

the ARTICLE (for teachers)

How Important is Spelling?

How important is spelling? One British academic thinks it may not be so important. English teachers, scholars, and linguists have been wrong to emphasize the need for correct spelling. He has suggested that various spellings of words should be acceptable if everyone can easily and effectively communicate. Is there any harm if "occasion" were spelled with two s's? Or would the world end if the i and e were reversed in such words as "foreign," "weird," or "neighbor?"

Not everyone agrees, however. In fact, quite a number of academics have gotten in a huff with regards to the proposal. Even if English may have many exceptions to established rules, those rules still exist for a reason. Communication is easier with consistent spelling. Good spelling goes hand in hand with good writing, which implies that the reader shouldn't have to re-read sentences to understand the meaning of the writer. Most academics agree that spelling is just as important as good grammar.

With the popularity of text messaging, in which people ignore proper spelling and grammar for speed, it's become more important than ever to follow spelling rules. What would your impression be of an official letter from the bank or local government with words spelled willy-nilly? Or how would you feel about a glossy business pamphlet which introduced you to a company's products and services, but with numerous spelling mistakes? Equally important, yet also more troublesome, would be an undecipherable business letter or email. What might the consequences be then?

It all comes down to communication. In face-to-face conversations, it proves relatively easy to clarify or explain an idea. Visual clues and tone of voice also help. But written emails and letters require rules for quick comprehension. Despite one academic's wish, spelling can't be ignored.

Teacher's Notes:

* Underlined words in red typeface may be vocabulary unfamiliar to the students.

the Article (for students)

How Important is Spelling?

How important is spelling? One British academic thinks it may not be so important. English teachers, scholars, and linguists have been wrong to emphasize the need for correct spelling. He has suggested that various spellings of words should be acceptable if everyone can easily and effectively communicate. Is there any harm if "occasion" were spelled with two s's? Or would the world end if the i and e were reversed in such words as "foreign," "weird," or "neighbor?"

Not everyone agrees, however. In fact, quite a number of academics have gotten in a huff with regards to the proposal. Even if English may have many exceptions to established rules, those rules still exist for a reason. Communication is easier with consistent spelling. Good spelling goes hand in hand with good writing, which implies that the reader shouldn't have to re-read sentences to understand the meaning of the writer. Most academics agree that spelling is just as important as good grammar.

With the popularity of text messaging, in which people ignore proper spelling and grammar for speed, it's become more important than ever to follow spelling rules. What would your impression be of an official letter from the bank or local government with words spelled willy-nilly? Or how would you feel about a glossy business pamphlet which introduced you to a company's products and services, but with numerous spelling mistakes? Equally important, yet also more troublesome, would be an undecipherable business letter or email. What might the consequences be then?

It all comes down to communication. In face-to-face conversations, it proves relatively easy to clarify or explain an idea. Visual clues and tone of voice also help. But written emails and letters require rules for quick comprehension. Despite one academic's wish, spelling can't be ignored.

Notes:

STEP ONE

Brainstorm: Brainstorm with a partner(s) words and ideas associated with "communication" for 2 minutes. Spend another 5 minutes or less discussing the words and ideas together.

STEP TWO

Discuss: Do you agree or disagree? Why?

- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | I wish that my spelling ability in English were better. |
| b. | I wish that my English grammar were better. |
| c. | There should be an international form of English different from American English, British English, etc. |
| d. | It's okay if a non-native English student makes many spelling mistakes. |
| e. | It's okay if a native English speaker makes many spelling mistakes. |

STEP THREE

The Article: Read the article, and work with a partner to understand it. Lastly, summarize in your own words.

STEP FOUR

Discuss: Talk about the following questions in pairs/groups. Remember to support your answers!

- | | |
|----|---|
| a. | Did you like this article? |
| b. | What do you think about spelling well? How important is it? Please explain. |
| c. | Some people say mistakes in English are okay if the other person can understand. Do you agree? |
| d. | What would you think if your teacher spelled words incorrectly? How about if he had poor grammar? |
| e. | Why do you think there are grammar and spelling rules? Please explain. |
| f. | Should an international form of English follow American rules, British rules, or something different? |

STEP FIVE

Presentation: Select one of the questions from above and prepare a formal presentation with your partner. Choose either to inform or persuade in your presentation. Use the following outline to organize your presentation, making notes on your notebook. Lastly, speak to another pair of students.

Introduction: State the key idea of your presentation.
Outline: Briefly mention the steps you plan to present.
Main Body: Break this into statements with supporting evidence for each one.
Conclusion: Summarize the key points once more.