

LOOKING AT YOURSELF AS A WRITER

Spelling

If spelling is a problem for you, consider possible sources of your difficulties. Here are some causes and cures.

- CAUSE** You have trouble with a few commonly misspelled words, and because these words occur so often, your spelling problem seems worse than it is.
- CURE** Ask someone to dictate words from a list of commonly misspelled words, and write the words as they are read to you. Once you have identified your “spelling demons,” practice writing the words correctly.
- CAUSE** You tend to confuse words that sound alike.
- CURE** Keep a list of the commonly confused words that give you trouble. When they occur in a draft, consult the Glossary of Usage (W1).
- CAUSE** Your handwriting is so poor that the words don’t flow smoothly onto the paper. (Spelling is to some extent kinesthetic—a matter of how a word “feels” as you form it.)
- CURE** Try typing your drafts. The words may flow more smoothly as you type, reducing your misspellings. Another advantage of typing is that you’ll have access to a spell checker.
- CAUSE** You have a learning disability. Maybe you have trouble distinguishing between sounds, or perhaps your eyes scramble or reverse letters.
- CURE** If possible, consult an expert on learning disabilities. With the expert’s help, you can diagnose the cause of your problem and devise ways to overcome it—or work around it. Almost certainly the expert will advise you to write on a computer with a spell checker.