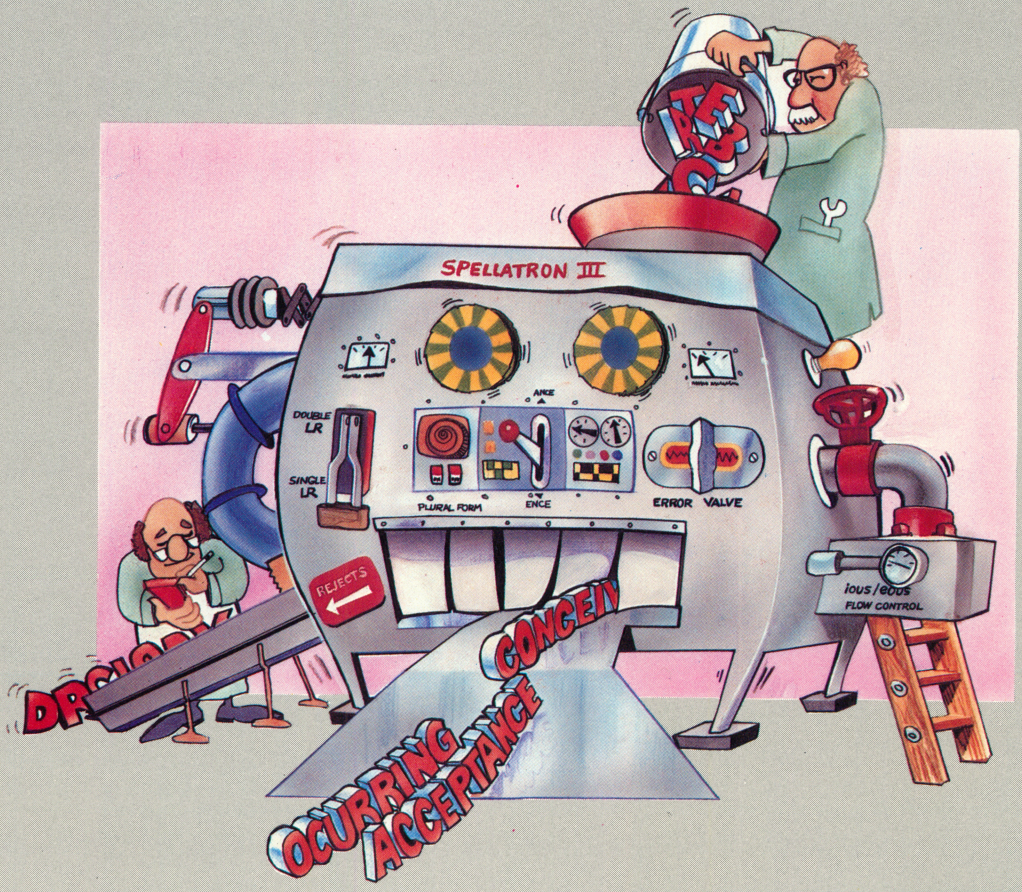
The Spelling Machine



The Learning Seed

The Spelling Mac

Written by Robert Lawrence
Programmed by Mark Whitehurst

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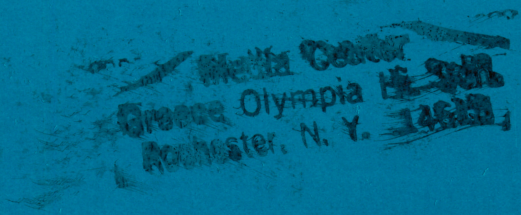

The Learning Seed Company

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Introduction and Summary

The Spelling Machine is packed with information. When you consider the purchase of a book you first look to see how long the book is. But with computer disks there is no easy way to measure the information. Some disks are the equivalent of a five page leaflet; **Spelling Machine** is a full length book. We had to use a computerized version of a shoehorn to fit all the spelling rules and practice sentences onto a single disk.

The program is smooth and easy to use; you could boot the disk right now without reading any documentation and use the program for hours.

