

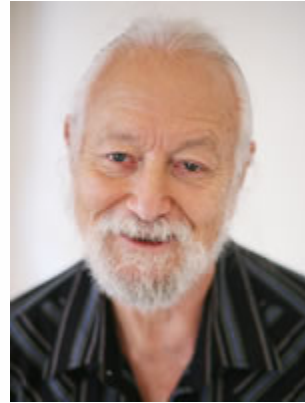
Copywriting Exercises: Are You a Better Speller Than Will Newman? (It's Not That Hard!)

By Will Newman

We're writers, you and I. We build with words. We build images of how people's lives improve with what we offer.

Our words let people see themselves getting healthier, slimmer, wealthier. Those same words let people see our nonprofit organization build a better world. Or they help people choose The Candidate we think is best.

As copywriters, we use words as both tools and the materials we build with. But those same words we rely so much on try to trick us. In spite of our best intentions, the words we put on the page come out misspelled or misused. No big deal.



Will Newman

Except it can be. When we misspell or misuse a word, we risk tickling the BS-meter of the readers who are ever-vigilant to catch mistakes like these. (Confession time: I'm one of them.)

So today, we're going to have a fun look at some of the most frequently misspelled words. These are all simple words, words you'd use in good, conversational copywriting.

The 'funnest' spelling test you've ever had

We'll do these copywriting exercises as a quiz. (Don't worry, you're not being graded.) I'll present you three sets of words, five at the time. The choices are random; so don't try to guess a pattern.

You decide which of the options is spelled correctly. And as a bonus, if I have a mnemonic — a trick for remembering the correct spelling — I'll offer it to you.

These copywriting exercises are all for fun. Truth be told, I incorrectly spell many of these words all the time.

Round 1

1. (a) mispell
(b) misspell
2. (a) acomodate
(b) accomodate
(c) accommodate
3. (a) acceptable
(b) acceptible
4. (a) embarass
(b) embarrass
5. (a) lollypop
(b) lolypop
(c) lollipop

Round 1 correct spellings:

1.
(b) misspell — Memory aide: Without the second 's,' you'd pronounce it 'my spelling'
2. (c) accommodate — Memory aide: Everything is doubled
3. (a) acceptable — Memory aide: Just gotta remember it (-able/-ible drives me nuts!)
4. (b) embarrass — Memory aide: Everything is doubled
5. (c) lollipop — Memory aide: Just gotta remember

Round 2

1.
(a) freind
(b) friend
2. (a) necessary
(b) neccessary
3. (a) bizarre
(b) bizzarre

4. (a) dissappear
(b) disappear
5. (a) heighth
(b) height

Round 2 correct spellings:

1.
(b) friend — Memory aide: When you spell it, say "fry end"
2. (a) necessary — Memory aide: Only the double 's' is necessary
3. (a) bizarre — Memory aide: Only one 'z.' Bizarre, isn't it?
4. (b) disappear — Memory aide: Make the second 's' disappear
5. (b) height — Memory aide: English is absurd that it spells height and width so differently

Round 3

1.
(a) occasion
(b) occassion
2. (a) maintenance
(b) maintanance
3. (a) tomorrow
(b) tommorrow
4. (a) recieve
(b) receive
5. (a) weird
(b) wierd

Round 3 correct spellings:

1.
(a) occasion — Memory aide: There's no occasion for the second 's'

2. (a) maintenance — Memory aide: Just gotta remember
3. (a) tomorrow — Memory aide: Two m's make it hard to see a brighter tomorrow
4. (b) receive — Memory aide: 'i' before 'e' except after 'c' or sounding like 'a' as in neighbor and weigh
5. (a) weird — Memory aide: 'i' before 'e' except after 'c' or sounding like 'a' as in neighbor and weigh, **OR** with weird words like 'weird'

Don't worry if you didn't do very well on these copywriting exercises. These words give me fits regularly and I depend on my spellchecker to catch me before I go too badly wrong with them. I found out something over the years. The more I depend on my spellchecker, the worse my spelling gets.

Thanks for hanging out with us this week. I've had a lot of fun learning about Money-Making Websites, AdSense, e-books, and how poor a speller I am.

I hope to see you again next week. Until then, tell us what you're thinking. Comment below.

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23 Responses to "Copywriting Exercises: Are You a Better Speller Than Will Newman? (It's Not That Hard!)"

Hi Will,

I only got one wrong. Clients do appreciate copywriters who can spell words correctly. Copywriters who are excellent spellers have a skill that sets them apart from the competition.

Sheila – over a year ago

As an editor, I am appalled at the poor grammar and misspellings in copywriting. I wish I could copy edit everything I see before the copy is distributed!

[FROM WILL: I completely agree that misspellings and serious grammar mistakes have no place in good copywriting. However where I might use "whom" in more formal writing, it really has no place in copywriting regardless of its correctness. Good writing – whether fiction, nonfiction, or copywriting – should not call attention to itself. So sometimes it's necessary to deliberately make a mistake.]

Guest (EditorBeth) – over a year ago

This spelling exercise was fun. I missed one word in each round! I need to study the words over to remember them.

