

# How to Improve YOUR Spelling

Excerpts from Harry Shefter's  
*Six-Minutes A Day to Perfect Spelling*

Highly Effective Methods  
For Improving Spelling and Reading Ability

Copyright © 2014 by Donald L. Potter

Permission granted for reproduction  
for noncommercial educational purposes.

# How to Improve YOUR Spelling

Excerpts from Harry Shefter's

## *Six-Minutes A Day to Perfect Spelling*

My respected high school English and Literature teacher, Robert O'Neal, had a little paperback bookstore in the school library in Rising Sun, Indiana. I bought some really good books from him that I have enjoyed over the years. Among those books were two by Harry Shefter, *Six Minutes a Day to Perfect Spelling*, and *Faster Reading Self-Taught*. Both books have been a great help to me over the years. I still have the original copies that I purchased from Mr. O'Neal.

In this brief paper, I am going to share with you Mr. Shefter's techniques for improving your spelling troubles forever. Unfortunately the book is no longer available, except from used booksellers. I am not going to reproduce the whole book, but I am going to present enough of the material for you to be able to use this proven method to improve your spelling.

Teachers and parents will find exactly what they need do a great job teaching their students and children how to well.

It is a very important, but little known fact, that good spellers inevitably are good readers. Unfortunately the relationship is not always reversible, good readers are not always good spellers. But time spent teaching spelling ALWAYS improves reading ability with ALL students.

Recently I worked with a third grader who was failing all her spelling tests. I demonstrated Mr. Shefter's techniques one evening after school to her and her mother. The girl immediately started making good grades on her spelling tests and improved her self-confidence. Your students or children will experience the same success if they follow these proven study techniques.

## *A Word from the Author about*

### *You and Spelling*

First of all, there's nothing the matter with you if you have a spelling problem. You're no worse, nor better, and some college instructors, business executives, stenographers, mechanics, and housewives whom I am proud to number among my acquaintances. These people are alert, bright, and conscientious; some of them even have a magnificent command of the English language. But they can't spell!

You are therefore special case. You have lots of company. More than 60% of your classmates, when he went to grade school, worried about the spelling. If you went to college, you will be interested to know that in a recent national survey, conducted among colleges and universities, more than 25% of the students, seniors as well as freshman, had serious spelling troubles with words as easy as "sense." In short, whether you are very young or quite mature, what are you left school early or get a job or went on to get certain degrees, neither your educational background nor native intelligence has anything necessarily to do with your ability to spell correctly.

However, you should try to improve your spelling and I'll tell you why in chapter 1.

Here's something else. You are concerned about your spelling, which is never quite get around to doing anything about it except in a haphazard way. Perhaps you try to memorize rules, right words out countless times practice, study long list of "demons," played "find-the-correct-word" games, even fearfully entered spelling bees in the vague hope that somehow you would improve. But you haven't improved because all of these methods or no value what ever in a long-range plan.

What you need is an organized, fresh attack. That's what you are going to find in this book. The suggested techniques, if you use them, are guaranteed to bring you success and I do not say this recklessly

A Greek immigrant, within less than the year after his arrival in this country, was held to master a list "200 most frequently misspelled words" unrewarded day plan described in the following pages. When I say "master," I mean he proved he had the words under control for good in frequent writing experiences during the course of his training. What is equally interesting is that while Mr. Coatas was concentrating on the selected list he was also picking up numerous other words and adding them to his private collection.

The system does work with people of all ages. A 9-year-old boy, the son of a colleague of mine, learned how to stop embarrassing his father. Twenty-three native-born Americans, ranging in age from 27 to 57, members of the first-class in spelling ever given on the university level. Were shown how to get rid of practically all other troublemakers in less than 6 months. A television audience of approximately 60,000 people wrote enthusiastic letters about the method presented before the camera, and asked that the suggestions be put into book form. As a matter of fact, that's one of the main reasons why *Six Minutes a Day to Perfect Spelling* was written

I've told you all this because I want to show you that you have it in your power to rid yourself of a frequent source of irritation. However, a word of warning must be inserted here. You hear it again and again throughout the course of the instructional material. If you merely read each chapter carefully, you will not be any better off at the end than when you started. That is, if you only read, and do not do. You will have to cooperate, to do the work is indicated; there's no question about that. But, happily, it's only *Six Minutes a Day to Perfect Spelling!*

Good spellers are made, not born!

