

The most commonly misspelled words in English...

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A spokesman from the market research company said, "A common mistake many make is writing a word the way it sounds which leaves us muddling up one letter with another and getting it wrong. Fortunately, computers' spell-check corrects wrongly spelt words for us, but that means we become lazy and never learn the correct spelling." They added, "There's no excuse not to learn how words are formed – it's drilled into us from such a young age and if the words are frequently used we should make a conscious effort to get it right next time. The fact we judge other people's intelligence by their written word, yet don't like to be judged ourselves, means we should all pick up a dictionary once in a while."

The top 20 misspelled words: 1) Separate; 2) Definitely; 3) Manoeuvre, 4) Embarrass; 5) Occurrence; 6) Consensus; 7) Unnecessary; 8) Acceptable; 9) Broccoli; 10) Referred; 11) Bureaucracy; 12) Supersede; 13) Questionnaire; 14) Connoisseur; 15) A lot; 16) Entrepreneur; 17) Particularly; 18) Liquify; 19) Conscience; 20) Parallel.

Category: English language / Survey / Spelling

Level: Intermediate / Upper intermediate

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EXERCISES

1. **Misspelled words in English:** What three words do you often misspell in English? Go round the room swapping details.

2. **Dictation:** The teacher will read four to six lines of the article slowly and clearly. Students will write down what they hear. The teacher will repeat the passage slowly again. Self-correct your work from page one - filling in spaces and correcting mistakes. Be honest with yourself on the number of errors. Advise the teacher of your total number of errors. Less than five is very good. Ten is acceptable. Any more is room for improvement! More than twenty - we need to do some work!

3. **Reading:** The students should now read the article aloud, swapping readers every paragraph.

4. **Vocabulary:** Students should now look through the article and underline any vocabulary they do not know. Look in dictionaries. Discuss and help each other out. The teacher will go through and explain any unknown words or phrases.

5. **The article:** Students should look through the article with the teacher.

- a) What is the article about?
- b) What do you think about the article?

6. **Let's think! Spelling:** Think of five words you find hard to spell, maybe check them in a dictionary then write them below. Add five words from the article. Test your partner with them.

Five words you find hard to spell	Five words from the article
1	1
2	2
3	3
4	4
5	5

The teacher will choose some pairs to discuss their findings in front of the class.

7. **Let's think!** Swap partners. With your new partner on the board think of as many uses for '**spelling**' as you can. Write them on the board. *One-two minutes*. Compare with other teams. Using your words compile a short dialogue together.

8. **Sentence starters:** Finish these sentence starters. Correct your mistakes. Compare what other people have written.

- a) Spelling tests _____
- b) Spelling _____
- c) The English language _____

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9. Let's do 'The Article Quiz': Have the students quiz each other in pairs. They score a point for each correct answer and half a point each time they have to look at the article for help. See who can get the highest score!

Student A

- 1) What is the most commonly misspelled word?
- 2) Name two of the words just outside the top 20.
- 3) Who was the survey done by?
- 4) How many people were surveyed?
- 5) Sum up what the spokesman said.

Student B

- 1) What was the second misspelled word?
- 2) What word was at No 20?
- 3) One in five people said?
- 4) Three out of ten people said?
- 5) Two out of three people said?

10. Let's talk! In a pub: *In pairs:* Imagine you are in a pub. The conversation gets onto **misspelled words in English**. Discuss. *5-minutes*.

11. Let's write an e-mail: Write and send a 200 word e-mail to your teacher about: **Misspelled words in English**. Your e-mail can be read out in class.

12. Quickfire: The teacher will go round the room asking students: "I think spelling is ..."

SPEAKING

Let's play a game – 'Hangman'

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Form two teams. Each team chooses a word to test the other team. Teams take turns to ask the other team for a letter of the word they have. One of the team draws the hangman on the board for every letter not right. Try not to be hanged too often!

The teacher can moderate the session.

DISCUSSION

Student A questions

- 1) Did the headline make you want to read the article?
- 2) Are you good at spelling in your own language?
- 3) Are you good at spelling in English?
- 4) Do you have a good memory?
- 5) What words do you find challenging?
- 6) How many new words do you learn every day?
- 7) How do you learn new words?
- 8) Do you like spelling tests?
- 9) When was the last time you did a spelling test?
- 10) Have you done this lessons spelling test? If yes, what was your score?

Student B questions

- 1) What do you think about what you read?
- 2) Would you like to do more spelling tests? If not why?
- 3) Would you prefer to do a dictation exercise? If not, why?
- 4) Would you prefer to do a homework exercise? If not why?
- 5) Do you use spell check on your computer?
- 6) Do you make many spelling mistakes when writing?
- 7) Does sending a text message help your spelling?
- 8) Are you embarrassed by your spelling?
- 9) Is spelling something you learn at school?
- 10) Did you like this discussion?