Thank you Will for a little learning fun.

Guest (Clara Mae Watrous) – over a year ago

I aced the simple test. The problem is before I have time to practice more or take classes I need work. I am willing to give free trials just for fun.

Guest (Susan) – over a year ago

Mr. Newman encourages me every day. His articles provide hope to me that this copywriting thing REALLY is going to work. I appreciate and absorb everything that Mr. Newman writes. I am grateful for his clear explanations, clarifications, and expansions of other writers' products, services, and/or, articles. Thank you, Mr. Newman, for helping me remain focused and diligent!

Guest (Bill) – over a year ago

Elementary, my dear Watson.

Guest (Irene) – over a year ago

Like it Will. Must confess to spelling one word wrong, because I changed my mind. Good practice though. Will it be crosswords next?

All the best, John

upmarket – over a year ago

Hi ,Will Newman you have invented very fantastic way which lets you remember a spelling of Amy word simply. So your way is courageous to resist forgiveness. Thanks.

Guest (Magey thow) – over a year ago

Thanks for this little brain teaser.

I actually did very well on this. Was fun to do.

I so much enjoy your newsletter.

Thanks Will:)

Guest (Kathy) – over a year ago

That was fun. I have a memory trick for acceptable. Accept what's on the table.

Guest (Kat) – over a year ago

Hi Will,

English is my native language, thank God! I lived in Los Angeles for 6 years while in graduate school and met many people learning English-As-Second-Language. Many told me this is among the hardest things they have ever done. Of those who have learned more than two languages, they told me American English is the most difficult, this because we incorporate other languages into our own.

Nora King – over a year ago

By the way, I have come to depend on Spell Check too much. I did not realize what a bad speller I was until I started using it. Even with it, you need to be careful to edit, as Spell Check will not catch everything, such as too many taps on the keys (to, too)and other words that are just wrong (two).

Nora King – over a year ago

I have an uncommon ability to remember a word once I write it down. I very rarely use a dictionary and have people come to me all the time to spell things out for them. I looked your word lists and got them all right. That was fun, thank-you!

Guest (Danelle) – over a year ago

I really appreciate your columns. They are fun to read and encouraging.

Guest (Nina) – over a year ago

Proof-reading is my sickness. My eye goes right to the error and gets stuck there, interfering with so many things: distraction from the presentation, the sermon, once from the off-ramp because I was mesmerized by the misspelled sign guiding me to it. (Misspelled public signage mystifies me;I know how many people look at it before it's installed.) Moreover,

I doubt the credibility, professionalism and abilities of those with misspelled posts online or who use the wrong word (there, their, they're). But I give free reign to auto-correct in texts, Facebook posts and messaging. My phone routinely replaces my daughter-in-law Maggie's name with "maggot." She laughs, but I wonder. Incidentally, I got 100 percent on the quiz. Yes, I'm sick.

Guest (Debra Thompson) – over a year ago

Hey ! Just 1 error!! And you know what ? I am french and don't live in the states....apart of this, still struggling with writing, cpywriting, a book not a book, blog ,,I started meditate to clear my brain, and good new : I sarterd a program to clean my neuronesit's about Fasting ! And it works !

Martina

Guest (Martina) – over a year ago

You hit the nail right on the head with this article, Will. I, too, find myself REPEATEDLY misspelling even the most common words. From now on when I misspell a word I'm going to write it THREE times to get it correct; kind of like the "use a word three times and it's yours" thing.

Thomas Arillotta – over a year ago

Hi Will, thanks so much for the spelling test! I got them all right, so I feel pretty smart right now! :) I have always been a great reader and I used to kick my mom's butt at Scrabble, too! Guess spelling is second nature.

Kat B – over a year ago

Yes. Remember: 'i' before 'e' unless you're spelling's ElnstEln and know when not to.

FROM WILL: And spelling weird words like weird. M

Guest (Chris Morris) – over a year ago

Hello everybody,

Thank you for the great response. I knew when I wrote this I get a lot of responses; I always do when I talk about language. I hope you had fun with this one. I know I had fun writing it.

I wish I could respond to everybody, but with this many responses, time simply does not allow.

Good luck, best wishes, and much success, Will

Will Newman – over a year ago

Got them all right!

I always pick up other's mistakes, but miss my own.

[FROM WILL: Ah. The joys of self-editing!]

Guest (Adam) – over a year ago

This was yours Will. Just because a word is spelt correctly doesn't mean it's the correct word. Ode to a Human Spell Checker distributed by John Forde at www.CopywritersRoundtable.com and used with his permission.

Eye halve a spelling chequer It came with my pea sea It plainly marques four my revue Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word And weight four it two say Weather eye am wrong oar write It shows me strait a weigh.
As soon as a mist ache is maid

It nose bee fore two long And eye can put the error rite Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it

I am shore your pleased two no Its letter perfect awl the weigh My chequer tolled me sew.

[FROM WILL: Excellent! Using spellcheck software without care can be an invitation to disaster. Or great laughs, as shown by John's great poem.]

Will Craig – over a year ago

Easy as pi...(!)

No al in place. Thanks for the pleasure!

Guest (guest) – over a year ago

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