Please write your name in pencil below:

\_\_\_\_\_

You just wrote your name.

When was the last time you misspelled it? You probably can't remember. Spelling and name is automatic. You do it without thought, without hesitation, knowing it will come out right. *There is no reason, then, why you can't do the same with any word in English language.*

I'm where to show you how. That's *my* job. I will also tell you how to practice, so the correct spelling can stay with you forever. That will be *your* job. Will work as a team, and sooner than you dare expect, you will be able to spell any words you want as easily and automatically as you do your name. This is not an idle promise. I've seen it come true time and time again with students in my classroom.

Why does a person always spell his own name correctly question? The reason is simply that he has made the word his name a part of him. He has reduced their spelling to the habit level. Mind you; this is true of Aleksandra Trzettizorriskaya. (a student of mine some years ago) as it is of John Brown, Jack Smith, or you.

It stands to reason then that your spelling will improve when you learn to treat other words the same way. Reduce them to the habit level. Make them a part of you.

Don't worry about long nights of study devoted to impossible to remember rules and procedures. All you will need is 6 MINUTES A DAY of your time. All you have to learn is 5 simple steps:

See the word!

Think the word!

Feel the word!

Say the word!

Build the word!

**That's all: Six minutes a day and five steps.**

## Chapter 2

### See the Word!

Everybody dreams. You do, too, we're sure. You sit back now and then and look at that house you will have someday - the one with the green shutters, light brown siding, and brilliant red roses hugging the foundation. Or perhaps you imagine the sensation you will create on a special occasion. You enter the room. All eyes turn toward you. People whisper admiringly. Calmly, almost indifferently, you walk slowly toward a chair, seat yourself, and pretend that you've been accustomed to this sort of attention ever since you were born. You see the details, the colors, everything as if you were actually there.

In effect, what you are doing is looking with our mind rather than your eyes. And this is the first trade secret of good spellers. They make a mental picture of every word they write. Their hands merely trace the image on paper.

You already have the ability to see with your mind. Now train yourself to apply it to spelling. It's a must! Without developing this technique, progress will be almost impossible. With it, you will remove a major roadblock.

Look at the following phrase in red:

### 6 Minutes a Day

Be sure your seated comfortably and are completely relaxed. Get set to concentrate.

All right. Trying to make your mind a blank. Stare very hard at the number and words for 10 seconds. Just stare - trying not to think - do nothing else.

Now look away toward some dark surface—the wall, floor, that old couch cover. Count 5. The image of at least the number should appear on the blank area. Practice until this happens regularly.

Try this method with other arrangements: a series of colored circles, a strip from the Sunday comics, a design from a gaudy sport shirt. Stare at the pattern for 10 seconds, look away, count 5, and try to re-create the image on another surface.

After you train yourself to throw a picture with your mind, try with words. Let's use CALENDAR as the 1<sup>st</sup> example.

If you have trouble with the word, you probably misspelled it at the DAR syllable. The fact is that people rarely spell a word so badly that it cannot be recognized. Usually, it is one particular part, are one letter that causes the spelling problem. Therefore, focus your attention on the part of the word you always misspelled – the difficult part for you. Your objective is to get rid of the distorted image you have in your mind and to replace it with a clear and correct one.

Right the word in this matter:

calenDAR

Now the difficult part stands out. Look at this image for 10 seconds. Remember: just stare. Let the picture sink in.

Again, try to see the image on another surface. Count 5. Make sure the difficult part shows up most clearly.

On abuse of paper, write out calendar rapidly, “lucky” at the picture of the word with your minds eye all the while. Repeat the whole procedure 3 times.

Here are some other devices you can use to set up the image:

1. Try colored crayons for the difficult part, and playing any or pencil for the rest of the letters.
2. Separate the parts, and underline the difficulty:

*cal en dar*

3. Circle the key part:

*calen (dar)*

4. Use the number 2 to remind you that certain words are always written in 2 parts.

all 2 write

### Spellick # 1

If you think you’ve never seen the word “spellick” before, your are right. It was invented for this book. SIX MINUTES A DAY TO PREFECT SPELLING is a complete course in itself. The only additional tools you need are a dictionary, a pencil some paper, things you already own. There are, however, some other very useful tools which you can build for yourself ... if you have the time and, more important, if you have the desire to get ahead as fast as possible. We have called the extra devices *spellicks* the gimmicks or special tricks this in business of learning to spell. *Spellicks* are separated from the rest of the instruction because they are extra rather than musts. But *spellicks* are the *power tools* of spelling. Use them if you possibly can. Here is *spellick* number one.

