

LEARNING TO SPELL IN ENGLISH

by Paul Rogers

Good writing in English should begin with good spelling. Although advances in technology have given us "Spell Check", it is my opinion that learning to spell well is an important "ingredient" to a "command" of the English language.

However, learning to spell correctly is difficult even for native English speakers. English words are too often not spelled the way in which they are pronounced, primarily due to the fact that English is a mixture of other languages, such as German, French, Spanish, and ... who knows?

One key factor is that learning to spell depends upon good pronunciation:

"The most effective way to improve spelling is to improve pronunciation?"

(Reference Manual For The Office, by Clifford R. House and Kathie Sigler, 1989, Southwest Publishing Company, Cincinnati, Ohio.)

For EFL/ESL students, difficulties in pronunciation are compounded by the fact that it is frustrating to learn how to reproduce certain English sounds which do not exist in their native languages. And this problem, in turn, leads to an inability to hear and understand many words when spoken out loud.

To "solve" all of the above complications, I have developed a phonetic system to learn English as a Foreign language, and include a variety of lessons and exercises to help students "master" English as easily as possible. My material is bilingual, Spanish/English, but can be used by other students as well. Below is a simple exercise that is very helpful.

The following is short list of such words:

**read - "Read the word out loud."
 red - "The house is red."
 read - "Yesterday, I read the newspaper."
 lead - "The conductor leads the orchestra."
 lead - "Bullets are made out of lead."
 led - "He led them through the woods."**

This chapter, then, is aimed at providing a phonetic framework for the EFL/ESL student in learning basic English spelling. Although the text focuses on Spanish speaking students, it is expected that students whose first language is not Spanish will be able to write out the appropriate phonetic spelling after hearing it from the teacher or from another sound source.

A. "The Long and Short of It"

Review of the vowels - a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y.

English vowels are divided into two sounds: long and short.

1. Long = A vowel is said to be long when the sound made is longer than the sound made for ...short vowels! Plus the sound is made along the bridge of the nose. Long a, e, i, and o are pronounced exactly like their names; long u is pronounced like the u in tube, and long y is pronounced like the word eye.

2. Short = A vowel is said to be short when it is pronounced using less air than long vowels with the

sound located low in the throat (in the "Adam's apple"). The short a has three sounds, whereas the other vowels only have one specific short sound.

Note: When the vowel E is at the end of a word or follows an E, the sound is changed from short to long.

PRACTICE

LONG A = "ei"

all "ay" words:

bay (bei) - bahia

day (dei) - día

play (plei) - jugar o tocar

say (sei) - decir

way (wei) - metodo, via

cape - bare - fare - plane

SHORT A = 3 SOUNDS -

1. Like the letter a in the word "cachucha" -

bar - barra

car - carro

far - lejos

2. "ae" -

cap (caep) - cachucha

bad (baed) - malo

cat (caet) - gato

man (maen) - hombre

3. Like the "o" in "octubre"

all (awl)

ball (bawl)

call (cawl)

fall (fawl)

hall (haw)

tall (tawl)
wall (iuawl)

LONG E = "i"

be (bi) - ser, estar
he (hi) - el
me (mi) - mi o me
she (shi) - ella
we (wi) - nosotros
sheep (ship) - oveja

SHORT E = Like the e in "en"

get -obtener
ten - diez
hen - gallina
wet - mojado
when - cuando

LONG I = like the word "hay" -

mine (mayn) - mio
nine (nayn) - nueve
time (taym) - tiempo

SHORT I = "ie"

fit (fiet) - caber
give* (giev) - dar
hit (hiet) - golpear
it (iet) - eso
live* (liev) - vivir
sit (siet) - sentar

***exception to the rule of e at the end of the word!**

LONG O = like the "o" in Spanish-
or (or) - o
before (bifor) - antes
more (mor) - más
old (old) - viejo/a

SHORT O = 'a' or like the "o" in "octubre"
of (av) - de
off (af) - lejos
on (an) - en, sobre
other (ather) - otro

LONG U = just like the letter "u" in Spanish -
tube (tub) - tubo
fuel (ful) - combustible
cure (cur) - curarse
glue (glu) - pegamento

SHORT U = Like the "a" in "tia"
up (ap) - arriba
under (andr) - debajo
us (as) - nos
bus (bas) - camión

LONG Y = "hay"
by (bay) - por
cry (cray) - llorar
my (may) - mio/a
why (iay) - porque

SHORT Y = "i"
body (badi) - cuerpo
pretty (preti) - bonita
necessary (nesesari) - necesario
city (citi) - ciudad

PRONUNCIATION OF CERTAIN CONSONANTS

1. The soft G and the J -

The initial sound is made by forcing air along the space between the back teeth while, at the same time, making a face that can only be described as a little grin. G is completed with a long e, J with a long a.

garage (garadch) - garage

George (yiorch) - Jorge

orange (orandch) - naranja

juice (yus) - jugo

2. The sound of the H is made by blowing out air in a sigh, with the mouth slightly open, similar to the J en español.

hello (jelo) - ola

hi (jai) - ola

help (jelp) - ayudar

Q - is usually followed by a U, and is pronounced KW (or like kiu in Spanish).

