

WRITE FOR BUSINESS & BE UNDERSTOOD

Spelling Tips

Spell check is useful tool, but don't rely on it exclusively. For example, your word processor won't underline the mistake in this sentence because it's a word in its own right, "Collect the surveys form everyone." Always read through your documents to find every error.

Create a list of your most commonly misspelled words and keep it near your computer for quick reference, particularly if you have trouble remembering how to spell the names of people, places, or technical terms that won't be included in your word processing program's dictionary.

Avoid misused homophones. Homophones are words that sound alike but have different meanings, for example effect and affect. To spell the word, you have to know what each word means. In general, effect is a result of an event. Affect is the action that makes something change. You can remember that effect equals event while affect equals action.

Other common homophone errors:

There = a distant location
Their = possessive pronoun
They're = they are

To = preposition
Two = 2
Too = also

Your = possessive pronoun
You're = you are

Word Usage

Pay attention to how you use the word "is" compared the word "are. People are increasingly using the phrase "there is" in conversation and it is beginning to creep into writing as well. Sometimes it's a perfectly acceptable phrase, "There is my missing pen!" but sometimes it's wrong, "There is paper, envelopes, and stamps next to the copier." "There are paper, envelopes, and stamps next to the copier" is correct because more than one thing is listed in the sentence. The rule is officially called subject-verb agreement, but all you really need to know is that you when you list more than one thing, use are.

Don't use words that aren't words. This table shows words that commonly—and incorrectly—used and the correct word.

COMMON BUT INCORRECT	CORRECT WORD OR PHRASE
irregardless	regardless or irrespective
supposably	supposedly
alright	all right
alot	a lot

Register

As a writer, you vary your register based on your audience. Register refers to how formal or informal your tone is. Word usage, punctuation usage, abbreviations, and forms of address are some of the elements of writing that will change depending on your audience. This table gives you some examples of each register and with whom it's appropriate to use each.

	CASUAL	SEMI-FORMAL	FORMAL
Audience	Friends and family in emails or texts (handwritten notes or other writing purposes require semi-formal rules)	Professional colleagues you know well	Unknown recipients, colleagues you know indirectly or who are in superior positions
Emoticons ☺, ☹, 😊, ☹	Yes	Only in emails or texts and only if you know the recipient very well. Limit them to 1 or 2 per message	No
Acronyms & abbreviations	Yes LOL, OMG, BTW or similar are acceptable in emails and texts	Industry-related acronyms (provided the reader will know them) are acceptable	Well-known abbreviations are acceptable: Dr., Mrs., Blvd., Oct., NV
Punctuation & capitalization	Traditional rules aren't always followed. hey aleesha!!!!!!! i am so excited. John are you going?	Follow traditional rules, but your reader might overlook an occasional error.	Traditional rules required. I will be busy today, tomorrow, and Friday. Dear Mr. Juarez,
Text shorthand	Yes Where R U? Going 2 dinner now.	No	No
Contractions & idiosyncratic spelling	Yes You're tooooooo funny! I'm gonna study this weekend.	Contractions are acceptable.	No