

**DEPARTMENT OF AFRICAN AND GENERAL STUDIES  
UDS –WA**

**GEN 101 ENGLISH LANGUAGE**

**LECTURE 1 & 2**

‘Some kinds of ignorance can be concealed for years, but bad spelling can show up every time you write a sentence; and it can cost jobs and promotions as well as bad marks on English papers.’ L. M. Myers (1968:164) *Guide to American English* 4<sup>th</sup> edition.

‘Spelling mistakes show a lack of concern for accuracy, will suggest inefficiency to your reader...Poorly spelt letters other documents suggest poor standards, and in the highly competitive world of business, may well prevent the reader from having confidence in you as an individual or in the organization you represent.’ Stuart Sillars (2001:66) *Success in Communication*.

**SPELLING**

English spelling is arbitrary and at variance with its pronunciation. Different reasons account for this:

- English has drawn its words from many different sources; e.g. sell’ (Old English); ‘certain’ (French); ‘psychology’ (Greek).
- Some of its pronunciations have changed
- Same sound represented by different spellings

The same sound /i:/ can be represented in different ways as in:

- be, sea, key, quay, ski, esprit,
- amoeba/ameba, aeon/eon, people, leave, these, etc.

The same /i:/ sound is also spelt *ie*:

niece, priest, siege, believe, field

Exceptions – seize, weird.

- After *c* it is spelt *ei*: deceive, deceit, receive, ceiling, receipt, conceive, etc.
- The sound /s/ is represented by different spellings.
  - pass, cell, science, lapse, psalm, whistle, sword.
- There may also be different pronunciations the same combination of letters as in the different sounds of **ough** in:
  - **cough, rough, bough, though, thought, ‘through’**,
- *c* before *a/o/u* is hard –
  - **cat, cot, cut, come, cup, can...**
- but before *e/i* it is soft –
  - **cent, center, certificate, cite, city,...** except **façade**

- There are also many words with variant spellings:
  - acknowledgment – acknowledgement
  - characterize – characterise
  - gradable – gradeable
  - partizan – partisan

### ***British and American Spelling***

There are differences in spelling between British and American English. In some cases the two occur. Both systems of spelling are accepted but it is important to use only one consistently in a single document.

<u>American</u>	<u>British</u>
catalog	catalogue
check	cheque
offense	offence
program	programme
color	colour
neighbor	neighbour
labor	labour
flavor	flavour
honor	honour
vigor	labour
center	centre
meter	metre
fiber	fibre
liter	litre
ameba	amoeba
diarrhea	diarrhoea
esophagus	oesophagus
archeology	archaeology
gynecology	gynaecology
encyclopedia	encyclopaedia

### ***-ise/-ize***

Both *ise/ize* endings are acceptable in some words:

- -ize: capsize, seize,
- -ise: advise, surprise,

civilise/civilize,	civilisation/civilization	organise/organize
organisation/organization		

analyse/analyze	paralyse/paralyze
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BUT analysis/paralysis

Some words have *-ise form only*:

advertise	advise
comprise	compromise
disenfranchise	enterprise
franchise	improvise

merchandise  
supervise

revise  
televisé, etc.

### **Spelling guidelines**

There are only a few spelling guidelines for the English language, but like all other rules of the language there are always exceptions. The best approach to mastering English spelling is to internalize the correct spelling of words as you meet them.

#### **a) dropping –e before suffix**

If a word ends with a silent –e (*fame*) the –e is dropped when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added (-ous, -ing, -able, -al)

*fame* – *famous* \**fameous*\*  
*have* – *having* \**haveing*\*  
*cure* – *curable* \**cureable*\*  
*refuse* – *refusal* \**refuseal*\*

In 4 words ending in –ie, the *i* is changed to *y*

– *die, tie lie, vie*  
*die* – *dying*  
*lie* – *lying*  
*tie* – *tying*  
*vie* – *vying*

**BUT**

*dye* – *dyeing*  
*singe* – *singeing* (cf *singing*)  
*swinge* – *swingeing* (cf *swinging*)

#### **(b) Change y to i before suffix**

For words ending **consonant + y** (e.g. *happy*); change the *y* to *i* before any suffix is added:

*happy* – *happily*  
*beauty* – *beautiful*, *beautify*, *beautified*  
*mystery* – *mysterious*  
*amplify* – *amplification*, *amplifier*  
*empty* – *emptiness*, *emptied*  
*deny* – *denial*, *denies*, *denied*

However, words that end with a **vowel + y** (e.g. *boy*) retain the *y* when a suffix is added.

