



Identifying words that sound the same

Some words in English sound the same when they're spoken but have different spellings and different meanings. For example, the words **write** and **right** sound the same but mean different things and are spelt differently. These words are called **homophones**.

To work out the spelling of a homophone, you first need to check the meaning of the word. It can help to find particular words when you're reading, or you can use the word in a sentence. For example:

- They **write** poems and plays to get their ideas across.
- I agree, what you say is **right**.

There are no spelling rules to help you remember homophones. Don't try to learn the spellings of two or three homophones at the same time, as it can be confusing. It's best to practise one word at a time.

For example, if you want to write the word **there**, there's only one way of sounding out the word, but there are three homophones: **there**, **their** and **they're**. So there are three possible spellings! Rather than try and learn the spellings and the use of all three words, start with one word (eg **there**). The first thing is to check that you know the meaning, and notice the spelling, of the word **there**.

It helps to make a list of words with the same spelling pattern: eg **here**, **there**, **everywhere**. This is a word family. Try to remember a phrase or make up a story with words in the same word family to help you remember the spelling pattern for **there**. This also helps to link the spelling and the meaning of the word in your mind.

Andrea wanted to remember the homophone **right**. She made a list of words with the **-ight** pattern. Here's a story she wrote with the words:

There was a fight right outside my flat last night. It was dark as one of the street lights was broken. However, I caught sight of one man who looked like he was wearing a tight scarf around his neck. The sun was shining brightly the next morning when the police came round to question everybody in my block.

The words with the **-ight** pattern in the story are: **fight**, **right**, **night**, **lights**, **sight**, **tight**, **brightly**.

It helps to learn word patterns as you're learning more than one word at the same time. When you're sure of the spelling and meaning of one homophone, it makes it easier to learn the spelling of other words that sound the same.