Cut out a piece of *yellow* paper about two feet long and about six inches wide. Use this as the background. Cut other pieces of cardboard of the same color into strips about a foot long and 3 inches wide. Always searched drip, in black letters, the word you are studying at the moment. As you print, make the letters of the difficult parts twice his size of the others, now you have an excellent tool for seeing the word. The black on yellow will greatly sharpen the image. Just lean the background card against a solid object like a book and, and place the word card in front of it.

Of course, you continue the process of staring at the image for 10 seconds, looking away, counting 5, trying to create a mine picture, and then writing the word out rapidly as you visualize it.

SEE THE WORD with these:

|              |            |             |
|--------------|------------|-------------|
| arGUMent     | ILLiterate | quaRRel     |
| barGAIN      | judGMent   | reCOMMEND   |
| sePARate     | keroSENE   | SECRETary   |
| DEStroy      | leISure    | tempERAture |
| enVELOpe     | manAGE     | UNable      |
| femiNINE     | neCESSary  | VINEgar     |
| grATEful     | oCCasion   | wHISTle     |
| handKERchief | PARTner    |             |

### Review paragraph

As a review this chapter, we have prepared a paragraph contain every keyword mentioned in the explanatory material. Naturally, the real test of your ability to spell correctly is in your own writing when you are not deliberately being careful. Therefore, we have used the paragraph form, rather than a list, to make the situation as natural as possible.

These essays are not offered his literary gems. The need to keep them short and at the same time have them contain a special group of particular words creates a problem. Nevertheless, the occasional near-nonsense sentence should not interfere with your main objective, which is to use these paragraphs as a test of how much you have learned!

The best method of course is to ask someone to read aloud to you as you write. If you must work on the material by yourself, simply rewrite it. Look at the keywords (those words in boldface) only long enough to identify them, not long enough to help you spell them. Not in the text you get to it in a sentence. Use the blank spaces below the paragraph to jot down the words you missed. Study these again!

If you wish study to **feminine argument**, I **recommend** that you visit a **bargain** counter. You will see how to shoppers can sometimes **manage** to get into a **quarrel** over even a **handkerchief**. In the **judgment** of each unwilling **partner**, she simply must have the article for her **leisure** moments. On one occasion I saw the **temperature** of a **secretary** go up as if were lighted **kerosene**. She picked up a calendar in an **envelope**, but a bystander had been **unable** to resist reaching for it, too. One would have thought both were **illiterate** from the looks washed in **vinegar** that passed between them each surely would have been **grateful** if she should been able to **destroy** the other. Elect for a moment is if a **whistle** would had to be blown to separate the peer, but a **saleslady** made everything **all right** when she pointed out that the item was not even for sale.

I will continue the practice of giving you a summary paragraph at the end of each chapter that deals with the spatial skill. Your score should be 100% before you are satisfied. For example, in the foregoing paragraph if you got only 23 of the 24 keywords right you should eliminate your error before going ahead.

A word or two about test general, and spelling tests in particular. In most areas of information, it is customary to use an examination to major general knowledge in the field. In school subjects, for example, which drew additional 65% or higher indicate satisfactory achievement. Similarly, a mark of 85% might be excellent on a state professional or civil service examination.

With such grades in a spelling test would be meaningless! They would indicate only the percentage of words that need further study. The speller cannot be satisfied with 85% or 90% or 98%. He must drive for 100% EVERY Time.

You will not, therefore, find any test here designed merely to allow you to get a score. All the sentences and paragraphs at the ends of the chapters or in the appendix are there to help you learn two things:

the word you still have the study,  
the words you've already mastered.

Toying with long lists of deliberately misspelled examples of errors are picking out the correct forms from several possibilities is an utter waste of time. In fact it is dangerous to concentrate your attention on the wrong spelling at any time. Your mind may not choose to remember the right one the next time you have to use the word! For this reason there are no distorted spellings are useless tests in this book.