*toy* – *toys*  
*obey* – *obeying*, *obeyed*  
*destroy* – *destroyer*  
*play* – *player*  
*buy* – *buyer*, *buying*  
*employ* – *employed*, *employer*, *employee*

### **Exceptions**

There are some exceptions to the above rule. The *y* is retained before –**ness** in the following:  
dryness, shyness, slyness

The y is also retained before *-ing* in:  
studying, enjoying.

**PRACTICE**

What suffixes can you add suffixes to the following words?

scanty	fancy
handy	candy
shabby	funny
dry	lazy
candy	crazy
bounty	scary
country	infantry
ready	heavy

**(c) Place *i* before *e* except after *c***

If the sound is /ee/ the spelling is *ie*  
*niece, priest, siege, belief, believe, reprieve*

**Exceptions:** *seize, weird*, also *either, neither*

After *c* the /ee/ sound is spelt *ei*:  
*deceive, ceiling, perceive, conceive.*

**Using the Dictionary**

A dictionary gives us a lot of information about the vocabulary of a language including;

- Spelling(s): including variant forms; e.g. *judgment, judgement*.
- Definition(s): may include several different senses of a word.
- Parts of speech
- Pronunciation
- Inflectional forms and derivatives
- Synonyms/antonyms
- Usage

*Examples of some entries from the Advanced Learner's Dictionary.*

**eject** /i'dʒekt/ *v* 1 ~sb/sth (from sth) (*fml*) to force sb to leave a place. [Vn] *eject an invading army* [Vnpr] *The police ejected a number of violent protesters from the hall.* 2. ~sth (from sth) to force sth out usu violently or suddenly. [Vnpr] *lava ejected from a volcano* || [Vn] *Press 'Eject' to release the cassette from the recorder.* 3. ....

► **ejection** /i'dʒekʃn/ *n* [U, C].

**bank**<sup>1</sup> /bæŋk/ *n* 1 the land sloping up along each side of a river, or canal.....2. a raised slope at the edge of sth. or dividing sth....3.....etc.

**bank**<sup>2</sup> /bæŋk/ *v* 1 (of an aircraft) to travel with one side higher than the other, usu when turning.....

**bank**<sup>3</sup> /bæŋk/ *n* an organization or a place that provides a financial service. Customers keep their money in the bank safely and it is paid out ....

**bank**<sup>4</sup>

**bank**<sup>5</sup>

**ride**<sup>1</sup> /raid/ *n* journey or part of a journey on a vehicle....

**ride**<sup>2</sup> /raid/ *v* (*pt rode* /rəʊd/; *pp ridden* /rɪdn/

**greed** /grɪ:d/ *n* ~ (for sth) (*derog*) 1...

► **greedy** *adj* (-ier, -iest)...

### *The Thesaurus*

A dictionary gives the meanings of words; a thesaurus helps you

- Find the most suitable word for an idea.
- Avoid over using a word
- Find the most specific word
- Replace an abstract term with a more precise one.

### *Electronic Dictionary and Thesaurus:*

When you are using a computer to write, the MS Word software program has a dictionary and a thesaurus that can help you find synonyms for words or alternative terms to express yourself. For a word like 'kind', put your cursor on the word, right click and a pop-up window appears. Scroll down to "synonyms" left click and the following list appears.

- kind > synonyms > caring  
nice  
sympathetic  
generous  
gentle  
thoughtful  
compassionate  
benevolent  
Thesaurus

If none of these is suitable you can right click on the word "Thesaurus" and a pane appears on the right of your screen with the following lists. In case you are not looking for *kind* as an adjective you will find several alternative words for *kind* as a noun. The MS Word Thesaurus list for *kind* is illustrated below.

Thesaurus> **caring (adj)**  
+ kindhearted  
humane  
considerate  
benign  
humanitarian  
kindly  
  
**kind**  
**type (n.)**  
type

class  
variety  
brand  
category  
breed  
manner  
style  
nature  
hue  
caste  
sort  
form  
genre  
make

### SPELLING CHECKER

You can also use the MS Word software to check your spelling. The program identifies words that are not in its built-in dictionary, e.g. non-words such as *ther*, for *there*. However when you make confuse between two words like *there* and *their* this cannot be detected.

### ***Homographs, homonyms and homophones***

**Homographs** are words that have the **same spelling** but different sound (pronunciations) and meaning.

- I **refuse** your offer of apology. (refuse – v)
- Place the **refuse** in the garbage bin. (refuse –n)
- **bow** (n) [bow and arrow]
- **bow** (v) [bow down your heads]

**Homonyms** are words that have the **same spelling**, the **same sound** (pronunciations) but different, but closely related meaning.

‘cool’ (v) – Let the machine to cool for an hour.