Spelling Machine does not use a learn-one-word-at-a-time approach; it is not an arcade game that explodes spaceships for every correctly spelled word. The program presents general rules of spelling that, when mastered, lead to an understanding of how to spell dozens or hundreds of other words.

The program presents the rule and gives a set of practice sentences to test understanding. All spelling tests in this program use words in context. Research shows this is the most effective way to learn spelling.

Level of Difficulty

Any adult will find **Spelling Machine** worthwhile. Educated adults will find some of the spelling rules too easy, but the program allows room to choose word groups that make up your personal "spelling demons" list.

A ten year old could use the program but some of the words and rules will be too complicated.

Students in junior high and senior high school will find the program most useful.

Using the Disk

After booting the disk you will be asked, "Turn off the sound?" Answer "Y" if you need silence during the program. Next you will be asked "See the introductory information?" The introductory information is useful for first time users of **Spelling Machine**.

After a few screens of general information, the main menu will be available. The main menu offers four choices: (1) Ways to improve your spelling, (2) General rules and patterns, (3) Tricky endings, and (4) Challenge the demon list. This last option requires a printer.

Option (1) offers a brief tutorial showing general ways to improve spelling. It does not deal with specific words. This option will be used only once by each user, the other options will be used frequently.

Option (2) will present a menu of sixteen spelling rules. You may try them in any order. Each rule you select will be explained and taught using spelling words in context.

Option (3) is similar to option (2) except that the rules deal with "tricky word endings" such as -able, -ible, -ance, -ence, -ant, -ent and others. There are ten options in the "tricky endings" menu.

Option (4) requires a printer. The program will print a spelling test drawn at random from all the words used in the program. You may select up to fifty questions for the test, but the computer will select which words are tested. Each test will be different.

Correct answers are printed on a second page, so users who are testing themselves with this option should be careful not to look at the answer printout before taking the test.

Summary of Spelling Rules

Below are brief summaries of each of the spelling rules or groups. Also listed are the words used to test understanding of the rules. Remember, the words listed here are only those used to teach the rules. Learning the rules will help spell hundreds more words not listed here.

1. Y+S

Change "y" to "i" and add -es if the letter before the "y" is a consonant. If it is a vowel, just add "s." Exceptions: proper names and the word "standby."

Words tested: chimneys, quantities, fantasies, flunkies, honeys, stays, stories, toys, flies, rallies, Billys.

2. Y + Other Endings

When adding a suffix besides "s" to a word ending in "y", change the "y" to an "i" when the letter before the "y" is a consonant. Do not add an extra "e" as when adding an "s". Exception: adding -ing. Other exceptions: daily, paid, laid, accompanist.

Words tested: studious, loneliness, carrier, babying, tyrannical, employer, luckily, joyful, played, marriage, stayed, buying, plentiful, and laid.

3. Long vs. short vowels

Words with double letters have short vowels, words with single letters have long vowels in this group.

Words tested: canned/caned, stared/starred, super/supper, coned/conned, spitting/spiting, pined/pinned, later/latter, taping/tapping, cuter/cutter, muter/mutter, filed/filled, riding/ridding, moping/mopping, coped/copped, scared/scarred.

4. Final silent "e".

The final silent "e" drops before an ending beginning with a vowel but is kept when adding a suffix that begins with a consonant. Exceptions: Don't drop the silent "e" when the word ends in "ce" or "ge."

Words tested: mileage, courageous, writing, replaceable, seizure, valuable, coming, immediately, lonely, definitely, improvement, argument, completely.

5. Adding prefixes and suffixes
When a prefix ends with the same letter that a root begins with, make sure to keep both letters (mis + spell = misspell). When a suffix begins with the same letter that a root ends with, keep both letters (drunken + ness = drunkenness). When two words are joined to form one, and the first ends with the same letter that the second begins with, keep both letters (with + hold = withhold).

Exception: the word "eighteen."

Words tested: dissatisfied, cruelly, overrun, interracial, knickknack, outtalk, naturally, misstep, misspell, eighteen.

