

SPELLING

Do you think you are good at spelling or do you have a mental block when you see unfamiliar words and try to ascertain if they are spelled correctly! You are not alone. Spare a thought for foreign students when they are learning English as a second language. They are confronted with homophones (words that sound the same but have a different meaning) eg. there/their, here/hear, cite/sight/site.

What are you doing about improving your spelling? One way of improving is to keep a small note book in your bag and every time you see a word you are unfamiliar with: write it down and look up the meaning in a dictionary when you get time. This method requires discipline and the attitude to succeed and improve your knowledge of the English language. Words which you know the meaning of, but are unsure of the spelling, write the word down in such a way that you will remember the spelling. Many people get confused with the words 'occurred' and 'referred' and often miss one of the double consonants. If you write the words down with a small space between the syllables eg 'occur red', 'refer red' and say what you see you will remember the second 'r' and not have trouble spelling these words in future.

A candidate's success in an exam may depend on their ability to be able to spell correctly. It is sad to see candidates fail exams by a few marks through lack of English grammar skills.

There is a saying that 'good readers make good writers' and this is probably true. When you read your brain will take in sentence construction, grammar, when to use punctuation correctly, how to use paragraphs, layout and of course spelling. It does not matter what you read as long as you read and repeat the words in your head rather than just giving a cursory glance and skimming your eyes over words. Read the cornflake packet when having breakfast, read the advertisements on the bus and textbooks when you are at college. Do not skip words but read for meaning and understanding. If you see words you do not know how to spell, keep a list and ask someone in the family to test you on these words. Learn them by sticking up post-it notes in your bedroom so that you are constantly looking at these problem spellings and when you know them, put up another couple of post-it notes with different words on them. Each time you have replaced the words then you have expanded your knowledge of spelling and vocabulary? Think how much quicker your typing speed becomes if you do not have to look up words in a dictionary. Do not rely on spellcheckers on computers as they are usually the American version of words eg 'color' whereas the British version 'colour'.

Some peoples' speling skills come naturally. If you are not one of these fortunate people, decide how you are going to improve your ability. To ignore the fact that your spelling is letting you down means you will go through life with less confidence, perhaps miss out on promotion in your job and sending out correspondance from a legal office containing spelling errors is unforgiveable.

For examiner's use only

Spelling	Punctuation	Consistency Grammar Presentation	Total