See the word,

now...



## Chapter 3

### Think the Word!

Look very quickly at the 10 words listed below. In the space provided right the first thing that pops into your mind. Try to make your responses automatic as you can.

|            |            |
|------------|------------|
| ANT _____  | FEAR _____ |
| BLUE _____ | GIRL _____ |
| CARE _____ | HEAD _____ |
| DUTY _____ | IRON _____ |
| EASE _____ | JUNE _____ |

Now examine each combination, the original word and the one you inserted. What made and suggest blank to you? Think about it for a moment. The Bureau the name of a person in the space, it is she the one you like best, or possibly never could tolerate? If you wrote sad after blue, isn't it that the caller depressed you for one reason or another, if you put chair or couch after ease, you probably identify relaxation with a favorite piece of furniture. But no matter what YOU! You will remember that you have created far better the something thought of by another person.

Here again is a summary paragraph. Trying to give master the foregoing group of words. Remember: it is better if this material is dictated to you. New line review paragraph

early in February and acknowledgment written on official stationery came from the laboratory. By this time the police chief temperature was at the boiling point. The tragedy of the torn parachute, discovered by the persistence of the Sgt. Bristol, remain unsolved. The villain was still at large, and there wasn't even a principal suspect. But that she could face a dilemma before. In grammar which a professor would never use and a minister might call sacrilegious he ordered his men to search every part of the city, even the cemetery, and to break down the resistance of anyone brought in. The outrageous crime had no parallel in the literature of murder, but it is the privilege of a seldom grateful public to demand results. Police chiefs are obedient the public mood, and in this case the public, very a repetition of the crime, was in no mood to bargain. wrote down, BY filling in the spaces, you participated in what psychologists call and "association of ideas."

The term applies to very basic human characteristic. Faculty of your mind that helps you remember things is constantly establishing these BONDS don't seem to help you very much. This is that it should be. The bonds must be made up. It explains why the strains of the familiar bit of music can bring back a picture of a wonderful evening you once spent; why you'll reject a certain kind of food because it makes you think, perhaps subconsciously, but those harrowing mornings you spin on the high chair struggling with your persistent mother; why the number 16 may mean a dreamy birthday party to a girl.

In the ability of your mind to associate lies the key to another secret of the spelling. You have learned how to get a mental picture of the difficult part of a word. Now you can place a mental string around your finger in addition to the image in your mind, the result will be startling. When you tie in the problem syllable with an instantly recalled idea, you will have another strong aid towards a proper spelling of a word. The secret is simply to form a BOND.

Us go back to the calendar, the example we use to point out how advisable it is to *see* the word with the *mind* as well as the *eye*. The A between the D and R is the real troublemaker. Now invent a statement that creates a BOND between the difficult part and an easily remembered idea. For example semi scratch that for example: according to the calenDAR, the D. A. R. will meet this week. There it is. The abbreviation of the name of the famous feminine group reminds you of the A between the D and R. it can even be an entertaining game. The rules are simple:

1. Set up the Association.
2. Make it as silly or unusual as you can. Oddly enough, one tends to remember nonsense more readily than logic.
3. Try to combine this association with an IMAGE and this association for the BOND in your mind as explained in the previous chapter. SEE the word AND THINK THE WORD by association. Thus you make the difficult part of the word both the basis for the IMAGE and the association for the BOND.
4. Once you decide on a good combination, study for 10 seconds, look away towards another surface, SEE AND THINK the problem syllable, and then write the whole word out rapidly.

Take a look at these additional examples. After you become thoroughly familiar with the method, gradually make up your own list.

1. It is Vile to allow special priVILEge.
2. The suit on the sergeant looked like SERGE on an ANT.
3. She screamed, “EEE!” as she passed by in the cEmEtEry.
4. The Villain in enjoyed his VILLA IN the hills.
5. Scientists LABOR in the LABORatory.
6. GM in (General Motors) sent an acknowleGMent.
7. Every AGE has its trAGEdy.
8. You GAIN when you can buy a barGAIN.
9. My PROF is called PROFessor Gordon.
10. He lost his TEMPER AT the rise of his TEMPERATure.
11. Don’t MAR writing with bad gramMAR.