Queen (kiu-in) - reina

quiet (kwayet) - silencio

R - The English r is not rolled

run (ran) - correr

rain (rein) - lluvia

V - The sound of the V is made by placing the two front top teeth upon the lower lip while forcing air out making a vibration.

Do not confuse the V with a B!

every (evri) - cada

valley (veli) - valle

Victoria vehicle

Y - When the Y is a consonant, it is pronounced like "ll" in Spanish.

yes (lles) - si

yellow (llelo) - amarillo

you (lliu) - tu, Usted, Ustedes

young (llang) - joven

COMBINATIONS OF CONSONANTS

CH -

three sounds

1. Just like the CH in Spanish-

chair (cheir) - silla

church (chuerch) - iglesia

2. Like SH - pronounced like the CH but while blowing out more air -

Chevrolet (shavrolei)

Chevron (shavran)

Charlotte (sharlat)

3. Like K -

chemical (kamakal) - quimico

cholera (kolera) - colera

S followed by a consonant S___

There is no E in front of the English words!

school (skul) - escuela

space (spes) - espacio

station (steishan) - estación

star (staer) - estrella

student (studant) - estudiante

study (stadi) - estudiar

slow (slo) - despacio

speak (spik) - hablar

sports (sports) - deportes

start (staert) - empesar

stay (stei) - dejar

stop (stap) - parar

SH - See above under CH -

**She sells seashells, down by the seashore
(ella vende conchas en la playa)**

**TH - The pronunciation of TH is very comical and must
be practiced with a sense of humor!!! Stick your
tongue out and blow!!**

1. With a vibration:

the (tha) - el, la

other (athr) - otro

that (thaet) - ese

this (thies) - este, esta

they (thei) - ellos

there (their) - alli, alla

their (their ¡también!) - de ellos

therefore (theirfor) - por eso

2. Without a vibration

three (thri) - tres

thirsty (thiersti) - sed

thin (thien) - flaco

think (thienk) - pensar

thumb (tham) - pulgar

Thursday (thiersdei) - jueves

WH -

two sounds

1. Omit the W and just pronounce the H

whole (jol) - entero Also-hole(jol) = ollo

who (iu) - quién

2. Omit the H,
what (iuat) - que
when (iuan) - cuando
where (iuer) - donde
why (iuai) - porque

VOWEL COMBINATIONS

AI - TWO SOUNDS:

Short like the letter e in 'best'-
again - agen (otra vez)
against - agenst (contra)

Long like the long a -
gain - gein (ganar)
main - mein (principal)
pain - pein (dolor)
rain - rein (lluvia)
stain - stein (mancha)
train - trein (tren)

AW - LIKE THE SHORT O

awning - onning - (toldo)
dawn - donn - (madrugada)
lawn - lonn - (césped)
yawn - iuonn - (bostezo)

EA - four sounds:

1. Like the long e:
bean (bin) - frijol
clean (klin) - limpiar
clear (klir) - claro
dear (dir) - venado y querido/a
each (ich) - cada
ear (ir) - oreja
eat (it) - comer
hear (hir) - escuchar
heat (iit) - calor

lean (lin) - magro
meal (mil) - comida
mean (min) - significar, intentar, y malo
near (nir) - cerca
read (rid) - leer
teach (tich) - enseñar
year (llir) - año

2. Like the short e:

bread (bred) - pan
dead (ded) - muerto
head (jed) - cabeza

3. like "ur" when followed by r

early (erli) - temprano
earth (erth) - tierra
learn (lern) ready - listo

3. Like the long a:

bear - oso
great - grande
pear - pera
wear - usar ropa

EE - The same as a long e:

bee (bi) - abeja
feel (fil) - sentir
exception: been (ben) past participle of be

***EI - Like the long 'a'**

neighbor
weigh

***IE - Long e**

believe
relieve

**** THE I BEFORE E RULE:****I before E except after C -****BUT the following are the exceptions****either, foreign, heifer, height, leisure, neither, seize, weird.****An acronym to help remember:****Neither leisured foreigner nor financier could seize the heifer on the weird heights (compliments of my 7th grade English teacher, Miss Prebble).****OA - Like the long o:****boar (bor) jabalí****boat (bot) - barco****coat (cot) - chaqueta****goat - chivo****throat - garganta****OO - Two sounds:****Short like the short u:****look - mirar****book - libro****cook - cocinar****Long, like the long u:****zoo - zoológico****too - también****Ou and sometimes Ow sound like au:****loud - alto****out - a fuera****“out loud” - en voz alta****How - como****brown - café (el color)****cow - vaca****now - ahora**

