

SPELLING

Accurate spelling helps effective communication. To develop a professional level of communication, both for your studies and professional life after graduation, it is important to address spelling at the proof reading stage of assignment writing.

Incorrect spelling can distract the reader from the point you are trying to make. With spell-check facilities on your computer and easy access to on-line dictionaries, you can take steps to eliminate spelling errors. There are also strategies you can use to improve your spelling more generally.

Preferred spelling

Most lecturers expect that you will use standard Australian English spelling. As you research widely, you are likely to come across other forms of spelling, including American English spelling. While some lecturers accept American spelling, others require standard Australian spelling. Both these groups agree, however, that it is important to be consistent with your spelling throughout your assignment. To assist with this, set the language option on your computer to English (Australian).

Comparison of Australian and American English

The difference between standard Australian and American spellings is minimal and usually does not affect the reader's ability to understand what you have written. Some examples of common differences are given below.

Australian		American	
-our	colour, labour	-or	color, labor
-re	centre,	-er	center,
-ce	licence, defence	-se	license, defense
-ise	organise, maximise	ize	organize, maximize
-ll-	cancelled	-l-	canceled
-ae-	haemoglobin	-e-	hemoglobin
-oe-	foetus	-e-	fetus

N.B. Some organisation names use the American style, e.g. World Health Organization.

Dictionaries

To improve your spelling and expand your academic vocabulary, you should access the largest and best dictionaries you can; a pocket dictionary may be cheaper and easy to carry around but is unlikely to have the range of words you need. Choose a dictionary that suits your needs.

Subject specific dictionary: contains specialised words related to the area you're studying that are not available in a standard dictionary

Standard English dictionary: RMIT prefers the *Macquarie Dictionary*.

English learner's dictionary: If English is not your first language, it can be worth investing in a specialised learner's dictionary.

Dictionaries are also available in the reference section of the library and many can also be accessed for free online, with some versions also providing audio to help with pronouncing specialist terminology.

Strategies for spelling well

- It may help to see the word rather than just to spell it aloud.
- Develop a mental picture of the word.
- Use the LOOK, SAY, COVER, WRITE, CHECK method: look and write it correctly; say it aloud several times; cover and say again, trying to picture the word; write it; uncover and check; repeat if incorrect.
- Break words in to parts (syllables, root word, suffix, prefix).
- Look for patterns or word groups (haematology, haemoglobin, haemostasis).
- Link the word to similar words you know [practise (verb), practice (noun): is (verb), ice (noun)].

Spelling rules

Although there are exceptions to many of the 'rules' of spelling, being familiar with some of the more commonly used ones can assist with accuracy.

<p>Words that sound alike but are spelt differently</p> <p>It is essential that you learn these words separately and fully check their meaning in the dictionary to avoid using the wrong spelling when constructing a sentence.</p> <p>For example, there and their fair and fare</p>	<p>Words with 'ei' and 'ie'</p> <p>'i' comes before 'e' except after 'c'. There are some exceptions to this rule.</p> <p>For example, leisure, height, weight</p> <p>Here are some examples of 'ie' words: wield and field</p> <p>Here are some examples of 'ei' words: deceive, receive</p>
<p>Prefixes</p> <p>Letters added to the beginning of a word to make a new word are called prefixes.</p> <p>For example, mis + take = mistake back + ground = background</p> <p>Some common prefixes are 'mis', 'dis', 're', 'for', 'ant', 'ante', 'sub', 'un', and 'in'</p>	<p>Suffixes</p> <p>Letters added to the end of a main word are called suffixes.</p> <p>For example, Harm + less = harmless</p> <p>Some more suffixes are 'ed', 'ful', 'ly', 'ing', 'able', 'ance', 'ence', 'ness'</p>
<p>Rules for words with a silent 'e'</p> <p>Rule 1</p> <p>If a word ends with a silent 'e', drop the 'e' before adding an ending that begins with a vowel.</p> <p>Some of the endings that begin with a vowel are 'ed', 'er', 'en', 'ing', 'ous'.</p> <p>Here are some examples ripe + en = ripen tape + ed = taped take + ing = taking</p>	<p>Rules for words with a silent 'e'</p> <p>Rule 2</p> <p>If a word ends in 'ce' or 'ge', you keep the 'e' when you add 'us' or 'able'. Here are some examples: marriage + able = marriageable service + able = serviceable outrage + ous = outrageous</p>
<p>Doubling the last consonant</p> <p>In single syllable words ending in a consonant that follows a single vowel, you double the consonant when adding 'ed', 'er', 'est', 'ing'.</p> <p>For example, Tap + ing = tapping Rub + ed = rubbed</p> <p>Remember this is only the case when a single consonant follows a single vowel.</p> <p>For example, Feel + ing = feeling</p>	<p>Words ending with 'ful'</p> <p>When 'full' is added to a word you drop the final 'l'.</p> <p>For example, hand + full = handful rest + full = restful</p> <p>If you add 'ly' to any word ending with 'ful', you keep the existing 'l'.</p> <p>For example, Restful + ly = restfully</p>