12. Draw ALL the lines parALLel.
13. There was constant rePETition of his PET phrase.
14. TEN times later his persisTENce was rewarded.
15. She flew in a RAGE as it outrageous remarks.
16. EMMA was in a dileMMA.
17. When I think of FeBRuary, I say, “BR!”
18. It was an ERA of great litERature.
19. The princiPAL is my PAL.
20. You RILE me with your sacRILEgious remarks.
21. StationERy is for a lettER.
22. When he ATE, he was grATEful.
23. “ACH!” There goes the parACHute.
24. My skin shows resisTANce to TAN.
25. He would sooner DIE than be obeDIent.

It may occur to you at this point that some of the BONDS don't seem to help very much. This is that as it should be. The bonds must be made up BY YOU! You remember what you have created far better than something thought of by another person.

Here again is the summary paragraph. Try it after you master the foregoing group of words. Remember: it is better if this material is dictated to you.

### **Review paragraph**

Early in **February** an **acknowledgment** written on official **stationary** came from the laboratory. By this time the police chief's **temperature** was at a boiling point. The tragedy of the torn **parachute**, discovered by the **persistence** of **Sargent** Bristol, remain unsolved. The **villain** was still at large, and there wasn't even a **principal** suspect. But the chief had faced a **dilemma** before. In **grammar** which a **professor** would never use and a minister might call **sacrilegious** he'll ordered his men to search every part of the city, even the **cemetery**. And to break down the **resistance** of anyone brought in. The **outrageous** crime had no **parallel** in the **literature** of murder. But it is a **privilege** of a seldom **grateful** public demand results. Police chiefs are **obedient** to public mood, and in this case the public, varied a **repetition** of the crime, was in no mood to **bargain**.

## Spellick # 2

If you have no one available to dictate these paragraphs, there is still a way to solve the problem. Try to borrow recording machine. Perhaps a friend has one. Then you can simply recorded material in this and other chapters. Thereafter, you can play back the paragraph at your leisure, and write as you listen.

There are many advantages to such an arrangement. The fact that you hear your own voice dictating should help you remember. You can play the tape or record as often as you like, stop whenever you please, and even makeup essays on your own for further tests. If you use this suggestion, be careful to observe these cautions for the actual recording:

1. Speak clearly and a microphone; pronounce extra carefully. Do not leave out any syllables or letters.
2. Break up the sentences and phrases. For example: “Early in February – an acknowledgment – written on all official stationery – came from elaborate Tory –“
3. Read slowly; pause long enough after each phrase to allow yourself time to write it. You can accustom yourself to the proper timing by practicing writing sentences as you read them aloud. When you think you have the tempo set, and began to record, **ALLOW A FEW MORE SECONDS AT EACH BREAK.**
4. Identify each paragraph at the beginning of the recording. Say something like: “This is the paragraph on the page –.” You may want to check a word or sentence at a future date, and fail to remember the source. It would be wise to repeat this information on the label on the CD or mp3 file.
5. If you aren’t satisfied with a particular recording, **DO IT OVER.** Unless you feel comfortable as you listen, the recorded material will be more of a hindrance than a help!

So far you learn to **SEE THE WORD** your mind and **THINK THE WORD** by association. Now let's turn to the third important method of solving your spelling problems.

## Chapter 4

### Feel the Word!

Have you ever watched a blind person become familiar with the string object? He goes over the outline of the figure carefully and slowly. *Through his fingers* he memorizes the shape. We feel something similar again, his sense of touch will immediately identified. In fact, this is the way a blind person learns to read braille. But all of us have the ability to “think” and “see” with our fingers. Here are two illustrations.

You said in a darkened movie theater. As you watch the film, you’re clicking sounds nearby. Your puzzle, but when the lights go on you discover a woman putting her knitting away. Her fingers have been busy in the dark while her mind was concentrating on the screen.

One morning you are late. As you dash down the steps, your fingers feverishly make and knot in your to tie. Your mind, already forming excuses for tardiness, doesn’t spend the second spot on your time. Your *fingers* are doing the thinking.

Or let me remind you about the signature wrote on the first page. You didn’t think about it you let your *fingers* take charge. Your mind was probably wondering why you were asked to do the job.

