

Chapter 5

Select the Correct Word and Spell It Right

In this chapter, you'll learn

Why spelling matters

How to become a better speller

How to distinguish between confusing sound-alike and look-alike words

Does spelling matter? Some agents say, "It's only e-mail; it's not important. It takes too long to spell check each e-mail." But an e-mail with misspellings makes a poor impression: you are sloppy; you are not professional. Your company does not care about its customers.

Spelling Does Matter!

What would you think if you received this e-mail response to a message inquiring about a product guarantee?

Our product quarantee is "Gauranteed Period."

Not only is *guaranteed* misspelled, but it is misspelled two different ways! If you were the customer who received that e-mail, the sloppy spelling might make you worry about the guarantee, or whether your purchase would be shipped on time, or if your credit card would be billed correctly. Finally, you might see whether you could purchase this product somewhere else—with a more reliable "guarantee."

Spell-check programs are a great help to many poor spellers, bad typists, and busy agents who often don't take the time to proofread their e-mails before sending them. Spell-check programs flag many misspelled words. Some automatically correct commonly misspelled words.

But poor spellers often find that spell-check is only a partial solution. Spell-check may not recognize your misspelling, so it offers no correct choices. Or it could display more than one likely candidate for the correctly spelled word. Sometimes you can find the correct spelling by leafing through the dictionary. But if you truly have no idea of how to spell a word, you could spend a long time skimming dictionary pages looking for the correct spelling.

Sound-Alikes and Look-Alikes Trick the Ear and Eye

Sometimes, misspelling is not the problem. You're confused by sound-alike or look-alike words (*to, too, two*).

Try It

This message would get through spell check, but it has errors in word usage. Circle each incorrect word, and write the correct word above it.

Thanks for your inquiry about the pare of read shoes featured in our catalog. The shoes are died to match the dress that is shown on the same page. Many people order both and like to ware them together. The shoes are on sail. If you'd like to by this item, you must first pay the balance on your overdo account. We are not aloud to ship you knew merchandise until you pay your passed do bill.

This version of the e-mail has the correct word written above the circled word it replaces.

Thanks for your inquiry about the ^{pair red}pare of ^{red}read shoes featured in our catalog. The shoes are ^{dyed}died to match the dress that is shown on the same page. Many people order both and like to ^{wear}ware them together. The shoes are on ^{sale}sail. If you'd like to ^{buy}by this item, you must first pay the balance on your ^{overdue}overdo account. We are not ^{allowed}aloud to ship you ^{new}knew merchandise until you pay your ^{past due}passed do bill.

Did you find all of the look-alike and sound-alike words? If you missed any, check the list of sound-alikes below to help you choose the correct word.

Frequently Confused Words: Sound-Alikes and Look-Alikes

accept/except	accept: to receive, to agree <i>I accepted the terms of the contract.</i>	except: exclude; but <i>We have all the items you ordered except the down quilt.</i>
ad/add	ad: abbreviation for advertisement <i>The ad must be placed by 10:00 a.m.</i>	add: to perform a mathematical procedure <i>Please add six percent sales tax to the purchase price.</i>
addition/edition	addition: mathematical procedure; also <i>Do you want to order the matching earrings in addition to the necklace?</i>	edition: a particular version of a document <i>This is the third edition of the textbook.</i>
advice/advise	advice: recommendation; guidance <i>Can you give me some advice on a gift?</i>	advise: to recommend; to suggest <i>I'd advise you to give a gift certificate.</i>
affect/effect	affect: to influence <i>Your latest payment of \$55.70 will affect the balance you own on this account.</i>	effect: an accomplishment; to bring about; being in full force <i>The summer sale will be in effect until August 1.</i>
aid/aide	aid: the act of helping <i>Our Web site should aid you in ordering online.</i>	aide: person acting as an assistant <i>The political candidates brought their campaign aides to the meeting.</i>
all ready/already	all ready: completed <i>The order is all ready to send.</i>	already: before; so soon <i>I have already sent an invoice.</i>
bare/bear	bare: naked <i>This cape is a perfect cover for bare arms on chilly nights.</i>	bear: a type of animal <i>The rug is made from bear skin.</i> bear: to hold up, support; to be accountable for <i>We cannot bear the responsibility for misuse.</i>
be/bee	be: a verb form; used as a helping verb <i>Our agents will be with you as soon as possible.</i>	bee: an insect <i>Customers enjoy our clover honey made by the wild bee.</i>
beside/besides	beside: next to <i>The price appears beside the product description.</i>	besides: in addition; also <i>Besides the camel-hair blazer, we sell a camel-hair overcoat.</i>
billed/build	billed: to present a statement of costs or charges <i>You have been billed for your entire order.</i>	build: to construct <i>All the parts are in the box, but you will have to build the model.</i>

