

Spelling

Quiz

Are you a good speller?
If so, you are in the
minority.

In a recent experiment most people, even good spellers, failed to spell correctly all of a list of 16 common words. Most failed several.

Here is the list, which may be misspelled. Can you spell them correctly?

accommodate
disappoint disciplin
excessive gardian
inocuous miniatjur
mischevus ocazion
professor
psyckolojy
recommend
remembered sovrain,
tecnically

Answers are on the
back page. [Answers?
Are? Why spelled like
that?]

We are the Spelling
Society [international]
Look us up on the web
at spellingsociety.org
Read on for more info.

Did you try the quiz & then check to see how you did? If you made some mistakes, let's see why you made them. Quite possibly you were making good sense, but the "correct" spelling was not.

Did you [u?] leave out the silent e & g in /sovereign/? If so you were making good sense; the g in particular is a redundant leftover from ancient latin. It is no longer sounded, so we write it, say spelling reformers.

Are you & I writing this way to please the etymologists? Some say we are supposed to. Why is a puzzle, since the history of each word is all on record for the scholars to argue about if they wish.

Are we writing [excuse my spelling] to please our teachers? Teachers all over are refusing to correct spelling mistakes, on the grounds partly that the old spellings don't make sense any more.

Are we writing the old spellings - & being considered stupid when we don't - to live up to an ideal of some kind?

What ideal? What is ideal about the figure of 40 million people in the US who are semi-illiterate, unable to read a newspaper or fill out an application form?

What is ideal about reading scores which are no higher after years of intensive efforts to raise them than they were before the effort began?

We can blame the great influx of immigrants who don't read English. We can blame the TV watching which prevents reading of newspapers & books. But English spelling is a culprit.



What is all that illiteracy doing to employment?

Last week a tenant of mine, who came as a refugee from Bosnia, went to apply for a job at a home care facility. He could not read the elaborate government requirements & questions, so gave up, came sadly home. ...Today I went with him & helped him try again. This time he was welcomed, & may be hired. What if he didn't have my help?

Our language is one of the most difficult in the world to learn to read & write. The



scholars of past ages spelled the same word in multiple ways. No central

editing job was ever done in an English speaking country. We pay a price.

English cums from at
least 4
difrent
language
roots -
latin,
nordic,



saxon, french.
They all got mixd up
together as English was
sorting itself out &
emerging as one
language, from 800-
1400.

At that time riters wer
spelling enny way they
thaut best. Chaucer &
Shakespeare wer both
inconsistent
spellers.



That period
wud hav been
the time to
edit &
regularize
the spelling, to decide
e.g. wether the word
"pay" was going to be
ritten pey [saxon],
paiien [old french, the
language of Wm. the
Conquerer], or pacare
[latin].

"Pay" was the new way,
now cald The Great
Shift, under wich the
sound of the letter A
wich had been
"ah" changed
for sum reeson
& became "ay",
today's name
for the letter
A.



Wich to use? Since
nobody knew, paiien
became pay wile saxon
they stayd as they.
Inconsistent? Yes.
Dificult to lern? Yes.

Pay & they rime. They
wud be eesier to read &
rite if they wer speld
alike. The other
languages of Europe
settled on consistent
spelling patterns, so
they ar eesy to spel.
English is nothing of
the sort. It stumps
menny of its own
people, as well as
outsiders lerning it.



The erly problem was
worsend wen printing
was invented in the
1300's. The first
printers of inglish wer
germans. Thees, not
being familiar with
inglish, did not feel
up to editing the MSS
that wer handed to
them.

The german printers
took the words &
printed them as they
wer ritten - mistakes,
inventiv spellings &
all.

Once printed, the
words took on a certan
holiness. From then on
they wer regarded as
being corectly speld
wether they wer or not.

Samuel Johnson about
1750 created one of the
first English
dictionarys. He made no
effort to cleer up the
contradictions, but
left them all as they
wer.



Samuel
Johnson
School
pupils wer
expected to
memorize, not
to challenge his spellings.

Today this failure of
the UK to do wot all
the other european
nations did is exacting
a hevvy price. If it is
elitist, it is a costly
elitism indeed.

With television to be
wochd instead of
reeding, text messaging
larding the ritten word
with abreevations,
scool teachers who
don't respect the old
spellings - Wy shud
they, wen they cum from
cuntrys with foneticly
speld languages? - we
shud be in a state of
red alert.

A man who cannot reed
an aplication or a set
of instructions is
unlikely to be hired.
Boys becum dropouts
because they ar
ashamed- "I cant lern
to spel, must be
stupid." Unemployment &
crime increase
alarmingly. **Sumthing
needs to be dun....**

Quiz ansers: accommodate,
disappoint, discipline,
excessive, guardian,
innocuous, miniature,
mischievous, occasion,
professor, psychology,
recommend, remembered,
sovereign, technically.

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author. Also see:
www.wertheliving.org
www.americanliteracy.com
www.spellingsociety.org