‘cool’ (adj) – The weather is cool.

‘cool’ (n) - Don’t panic; keep your cool.

#### **Look up the following words**

quail/quail	bank/bank
book/book	ring/ring
fine/fine	class/class

### **Homophones**

- Two or more words that have the **SAME** sound (pronunciation) but are **SPELT DIFFERENTLY**. More importantly they have **different meanings**:
  - **residence** - place

- **residents** – people
- ‘All the **residence** have been ordered to vacate the town because of the strange disease’.
- **incidence** – frequency, occurrence, prevalence
  - **incidents** – events, happenings, occasions

There are over 600 pairs in English (*The Oxford Companion of the English Language*, 1992).

- pair/pare/pear
- right/rite/write/wright
- cent/scent/sent

In reading they present no problem, but in **writing** they require an effort of memorization as one word can easily be confused for the other; e.g. when **flair** is written for **flare** or **fare** for **fair**.

**Note:** Some words may not be true homophones; that is, they are not exactly the same in sound, but they are close enough in sound to cause confusion in spelling, e.g.

temporal/temporary;  
loose/lose;  
once/ones/one's.

More examples:

affect/effect	pail/pale	breath/breadth/breathe	adapt/adopt	temporary/temporal
born/borne	passed/past	feather/further/farther	boarder/border/bother	
corps/corps	brake/break	read/red	damage/damages	cent/scent/sent
been/being	deceased/diseased		dear/deer	road/rode
fateful/faithful		flour/flower	sail/sale	formally/formerly
weather/whether		plain/plane		

(Soft copy of Homonym packet) See also pp 92-93 of handout.

### **Word Families**

Words come in families. You can expand your vocabulary by becoming familiar with these word families. This can enable you to become a more fluent speaker and writer of English.

You can express yourself in a wider range of ways. E.g. If you know the **verb** and the **noun** forms related to the adjective **boring**, you can say:

- The lesson was **boring**. (adj)
- The lesson **bored** me. (verb)
- The lesson was such a **bore**. (noun)

Many of the parts of speech or different members of the family are formed by adding prefixes and suffixes to common words: e.g. **accident** – **accidental** – **accidentally**

Sometimes the same form is used as a different part of speech:

**anger** – **anger**

- He found it hard to control his **anger**.
- He always **angers** me with his petty complaints.

Becoming familiar with these word families expands your vocabulary and can enable you to become a better speaker and writer of English.

<b>Nouns</b>	<b>Adjectives</b>	<b>Verbs</b>	<b>Adverbs</b>
ability, disability, inability	able, unable, disabled	enable, disable	ably
acceptance	acceptable, unacceptable, accepted	accept	acceptably, unacceptably
accident	accidental		accidentally
accuracy, inaccuracy	accurate, inaccurate		accurately, inaccurately
accusation, the accused, accuser	accusing	accuse	accusingly
achievement, achiever	achievable	achieve	
act, action, inaction, interaction, reaction, transaction	acting	act	
activity, inactivity	active, inactive, interactive, proactive	activate	actively
addition	additional	add	additionally
avoidance	avoidable, unavoidable	avoid	avoidably
base, the basics, basis	baseless, basic	base	basically
bearer	bearable, unbearable	bear	
blood, bleeding	bloodless, bloody	bleed	
care, carer	careful, careless, caring, uncaring	care	carefully, carelessly
consideration	considerable, considerate, inconsiderate, considered	consider, reconsider	considerably, considerately
damage, damages	damaging, undamaged	damage	
drink, drinker, drinking, drunk, drunkenness	drunk, drunken	drink	drunkenly
ease, unease, easiness	easy, uneasy	ease	easily, uneasily, easy
emphasis	emphatic	emphasize	emphatically
energy	energetic	energize	energetically
fame, infamy	famed, famous, infamous		famously, infamously
fashion	fashionable, unfashionable	fashion	fashionably, unfashionably
gratitude, ingratitude	grateful, ungrateful		gratefully
head, heading, headings	overhead, heady	head, behead	overhead
loser, loss	lost	lose	



**PRACTICE:**

Complete the table below by providing the **noun, adjective, verb** and **adverb** forms of the words given. As you see in the above examples above some words may have more than one form of a part of speech, while some may not have all four form. Consult a dictionary if you are in doubt.

Nouns	Adjectives	Verbs	Adverbs
		reward	
	rude		
recognition			
			namely
	generous		
ground			
habit			
		modernize	
	memorable		
		opt	
			necessarily
			skillfully
	strong		
		hurt	
	groundless		
purification			
accountability			
	temporary		
		lose	
	loose		
	sharp		
gratitude			
		embolden	
			sadly
		avoid	