

The Reasons Why English Spelling is so Weird And Wonderful



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Howtospell

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Welcome to the Weird and Wonderful World of English Spelling.



Hi, this is Joanne Rudling, and thank you for buying this ebook. I know from 14 years experience teaching spelling, writing and literacy people really get frustrated with English spelling, and are always asking why certain words are spelled the way they are and why we can't simplify spelling.

Learning about the history of English spelling will make you appreciate and love spelling for all its weird and wonderful ways, and you'll really understand the logic behind the illogical.

Understanding the history of English spelling and why words are spelled the way they are, and taking an interest in where words come from are two of the most important ways to improve and learn spelling.

The benefits of knowing the history of English spelling are huge, you'll gain confidence in spelling, you'll be able to spell those difficult letter patterns easier and you won't get so angry at spelling.

So here goes...

Things You're Going to Learn



At the end of this book:

- you'll know exactly why English spelling is the way it is with all its quirks and strangeness,
- you'll see the logic in the English spelling system and feel more confident about it,
- you'll feel happier about spelling and love it!
- you'll understand why you can't rely on pronunciation for spelling, and how pronunciation changed over the centuries but spelling didn't,
- you'll know how the various tribes that invaded Britain developed English and made it so 'strange',
- you'll know who caused our spelling problems,
- you'll improve your vocabulary and know why there are so many words that mean the same thing or similar.



Spelling v Pronunciation

Spelling reform, simplifying spelling, moaning about spelling won't work and won't help you.

Learning to love spelling will work and will help you.

Some people blame their accents and the way they say words for not being able to spell well. They think that if they speak 'properly' and pronounce words 'correctly' they'll be able to spell. But this is not true. The English spelling system doesn't work like that. We can have loads of different ways of saying the same word which means we can't have a standard spelling for it. For example, I say bath /bath/ with a flat 'a' /bath/ others say /barth/ with a long /a/ sound.

There have always been lots of different English accents and dialects. How we say words still varies from region to region and country to country - London, east Midlands, Liverpool, Newcastle, Scotland, American, Australian, Indian, the Caribbean etc. So a simplified, standardized spelling system couldn't possibly reflect all these great varieties of English.

Another reason why spelling and pronunciation are different is that the way we say words has changed over the centuries while the spelling remained fixed. Sometimes the way something is spelt shows us the history of the word and the way people spoke it centuries ago - and that's why the spelling might seem a bit strange.



"English is a modern, living language but also one that reflects a fascinating history. Each time Britain was invaded so too was the language.

An understanding of how words have developed can make learning spelling more interesting and less frustrating.

Knowing where our words come from can help you feel better about those 'strange' groups of letters that seem to make no sense at all."

(Adult Learners' Guide to Spelling by Anne Betteridge)

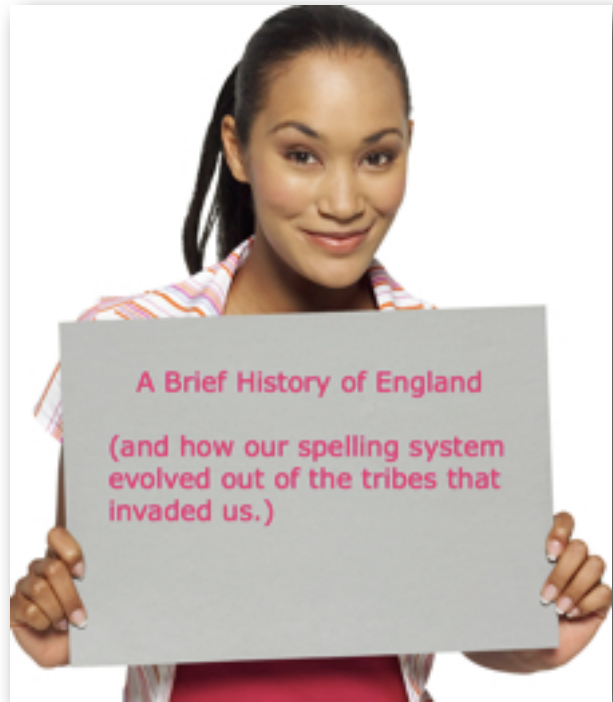


English spelling can seem weird because it's not always easy to see why words are spelled the way they are.

The problem is that the English spelling system developed slowly over the centuries, and the irregularities came about because of various writers trying to fit their alphabet and sounds to English. Latin writers, French scribes, the printing presses of the 1400s, and 16th Century English academics all changed and introduced their own 'strange' ways of spelling words.

In this book we'll look at what sorts of problems these lot caused us and how we can use this knowledge to help us feel less infuriated with English spelling.

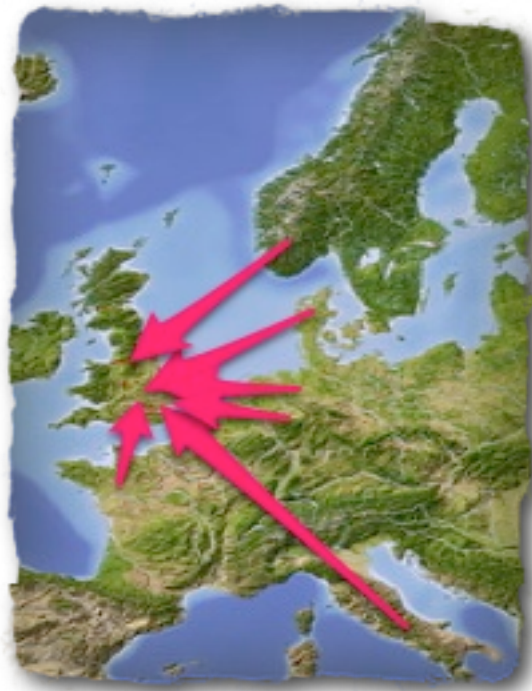
Quick Quiz



Do you know any of the answers to the questions below?

1. What language did the Romans speak?
2. What did the Romans name Britain?
3. Which tribe of people did the 'English' come from?
4. What name did the Anglo-Saxons give England?
5. Why is there a silent 'k' and 'g' in know, knock, gnaw, gnat?
6. Which country did the Normans come from?
7. What famous date did they invade Britain?
8. Why is -gh silent or pronounced with a 'f'?
9. Why do we pronounce come, son, woman with a 'u' but spell it with an 'o'?
10. Why are there so many words that mean the same thing?

A Brief History of England and English Spelling.



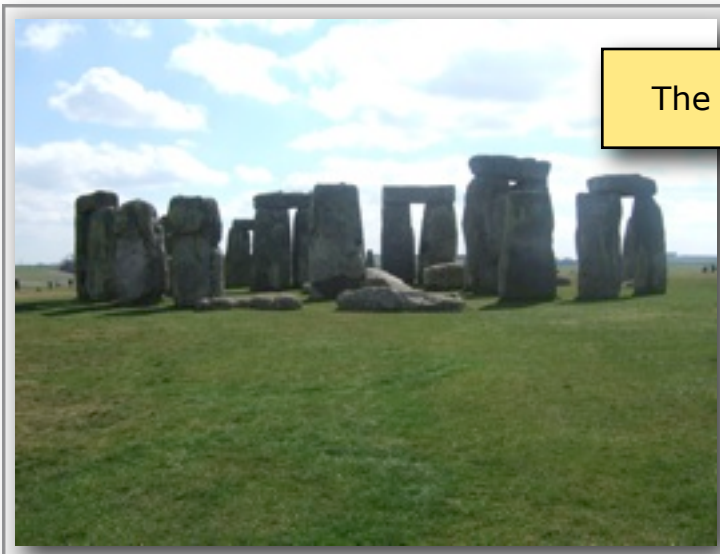
- English developed from the languages of the invaders that settled in England: the Romans, Angles, Saxons, Jutes, Vikings, and finally the Normans.
- English comes from the following languages: Germanic (German, Scandinavian and Dutch), Romance (Latin and French).
- This is why there is a big variety of words and spellings.

The Celts



We're not sure who first lived in England. But we know something about the Celts who settled here by 400BC. They spoke Celtic.

Celtic still exists today in Ireland (Irish Gaelic), Scotland (Scots Gaelic) and Wales (Welsh).



