ENGLISH

SHARPENER:
Spelling

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Introduction

Poor spelling can have a disquieting effect on the reader. In many it merely provokes a concern as to the reliability and authority of the writer; in others it rouses a level of pedantry and frustration that is out of all proportion to the importance of the text. Certainly, spelling matters – the more influential the writer, the greater is the blunder of a typographical error or misplaced homophone.

Edward Carney (1994: 79) states, ‘Spelling errors have social penalties. If you cannot spell you are thought to be uneducated and, by a further savage twist, unintelligent.’

It is difficult to determine at what age and at what level of authority poor spelling engenders such negative associations. My favourite misspelling is from a six-year-old who sent a Christmas card to ‘Mr Rice and your Secret tart’ – after some amusement in the staffroom it became apparent that she had attempted to write ‘secretary’. Another favourite was from an undergraduate. It read, ‘Samuel’s closet (closest) relationship is with his mother’, which should serve as a warning to those who rely on automatic spell-checkers. The unintended humour of these misspellings is entertaining, the consequence minimal.

Contrast these examples with the government’s withdrawal and reprinting of 48,000 KS2 spelling posters in 2000 due to typographical errors. It drew the headline, ‘Shame over spelling blunder’ from the normally reserved BBC. Correct spelling is important if you need your message to be taken seriously.

For many children, spelling isn’t easy and those who are fortunate to have a good orthographic memory should perhaps reflect upon the following quote from Samuel Langhorne Clemens, better known as Mark Twain:

‘I have had an aversion to good spelling for sixty years and more, merely for the reason that when I was a boy there was not a thing I could do creditably except spell according to the book. It was a poor and mean distinction and I early learned to disenjoy it. I suppose that this is because the ability to spell correctly is a talent, not an acquirement. There is some dignity about an acquirement, because it is a product of your own labor. It is wages earned, whereas to be able to do a thing merely by the grace of God and not by your own effort transfers the distinction to our heavenly home – where possibly it is a matter of pride and satisfaction but it leaves you naked and bankrupt.’

Mark Twain’s Autobiography Volume II.

Of course, we know that spelling can be acquired otherwise a large number of people in the teaching profession would be wasting a huge amount of time. The flip side of this statement is that for some children (and adults) spelling is a skill that requires structure, support and much celebration of achievement.

The activities presented in this book are based on the appendices for the new draft National Curriculum for English. The resources are unashamedly worksheet based and these materials are intended to be used alongside, and in conjunction with, other teaching methods. The materials relate to the curriculum’s spelling guidelines, which are given in the form of rules.

McLeod (1961) states that the value of a spelling rule can be assessed by reference to a number of criteria:

- it should apply to a large number of words;
- it must have few exceptions;
- it must be easy to state and understand;
- it must cover only appropriate words.

Rules offer the pupil an opportunity to spell a large number of words in exchange for a small amount of learning, but where the rule is complex and applies to limited examples its efficiency falters. In these cases, rote learning of individual words may be more time-effective for some children. Teachers, through their knowledge of pupils’ learning styles, are best placed to judge the most appropriate method of teaching.
Using this book

Teacher’s notes provide further information about spellings, contextualise the activities and offer suggestions for extension, as necessary.

The Activity sheets are described and explained beneath the Teacher’s notes and are indicated by the banner shown on the left.

ACTIVITY

Extension activities can be found in the right-hand column next to the relevant activity, beneath this Extension heading.

Resources

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Words ending in -able and -ible

Rules and guidelines*

The -able ending is far more common than the -ible ending. As with -ant and -ance/-ancy, the -able ending is used if there is a related word ending in -ation. If the -able ending is added to a word ending in -ce or -ge, the e after the c or g must be kept, as those letters would otherwise have their ‘hard’ sounds (as in cap and gap) before the a of the -able ending. The -able ending is usually, but not always, used if a complete root word can be heard before it, even if there is no related word ending in -ation. The first six examples opposite are obvious; in reliable, the complete word rely is heard, but the y changes to i in accordance with the rule. The -ible ending is common if a complete root word can’t be heard before it, but it also sometimes occurs when a complete word can be heard (e.g. sensible).