Ow also sounds like the long o:

crow (cuervo) = cro

grow (crecer) = gro

flow (fluir) = flo

low (bajo) = lo

glow (lucir) = glo

grow (gro) = crecer

slow (despacio) = slo

VOWELS COMBINED WITH CONSONANTS

AUGH - two sounds:

1. ____ff:

laugh (laff) - reir

2 mute:

caught (cat) - atrapó

taught (tat) - enseño

EIGH - two sounds:

1. like "eye" -

height (hayt) - altura

2. like the long a -

neighbor (naybor) - vecino

weigh (iue) - pesar

weight (iuet) - pesa

IGH - Like the long i:

fight (fait) - pelear

high - (jai) - alto

light (lait) - luz

night (nait) - noche

right (rait) - derecho, justo, y correcto

ER, IR y UR -

her (jer)bird - pajarro

er

fur

OUGH - five groups:

1. short o-

bought (compró, pasado de buy)

fought (peleó, pasado de fight)

ought (debe)

sought (buscó, pasado de seek)

thought (pensó - pasado de "think")

2. long u -

through - através

3. ou -

bough - brazo del árbol

plough - arado

4. __ff

cough - tos

enough - bastante

rough - tosco

tough - duro, difícil

5. o

although - aunque

though - aunque

OULD - Like the short u, and the L is mute:

1. could (kud) - pasado de "can"- poder

I could walk to the store -

Yo podría caminar a la tienda

2. should (shud) - condicional o deber

You should do it -

Ud. debería hacerlo

3. would (iuud) - subjuntivo

She said she would go

Ella dijo que iría

PRACTICE:**1. Short I versus "ee" -**

La "I" corta-"ie"-versus el sonido de "I"
did (pasado de "do") deed (una acción)
is (el es) ease (tranquilidad)
it (eso) eat (comer)
live (vivir) leave (salir)
hit (golpear) heat (calor)
sit (sentarse) seat (asiento)
ship (barco) sheep (oveja)
pit (hueso) Pete (Pedro)
fit (caber) feet (pies)
still (todavía) steal (stil) robar - steel (stil)
acero

2. TH verss T

La "TH" y "T"
thigh (muslo) tie (corbata)
thanks (gracias)tanks (tanques)
bath (baño) bat (bata)
three (tres)tree (arbol)
those (a ellos)toes (dedos de pie)
booth (puesto)boot (bote)
there (allí)tear (rasgar)

3. La J y Y

joke (broma)yolk (yema)
jam (mermelada)yam (ñame), y ham (jamón)
jail (carcel)Yale (una universidad)
Jess (Jessica)yes (sí)

normal

natural (nachural)

legal

universal

6. "_____ente" words remove the "e"

accidente accident

continente continent

cliente client

evidente ???

7. Some words that end in "a" in Spanish omit the a in English:

artista artist

dentista dentist

lista ???

8. "___mento"- omits the "o"

implemento implement

monumento ???

fragmento ???

9. "_____ante"- omits the e

abundante abundant

consonante ???

dominante ???

10. "___ia" changes to "_____e" and the e is silent.

policía police (polis)

licencia license (laisans)

11. _____ese changes to _____ese (es)

famoso	famous
delicioso	delicious
glorioso	??????

12. ___rio changes to ___ry (ri)

adversario	adversary
aniversario	anniversary

13. ___idad changes to ___ty (ti)

actividad	activity
ciudad	???