The Celts built Stonehenge

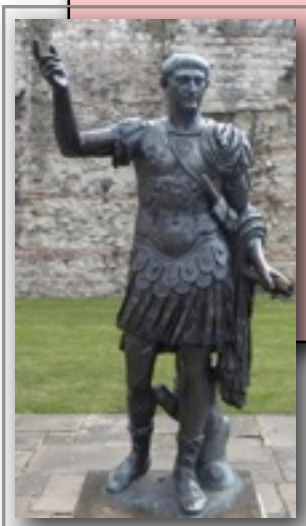
English 'borrowed' only a few words from Celtic, for example: bog, slug, trousers, whiskey...

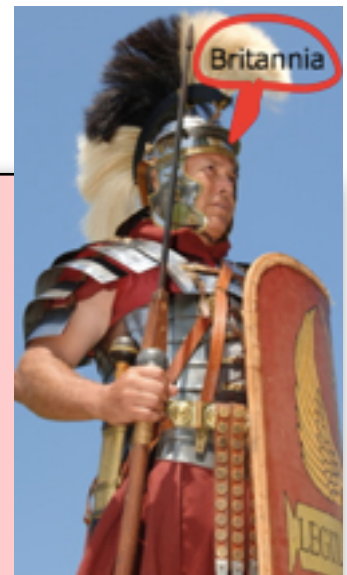
The Romans (from Italy)



The first landings in Britain by the Romans took place from 55BC to check out the country and do some trade.

- In 43AD the Romans finally invaded and colonised Britain. They called this country **Britannia**.
- They spoke **Latin**.
- Romans loved cities and built **Londinium** (London), Chester, Lancaster, Gloucester, Winchester and the famous Roman baths in Bath.





The British ruling Celtic tribes adopted Latin as a second language. But in the countryside they still spoke Celtic.

- We still use some Roman words: island, scissors, debt, plumber. **They all contain silent letters which show the history of the word.** For example, plumber which comes from the Latin/Roman word plumbum meaning lead (lead piping) used in plumbing.
- The Romans also gave us the following words: tribe, villa, election, sewage, sewer, myth, legion, cohort, camouflage...
- We still use Latin in law - bona fide, pro forma, subpoena, sub, pro, bonus, prima...



In 410 AD the Romans withdrew from Britain because they needed to defend Rome and Italy from invaders. But some Romans stayed.

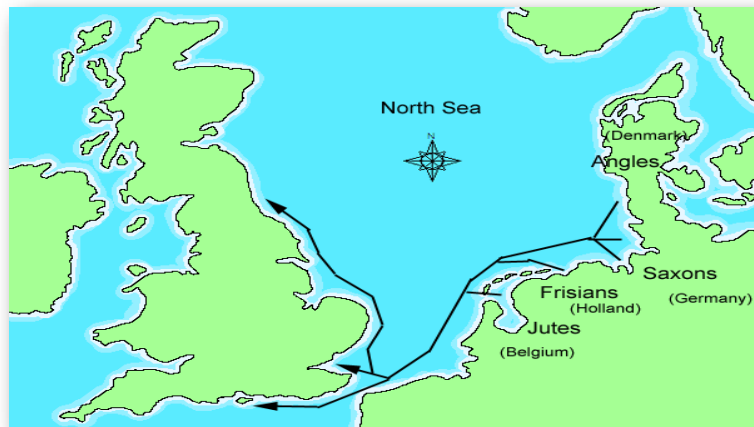
Latin was still used for writing and in the administration of Britain by educated Britons. Celtic continued to be spoken.

Many of our words are based on Latin words and not Celtic.

Latin really hit spelling hard when the French invaded in 1066 and the Renaissance took place in 16th century (watch out for those periods later!)

The Anglo-Saxons - the English!

(northern Germany & Holland)



From 410AD when the Romans left, tribes from northern Europe began to invade Britain.

These Saxons, Angles and Jutes spoke a number of Germanic languages that eventually became Anglo-Saxon/Old English.

- They gave England the name "Angle-land."
- **The Anglo-Saxons became the English!**
- **The 100 most common words in present day English are from Anglo-Saxon**, including everyday words: *earth, house, food, sing, night, daughter, women, cough, sleep...*



The Anglo-Saxon -gh- letter pattern



-gh
-ight, -ough, -augh

The difficult **-gh** letter patterns: **-ight, -gh-, -gh, -ough**, all come from **Anglo-Saxon** words (in brackets): daughter (**dohtor**), night (**niht**), light (**liht**), bright (**beorht**), dough (**dāg**), bough (**bōh**), rough (**ruh**)

- The 'h' was a hard throaty sound like the Scottish sound in *loch*.
- Then around the 13th century the 'h' became 'gh' because of the French influence to try to indicate this throaty sound.
- Then in about the 17th century the 'gh' sound was either dropped or became 'f' sound: enough, cough, though, through, plough, rough, borough, slaughter, nought, laugh...

Which of these -gh- words are silent and which have a 'f' sound?

enough, cough, though, through, rough, toughen
borough, roughly, slaughter, nought, laugh.

Answers

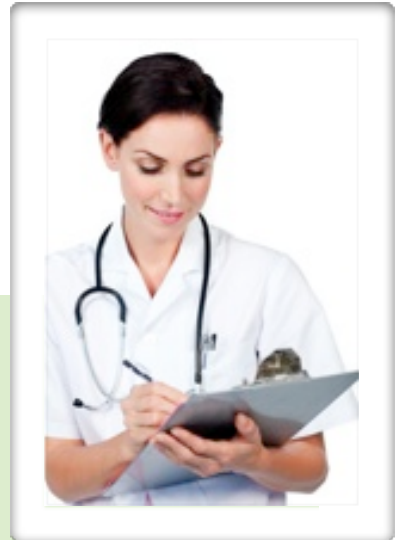
silent -gh-

though, through, borough,
slaughter, nought, daughter.

'f' sound

enough, cough, rough, laugh,
tough
roughly
toughen

Pronunciation of -gh- words



-ough has seven sounds

Have you thought this through thoroughly enough?

oo - /too/	through
off - /coff/	cough, trough
uff - /cuff/	enough, rough, tough
oh - /toe/	dough, though, although
ow - /how/	bough, doughty
u - /uh, up/	borough, thorough
or - /or/	bought, brought, fought, nought, ought, sought, wrought, thought

-augh normally sounds like /or/ - *door/nor*

daughter /dort a/, naughty, slaughter, taught, haughty

but laugh is pronounced with a long or short 'a'
laff or larff

-eigh normally sounds like /ay/ - *say, day*

eight, neighbour, weigh, weight, sleigh

but height rhymes with *bite!!*

-igh sounds like **i** in *tie*

high, sigh, thigh, light, delight, sight, might, night, right, tight, flight



1. **Can you guess these Saxon words?** (Read them out aloud)
hwo, hwat, hwer, hwil, hwaël, hwit, hwy
2. **Can you guess these words?** tyn, twentig, hundred, reod, grene, man, wifman

Answers

1. hwo = who, hwat = what, hwer = where, hwil = while,
hwaël=whale hwit = white hwy =why
(some people still pronounce the h!)

These words were originally written as they were spoken- the 'h' and 'w' both pronounced. By 1300 the letters had been switched to 'wh', maybe so it matched the other words with h patterns - 'ch' and 'th' and to make it more French.

2. tyn → ten
twentig →twenty
hundred → hundred
fif hundred þreo ond twentig → five hundred and twenty-three
cese → cheese (c used to be ch)
reod → red
grene → green
geolu → yellow
man → human
wifman → woman

The Vikings/Danes/Norsemen (from Scandinavia)



- In the eighth century, 793AD, the Vikings (Norsemen or Danes) invaded Britain from Scandinavia.
- After fighting the Anglo-Saxons, they eventually lived together in peace.
- The Anglo-Saxon and Viking (Old Norse) languages combined to become **Old English** which is also referred to as **Anglo-Saxon**.
- The Vikings brought 2000 new words into English: *anger, awkward, cake, die, egg, freckle, muggy, reindeer, silver, skirt* and *smile*.
- knee, knuckle, knife, know, knot, gnaw, gnat are all Viking words. The **k** and **g** were pronounced by the Vikings. But now they are silent but used in writing to show the history of the word.
- A lot of words with the beginning **sk-** and **sc-** are from the Vikings – sky, skin, skip, skill, skate (the fish), skirt, scab, scale, scanty, scar, scare, scathe, scorch, score, scowl...