There are many things you do almost entirely by reflex. The patterns of behavior are so habitual that your mind often operates in a secondary capacity. It has a much clearer picture of the necessary movements and such a strong association with the proper reactions that the physical process becomes prompt, efficient, and almost without thinking.

You know how to SEE THE WORLD. You know how to THINK THE WORD. Learn how to FEEL THE WORD and spelling will also become one of your mechanically perfect skills.

This physical attack upon words is designed to force the hand to do most of the work or spelling. It is almost a final step in naming your write any word as casually as you do your signature.

Tried another experiment. Write the number 19836 on a blank piece of paper. Put your finger on each digit and trace it, saying it out loud as you trace. Do this three times. Turn the paper overwrite the original number once more, but, as you do, say aloud 12345. If you can write one number while saying another, you proved that your hand to be taught to spell automatically.

This skill is particularly useful for words to contain more than one difficult part. A BOND or IMAGE may not be enough to eliminate all the trouble spots.

Take the words PSYCHOLOGY for example. A poor speller may forget that it begins with a P, or that it contains a Y and CH. It is therefore possible to make several errors. The attack must be on the overall basis. You must *feel* the *entire* word and be able to write it mechanically.

Use this system:

1. On a piece of paper, write the letters, well-rounded, *script* letters. About twice the size of your normal handwriting should be sufficient.

*psychology*

2. Place the pen or pencil you have used aside, and WITH YOUR FINGER directly touching the letters, slowly TRACE the word, softly repeating aloud each letter as you trace it.
3. Allow no break in rhythm. Your arm should swing along, not stopping its motion until it has completed the word. Dot the *i* or *j* and cross the *x* and *t* if there is one.
4. Do this three times. Start carefully and gradually increase the pace until it is very much like the speed at which you normally write.
5. After you have been able to sweep through the word confidently, without pausing, turn the paper over, THIS IS VERY IMPORTANT. SAY ANYTHING ALOUD AS YOU WRITE THE WORD. Repeat your name and address, or recite a favorite bit of poetry, or simply count. By talking as your write, you force yourself to make the process automatic.
6. If you make the slightest mistake, repeat the exercise until your HAND spells the word. Remember, use your finger to trace. Do not use a pen or pencil.

Here are a few more words that contain problems in several places. They can be handled best by the tracing method.

1. *minimum*
2. *campaign*
3. *ridiculous*
4. *guardian*
5. *bureau*
6. *ascertain*
7. *memorandum*
8. *mortgage*
9. *gurantee*
10. *acknowledge*

After a while, you will find that you can combine tracing with the other two techniques of seeing and thinking. Thus, if you must think about the spelling, it will help rather than hinder the writing.

Here is the way to combine the three steps.

1. Construct the image in your mind as suggested in the second chapter.
2. Prepare a BOND for the different part or parts of the word.
3. Trace the word WITH YOUR FINGERS three times.
4. Write it rapidly AS YOU LOOK AT THE IMAGE IN YOUR MIND and REPEAT THE BOND ALOUD. In this way you will be **seeing the word**, **thinking the word**, and **feeling the word** all at once.

If you can master this three-step technique, 90% of your spelling troubles will be over.

### **Review Paragraph**

Lucy looked at Mr. Forbes, her **guardian**. She felt that the terms of the **mortgage** were **ridiculous**, and she clearly recalled the **memorandum** the head of the housing **bureau** had sent her. He had strongly urged some sort of **guarantee** of payments so the risk would be at a **minimum**. She realized she would first have to **ascertain** what **psychology** would work best before she could start a **campaign** to force Mr. Forbes to **acknowledge** the justice of her claim.

SEE THE WORD!

THINK THE WORD!

FEEL THE WORD!

*and*

## Chapter 5

### Say the Word!

It is very common for people to be entirely unaware of the spoken mistakes they make. These people haven't learned to listen to themselves talk. Unfortunately, oral errors are often transferred to written words. Many misspellings come directly from faulty pronunciation.

You tend to write the way you speak. Examine these:

|          |         |
|----------|---------|
| SURPRISE | FILM    |
| CALVARY  | JEWELRY |

Say each one aloud. Try to listen to yourself as you speak. If you have trouble concentrating on your voice, use this simple device. Stand a few inches away from a wall. Hold your hands behind your ears and parallel to the wall. As you talk, you will hear the sound as if they were coming over a microphone.

