

Learning Skills

Study
skills

Improving Spelling and Grammar

Spelling Top Tips

- Try writing out the word on another piece of paper – which word looks right?
- Can you break the word down into smaller sections or parts?
- Is there a rhyming or similar word that you know how to spell?
- Use a dictionary – if there is not one in the room ask your teacher
- Once you have correct spelling – test yourself using Look Cover Write Check
- Create your own word list for reference– include the correct spelling for words that you have misspelled in tasks, as well as words that you know are tricky

While computer spell checks can be useful, they also have limitations. They do not detect homonyms – words which sound the same, but are spelt differently eg. Witch and which; knew and new; here and hear. If you are relying on a spell checker keep an eye out for homonyms, and once you've found a correct spelling put it on your word list for reference.

For activities and more information go to: bbc.co.uk/skillswise/english

Punctuation Key Information

Capital letters

- Use at the start of each sentence
- Use for a proper name, including:
 - » a person
 - » places - countries, states, towns and so on
 - » days and months
 - » religions eg. Buddhism, Catholicism
 - » nationalities eg. Vietnamese, Italian
 - » festivals eg. Christmas, Ramadan
 - » historic Periods or specific events eg. the Victorian Era
 - » organizations eg. The Gordon, Ford Motor Company
 - » first letter of significant words in the title of a book or film eg. The Black Swan
 - » acronyms eg. WHO for World Health Organisation

Commas

Commas separate the items in a list or mark out the less important part of a sentence.

Example of separating items: I need some pens, pencils, paper and a calculator before I start my class.

Example of marking out the less important parts of a sentence: The car, which was parked by the light, had a dog in the back seat.

Quotation marks

Quotation marks are used to highlight the spoken word. They are placed before and after any dialogue spoken in a sentence.

Eg. Dorothy said "Toto, I've got a feeling we're not in Kansas anymore".

Brackets

Additional information which is not essential to a sentence may be placed in brackets. This might include an explanation, a comment or an example.

Eg. Caroline's fear of small dogs (such as beagles, Jack Russell's and poodles) is well known.

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Sentences

A sentence is a group of words which makes sense on its own and expresses a complete idea. It should start with a capital letter and end in a punctuation mark (?!).

If you are unsure about whether a sentence is clear or needs punctuation try reading it out aloud. If you pause, then this indicates that you need a comma. If you take a breath or stop then this indicates you need a full stop.

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Paragraphs

A paragraph is a group of sentences about one main idea. Each paragraph should have a specific point which is fully explored – through an explanation and example.

When you wish to start writing about a slightly different idea or concept then it is time to start a new paragraph. Paragraphs should be separated with a blank line or an indent.

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Proofreading

Proofreading helps ensure you are submitting your best quality work. You should be on the lookout for:

- Clear and smooth flowing sentences
- Spelling
- Punctuation ie. Capital letters, full stops and commas

If working on a computer, it may be useful to print out the work and proofread the hard copy –it's easier to spot mistakes. Read your work out aloud – ensure you are reading exactly what is on the page and not what you think should be on the page!

Have someone else read out your work to you – are the sentences clear and flowing?