Viking vs Anglo-Saxon words



As Viking words became English, people could choose between Anglo-Saxon or Viking words:

wish or want, craft or skill, hide or skin, raise or rear,
break or breach, skirt or shirt, wake or watch.

These words used to mean the same thing but over time the meanings of these words have changed slightly.



King Alfred (Alfred the Great) united England and showed the people they could have a great language and literature of their own.

Old English Letter Patterns

Many modern English letter patterns come from Old English:
igh, gh, wh, ch, aw, ow, ew, sk, tch, wi, lk, wr, th.

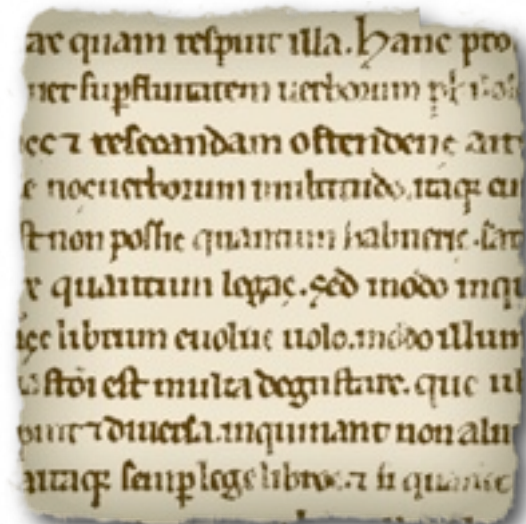
Learning common Old English letter patterns will help to improve your spelling.

Remember with letter patterns the visual pattern is important not the sound.

wh-	kn-	-gh	-igh	-aw	-ow	-ew
when who whether white wheel	knife know knock knee knight	through brought daughter enough laugh	right eight frighten high neighbour	law drawer saw raw straw	cow show shadow below bowl know	new knew blew flew screw

-all	-lk	wi-	sk-	-tch	wr-	th-
all call ball tall fall hall	folk talk walk stalk	wit witness wish wise witches wizard	sky skirt skin skirmish skill	match watch thatch scratch	wreck wrong write writ wrist	their they thrift thrust tether both birth

If you learn these you'll be less likely to write -hg instead of **-gh** and you'll know why there are silent **k** and **g** in knee/knock/gnaw/gnome - they're not there to mess with your brain!



Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse combined to become **Old English**, and with it a rich tradition of literature.

This is when English spelling became complicated. The Christian missionaries tried to use their Latin 23-letter alphabet for the 35 or so sounds of Old English. They couldn't fit the sounds in so they used some of the old Rune alphabet and a combination of letters.

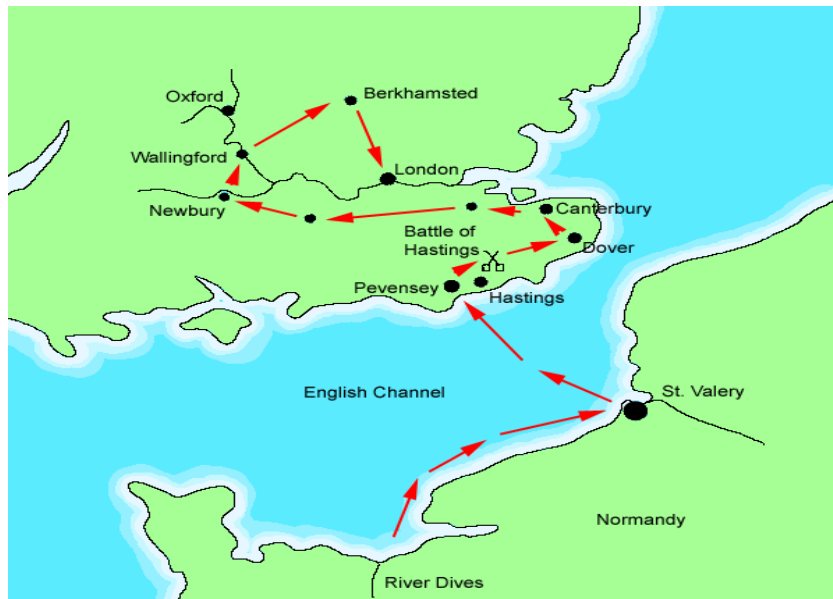
Basically, they manipulated the alphabet onto the sounds.

These haunt our spellings today.

And then the French came along to really confuse things and cause chaos with our spelling.



The Normans / French (1066)



The Duke of Normandy (William the Conqueror) invaded Britain in **1066**.

The French defeated the English at the Battle of Hastings.





- The Normans (the French) settled in Britain over the next three centuries.
- French became the language of the nobility (the king, queens and the aristocrats).
- **French and Latin** became the language of law and government.
- **English** was the language of the lower classes and peasants (the farmers), and it stopped being a written language.
- The peasants were the English-speaking Saxons and their movements were restricted, and they were oppressed by the Norman landowners. A feudal system came into being.
- The lords and barons (the bosses) were the French-speaking Normans (French).
- Thousands of French words became English: crown, castle, parliament, army, mansion, romance, chess, colour, servant, peasant, traitor, governor... and spelled the French way.
- **Spelling became more complicated as the Norman scribes applied French spelling rules to English.**

The Chaos Begins!



Scribes had the job of handwriting and copying documents, books, laws, etc.

French scribes introduced new spellings that are with us today (and giving us headaches!)

1. **ce** replaced s: Old English *mys*, Modern English *mice*. (page 57)
2. **ch** replaced c: Old English *cild*, Modern English *child* (page 59)
3. **gh** replaced h: Old English *liht*, Modern English *light* (page 15)
4. **qu** replaced cw: Old English *cwen*, Modern English *queen* (page 25)
5. **o** replaced u when next to m,n,v,w, Old English *sunu*, Modern English *son*. (page 26)
6. **ou** replaced u: Old English *hus* or *wund*, Modern English *house* or *wound*. (page 27)

The Letter Q



The French replaced several Old English spellings including, *cw* to *qu*.
In Old English the sound 'qu' as in 'queen' was spelt 'cw' – *cwene/cwen*

Say these words: *cwic*, *cwifer*, *becweth*, *cwell*. What are they?

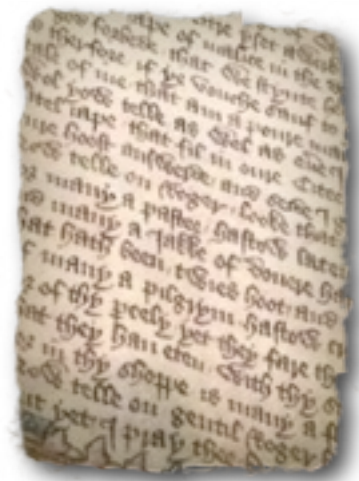
qu had the same sound as *cw*. (Some say it was a pointless change!)

cwen or *cwene* → queen, *cwic* → quick, *cwifer* → quiver,
becweth → bequeath, *cwell* → quell

But many **qu** words are originally French – quality, question, tranquil, queasy.

French included many words where the sound 'k' was represented by 'qu'
– as in quay and picturesque.

Medieval Handwriting and the Consequences Now.



The slanting Medieval handwriting also complicated things.

The slanting letters of *u* / *i* (no dot) / *m* / *n* / *v* / *w* when written next to each other blended together or looked similar and were difficult to read.

So to make letters clearer they wrote O instead of *i* and *u* but the sound stayed the same:

- ❖ **cuman** became **come** still said as /cum/
- ❖ **wimman** became **woman** /wu man/
- ❖ **sunu** became **son** /sun/
- ❖ **wundor** became **wonder**
- ❖ **lufu** became **love**
- ❖ **abufan** became **above**

This is why the 'u' sound is written as 'o' in words like wonder, love, above, cover, dove, glove, some. Notice the 'o' is before v, n, m. (Some people pronounce the 'o' as 'o'. They see the 'o' and think it should be pronounced 'o'. That's fine, all accents accepted here!)