Frequently Confused Words: Sound-Alikes and Look-Alikes *(continued)*

brake/break	brake: a device for stopping or slowing motion <i>We are recalling all 2000 models because of a problem with the brake.</i>	break: to separate into parts; to smash <i>If you don't package the crystal carefully, it will break.</i>
buy/by	buy: to purchase <i>You have to buy the ink cartridges for the printer.</i>	by: next to; not later than <i>We hope to ship your order by Monday.</i>
choose/chose	choose: to select <i>You may choose either of the free gifts.</i>	chose: past tense of choose <i>Last year you chose to receive a cash rebate.</i>
complement/compliment	complement: to complete <i>The red shoes will complement the outfit.</i>	compliment: to praise <i>I'd like to compliment you for your good work.</i>
continuously/continually	continuously: uninterrupted or constant <i>The video is played continuously.</i>	continually: reoccurring often <i>We continually review and update our policies.</i>
do/due	do: to perform or execute <i>I was unable to do the work you described.</i>	due: owed as a debt; expected <i>Payment is due upon acceptance.</i>
dual/duel	dual: composed of two; a double purpose <i>The tote bag has dual compartments.</i>	duel: prearranged formal combat <i>We prefer to mediate your complaint, not engage in a duel with you.</i>
dyeing/dying	dyeing: coloring with a dye <i>I'm dyeing the shoes according to your instructions.</i>	dying: ceasing to live <i>The plant you purchased is dying because of poor care.</i>
envelop/envelope	envelop: to surround <i>We envelop the vase with foam to prevent breakage.</i>	envelope: container for a letter <i>Return your payment in the brown envelope we provided.</i>
ensure/insure	ensure: to make certain <i>We do everything to ensure your satisfaction.</i>	insure: to protect against financial loss <i>You can insure the building against fire damage.</i>
farther/further	farther: used to describe a measure of physical distance <i>Our Connecticut store is farther from you than our New York store.</i>	further: used to describe advancement of a non-physical distance <i>We are further along than we thought.</i>
for/fore/four	for: preposition used to indicate aim, object, purpose, or recipient of an action <i>We will be happy to process the return for you.</i> fore: before; in front of <i>This scale-model schooner comes with fore-and-aft rigging.</i>	four: numeral <i>Please send me four copies of the book.</i>