6. Unheard consonants
Under this rule we group words that are often misspelled because they are often mispronounced.

Words tested: government, environment, arctic, recognize, library, probably, quarter, perhaps, surprise, representative, comfortable, used, supposed, authentic, and empty.

7. Unheard vowels
Similiar to the above but with vowels that are often "swallowed" in mispronunciation.

Words tested: literature, temperature, bachelor, luxury, miniature, caramel, casualties, privilege, different, particular, boundary, aspirin, actually, accuracy, convenient and sophomore.

8. Avoiding extra letters
Some words are misspelled because speakers often add extra letters when using the words.

Words tested: burglar, grievous, disastrous, umbrella, monstrously, lightning, laundry, drowned, hindrance, mischievous, sandwich, and development.

9. Silent letters #1
Letters that are silent—H, B, G, K, P, L, W, GH.

Words tested: rhythm, psychology, pneumonia, foreign, gnawed, wrinkles, wrapper, wrench, tomb, silhouettes, knuckle, exhaust, raspberry, know, subtle, yolk, debt, diaphragm, beanstalk, and daughter.

10. Silent letters #2
Letters that are silent—T, C. N, I, A, W, E, U, UE.

Words tested: listen, withdrawal, often, column, answers, indict, mortgage, condemned, guess, hymn, vegetables, business, acquaint, colleague, muscles, acquire, and extraordinary.

11. I before E
The old standard—"Write "i" before "e" except after "c", or when sounded like a as in neighbor, and weigh. Exceptions: leisure, protein, counterfeit, weird, farenheit, caffeine, and seize.

Words tested: believe, thief, chief, field, handkerchief, friends, ancient, cashier, receive, ceiling, conceive, sleigh, heir, veins, their, leisure, weird, height, caffeine, and freight.

12. Doubled consonant patterns
Spelling Machine organizes these spelling demons in three groups as follows:

One plus two—single consonant near the beginning and a double consonant at or near the end. Examples include necessary, across, fulfill, recommend, disappear, trespass, disappoint, profession, tomorrow.

Two plus one—double consonant near the beginning and a single consonant at the end. Examples include occasion, immediate, accelerate, appropriate, and opportunity.

Two plus two—Two doubled consonants. Possession, accommodate, committee, success, occurrence, embarrassing, and raccoon.

13. Unstressed vowels
Deals with problems caused by vowels in unstressed syllables.

Words tested: prevalent, separate, arithmetic, definite, martyr, optimism, hypocrisy, murmur, villain, vitamin, and benefit.

14. To Hyphenate Or Not To Hyphenate
The program gives a few guidelines but no definitive rules for dealing with hyphens.

Words tested: workroom, wristband, semiannual, house party, redheads, red light, horse show, doghouse, good-natured, by-product, worn-out, color-blind, red-letter, and color guard.

15. Root Changes
When adding a suffix to a root, the spelling of the root (other than dropping a final silent "e" or changing "y" to "i") does not change. Sometimes, the spelling of the root does change.

Words tested: curiosity, explanation, desperate, prevalent, maintenance, remembrance, repetition, procedures, pronunciation, apparent, description, and forty.

16. Plurals
Several rules guiding the formation of irregular plurals are presented.

Words tested: echoes, heroes, banjos, radios, wives, knives, chiefs, thieves, bacteria, crises, stimuli, women, moose, sheep, churches, kisses, taxes and pencils.

17. Doubling the Final Consonant
When you add -ed to "benefit" the "t" does not double, but when you add a -en to "forgot" the "t" does double. Why? When the final consonant is preceded by a single vowel and when the accent is on the last syllable, double the final consonant.

Words tested: chopped, thinnest, controllable, quizzed, nutty, robbery, running, commitment, forgotten, opening, swimming, excellence, conferring, trainee, redder, conference, committed, murdered, occured, and beginning.

Tricky Endings

1. -able vs. -ible

Use -able when the root is a full word (or a full word minus the final silent "e"). Use -ible when the root is less than a full word or ends in-ns. Exceptions include probable, inevitable, indispensable.