Notice also the **f** changed to **v**. The f was just like the v sound, but gradually the f changed to a harder sound so the scribes changed f to v to reflect the softer v sound in speaking (which is good). But then they had to change the u to o because u was hard to read next to v!

Confused? Thanks French scribes!

-ou- letter pattern



French scribes replaced the Old English **u** with **ou**.

This happened because of handwriting again - the **u** and **v** looked the same. The scribes wanted a way to make the U represent a long vowel sound.

- ❖ **hus** became **house**
- ❖ **wund** became **wound**
- ❖ **ruh** became **rough** (the **u** became **ou** and the **h** became **gh**!)
- ❖ **ful** became **foul**

The -ou- letter pattern has different sounds! Read them slowly and check what sounds they make.

The letter C

"is no letter at all"
John Baret 1580.

The letter **C** is a problem letter that has been talked about over the centuries.

Its sound can be **Q**, **K** (hard c) and **S** (soft c): cue, can, city.

It also has a different sound with h - **ch**: cheese but not chorus or chemist.

It's sometimes pronounced **sh** with machine, champagne, ocean.

We can have British 'kerb' v American 'curb', and disc v disk.

Since the 1700s the Q, K, S sounds are or have been used for Islam's holy book from Coran, Koran to now-favoured Quran or Qur'an.

It can even be silent: muscle, indict, science

The Old English pronounced **C** with a hard **k** but then the French introduced the soft C (s sound).

The French scribes wrote C before i and e instead of S – cell, city, procession, cellar, citizen, grace, reconcile, palace.

Modern words follow this old rule:

A soft **c** (s) before **i, e or y** - cinema, decide, celebrate, cemetery, cybernetics.

A hard **c** (K) before **a, o, u**, a **consonant**, or at the **end** of words - can, could, cut, class, public.

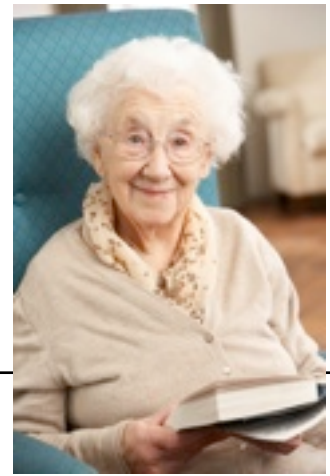
bicycle = by/si/kul (both sounds)

It's a good rule but with all rules there are exceptions.

About 74% of words with C are pronounced K

About 22% of words with C are pronounced S

Fill in the letters that come after C.



A **C__nadian** woman who has smoked for 95 years has finally **dec__ded** to give up. **Lucy Cooper announc__d** she would **c__t** out all **c__garettes** as she **c__lebrated** her 105th birthday today. Mrs Cooper has always **c__aimed** that she is not **addic__ed** to **tobacc__** and **c__uld** stop at any time. Now, she says the time has **c__me**. "I paid about 10 **c__nts** for a **pac__et** when I started, and look at the **pric__** now! We used to smoke in the **c__nema** and teachers even smoked in the **c__ass**, but there aren't many **plac__s** you **c__n** smoke in **public** now. The **c__ilings** in my apartment are brown and my **c__othes** smell. I'm quitting!"

Thanks to Johanna Stirling for
this exercise in her great book:
Teaching Spelling to English
Language Learners.

The letter C

Answers

A **Canadian** woman who has smoked for 95 years has finally **decided** to give up. **Lucy Cooper announced** she would **cut** out all **cigarettes** as she **celebrated** her 105th birthday today. Mrs Cooper has always **claimed** that she is not **addicted** to **tobacco** and **could** stop at any time. Now, she says the time has **come**. "I paid about 10 **cents** for a **packet** when I started, and look at the **price** now! We used to smoke in the **cinema** and teachers even smoked in the **class**, but there aren't many **places** you **can** smoke in **public** now. The **ceilings** in my apartment are brown and my **clothes** smell. I'm quitting!"

The Letter G



The French put a silent **U** in words like **guess** because in French **g** followed by **e** would sound like **j**. So 'gu' made it a /k/ sound: guide, guess, guilty, guard, dialogue...

- ❖ gest (Old English) → **guest**
- ❖ tunge (Old English) → **tongue**
- ❖ vage → **vague**
- ❖ voge → **vogue**

The Norman French also brought us the soft 'g' (just like the soft 'c')

Soft 'g' is soft before **e, i, y** letters (but not all!) This mainly occurs in French, Latin, Greek derived words: giant, engine, genius, gymnasium, gym, gentry, age, edge, page, huge, badge, hedge

Careful! We pronounce a **hard 'g'** with Old English common words and from other languages: get, girl, give gecko, gingko, Gideon, begin, singing, younger, biggest.

Usually its a **hard 'g'** before **a, o, u**, or **consonants**: goal, gate, gut, guide, great, ghoul, glass...

The Letter H



The pronunciation of the letter H can be silent or pronounced depending on your accent.

For centuries this letter wasn't pronounced much especially when the words came from French: habit, history, honest, hospital hotel, human.

By the 18th century H began to be pronounced in some words but not others. H was silent in: habit, harmonious, heritage, heir, herb, honest, humour and certain other words. Some of these words are now pronounced with the H.

Words that still have a silent H are of French origin: heir, honest, honour, hour, herb (in American).

Norman vs Saxon Words



Warwick Castle

The Normans lounged on cushions,
on chairs and couches, in mansions and palaces and hostelries, the
Saxons sat on stools, in houses and inns and cottages,
The Normans had their tapestries and carpets in salons and
parlours, the Saxons had their rugs and stoves and sinks in the
kitchens,
The Normans viewed gardens and conservatories, the Saxons
looked out on yards and sheds,
The Normans dined and supped on beef and pork on plates, the
Saxons got the bones to gnaw, in bowls and dishes among the
sheep and cows.

This illustrates perfectly the way that French words reflected the
lifestyle of the Norman upper classes, while the Old English words
belonged to the much poorer conditions of the ordinary English
people of the time.

(Class is still reflected in some of the words even now!)

Informal and Formal Words

There are many words the French gave us. Do you know the 'down-to-earth' Anglo-Saxon words of these formal French words? Writers like George Orwell were big fans of using simple Anglo-Saxon words in writing and not the 'big' overblown French ones.

<u>French</u>	<u>Anglo-Saxon/Old English</u>
---------------	--------------------------------

deceased –	dead
------------	------

obtain –	get
----------	-----

perspiration –	
----------------	--

odour –	
---------	--

desire –	
----------	--

riches –	
----------	--

sacred/saintly –	
------------------	--

marriage –	
------------	--

conceal –	
-----------	--

infant –	
----------	--

commence –	
------------	--

aroma –	
---------	--

aid –	
-------	--

liberty –	
-----------	--

beef –	
--------	--

mutton–	
---------	--

veal –	
--------	--

venison–	
----------	--

pork –	
--------	--

French	Anglo-Saxon/Old English
--------	-------------------------

deceased – dead

obtain – get

perspiration – sweat

odour – smell

desire – want

riches – wealth

sacred/saintly – holy

marriage – wedding

conceal – hide

infant – child

commence – begin

aroma – stench

aid – help

liberty – freedom

beef – ox

mutton- sheep

veal – calf

venison- deer

pork – pig/swine

The Middle Ages: 1066 -1485 (Middle English)



The Middle Ages are also referred to as the Medieval era.

- Britain was multilingual: Latin, French, English coexisted.
- English spelling was a mixture of Old English and French. Gradually these languages fused together and spelling, grammar, pronunciation changed to become Middle English.
- There were hundreds of dialects and regional accents spoken in Britain and spelling was flexible. Everyone spelled words how they wanted.

Anglo-Saxon, French and Latin Word Choices.

By the 13th Century there was a huge increase in vocabulary because of French and Latin. This gave us many synonyms (words with same/similar meanings).

We can see the influence of Anglo-Saxon, French and Latin on the choice of words we can use today. These words, now, have slightly different shades of meaning.