Frequently Confused Words: Sound-Alikes and Look-Alikes *(continued)*

forth/fourth	forth: forward in time, place, and order <i>Despite setbacks, we are moving forth.</i>	fourth: a number <i>This is the fourth time I've asked you to take me off your mailing list.</i>
hear/here	hear: to perceive sound <i>Despite the noise, I was able to hear your complaint.</i>	here: at or in this place <i>Click here to learn more.</i>
hole/whole	hole: an opening <i>To attach, insert the string in the hole.</i>	whole: entire; complete <i>I will tell you the whole story.</i>
knew/new	knew: was aware of <i>He knew of the product defect.</i>	new: recent; unfamiliar <i>The raincoat is a new addition to our catalog.</i>
loose/lose	loose: not tight <i>After the accident, the car's bumper was loose.</i>	lose: to misplace <i>I frequently lose my keys.</i>
made/maid	made: constructed; forced <i>All of our products are made in the United States.</i>	maid: a servant <i>The rate includes daily maid service.</i>
mail/male	mail: postal material <i>The mail is delivered in the morning.</i>	male: a man or boy <i>Please indicate whether the applicant is male or female.</i>
maybe/may be	maybe: perhaps; possible <i>He said that maybe the order would be processed today.</i>	may be: might be; could be <i>We may be able to build a product that meets your needs.</i>
morning/mourning	morning: before noon <i>The stockholders' meeting is scheduled for the morning.</i>	mourning: period of grieving <i>We are still mourning the death of our company's president.</i>
no/know	no: not any; negative <i>We have no excuse for misplacing your order.</i>	know: to have knowledge of <i>We know we can handle your order promptly and efficiently.</i>
overdo/overdue	overdo: to do too much <i>If you overdo your workout, your muscles will be sore.</i>	overdue: beyond the expected time <i>Your payment is 30 days overdue.</i>
pair/pare/pear	pair: two of a kind <i>The socks you returned were not a pair.</i> pare: to peel <i>The cake will taste sour if you don't pare the apples before baking.</i>	pear: a fruit <i>The pear was not ripe.</i>
passed/past	passed: overtook; moved ahead; went beyond; surpassed <i>Our new truck passed all the safety tests.</i>	past: an earlier time <i>Those software failures were in the past.</i>

Frequently Confused Words: Sound-Alikes and Look-Alikes *(continued)*

peak/peek	peak: to approach the top or maximum <i>Hotel rates peak during tourist season.</i>	peek: to glance quickly <i>I peeked at your order but didn't review it carefully.</i>
personal/ personnel	personal: private <i>We consider your medical history to be a personal matter.</i>	personnel: employees <i>All of our accounting personnel will work on the project.</i>
plain/plane	plain: simple <i>The black dress is plain but elegant.</i>	plane: airplane <i>The plane has a business class section.</i>
pray/prey	pray: to utter a prayer; make an urgent plea <i>We pray that you'll make a contribution to this worthwhile charity.</i>	prey: an animal hunted for food; to victimize <i>The salesman was fired because he preyed on elderly couples.</i>
precede/proceed	precede: to go before <i>The 1992 and 1994 editions precede the current one.</i>	proceed: to continue <i>I got permission to proceed with the transaction.</i>
principal/ principle	principal: head of a school <i>Mr. Jones was named principal of Maywood Elementary School.</i> principle: a rule; standard of good behavior <i>The decision was based on principle, not profit.</i>	principal: a sum of money <i>You paid back the principal of your loan.</i> principal: main <i>The principal reason for the meeting is to plan a strategy.</i>
read/red	read: to have examined or grasped written material <i>He read our mission statement on our Web site.</i>	red: color <i>The coat comes in black or red.</i>
sale/sail	sale: the exchange of goods and services for money <i>The sale of the business took place in March.</i> sail: to travel by water <i>The ship with your goods is scheduled to sail on Monday.</i>	sale: disposal of goods at a lower price <i>We are having a sale on all of our computers.</i>
scene/seen	scene: part of a play <i>The carpenters built a set for that scene.</i>	seen: perceived with the eye <i>The buyer has seen the same dress in other stores.</i>
seams/seems	seams: lines formed by sewing together fabric <i>This model sewing machine will guide you to sew straight seams.</i>	seems: appears <i>Resolving your problem seems simple.</i>
sew/so	sew: to stitch <i>A beginner could sew this dress.</i>	so: therefore <i>He left a message, so I returned his call.</i>