Words tested: edible, available, favorable, believable, perishable, inflammable, describable, acceptable, inevitable, probable, audible, divisible, visible, infallible, compatible, invincible, negligible, sensible, responsible, accessible, and irresistible.

2. -el, -le, -al

Spelling Machine groups identical endings to make these words easier to learn: angle, apparel, cancel, nickel, angle, nobel, pickle, receptacle, actual, original, pedestal, primeval.

3. -ery vs. -ary

Learn the common -ery words and then assume that all the others end in -ary.

Words tested: bindery, cemetery, discovery, distillery, gallery, monastery, mystery, adversary, dictionary, elementary, hereditary, imaginary, secretary, summary, temporary, voluntary.

4. -ious, -eous, -uous, -ous

Words ending in -ious often have an ee-us sound (as in curious) or a yus sound (as in ingenious). Many other -ious words end with a shus sound (as in cautious) or a jus sound (as in religious).

-ous words have an us sound (as in famous) at the end—but not a jus or shus sound.

If a word ends in -uous it will have either a yoo-us sound (as in ambiguous) or an oo-us sound (as in superfluous).

-eous words are much like -ious words. They end in an ee-us sound (courteous) or a jus sound (advantageous).

Words tested: curious, mysterious, delicious, superstitious, religious, gracious, enormous, tremendous, ridiculous, famous, ambiguous, conspicuous, strenuous, arduous, superfluous, advantageous, simultaneous, courteous, erroneous, and miscellaneous.

5. -er, -ar, -or

-er is used for the comparative form, almost all other -er words are nouns. Words for people who perform a job end in -er or -or, not -ar (exception—scholar). -or words are almost always nouns (prior is an exception).

Words tested: caterpillar, particular, similar, vulgar, vinegar, observer, consumer, manufacturer, laborer, providers, governor, debtor, sponsor, factor, neighbor, supervisor, beggar, calendar, and manager.

6. -ance vs. -ence

If a verb ends in "r" preceded by a consonant, we use ence. Note: this is only a partial guideline.

Words tested: absence, audience, coincidence, difference, ex-

istence, experience, evidence, insistence, preference, interference, acceptance, abundance, acquaintance, appearance, attendance, nuisance, performance, resistance, significance, and temperance.

7. -ant vs. -ent
Most words ending in -ant are adjectives derived from nouns ending in -ance. Most words ending in -ent are adjectives derived from nouns ending in -ence.

Words tested: abundant, defiant, elegant, observant, radiant, repentant, significant, self-reliant, relevant, tolerant, coherent, competent, dependents, excellent, prominent, resident, apparent, and superintendent.

8. -efy vs. -ify
Four fairly common words ends in -efy: stupefy, putrefy, rarefy, and liquefy. -efy and -ify words follow the y+suffix rules; thus ify+ed=ified.

Words tested: pacify, terrified, testify, putrefied, specify, stupefy, classify, beautify, and identify.

9. -sede, -ceed, -cede
Only 12 words with these endings are important. Only one ends with -sede: supersede. Three end with -ceed: exceed, proceed, succeed. The rest end with -cede.

Words tested: supersede, exceed, proceed, concede, precedes, intercede, succeed, secede, and recede.

10. -yze, -ize, -ise
Only two common words end in -yze: analyze and paralyze. -ize is the most common ending, about 35 common words end in -ise.

Words tested: paralyze, analyze, advertise, advise, disguise, enterprise, exercise, otherwise, sunrise, supervise, merchandise, fertilize, hypnotized, organize, sympathize, patronize, apololgize, authorize, criticize, and realized.

The Authors

Spelling Machine was written by Robert Lawrence. No, he does not have a PhD in spelling. But he does teach writing at Triton College in River Grove, Illinois.

Programming is by Mark Whitehurst who teaches computer science at Triton.

Replacement Policy

We will replace any defective disk within one year after purchase. Return the defective disk for a no charge replacement.

One back up disk may be purchased for $8. Send proof of purchase along with payment or institutional purchase order.

THE LEARNING SEED
21250 NORTH ANDOVER ROAD
KILDEER, ILLINOIS 60047