Notice how the Latin is quite formal and specific, the French more elegant, a bit formal, and the Anglo-Saxon informal and down-to-earth.

Anglo-Saxon	French	Latin
ask	question	interrogate
fast	firm	secure
fire	flame	conflagration
holy	sacred	consecrated
kingly	royal	regal
climb	--	ascend
clothes	attire	--
wish	desire	--
sorrow	distress	--
forgive	pardon	condone
law	rule	canon
hap	chance	accident
wealth	riches	opulence



Legalese - lawyer speak

During the 13th century, French replaced Latin as the language of law. Then during the 15th century English was gradually replacing French. Three languages were competing and lawyers were worried about which words to use. 'The precision of words' was important - French, Latin or English?

In many cases, the solution was not to choose but to use two words. These paired words were used to cover any ambiguity that might arise, and we still use these Middle English legalese terms:

English / French

goods and chattels
breaking and entering
fit and proper
wrack and ruin

French/ Latin

peace and quiet
final and conclusive

English/Latin

will and testament

The habit became popular and we have:

English/English

have and hold
each and every

French and French

null and void
cease and desist
aid and abet

The Crusades and the Arab influence



During the 1100s and 1200s various crusades to the Holy Land and the Middle East took place.

There was a constant exchange of ideas and language, and many words were transformed into English: assassin, divan, arsenal, kiosk, alcohol, alchemy, sugar, syrup, zero...

suffah - sofa

sukkar - sugar

ghul - ghoul

makhazin - magazine

matrah - mattress

rahat - racket

naranj (aranj)- orange



William Caxton and the Printers

1422-1492

Caxton developed the printing press in 1477. He established a press at Westminster, the first printing press in England. Amongst the books he printed were Chaucer's 'Canterbury Tales', Gower's 'Confession Amantis' and Malory's 'Le Morte d'Arthur'.

- Caxton and the printers altered spelling. They also spelt words differently even within a text. They sometimes added or deleted an 'e' to the end of words (*whiche*), or made the spelling up to fit the line. In one single passage Caxton had *booke* and *boke*, *axed* and *axyed*. He sometimes doubled letters when he wanted – *hadde*.
- Caxton lived many years in Flemish countries and introduced the Flemish way of spelling words with a gh: ghost, ghastly, (and even gherle (girl) and ghoos (goose) which were both later dropped.)
- He also encouraged the influence of French by replacing original words to French-derived ones.

Some writers complained about the disastrous effect of French on the English language, and the influence of 'fashionable' Latin on spellings.



It was expensive to keep changing spellings so the printers fixed words in the way that suited them.

Some of the printers were Dutch and would spell words the Dutch way. An example of this was *yacht*. It was 'yott' before it was altered.

But this was a time when speaking was changing and printers sometimes used the old spellings of words like would, should, night and bright. These became the standard spellings and we struggle with them today!

- The notion of 'correct' spelling began to grow.
- Spelling was more stable than pronunciation.
- The process of standardizing the spelling was underway but it was going to be another three centuries before it became fixed.



By 1500 English had become the official language of court and the King.

Henry V was the first king since the Norman Conquest to use English regularly in his official writings.

But the influence of French, Latin and Greek on English was still increasing. The academics and scribes kept the original spellings of these borrowed words, and this increased our stock of 'weird' spellings.

The Great Vowel Shift



Unfortunately, printing and dictionaries were published during a period known as the Great Vowel Shift. Between 1450 and 1750 many vowel and consonant sounds changed or disappeared. No one seems to know why this happened.

A lot of letters became silent but the spellings were already fixed.

- The **l** in **should** and **would** used to be said. Then people eventually stopped saying it. But an **l** was added to **coude (could)**, although it didn't have one before, so it matched would and should.
- The **l** in words like **half** and **calf** became silent.
- The final **n** in **damn**, **hymn**, **autumn** became silent.
- The **gh** guttural sound in **right**, **light**, **cough** changed to **f** or became silent.
- The **w** in **wr-** words **write**, **wrist**, **wrath**, **wreak...** became silent.
- The **g** and **k** in **knee**, **know**, **gnat** became silent.
- The pronunciation of **e** at the end of some words like **name**, **stone**, **fine** stopped and became silent. **Name** used to be pronounced as two syllables to rhyme with *farmer*. **Life** used to be pronounced like *leaf*.

police and **polite** don't have the same **i** sound because *polite* is an old word and its **i** sound changed in the Vowel Shift. But *police* is a new word so never changed sounds.



Academics and Troublesome Silent Letters

The academics of the Renaissance (16th century) were enthusiastic about Latin and wanted to imitate some Latin spellings to give English spellings more authority. So they shoved in those troublesome silent letters!

- ❖ **Doubt** is a mix of Old French (doute) and Latin (dubitare) - silent b "dowt"
- ❖ **Debt** is from the Latin debitum - silent b "det"
- ❖ **Subtle** is from the Latin subtilem - silent b "su tul"
- ❖ **Receipt** is a combination of Anglo/Norman French (receite) and Latin (recepta) - silent p "re seet"
- ❖ **Scissors** was *sisoures* but then a **c** was added because of the Latin (*scindere*) to split. "siss as"
- ❖ **Salmon** was *samon* then they added the silent 'l' to show its classical roots. silent l "sa mon"

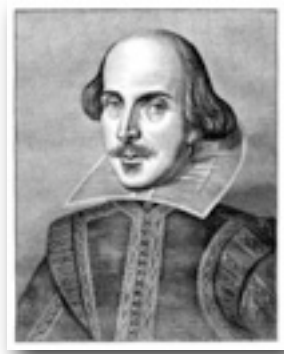
These words were originally logically spelt before the academics messed about with them and messed things up!

They tidied up spellings but also messed up spellings. They sometimes increased the number of irregular forms: the Old English **gh** of *night* and *light* was added to/extended to *delight* and *tight*.

These 'academics' also made mistakes which we live with today:

- ❖ **Island**??! Why is there an S when we don't pronounce it? **Island** was an Old English word **iland** or **yland**. The scholars stuck a 's' in there believing it came from the Latin word (insula) and French (isle).

William Shakespeare



1564 to 1616

Shakespeare made fun of this obsession with changing words to Latin and called it 'abominable'.

Shakespeare was the greatest inventor of words giving us about 800 permanent additions to our vocab. He was especially good at compound words (putting two words together to make one): countless, courtship, barefaced, eyesore, tongue-tied, lackluster...

With some words we're not sure if he actually invented them or if they were already around in the spoken language. Words like excellent, lonely, frugal, critical and horrid, first appeared in his work.



Stratford upon Avon

Thanks Larry Beason Eyes before Ease

Magic 'e' Silent 'e'



'e'

"a letter of marvellous use in the writing of our tongue"

Richard Mulcaster 1582

In 1582 the scholar Richard Mulcaster wrote about putting an 'e' on to the ends of words and how it would make the vowel before it change its sound. He said that the 'e' could help our spelling system.

Adding an 'e' to short vowel sound words elongates the vowel sound and makes it go from a short vowel sound - cap - to a long vowel sound - cape.

pet - Pete
hop - hope
mat - mate
tap - tape
hug - huge
sit - site
us - use
win - wine
fat - fate
cap - cape
sit - site
at - ate

*But this rule doesn't apply to every word: some / have /love / give are all still short vowel sounds. be/bee are the same long vowel sound!

No English words end in 'v' or 'u'. There's always an 'e' on the end: give, have, eve, twelve, glue, true, rescue...

No English words end in 'j'. The sound is made by -dge or -ge: badge, bridge, hedge, marriage, age...

18th 19th 20th 21st Centuries



The expansion of the British Empire brought words from America, India, Australia, New Zealand, Africa and China, and strange spellings: pecan, ketchup, prairie, bungalow, polo, junk, kangaroo, kiwi, safari...

Taking an interest in words is a great way to learn, remember and love words and spellings.

Can you guess where these words come from?