Frequently Confused Words: Sound-Alikes and Look-Alikes (continued)

sight/cite/site	<p>sight: the act of seeing <i>Customers were excited by the sight of the new model.</i></p> <p>site: a location <i>To register, visit our Web site.</i></p>	<p>cite: to quote <i>Please cite all of your sources of information.</i></p>
stationary/ stationery	<p>stationary: not movable <i>The stationary pedestals support the office's plants and sculptures.</i></p>	<p>stationery: writing paper <i>Our most popular product is stationery.</i></p>
than/then	<p>than: compared with <i>The 1,000DS has more storage space than the 200DS.</i></p>	<p>then: at that time; next in time <i>First we will bill you, then we will ship your order.</i></p>
their/there/they're	<p>their: belonging to them <i>We used their research in our book.</i></p> <p>there: in that place <i>Place your returned items over there, on the counter.</i></p>	<p>they're: contraction for they are <i>They're the ones who registered for the course.</i></p>
thorough/through/ threw/thru	<p>thorough: complete <i>We gave your complaint a thorough review.</i></p> <p>threw: tossed <i>Because your son threw the ball, your insurance will not pay to replace the window.</i></p>	<p>through: from beginning to the end <i>We couldn't make our way through the contract.</i></p> <p>thru: informal for <i>through</i> <i>You can order food at our drive-thru window.</i></p>
to/two/too	<p>to: in the direction of <i>We sent it to the buyer.</i></p> <p>two: numeral <i>We shipped two of the items you ordered.</i></p>	<p>too: also <i>Check out our new model, too.</i></p>
undo/undue	<p>undo: to reverse <i>I'm sorry that we can't undo our error.</i></p>	<p>undue: excessive; not just or proper <i>We determined the damage was caused by undue force.</i></p>
waist/waste	<p>waist: middle of the body <i>The size 10 dress has a 32-inch waist.</i></p>	<p>waste: to consume carelessly <i>Your old dishwasher wastes energy and water.</i></p>
wait/weight	<p>wait: rest in anticipation <i>We wait for the newest model.</i></p>	<p>weight: a measure of heaviness <i>The shipping and handling fees are based on the weight of the package.</i></p>
waive/wave	<p>waive: to give up a claim <i>We'll waive the interest charges.</i></p>	<p>wave: a surge or rush <i>All of the robots were purchased by the first wave of customers.</i></p>
where/wear	<p>where: at or in what place <i>Where is your store located?</i></p>	<p>wear: to dress in <i>What size shoes do you normally wear?</i></p>

Frequently Confused Words: Sound-Alikes and Look-Alikes (continued)

weather/whether	weather: state of atmospheric conditions <i>Our Web site has a link to the local weather forecast.</i>	whether: if <i>I'm wondering whether I can return the item I purchased online.</i>
we're/ were	we're: contraction for we are <i>We're the leading manufacturer of computer chips.</i>	were: form of the verb "to be" <i>Both companies were founded in 1999.</i>
wood/would	wood: lumber <i>The entire chair is made of wood.</i>	would: auxiliary form of helping verb <i>I would have sent you a refund if you had returned the jacket.</i>
write/right	write: to form letters/words <i>Please write to us if you have other questions.</i>	right: correct; direction <i>It broke because you did not use it the right way. Turn right at the stop sign.</i>
your/you're	your: belonging to you <i>Bring your identification when you register.</i>	you're: contraction for you are <i>You're the winner of the contest.</i>

Practice 5.1— Choose the Correct Word

Write the correct word above the pair of words. For answers to **Practice 5.1**, see page 102.

To: James.Reiss@mailman.com
From: CustSvc@FastypePrinting.com
Subject: Answers to your questions about Fastype Printing services

Dear James Reiss:

Thanks for your e-mail inquiring about our printing services. Yes, we do print **stationary/stationery**. It is one of the **principal/principle** services that we offer. We will be glad to develop a logo for you. Our price for designing the logo and letterhead, as well as printing 1,000 sheets of **stationery/stationary** and **envelops/envelopes**, is \$500.