Now that you have pronounced the words, look them up on a good dictionary. You will notice that, after the spelling of a word, its proper pronunciation is indicated by certain symbols for the vowels and consonants. At the bottom of each page of the text of the better dictionaries is listed the key or interpretation of these signs. Become familiar with them, but there is no need to learn the list by heart. Frequent use will fix the various marks in your memory. Also glance through the "Guide to Pronunciation," and "The Rules for Syllabification" usually found in the introductory matter. Learning how to use this information is necessary.

All right, you've checked the words. Did you leave out a syllable? Did you add one? Did you fail to say R in SURPRISE? Did you put the L before the V in CALVARY? If you made any of these mistakes, you committed one of a number of common spoken errors that often become spelling errors.

The problem breaks down into four types of mispronunciation errors.

#### **A. Extra Syllable.**

Some letter combinations in our language are difficult to produce orally. An M following an L is an example. The open mouth position must immediately be followed by closed lips, and stopped short. The tendency, therefore, is to add a syllable between the letters to try to bridge the gap. Thus you get FILLUM instead of FILM.

You can train yourself to speak correctly. Slow down your speech. Give each sound its full value before producing another. If you are in doubt about a word or you hear other people saying it differently, look it up. Practice before a mirror. Watch you lip and jaw movements. Say it right and you will spell it right!



SAY AND SPELL:

ATHlete      disasTRour      rememBRance

launDRy      hinDRance      barbaROUS

umBRella      mischieVOUS

attacKED

drownED

*E is not pronounced*

*E is not pronounced*

### **B. Omitted Syllable**

It is just as wrong, of course, to leave out a syllable. Here the trouble arises out of speech that is too hurried. Slow up. Take it easy. Say the whole word. Don't say and write JOOLERY instead of JEWELRY.

SAY AND SPELL:

accidentALly

poEM

tempERature

probABly

choCOLate

labORatory

### **C. Incorrect and Omitted Sounds**

You may occasionally use the proper number of syllables in a word but pronounce a particular letter incorrectly or leave it out altogether. You must not be careless. Get the dictionary habit. Don' say and spell SUPPRISE whey you mean SURprise.

SAY AND SPELL:

arCtic

diPHtheria

goverNment

FebRuary

sacrilegious

quesTION

### **D. Reversed Sounds**

Usually this error occurs as the result of hearing the word spoken incorrectly and copying the mispronunciation without bothering to check. In this way the little boy listens to his friend describe the charge of the "CALVARY." And may imitate this for years, before discovering that the words is CAVALRY. And imagine his dismay when he learns that there really is a word CALVARY, the hill where Christ was crucified!

SAY AND SPELL:

irrELEvant

trAGEDy

PERform

PERspiration

Right here there must be a question in your mind.

"What if I can say the word correctly, but still have trouble spelling it?"

That's fair enough. But don't forget the first three techniques. When you have removed the speech problem, treat the word like any other. SEE IT, THINK IT FEEL IT! It's the basic attack. What we're doing now is giving you hints that can be applied to groups of words. However, the SEE-THINK-FEEL method is the guaranteed way, even if no other suggestion helps.

Now some additional problems related to speech.

### **E. The Indefinite Vowel.**

## **Note from Internet Publisher: Donald L. Potter**

March 11, 2014

I have been working on this document for a couple weeks now. I decided to go ahead and publish the work to date, although there remains much material to add. I found Shefter's book quite helpful when I was a teenager. I have now been teaching spelling since 1990 to regular English speaking students and bilingual students. I credit much of my success teaching spelling to the principles and practices presented in Shefter's book.

I am also interested in teaching spelling because of the impact of spelling instruction on reading fluency. In fact, I have come to conclude that spelling itself is the best way to teach fluent reading. Unfortunately the reading head has come to wag the spelling tail, instead of the reverse. This has not always been true. For almost 200 years, reading was taught by means of spelling. In any event, I believe that teachers who master Mr. Shefter's techniques will see dramatic improvement, not only in spelling ability, but also in reading ability.

As I have time, I will be adding to this document.

[www.donpotter.net](http://www.donpotter.net)

Last updated 4/20/14.