14. ___ar s changes to ___ate (eit)

dictar	dictate
dominar	dominate

15. Many words that begin with "es" in Spanish omit the "e" in English.

escuela	school
estudiar	study
estudiante	student

CONFUSING WORDS

bat (baet) murcielago
but (bat) pero
bad (baed) malo

bear (beir) oso
bare (beir) desnudo
beer (bir) cerveza

been (ben) pasado de be
bean (bin) frijol
bin (bien) arcón

bow (bau) inclinarse

bow (boh) arco

boys (boiz) muchachos

voice (vois) voz

buy (bai) comprar

by (bai) por

bye (bai) adios

chip (chiep) - nacho, o potato chip

cheap (chip) barato

closet (klasat) ropero

closed (clozd) cerrado

clothes (kloz) ropa

close (kloz) cerrar

close (klos) cerca

cost (kast) cuesta

coast (kost) costa

dear (dir) querida

deer (dir) venado

dip (diep) bañar

deep (dip) profundo

here (jir) aquí

hear (jir) escuchar

kiss (kies) beso

keys (keez) llaves

of (av) de

off (eff) apagado

ship (shiep) barco
sheep (ship) oveja

shot (shoet) disparo
shut (shat) cerrado

sit (siet) sentarse
seat (sit) asiento

soap (sop) jabón
soup (sup) caldo, sopa

thirsty (thiersti) sediento
Thursday (thersdei) jueves

thirty (therti) treinte
dirty (dierti) sucio

tree (tri) árbol
three (thri) tres

wash (uash) lavar
watch (uatch) mirar
y watch reloj en la muñeca

wear (ueir) usar ropa
where - donde
were (uer) pasado de be

which (uich) cual
witch (uich) bruja

wind (uiend) viento
wind (uaind) enrollar

work (uerk) trabajar

walk (uak) caminar

world (uerld) mundo

word (uerd) palabra

Exercise: Write the correct word:

1. It is ___ for a ___ to bite you.

bat (baet) but (bat) bad (baed)

2. The ___ was drinking the ____.

bear (beir) bare (beir) beer (bir)

2. Have you ___ to the food ___ to get the ___?

been (ben) bean (bin) bin (bien)

3. Robin Hood began to ___ before he shot his ____.

bow(bau) bow (boh)

3. The ___ has a loud ____.

boys (boiz) voice (vois)

4. If you go ___ the store, please ___ some groceries.

buy(bai) by (bai) bye (bai)

5. We should get the ___ potato ___ because we do not have much money.

chip (chiep) - cheap (chip)

6. Bring the ___ in the ___, and please ___ the door.

closet (klasat) closed (clozd)

clothes (kloz) close (kloz) close (klos)

7. If you ___ your hand ___ into the tub, you will find the plug.

dip (diep) deep (dip)

8. Can you ___ me if I stand ___?

here (jir) hear (jir)

9. "Give me the ___" she said

kiss (kies) keys (keez)

10. Turn ___ the light.

of (av) off (aff)

1.

http://www.splashesfromtheriver.com/spelling/spelling_rules.htm

Free Homeschool Curriculum Spelling Course

[Home](#)

**Free Spelling
Course**

[Course Outline](#)

[Spelling Rules](#)

[Disclaimer](#)

Spelling Lessons

[Lessons 1 to 5](#)

[Lessons 6 to](#)

[10](#)

[Lessons 11 to](#)

[15](#)

[Lessons 16 to](#)

[20](#)

[Lessons 21 to](#)

[25](#)

[Lessons 26 to](#)

[30](#)

[Dictation](#)

[Lessons 1 to 30](#)

SPELLING RULES

SPELLING PLURAL NOUNS

1. Most words add **s** to the root forms without any change (barn - barns).
2. Words ending in **sh, ch, ss, x, and z**, usually add **es** to form the **PLURAL** (bush - bushes).
3. Words ending in a consonant and **y** change the **y** to **i** and add **es** (party - parties).
4. Some words ending in **f** change the **f** to **v** and add **es** (calf - calves).
5. Some singular words have different words for their plural form (man - men; mouse - mice; goose-geese).

SUFFIXES

1. A letter or a syllable placed after a word to form a new word is called a suffix. Some suffixes are a

Spelling Lesson Answers

[Lessons 1 to 5](#)

[Lessons 6 to](#)

[10](#)

[Lessons 11 to](#)

[15](#)

[Lessons 16 to](#)

[20](#)

[Lessons 21 to](#)

[25](#)

[Lessons 26 to](#)

[30](#)

Free Spelling
Course
sponsored
entirely by
Splashes From
The River

[Cozy Grammar
Course](#)

[Cozy
Punctuation
Course](#)

[Intermediate
Grammar I](#)

[Intermediate
Grammar II](#)

[Cozy Essay
Course](#)

[Cozy
Classroom CD](#)

[About Splashes](#)

es, ed, ing, er, est, ly, ful, able, ible, ment, ive, ance, ence, ion, tion, ition, ation, sion, ous, ious, less, and al. Sometimes a word will have two suffixes. For example, respectfully has the two suffixes ful and ly added to the root word respect.