SPEAKING

Let's play – 'The spelling game'

Allow 10-15 minutes – As a class / small groups / pairs / 1 to 1

Form two teams. Each team prepares 15 words. Taking turns teams then ask a member of the other team to spell one of these words. The first team to score 10 words correctly is the winner. You might need to add new words if the team opposite can't spell what you have prepared! Score ten points for every correct word spelt: Maximum score = 100 points.

Note: Teams before you play give the teacher a copy of your prepared words – make sure the teacher can read them!

Note: Teachers – it might be an idea to have a large dictionary handy!

The teacher can moderate the session.

GAP FILL: READING

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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The most commonly (1)_____ words in English were recently published. A survey of 3,500 Britons by the market research company www.OnePoll.com discovered that 'Separate' is the most commonly misspelt word in the English language. The eight-letter word came top due to regular placing of an 'e' where the first 'a' sits. Second in the list was '(2)_____', which often falls victim to a string of mistakes including mixing up the second 'i' with an 'a'. Another common error is dropping the final 'e'. '(3)_____', which is (4)_____ due to the unusual (5)_____ of 'oe' and 'u', came third and '(6)_____', in which an 'r' or an 's' often falls by the wayside, was fourth. '(7)_____' emerged as the fifth most commonly misspelled word due to confusion over the double 'c' and double 'r'. Words just outside the top 20 include 'calendar', '(8)_____' and 'changeable'.

The (1)_____ discovered one in six people spell words so incorrectly while typing their PC doesn't recognise the word they are attempting. Two out of three admitted using spell-check on computers had made them lazy when writing letters or notes by hand. One in five blamed (2)_____ text messaging for their bad spelling. Three out of ten were embarrassed by their poor spelling skills. One in five said it was their belief the art of spelling was something 'you just learnt at school'.

A spokesman from the market (3)_____ company said, "A common mistake many make is writing a word the way it sounds which leaves us muddling up one letter with another and getting it wrong. (4)_____, computers' spell-check corrects wrongly spelt words for us, but that means we become lazy and never learn the correct spelling." They added, "There's no excuse not to learn how words are formed – it's drilled into us from such a young age and if the words are (5)_____ used we should make a (6)_____ effort to get it right next time. The fact we judge other people's (7)_____ by their written word, yet don't like to be judged ourselves, means we should all pick up a (8)_____ once in a while."

pigeon

occurrence

embarrass

problematic

misspelled

manoeuvre

combination

definitely

research

frequently

conscious

fortunately

predictive

survey

dictionary

intelligence

GAP FILL: LISTENING

Listen and fill in the spaces.

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The survey discovered one in six people spell words so incorrectly while typing their PC doesn't recognise the word they are attempting. Two out of three admitted using spell-check on computers had made them lazy when writing letters or notes by hand. _____ predictive text messaging for their bad spelling. Three out of ten were embarrassed by their _____. One in five said it was their belief the art of spelling was something '_____'.

A spokesman from the market research company said, "A common mistake many make is writing a word _____ which leaves us muddling up one letter with another and getting it wrong. Fortunately, computers' spell-check corrects wrongly spelt words for us, but that means we become lazy and never learn the correct spelling." They added, "There's no excuse not to learn how words are formed – it's drilled into us from _____ if the words are frequently used we should make a conscious effort to get it right next time. The fact we judge other people's intelligence by their written word, _____ judged ourselves, means we should all pick up a dictionary once in a while."

GRAMMAR

Put the words into the gaps in the text.

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A spokesman from the market research company said, "A common mistake many make is writing a word the way it sounds which leaves us muddling up one letter with another and getting it wrong. Fortunately, computers' spell-check corrects wrongly spelt words for us, but (5)___ means we become lazy and never learn the correct spelling." (6)___ added, "There's no excuse not to learn how words are formed – it's drilled into us from such a young age and if the words are frequently used we (7)___ make a conscious effort to get it right next time. The fact we judge (8)___ people's intelligence by their written word, yet don't like to be judged ourselves, means we should all pick up a dictionary once in a while."

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SPELLING TEST

The teacher will ask the class individually to spell the following words that are in the article. Afterwards, check your answers with your teacher, using the following ratings: **Pass = 12, Good = 15, Very good = 18, Excellent = 20**

1	Separate	11	Bureaucracy
2	Definitely	12	Supersede
3	Manoeuvre	13	Questionnaire
4	Embarrass	14	Connoisseur
5	Occurrence	15	misspelt
6	Consensus	16	Entrepreneur
7	Unnecessary	17	Particularly
8	Acceptable	18	Liquify
9	Broccoli	19	Conscience
10	Referred	20	Parallel

LINKS

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/education/7930745/Separate-is-most-commonly-misspelled-word.html>
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/misspelled.html>
<http://www.yourdictionary.com/library/150more.html>
<http://www.world-english.org/misspell.htm>
<http://www.theprobabilist.com/10-most-misspelled-words-in-blogs/>
<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/page/spellingcommonmisp>

ANSWERS

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(V1)

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