1. bungalow
2. verandah
3. ketchup
4. galore
5. alcohol
6. guru
7. shampoo
8. robot

Clues

India (Hindi), China (Cantonese), Irish, Arabic, Czech



Answers

1. **bungalow** from Hindi *baṅglā* 'belonging to Bengal', from a type of cottage built for early European settlers in Bengal
2. **verandah or veranda**- from Hindi *varaṇḍā*, from Portuguese *varanda* 'railing, balustrade'
3. **ketchup** from Chinese Cantonese dialect tomato juice.
4. **galore** from Irish *go leor*, literally 'to sufficiency'
5. **alcohol** from Arabic *al-kuḥl* 'the kohl'. In early use the term referred to powders, specifically kohl, and especially those obtained by distilling or rectifying spirits
6. **guru** - from Hindi and Punjabi, from Sanskrit *guru* 'weighty, grave' (compare with Latin *gravis*), hence 'elder, teacher'
7. **shampoo** from Hindi *cāṃpo!* 'press!'
8. **robot** from Czech, from *robota* 'forced labour'

thanks to www.oxforddictionaries.com



Samuel Johnson and Dictionaries

1709-1784

We've been writing English for about 1500 years but the spelling only became fixed about 250 years ago when Samuel Johnson's dictionary was published in 1755. It was a trusted, relied on, standard reference guide for hundreds of years. But some of his original spellings in his dictionary changed.

He decided to use the **-our** and **-re** endings for **colour** (not color) and **centre** (not center). He chose the French spelling (*colour*) and not the Latin (*color*). But for centre he chose the Old French, or from Latin *centrum*, from Greek *kentron*.

The other great dictionary man, Noah Webster (American dictionary), decided to use the **-or** and **-er** endings for American spellings: colour/color, honour/honor, flavour/flavor, labour/labor, behaviour/behavior, neighbour/neighbor, and **-er** for centre/center, sombre/somber, theatre/theater, centimetre/centimeter, litre/liter...

English is a growing, changing language even now. Hundreds of words are added to the English dictionary every year. Words drop out of favour, slang becomes the norm and language changes.

With texting and emails, Internet and computers who knows what spelling changes will happen over the next few centuries!

American English vs British English



Noah Webster
1758 -1843



With the Declaration of Independence in 1776 Americans wanted to proclaim their differences from Britain and one way was to reform spelling. Noah Webster led the way.

But his radical spelling reforms had little support and he only managed a few changes.

In 1828 Webster published his American English dictionary

-our to -or - colour to **color**.

-re to -er - centre to **center**.

-ise to -ize - realise to **realize** (-ize is the older, "British" version and was changed to -ise because of French influence)

-yse to -yze - analyse to **analyze**

-ogue to -og or -ogue - dialogue to **dialogue or dialog**

-ence to -ense - -defence to **defense**

No doubling of the final l – travelling to **traveling**

In most cases American words have fewer letters. (We'll see this in the next exercise.)

American English retains some words that had fallen out of use in British English 'gotten' and 'fall' for autumn.

American vs British Spellings

Let's have a look at the differences between some American and British spellings.

Both American and British writers tend to get confused about which spelling to use.

Do you know the British spellings for these American spellings?

<u>American</u>	<u>British differences</u>
-----------------	----------------------------

write a check	
---------------	--

cozy	
------	--

donut	
-------	--

draftsman	
-----------	--

roadside curb	
---------------	--

licorice	
----------	--

program	
---------	--

maneuver	
----------	--

mustache	
----------	--

omelet	
--------	--

plow	
------	--

pajamas	
---------	--

sulfur	
--------	--

tire	
------	--

gray	
------	--

specialty	
-----------	--

yogurt	
--------	--

American vs British Spelling

<u>American</u>	<u>British differences</u>
check	cheque
cozy	cosy
donut	doughnut
draftsman	draughtsman
roadside curb	kerb
licorice	liquorice
program	programme
maneuver	manoeuvre
mustache	moustache
omelet	omelette
plow	plough
pajamas	pyjamas
sulfur	sulphur
tire	tyre
gray	grey
specialty	speciality
yogurt	yoghurt



- The 20th Century technological revolution brought thousands of new words to English, and were often based on Latin and Greek: telephone, computer, aerospace, micro-organism, microchip...
- There are some words that have half Greek and half Latin origins – *television* and *antiterrorist* - they comprise of first half Greek, second half Latin. *Mobile phone* and *sub zero* are first half Latin and second half Greek.
- Loan words with foreign spellings, or slightly modified, continue to make English spelling a big challenge: Cajun, intifada, perestroika, chlamydia...
- Computer and technology are bringing in new words into English every year: laptop, email, Internet, to google, to tweet, social media, texting...

The Influence of Greek



Scientific discoveries brought more new words into English, many based on Greek, and are usually 'difficult' words to spell like ache and rhythm.

A lot of Greek-derived words are used for healthcare: radiologist, osteopath, chemist, psychiatrist, physiotherapist, tonic, clinic, chronic...

Greek influences include:

- the hard **ch** /k/ in **chemistry**, **anarchy**, **ache**, stomach**ch** ache...
- a middle **y** in **analyse**, **rhythm**, **hymn**...
- **ph** for /f/ in **photo**, **graph**, **phone**...
- silent **p** in **psychology**, **pneumonia**...



More Weird and Wonderful Spellings

Past Tenses

Have you ever wondered why we have some strange past tense spellings?

We have the regular, easy spellings:

I watch, I watched, I've watched.

But then we have these irregular forms:

I eat, I ate, I've eaten

see, saw, seen

sing, sang, sung

ring, rang, rung

write, wrote, written

freeze, froze, frozen

bite, bit, bitten

hide, hid, hidden

There are about 60+ 'odd' verbs and these come from our Scandinavian/Viking roots and not from French or Latin.

There used to be about 350 of these irregular forms but they eventually became regular.

Even now people are changing the way we say them:

people sometimes say 'I sung' for 'I sang' (should be I've sung)

or 'I rung the bell' for 'I rang the bell' (should be I've rung.)

Languages always change and evolve!

Silent Letters

Silent Letters

more than 60% of English words have silent letters in them.



Silent letters are there for a reason and not just to mess with your brain!
Let's look at these reasons and some of the patterns and rules.

Remember - most silent letters we see in words used to be pronounced but then overtime we stopped saying them but the spelling was set and so we left the spelling as it was. So the spellings reflect how we used to say the words centuries ago!

We also can see the history and origins of the word in some spellings:

- Can you remember why there's a silent 'k' and 'g' in knee, knock, gnaw?
- What about the silent 'b' in plumber, debt and doubt?
- What about the silent 'gh'?
- Why did the academics put an 's' in island?

Can you remember?

Some silent letters are the fossilized remains (like dinosaurs) of a once spoken letter.

A lot of silent letters help the reader to distinguish between homophones (same sound but different spelling and meaning):
be/bee, know/no, to,too,two/ whole/hole...

Or they help us work out the meaning and pronunciation (but remain silent):
sin/sign, rat/rate, tap/tape...

A few silent letter rules:

'k' is often silent before 'n' - **kn**ee, know, knuckle, knock...

'w' is often silent before 'r' - **wr**ite, wrist, wrong, wrap...

'g' is often silent before 'n' - **gn**at, gnaw, gnash, gnarl...

'p' is often silent before 's' - **ps**ychic, psalm, psychology, psychiatry...

'l' is often silent before 'k' - fo**lk**, walk, talk, yolk...

'b' is often silent after 'm' - plu**mb**er, numb, dumb, bomb, comb, climb, thumb...

'n' is often silent after 'm' - autu**mn**, column, solemn, hymn...

't' is often silent after 's' - li**st**en, fasten, glisten, castle...

Using the above rules complete these words:

1. Britain is __n__own for its royal family.
2. Reading and __r__iting are so important.
3. __w__rap up warm for winter.
4. __k__nives, forks and spoons are collectively __n__own as cutlery.
5. Fas__t__en your seatbelts
6. I like autum__.
7. My hands are num__ with the cold.
8. Add up the colum__ of figures.

Watch out for my silent letter pronunciation v spelling video and workbook coming soon.

Answers.

1. **k**nown
2. **w**riting
3. **w**rap
4. **k**nives/**k**nown
5. **f**asten
6. autum**n**
7. num**b**
8. colum**n**

Plurals

Anglo-Saxon plural forms were a bit complicated but thanks to the Vikings things became much simpler.

