

Dictionary of simplified

SOUNDSPEL

An alternative spelling for English

WRITTEN AS IT SOUNDS
PRONOUNCED AS IT'S WRITTEN

The former American Language Academy is now the...

American Literacy Council

784 45th St., Los Alamos, NM 87544

The original scholar's edition of the American Spelling Dictionary called for suggestions to clarify the rules & improve compatibility with traditional spelling. The greatest of these changes (all of which appear in a new PC version of ASD) is: Final-s replaces final-z in plurals (five **rooms**), possessives (the **room's** coolness), & 3rd person present tense singulars (he **rooms** with a frog).

SCHOLAR'S EDITION

The American Literacy Council

A Close Look at the Illogic and Disorder of English Spelling

TRADITIONAL

SOUNDSPEL

had (a)	had
plaid (ai)	plad
have (a-e)	hav
half (al)	haf
meringue (i-ue)	merang
guarantee (ua)	garrantee
laugh (au)	laf
dahlia (ah)	dalia
harangue (a-ue)	harang
ingenue (i)	anzenoo

a

TRADITIONAL

SOUNDSPEL

barn (ar)	barn
heart (ear)	hart
guardian (uar)	gardian
bazaar (aar)	bazar
are (are)	ar
sergeant (er)	sarjent
starve (ar-e)	starv
catarrh (arrh)	catar
bizarre (are)	bizar
memoir (ir)	memwar

ar

TRADITIONAL

SOUNDSPEL

maelstrom (ae)	maelstrom
made (a-e)	maed
steak (ea)	staek
rainy (ai)	raeny
playing (ay)	plaeing
sleigh (eigh)	slae
straight (aigh)	straet
gauge (au-e)	gaej
making (a)	maeking
gaol (ao)	jael
veiled (ei)	vaeld
they (ey)	thae
raise (ai-e)	raez
plagueing (a-ue)	plaeging
ballet (et)	balae
seine (ei-e)	saen
matinee (ee)	matinae
dossier (er)	dosyae
bouquet (uet)	boekae

ae

TRADITIONAL

SOUNDSPEL

chair (air)	chaer
their (eir)	thaer
swearing (ear)	swaering
where (ere)	whaer
cared (are)	caerd
prayer (ayer)	praer
square (uare)	sqaer
heir (heir)	aer
wary (ar)	waery
doctrineaire (aire)	doctrinaer

aer

TRADITIONAL

SOUNDSPEL

father (a)	faather
calm (al)	caam
palm (al)	paam
lingerie (i)	laanzheree
eclat (at)	ecclaa
pas (as)	paa
genre (e)	zhaanra
hurrah (ah)	hooraa
ah (ah)	aa
haha (ah)	haahaa
pa (a)	paa
baa (aa)	baa
mama (a)	maama
fa la la (a)	faa laa laa

aa

TRADITIONAL

SOUNDSPEL

met (e)	met
many (a)	meny
burial (u)	berrial
said (ai)	sed
aesthetic (ae)	esthetik
says (ay)	sez
head (ea)	hed
heifer (ei)	hefer
friend (ie)	frend
jeopardy (eo)	jeperdy
foetid (oe)	fetid
guest (ue)	gest
damage (a-e)	damej
cleanse (ea-e)	clenz
belle (e-e)	bel

e

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
-------------	-----------

seen (ee)	seen
key (ey)	.kee
deceit (ei)	.deseet
field (ie)	.feeld
people (eo)	.peepl
amoeba (oe)	.ameeba
team (ea)	.teem
aeon (ae)	.eeon
leave (ea-e)	.leev
ravine (i-e)	.raveen
these (e-e)	.thees
league (ea-ue)	.leeg
cheese (ee-e)	.cheez
deceive (ei-e)	.deseev
believe (ie-e)	.beleev
antique (i-ue)	.anteek
mosquito (ui)	.moskeeto
ski (i)	.skee
squeak (uea)	.speek
receipt (eip)	.reseet
debris (is)	.debree
esprit (it)	.espree

ee

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
-------------	-----------

trustee (ee)	.trustee
trusty (y)	.trusty
happy (y)	.hapy
happiest (i)	.hapyest
happiness (i)	.hapynes
happily (i-y)	.hapily
archaeology (ae)	.arkiolojy

y

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
-------------	-----------

pin (i)	.pin
women (o)	.wimen
busy (u)	.bizy
pretty (e)	.prity
lynch (y)	.linch
been (ee)	.bin
sieve (ie-e)	.siv
guild (ui)	.gild
anaesthesia (ae)	.anistheezha
exhibit (hi)	.exibit
give (i-e)	.giv
minute (u-e)	.minit
counterfeit (ei)	.counterfit
bisque (i-ue)	.bisk
apocalypse (y-e)	.apocalips
mischief (ie)	.mischif