| Words ending in -able and -ible | adorable (adoration), applicable (application), considerable (consideration), tolerable (toleration), changeable, noticeable, forcible, legible, dependable, comfortable, understandable, reasonable, enjoyable, reliable, possible, horrible, terrible, visible, incredible, sensible. |

Additional information

The first piece of guidance states, ‘The -able ending is far more common than the -ible ending’. A quick search using the morewords site (www.morewords.com) lists 1478 -able words and 219 -ible words, which represents a ratio of almost 7:1. While this does not take into consideration appropriate vocabulary, or exclude words where the letter strings are not used as a suffix, it remains clear that pupils would be well advised to opt for an -able ending if they are uncertain of the spelling of a word. As a caveat, this ratio plummets to 1:1 when considering words with a -sible/-sable ending.

As stated in the guidelines, if a root word can be clearly heard, then it is likely that the suffix -able will be used (if the root word ends in er it will always take the -able suffix). Exceptions of root word + -ible include: accessible, collapsible, collectible, convertible, deductible, (in)destructible, (in)digestible, (in)flexible, (ir)reversible, sensible.

These words are best taught as a list.

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<td>Words ending in -able and -ible (1)</td>
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This activity relates the -able word ending to -ation endings. Children are asked to find the root verb each time.

| Words ending in -able and -ible (2) |
This activity introduces multiple rules. Children should complete this sheet and use it for reference when completing the next activity.

| Words ending in -able and -ible (3) |
This sheet uses the rules introduced in the previous worksheet.

EXTENSION
Can the children think of -able/-ible words to fit into pairs of sentences, e.g.

The sandwich looked ____ible.
The sandwich looked ____able.

The dog was noisy and ____ible.
The dog was noisy but ____able.

His writing was ____ible.
His writing was ____able.
**Words ending in -able and -ible (1)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>-ation word</th>
<th>admir</th>
<th>admiration</th>
<th>observation</th>
<th>adoration</th>
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<td>Can you find the root verb?</td>
<td>admire</td>
<td>admiring</td>
<td>observing</td>
<td>adoring</td>
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<td>demonstrating</td>
<td>expecting</td>
<td>navigating</td>
<td>conso-lating</td>
</tr>
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**Activity:**
- Knock off the -ation
- Add -able
- Is it -able or -ible?
  - If a word ends in -ation, it will usually also have an -able ending. Cross off the -ation endings and add -able.
Words ending in -able and -ible (2)

Look at Eggstein’s Handy Hints, then add -able or -ible to the words.

Eggstein’s handy hints!

If a consonant is followed by y, change y to i before adding -able.

If a word ends in ce or ge, keep the e when adding -able.

If a word ends in ce, drop the e when adding -ible

No words end in -ceible or -geible

envy   envious replace replaceable force forcible
justly justify service produce
vary   variable peace reduce
ply    ply knowledge
deny deny manage
identify identify change

There aren’t many words ending in ce that have an -ible ending!
Words ending in -able and -ible (3)

Add -able or -ible to these words:

accept_______ divis_______ laugh_______
incred_______ fashion_______ remove_______
comfort_______ imposs_______ measure_______
manage_______ achieve_______ horr_______
prevent_______ invis_______ adapt_______
reason_______ illeg_______ adjust_______
compat_______ rely_______ enjoy_______
invinc_______ notice_______ compare_______

Circle all the words that end in -ible.

Eggstein’s handy hint!
If the root is a real word, add -able (but take care with words ending in e and y). If the root is not a real word, add -ible.

I don’t know whether to dribble or drabble the ball!
Perfect support for the new KS2 English grammar, punctuation and spelling test

*English Sharpener* is a series of books to help pupils and teachers with the technical requirements of KS2 English. Each book covers the specific aspects of English as described in the KS2 Test for grammar, punctuation and spelling, and the English Curriculum for years 3, 4, 5 and 6. Packed full of games, activity sheets and lesson plans, these titles will really get your class excited about language.

To help your pupils make sense of spelling, their trusty guide is Eggstein the chicken genius, accompanied by the Chicken Picker Crew who sort through the letters and words, choosing which ones need to go together.

These resources are full of fun but are also serious about getting to grips with spelling. Your pupils will enjoy grappling with the technical side of English and, because they are having fun, will also remember the rules, tricks and lessons to help them fly through their tests.

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