The simplest way to make a plural is adding **-s**:
(a computer) some computers

But we still retain the 'strange' **-en** plural form from our history.
Look at these Old English words:

children**en**, oxen**en**, brethren**en**, men**en**, women**en**

We also retain some irregular plural forms and these are usually related to every day objects.

(a tooth) some teeth
(a goose) some geese
(a man) some men
(a woman) women
(a mouse) mice
(a louse) lice

The **-ce** endings come from the French, and a lot of Modern English spelling take this ending. (It makes it a harder 'voiced' sound).

once (Old English ones)
twice (Old English twies) = two times
thrice = three times

mice
lice

will not / won't

Why don't we write the short form of *will not* to *willn't*?

We write will not as won't.

Will comes from Old English *wyllan*, related to Dutch *willen* and German *wollen*.

Depending on their region and dialect some English people used *will /will not* and some used *woll /woll not* (look at the German *wollan*)

We also had *wynnot*, *woonot*, *wo' not*, *we'n't* and *willn't*

Woll not was also contracted down to *wonnot* in the 16th Century, and from there to *won't*.

So we have two dialects mixed together! *Will* and *won't*.

Thanks to Larry Beason's Eyes before Ease
and the Oxford Dictionary online

Ch- Letter Pattern and Pronunciation

ch- is an example of a letter pattern that never changed its pronunciation or spelling when we borrowed words spelled with it. So when we borrowed the words from other languages we kept the spelling and pronunciation!

French words with the **ch** are pronounced **sh** - **ch**ampagne, chef, chaperon, chauffeur, brochure, chalet, chateau, chic, moustache, nonchalant,

Italian words with **ch** are pronounced **k** - Chianti, gnocchi...

Greek words - **ch** words are pronounced **k** - stomach, chaos, chemist, chorus, technology, monarch, ache, archaeology, architecture, archaic, bronchitis, character, charismatic, chemical, chlorine, cholera, chorus, Christian, chrome, school, echo ...

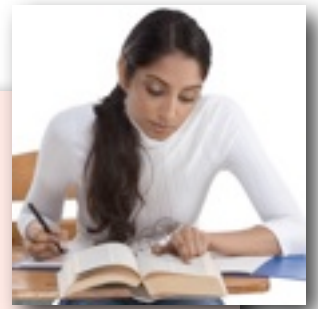
The traditional **ch** sound is made in about 62% of words - chair, cheese, chestnut, cheers...

k for ch is made in about 26% of words - chemist, stomach, chaos...

sh for ch is made in about 12% of words - champagne, chef...

Thanks Larry Beason

Word Families/Letter Patterns Linked by Meaning



As we've seen we can't rely on saying the word to help us spell it. Only about 50% of words are phonetically regular to be able to spell them like they sound. So to really help us spell we have to use our eyes to see what looks right.

Reading won't help most people with spelling, but reading helps when you actively and consciously start to really look at words, study them, see the shape, the look of words, notice letter patterns, word families, and know how words are made up with prefixes and suffixes (those are the beginnings and endings of words).

Most adults can spell tens of thousands of words not because they memorise them but because they memorise patterns, they understand and know common letter patterns.

One great way to improve your spelling and confidence is to notice letter patterns when they're linked by meaning. Look at these word families:

sign – **signal**- **signature**

ear – **hear** – **hearing** - **heard**

here – **there** – **where** - **everywhere** – **nowhere** - **thereabouts**

real – **reality** – **really** – **unrealistic** – **realise** – **realisation**



Many people wonder why the number 2 (**two**) is spelt the way it is and why the w is silent. We can explain it visually by looking at the words in the **-tw-** word family/letter pattern.

two – **twice** – **twelve** – **twenty** – **between** – twins – twist

Notice they're all related to two in some way. But the pronunciation is different! It's about the pattern not the sound.

We can also use our knowledge of the history of English to understand why there's a 'w' in *two*. In Old English/Anglo-Saxon they had 'w' in the spelling, *twā*, and most likely pronounced it similar to the Dutch, *twee*, and German, *zwei*, then it became silent. So keeping the 'w' in there shows us the history of the word.

One and **once** are problem words because they're pronounced with a /w/ but the other members of the word family with the letter pattern **on** aren't.

one – **once** – only – none – **alone** – lonely

The /w/ sound was added to *one* and *once* in popular speech somewhere between 1150 - 1476 (Middle English period) and became standard in the 17th Century. Many academics didn't like this /w/ pronunciation and thought it 'barbarous'.

Let's look at some more word families:

-ject- (from Latin- throw)
reject (throw away!)
rejection
projection (to throw light on something!)
projectile
dejection
objection
adjective (to throw light on nouns!)
injection

Sign (from Latin *signum* to mark, indicate, symbol)



terr- (from Latin *terra* for earth, land, ground)

terrain

territory

sub**terr**anean

Medit**terr**anean

extraterrestrial

miss (from Latin for send)

sub**mission**

dis**miss**al

per**mission**

mission

submission

emission

val (related to worth or strength from Latin *valere*)

value

equi**val**ent

invalidate

evaluate

valuation

ped (from Latin for foot)

pedal

pedestrian

pedicure

ex**ped**ition

-rupt (from Latin for broken)

rupture

interrupt

dis**ruption**

eruption

bankrupt

corrupt

abrupt



-le and -el endings

*"Several hundred words spell their final syllable with -LE" (*little, people, cycle, middle, table, bottle, bubble, able, noble, pickle, bundle, whistle, castle...*)

Many of these words like *little* and *middle* come from Anglo Saxon/Old English and used to be written -EL (*littel, middel*), and pronounced with the stress on the -EL.

Old English words like *littel* and *middel* became *little* and *middle* because of the French influence. The pronunciation then changed and fell on the first syllable just like the other -LE words.

*"Nearly a hundred words" end with -EL (*angel, level, model, tunnel, panel, camel, cancel...*) These words derive from Latin or French and the pronunciation stress is on the first syllable.

People is a difficult spelling because of the silent 'o'. Let's look at its history:

Latin > *populum*

Old French > *poeples*

Middle English > *peple*, (and sometimes spelt: *pepel, pepil, pepul, pepyl*. But those printers preferred the French -LE ending!)

Modern English > *people* (The 'o' was probably put in *people* to reflect the Latin origin.)

Most of the -LE spellings originate from words that are Latin:

<u>Latin</u>	<u>Old English</u>	<u>Modern English</u>
battalia	battel	battle
capitalem	catel	cattle
castellum	castel	castle
gentilis	genteel/gentile	gentle
boticulam	botel	bottle

History of English Spelling Timeline

(Approximate dates)

BC

By 400 BC the Celts had settled here. They spoke **Celtic**.

From 55 BC the Romans came to check Britain out.

AD

In 43 AD the Romans finally invaded and colonised Britain. They spoke Latin. Ruling Celtic tribes adopted **Latin** as a second language.

In 410 AD the Romans left Britain.

From 410 AD northern European tribes invaded Britain - Angles, Saxons, Jutes. They spoke a number of Germanic languages which became known as the **Anglo-Saxon** language. The 100 most common words we use today are from Anglo-Saxon.

From 793 AD the Vikings (Norsemen or Danes) invaded Britain. They spoke **Old Norse**. Over the next 250 years Old Norse and Anglo-Saxon combined.

By the 11th century **Old English** developed from Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse with a rich tradition of literature.

1066 The Norman French invaded Britain. They spoke **Norman French**. English was only spoken by the lower classes and stopped being written. (Norman scribes complicated spelling when they introduced their own ways of spelling and changed many Old English words to fit their spelling system.)

12th century Crusaders introduced many **Arabic** words into English.

By the 13th century Sermons, prayers and carols began to be written in English again. The language had changed and is called **Middle English**.

1400s **English** was the official language of England again.

1476 William Caxton set up the first printing press. Printing began to fix spellings. It was a time of pronunciation changes (Great Vowel Shift) but the printers still used the old spellings (and the gap between how we say a word and how we write it widened).