i

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
-------------	-----------

buy (uy)	.bie
high (igh)	.hie
dye (ye)	.die
lie (ie)	.lie
tried (ie)	.tried
trying (y)	.trieing
find (i)	.fiend
like (i-e)	.liek
buys (uy)	.bies
height (eigh)	.hiet
highest (igh)	.hieest
rhyme (hy-e)	.riem
stein (ei)	.stien
island (is)	.ieland
aisle (ais-e)	.iel
maestro (ae)	.miestro
diamond (ia)	.diemond
fiery (ie)	.fiery
fire (i-e)	.fier
eying (ey)	.ieing
guide (ui-e)	.gied
type (y-e)	.tiep
coyote (oy)	.kieoet
eye (eye)	.ie
aye (aye)	.ie
bayou (ay)	.bieoo

ie

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
-------------	-----------

I (i)	.i
by (y)	.bi
my (y)	.mi
why (y)	.whi
try (y)	.tri
sly (y)	.sli
spy (y)	.spi
pi (i)	.pi
alibi (i)	.alibi
simplify (y)	.simplifi
amplify (y)	.amplifi
dignify (y)	.dignifi
terrify (y)	.terrifi

i

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
-------------	-----------

hot (o)	.hot
swamp (a)	.swomp
yacht (ach)	.yot
knowledge (ow)	.nolej
honest (ho)	.onest
demijohn (oh)	.demijon
bureaucracy (eau)	.buerocrasy

o

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
embargoed (oe)	.embargoed
radios (o)	.raedioes
glowing (ow)	.gloeing
sewing (ew)	.soeing
soul (ou)	.soel
bone (o-e)	.boen
road (oa)	.roed
yolk (ol)	.yoek
brooch (oo)	.broech
beaus (eau)	.boes
depots (ot)	.deepoes
hoe (oe)	.hoe
owe (owe)	.oe
sew (ew)	.soe
sow (ow)	.soe
beau (eau)	.boe
below (ow)	.beloe
yeoman (eo)	.yoeman
doughnuts (ough)	.doenuts
chauffeur (au)	.shoefer
hautboy (aut)	.hoeboy
mauve (au-e)	.moev
rogue (o-ue)	.roeg
cantaloupe (ou-e)	.cantaloep
cologne (og-e)	.coloen
apropos (os)	.apropoe

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
go (o)	.go
no (o)	.no
so (o)	.so
slow (ow)	.slo
typo (o)	.tiepo
silo (o)	.sielo
glow (ow)	.glo
though (ough)	.tho
oh (oh)	.o
bellow (ow)	.belo
depot (ot)	.deepo

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
fort (or)	.fort
store (ore)	.stor
floor (oor)	.flor
pour (our)	.por
drawer (awer)	.dror
reservoir (oir)	.rezervor
quorum (our)	.qorur
swarm (ar)	.sworm
roar (oar)	.ror
rapport (ort)	.rapor
dinosaur (aur)	.dienosor
torque (or-ue)	.tork

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
point (oi)	.point
noise (oi-e)	.noiz
gargoyle (oy-e)	.gargoil
turquoise (uoi-e)	.turkoiz
rejoice (oi-e)	.rejois
going (oi)	.going
Freudian (eu)	.Froidian

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
boy (oy)	.boy
buoy (uoy)	.boy
enjoy (oy)	.enjoy
enjoying (oy)	.enjoying
enjoyment (oy)	.enjoyment
enjoyable (oy)	.enjoyabl

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
moon (oo)	.moon
group (ou)	.groop
fruit (ui)	.froot
glue (ue)	.gloo
drew (ew)	.doo
two (wo)	.too
flu (u)	.floo
canoe (oe)	.canoo
through (ough)	.thru
threw (ew)	.throo
rule (u-e)	.rool
lieu (ieu)	.loo
loose (oo-e)	.looss
lose (o-e)	.looz
pooh (ooh)	.poo
coup (oup)	.coo
bruise (ui-e)	.brooz
jiujitsu (iu)	.joojitsoo
silhouette (hou)	.silooet
buoy (uo)	.booy
deuce (eu-e)	.dooss
manoeuvre (oeu)	.manooover
sleuth (eu)	.slooth
rendezvous (ous)	.rondevoo
mousse (ou-e)	.mooss

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
cut (u)	.cut
love (o-e)	.luv
young (ou)	.yung
blood (oo)	.blud
does (oe)	.duz
judge (u-e)	.juj
tongue (o-ue)	.tung
brusque (u-ue)	.brusk
courageous (eou)	.keraejus

