

VI. Spelling

The spelling of English words is not fixed and invariable, nor does it depend on any other authority than general agreement. At the present day there is practically unanimous agreement as to the spelling of most words. In the list below, for example, *rime* for *rhyme* is the only allowable variation; all the other forms are co-extensive with the English language. At any given moment, however, a relatively small number of words may be spelled in more than one way. Gradually, as a rule, one of these forms comes to be generally preferred, and the less customary form comes to look obsolete and is discarded. From time to time new forms, mostly simplifications, are introduced by innovators, and either win their place or die of neglect.

The practical objection to unaccepted and over-simplified spellings is the disfavor with which they are received by the reader. They distract his attention and exhaust his patience. He reads the form *though* automatically, without thought of its needless complexity; he reads the abbreviation *tho* and mentally supplies the missing letters, at the cost of a fraction of his attention. The writer has defeated his own purpose.

WORDS OFTEN MISPELLED

- accidentally
- advice
- affect
- believe
- benefit
- challenge
- coarse
- course
- criticize
- deceive
- definite
- describe
- despise
- develop
- disappoint
- dissipate
- duel
- ecstasy
- effect
- embarrass
- existence
- fascinate
- fiery
- formerly
- humorous
- hypocrisy
- immediately
- impostor

- incident
- incidentally
- latter
- led
- lose
- marriage
- mischief
- murmur
- necessary
- occurred
- opportunity
- parallel
- Philip
- playwright
- preceding
- prejudice
- principal
- principle
- privilege
- pursue
- repetition
- rhyme
- rhythm
- ridiculous
- sacrilegious
- seize
- separate
- shepherd
- siege
- similar
- simile
- too
- tragedy
- tries
- undoubtedly
- until
- villain

Note that a single consonant (other than *v*) preceded by a stressed short vowel is doubled before *-ed* and *-ing*: *planned*, *letting*, *beginning*. (*Coming* is an exception.)

Write *to-day*, *to-night*, *to-morrow* (but not *together*) with a hyphen.

Write *any one*, *every one*, *some one*, *some time* (except in the sense of *formerly*) as two words.