16th century Renaissance scholars introduced words and spellings from Latin and Greek (to further complicate spelling).

1600s England began gaining power in India and with it brought hundreds of words into English with its strange spellings - bungalow, veranda, juggernaut, pundit, chintz, dinghy...

1607 English settlers established the first colony in America - Jamestown

17th-19th centuries The British Empire expanded and introduced words from all parts of the world from America, India, Australia, New Zealand, Africa and China - ketchup, kiwi, kangaroo, prairie, chutney...

Also scientific discoveries brought new words into the language based on Greek and Latin.

1755 Samuel Johnson published his dictionary

1828 Noah Webster published his American English dictionary

20th century technology brought thousands of words into English, often based on Latin and Greek: telephone, computer, aerospace, nuclear...

Late 20th/early 21st century the Internet has brought and keeps bringing in new words into English.

Language periods (approximate)

Old English/Anglo Saxon (5th Century – 1150)

Middle English (1150 – 1476)

Early Modern English (1476 – 1660)

Modern English (1476 – present)

Answers to Quiz

1. What language did the Romans speak? **Latin**
2. What did the Romans name Britain? **Britannia**
3. Which tribe of people did the 'English' come from? **Angles and Saxons**
4. What name did the Anglo-Saxons give England? **Angle-land**
5. Why is there a silent 'k' and 'g' in know, knock, gnaw, gnat? The 'g' and 'k' used to be pronounced but not now. We leave them in the spelling to see the history of the word.
6. Which country did the Normans come from? **France**
7. What famous date did they invade Britain? **1066**
8. Why is -gh silent or pronounced with a 'f'? We don't know why some are silent and some are pronounced.
9. Why do we pronounce come, son, woman with a 'u'? Because of medieval handwriting. The *u* look similar to other letters like *m* and *n* so they changed it to *o*.
10. Why are there so many words that mean the same thing or very similar? Because of Latin, French and Anglo-Saxon words that were all used in England.

Summary Map



Thanks to Johanna Stirling



“English is the memory of thousands of years of history”.

English is the result of thousands of years of military and cultural conquests. Romans, Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, Normans, academics, printers, writers, scientists, inventors all added to the mix of words and rules. And still are!

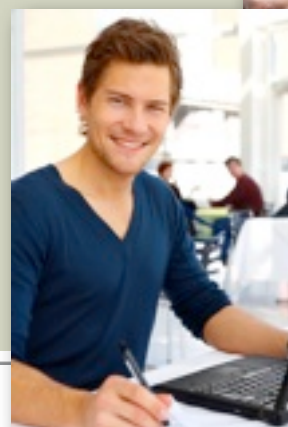
English spelling seems strange and inconsistent but it's not there to give you a headache. It's the result of a living, vibrant, forever moving language. “English has words from languages so old that we barely know they existed... More than 70% of all English words were born someplace other than England.”

Hopefully, you have a better understanding of why English spelling is the way it is and now you'll begin to love it and enjoy using different words.

Let me know.

If you have any questions
please contact me at
info@howtospell.co.uk

(Thanks to Gena K. Gorrell for the perfect
quotes above.)



What you've learnt

That's the end of the history bit.

Let's look at what you've learnt:

- you know the history of English spelling and why it's made English spelling the way it is with all its quirks and strangeness,
- you can see the logic in the English spelling system and feel more confident about it, because you know about letter patterns, word families, silent letters and their rules and why they're there,
- you know why you can't rely on pronunciation for spelling, and how pronunciation changed over the centuries but spelling didn't,
- you know who caused our spelling problems (scribes, printers, academics),
- your vocabulary has improved and you know why there are so many words that mean the same thing or similar, because of the influence of Latin, French, Anglo-Saxon, plus 'borrowed' words from other languages.

And knowing all this means you feel happier about spelling, your confidence has improved and you respect and love English spelling!

How to improve your spelling

As your knowledge of words increases, your confidence in learning improves, your ability to use a dictionary develops and your memory bank of words grow larger, you will start being able to predict likely spelling patterns or feel able to learn whole groups of words at once, and learning and remembering spellings will become easier for YOU.

(Basic Skills Agency – The Spelling Pack)



Remember - you have to keep writing and spelling to improve spelling. Keep working on your spelling. Do the spelling test podcasts on my [spelling blog](#).

Keep using the [Look, Say, Cover, Write](#) method (check the video), and use [spelling strategies and memory tricks](#) (check the video).

*Remember, others can help you improve your spelling. They can give you information; initially they can help you identify your errors; they can show you techniques for learning, but after that it's really all up to **you**.



Don't let your lack of confidence in spelling put you off writing.

*Writing is for all of us. So join in. And it really does help spelling.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements and thanks to the following people and their excellent books: (check out their books on the Amazon links below)

David Crystal: The English Language/Words Words Words/ Encyclopaedia of the English Language/ The Stories of English ([click here](#) for more about his books)

Johanna Stirling: Teaching Spelling to English Language Learners. (Click here [Amazon](#) to check out this brilliant book)

Gena K. Gorrell: Say What? The Weird and Mysterious Journey of the English Language (Tundra Books - [Click here](#))

Anne Betteridge: Adult Learners' Guide to Spelling (Chambers- [click here](#)).

Larry Beason: Eyes before Ease (McGraw Hill - [click here](#))

David Sacks: The Alphabet (Arrow Books - [click here](#))

Joy Pollock: Signposts to Spelling (Blessings - [Click here](#))

Elaine Miles: English words and their spelling (Whurr - [click here](#))

Christopher Upward & George Davidson: The History of English Spelling (Wiley-Blackwell - [click here](#))

www.oxforddictionaries.com

Basic Skills Agency's Spelling Pack.

If you want to know more about the history and development of English then I recommend two entertaining, enlightening books:

The Adventure of English by Melvyn Bragg ([click here](#))

Mother Tongue by Bill Bryson ([click here](#))



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Subscribe to my website, www.howtospell.co.uk, and get great spelling lessons straight to your inbox with links to my spelling blog for podcasts spelling tests and pronunciation-
<http://spellingblog.howtospell.co.uk/>

The screenshot shows the homepage of the website www.howtospell.co.uk. The navigation bar includes links for HOME, ABOUT, SPELLING HELP, SPELLING LESSONS, SPELLING GAMES, SPELLING BLOG, and CONTACT US. The main content area is titled "Home" and features several sections:

- Spelling for adults at How to Spell.** A paragraph discussing the challenges of English spelling and the benefits of learning.
- Spelling matters.** A paragraph explaining how poor spelling can affect one's professional life.
- Spelling - learn to love it.** A section encouraging users to learn spelling with the help of the website.
- Brain training - try my spelling games.** A section promoting spelling games.

On the right side, there is a sidebar titled "Spelling Lessons and Quizzes for Adults" featuring a brain icon. Below this, a blue box contains the text: "Sign up for Free Lessons at How to Spell and get my Top Ten Spelling Tips free." Below the blue box is a sign-up form with fields for "Name:" and "Email:", a "Submit" button, and a note: "We respect your email privacy." Below the form, it says: "You'll also be the first to know about my exciting new courses, spelling tutorials and my exclusive spelling offers for subscribers only." A red circle highlights the sign-up form, and a red arrow points from the text in the top box to the form.

Spelling Strategies Video

You've now learnt all about the history of English spelling to help you improve your spelling. **Now take the next step...**

Do you kick yourself when you want to spell a word that sums up how you feel and you can't spell it?

Good spellers use strategies like memory tricks to help remember difficult spellings

I've got a great video all about how to learn and remember difficult words using spelling strategies like memory tricks and syllable breakdown. www.howtospell.co.uk

how to spell - shop

Do you really want to improve your spelling? **Then start right now.**

Buy my video on using **Spelling Strategies and Memory Tricks** to help you remember and learn difficult spellings. We'll look at how to remember words that are important but always seem to get spelled wrong, even at university level, for example: necessary, stationary, believe, February, accommodation, beautiful... We'll analyse the bits that people get wrong and then we'll learn how to remember them.

It's packed with lots of information and I can guarantee you'll find it useful because I use these strategies and love them. **Get instant online access now for only £2.97.** Please check the video below for more info.



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