrophes.

1. Johns car needs an overhaul.
2. Drop me at Ryans place after work, please.
3. Put the weapons back in the gun safe.
4. Its a clear case of assault.
5. Was its conclusion too short?
6. I wanted to got to the Jazz Groups first concert.
7. The stations officers attitude had changed.
8. Ive been told to go to the later lecture.
9. The criminals record doesnt justify leniency.
10. Jans grandfathers home was robbed.
11. There are too many exercises here!

Answers

Note: The 'owner' is highlighted in yellow.

1. John's car needs an overhaul.
 2. Drop me at Ryan's place after work, please.
 3. Put the weapons back in the gun safe.
 4. It's a clear case of assault.
 5. Was its conclusion too short?
 6. I wanted to go to the Jazz Group's first concert.
 7. The station's officers' attitude had changed.
 8. I've been told to go to the later lecture.
 9. The criminal's record doesn't justify leniency.
- OR
- The criminals' record doesn't justify leniency,
if the record belongs to criminals.
10. Jan's grandfather's home was robbed.
 11. There are too many exercises here!