Please tell me **where/wear** you'd like me to send the contract. I will **mail/male** it to you. If you **except/accept** these terms and would like to **precede/proceed**, please sign and return the contract. That will **insure/ensure** quick service.

Sincerely,
Jean Berg
Fastype Printing

Practice 5.2—

Find the Misused Word and Replace It with the Correct Word

Circle the misspelled words and write the correct words above them.
For answers to **Practice 5.2**, see page 103.

1. We do not have any vacancies for the weaks you requested.
2. During off-peek periods, we accept reservations for shorter stays.
3. Hear is the answer to the question you asked in your e-mail.
4. Bee sure to click on the box to the left of the school's name, and then

click the "ad" button to list additional schools.
5. You do not have to weight to file your application.
6. Please go to our policies page for more information regarding Web

cite security.
7. The procedures are different for foreign students seeking financial aide.
8. I'm sorry that you are having trouble accessing our site in the evenings,

our peek hours. Please try in the mourning when usage is lower.

9. The sail price for the computer is no longer in affect.
10. The humidity in the air will effect how long the tree lasts.
11. We received too e-mail messages from you regarding the soymilk maker.

Hear is my explanation four the watery milk.

12. I believe you will have know problem with the delivery, but due let us no if
we can bee of further assistance.

Make Your Own “Cheat Sheet” of Words You Often Confuse

Did you miss any words in **Practice 5.2**? Are there others on the list that you frequently confuse? Enter them in the chart below to create your personal list of commonly confused words. We’ve given you an example of easily confused words: *compliment* and *complement*. Refer to your “Cheat Sheet” as you write your e-mail responses.

Commonly Confused Words	Definition
compliment/ complement	compliment: praise <i>I'd rather get a bonus than receive a compliment.</i> complement: complete or make whole <i>The necklace is a complement to the earrings.</i>

Answers to Practice 5.1—Choose the Correct Word

The correct word appears above the incorrect word.

To: James.Reiss@mailman.com
From: CustSvc@FastypePrinting.com
Subject: Answers to your questions about Fastype Printing services

Dear James Reiss:

Thanks for your e-mail inquiring about our printing services. Yes, we do

stationery *principal*
print **stationary/stationery**. It is one of the **principal/principle** services

that we offer. We will be glad to develop a logo for you. Our price for

designing the logo and letterhead, as well as printing 1,000 sheets of

stationery *envelopes*
stationery/stationary and **envelops/envelopes**, is \$500.

where
Please tell me **where/ wear** you'd like me to send the contract. I will

mail *accept*
mail/male it to you. If you **except/accept** these terms and would like to

proceed
precede/proceed, please sign and return the contract. That will

ensure
insure/ensure quick service.

Sincerely,

Jean Berg
Fastype Printing

Answers to Practice 5.2—

Find the Misused Word and Replace It with the Correct Word

The correct word appears above the incorrect word.

1. We do not have any vacancies for the *weeks* weaks you requested.
2. For off-*peak* peek periods, we accept reservations for shorter stays.
3. *Here* Hear is the answer to the question you asked in your e-mail.
4. *Be* Bee sure to click on the box to the left of the school's name, and then click the *"add"* "ad" button to list additional schools.
5. You do not have to *wait* weight to file your application.
6. Please go to our policies page for more information regarding Web *site* cite security.
7. The procedures are different for foreign students seeking financial *aid* aide.
8. I'm sorry that you are having trouble accessing our site in the evenings, our *peak* peek hours. Please try in the *morning* mourning when usage is lower.
9. The *sale* sail price for the computer is no longer in *effect* affect.
10. The humidity in the air will *affect* effect how long the tree lasts.
11. We received *two* too e-mail messages from you regarding the soymilk maker.
Here Hear is my explanation *for* four the watery milk.
12. I believe you will have *no* know problem with the delivery, but *do* due let us *know* no if we can *be* bee of further assistance.