2. Many words are formed by adding ed and ing without any change (furnish - furnished - furnishing).
3. Words ending in a silent e drop the e before adding ed and ing (move - moved - moving).
4. Words ending in a consonant and y change the y to i before adding ed, but do not make any change before adding ing (deny - denied - denying).
5. Words ending in a vowel and y add ed and ing without making any other change (delay - delayed - delaying).

PREFIXES

1. A syllable placed before a word to change its meaning is called a prefix. Some prefixes are im, un, in, co, dis, inter.

DOUBLING THE FINAL CONSONANT

1. Words of one syllable ending in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel double the final consonant before adding ed and ing (trim - trimmed - trimming).
2. Words of two or more syllables double the final consonant before adding ed and ing when these conditions are met: the last syllable ends in a single consonant preceded by a single vowel, and the accent is on the last syllable (refer - referred - referring).

POSSESSIVE FORMS

[Contact](#)
[Information](#)
[About Us](#)

Link Directory

[Educational](#)
[Homeschool](#)

1. **Singular nouns form the possessive by adding an apostrophe and s (pilot - pilot's).**
2. **Plural nouns that end in s add only an apostrophe to form the possessive (aviators - aviators').**
3. **Plural nouns that do not end in s add the apostrophe and s to form the possessive (men - men's).**

CONTRACTIONS

1. **A word or phrase that has been shortened by leaving out some of the letters is called a contraction.**
2. **An apostrophe is used to show that the letters have been omitted (won't - will not), (o'clock - of the clock).**

CAPITALS

1. **The beginning of a sentence is always capitalized (The day was bright and sunny.).**
2. **The names of holidays are capitalized (Christmas, Valentine's Day).**
3. **The names of the months of the year and the days of the week are capitalized (January, Monday).**
4. **The names of countries are capitalized (United States, Great Britain).**
5. **When you write the name of a particular avenue or street, capitalize the words avenue and street (Fifth Avenue, Oak Street).**
6. **The abbreviations Mr., Mrs. and Ms. are always capitalized and followed by a period (Mr. Callahan, Mrs. Perry, Ms. Smith).**
7. **The names of deities are capitalized (God, Allah, Buddha, Saviour).**

8. **The word republican is capitalized when it refers to the Republican party (The Republicans won the election.).**
9. **When words like senator and general are used as titles with a person's name, they are capitalized (General Herkes distinguished herself in battle.).**
10. **We capitalize the words capitol, senate, building, supreme and court when referring to the Capitol Building, the Senate, the Supreme Court of Canada.**

LETTERS AND SYLLABLES

1. **The vowels are a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y and w. The other letters are consonants.**
2. **Two vowels written together often have the sound of a single vowel. (In brain the ai has the sound of a. In eagle the ea has the sound of a long e, but in bread it has the sound of short e. This rule will help you with the ei and ie words: i comes before e except after c or when sounded like a, as in neighbor and weigh.**
3. **A syllable is a word or part of a word which has one vowel sound and is spoken as a unit. (boy is a one-syllable word; chil dren is a two-syllable word; or na ment is a three syllable word. In every word of two or more syllables one syllable is given more emphasis than the other. This extra emphasis is called accent, and is shown in the dictionary by an accent mark (')**
4. **(In meet' ing the first syllable is accented.) Most words have only one accented syllable, but some have more than one (in' for ma' tion). The accent that is the heavier is called the primary accent. The other accent is called the secondary accent.**
5. **In your dictionary each word is re-spelled according to its pronunciation. The vowels are**

marked according to their sounds, and the accented syllables are shown. The marks for the vowel sounds are called diacritical marks. These marks vary from dictionary to dictionary. Please consult the beginning of your own dictionary for the explanation of diacritical marks used in that particular publication.

6. The two words at the top of each dictionary page are called guide words. The guide words are the first and last words on that particular page.

SPECIAL WORDS

1. **Compound Words** are made by writing two small words together to make one larger word. (newspaper, somebody)
2. A **root word** is the root, or beginning word, from which another word is made. Play is the root word of plays, played and playing.
3. **Derived words** are words that come from other words. Suitable is derived from suit; advertisement from advertise. Sometimes the spelling of the root word is slightly changed in the derived word.
4. A **synonym** is a word having almost the same meaning as another word. (replied - answered; accurate - exact)
5. An **antonym** is a word that is opposite in meaning to another word. (private -public; good - bad)
6. **Homonyms** are words that are pronounced alike but which are spelled in different ways and have different meanings (knew - new; steel - steal; deer - dear)