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
hue (ue)	.hue
feud (eu)	.fued
few (ew)	.fue
view (iew)	.vue
queue (ueue)	.cue
fuse (u-e)	.fuez
ewe (ewe)	.ue
beauty (eau)	.buety
fugue (u-ue)	.fueg
coupon (ou)	.cuepon
nuisance (ui)	.nuesanss
vacuum (uu)	.vacuem
adieu (ieu)	.adue
yule (yu-e)	.uel
unit (u)	.uenit
debut (ut)	.debue
impugnity (ug)	.impuenity
yew (yew)	.ue

ue

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
pull (u)	.puul
wolf (o)	.wuulf
could (oul)	.cuud
book (oo)	.buuk
sure (u-e)	.shuur
tour (ou)	.tuur
pleurisy (eu)	.pluurisy
bouillon (oui)	.buulyon

uu

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
furnish (ur)	.furnish
burr (urr)	.bur
blurred (urre)	.blurd
curve (ur-e)	.curv
bird (ir)	.burd
stirring (irr)	.sturing
stirred (irre)	.sturd
yearn (ear)	.yurn
learned (ear-e)	.lurnd
terminal (er)	.turminal
err (err)	.ur
erred (erre)	.urd
worm (or)	.wurm
wormed (or-e)	.wurmd
serve (er-e)	.surv
journey (our)	.jurny
scourged (our-e)	.scurjd
squirm (uir)	.squirm
myrtle (yr)	.murtl
myrrh (yrrh)	.mur
murmur (ur ur)	.murmur
murderer (ur er)	.murderer
girder (ir er)	.gurder
learner (ear er)	.lurner
herder (er)	.hurder

ur

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
chattering (er)	.chatering
freer (r)	.freer
liar (ar)	.lieer
augur (ur)	.auger
elixir (ir)	.elixser
haemorrhage (orrh)	.hemerej
nature (ure)	.naecher
ogre (re)	.oeger
martyr (yr)	.marter
chauffeur (eur)	.shoefer
pursue (ur)	.persoo

er

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
auto (au)	.auto
awkward (aw)	.aukward
fault (au)	.fault
exhaust (hau)	.exhaust
salt (a)	.sault
bought (ough)	.baut
taught (augh)	.taut
balk (al)	.bauk
broad (oa)	.braud
false (a-e)	.faulss
squall (ua)	.sqaul
awesome (awe)	.ausum
sauce (au-e)	.saus

au

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
law (aw)	.law
lawless (aw)	.lawles
lawyer (aw)	.lawyer
jaw (aw)	.jaw
jawbone (aw)	.jawboen

aw

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
cloud (ou)	.cloud
house (ou-e)	.hous
hour (hou)	.our
flour (ou)	.flour
out (ou)	.out

ou

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
how (ow)	.how
bough (ough)	.bow
pow (ow)	.pow
power (ow)	.power
landau (au)	.landow

ow

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

feed (f)	feed
muffin (ff)	mufin
tough (gh)	tuf
calf (lf)	caf
graphic (ph)	grafik
sapphire (pph)	safier

f

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

get (g)	get
dagger (gg)	dager
ghetto (gh)	geto
guarded (gu)	garded
vaguely (gue)	vaegly

g

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

just (j)	just
judgment (dg)	jujment
bridge (dge)	brij
soldier (di)	soeljer
magic (g)	majik
exaggerate (gg)	exajeraet
region (gi)	reejon
grandeur (de)	granjer
gorgeous (geo)	gorjus
adjust (dj)	ajust
modulate (d)	mojulaet
large (ge)	larj

j

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

khaki (kh)	caky
cook (c)	cuuk
kook (k)	cook
kopek (k)	coepek
vacant (c)	vaecant
vacation (c)	vaecaeshon
character (ch)	carrakter
mechanism (ch)	mecanizm
liquor (qu)	licor
saccharine (cch)	sacarin
kangaroo (k)	canggaroo
kazoo (k)	cazoo
Kansas (k)	Canzas
Ukraine (k)	Uecraen
America (c)	Amerrica

c

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

kit (k)	kit
kite (k)	kiet
back (ck)	bak
spoken (k)	spoeken
spooky (k)	spooky
lacquer (cqu)	laker
chukka (kk)	chuka
talk (lk)	tauk
chemistry (ch)	kemistry
biscuit (cu)	biskit
clique (que)	clik
coyote (oy)	kieoet

k

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

lip (l)	lip
telling (ll)	teling
muscle (cle)	musl
people (le)	peep
kiln (ln)	kil
lisle (sl)	lie

l

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

men (m)	men
hammer (mm)	hamer
column (mn)	colum
phlegm (gm)	flem
palm (lm)	paam
lamb (mb)	lam

m

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

not (n)	not
runner (nn)	runer
knock (kn)	nok
gnat (gn)	nat
comptroller (mp)	controeler
pneumatic (pn)	noomatik
mnemonic (mn)	nemonik
handsome (nd)	hansum

n

TRADITIONAL SOUNDSPEL

sing (ng)	sing
singer (ng)	singer
singing (ng)	singing
sang (ng)	sang
sung (ng)	sung
tongs (ng)	tongs
lungs (ng)	lungs
tongue (ng)	tung

ng

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
finger (ng)	finger
linger (ng)	lingger
hungry (ng)	hunggry
anger (ng)	angger
angry (ng)	anggry
longer (ng)	longger
single (ng)	singgl
jingle (ng)	jinggl
bangle (ng)	banggl
language (ng)	langgwej

nggg

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
quack (qu)	qak
quad (qu)	qod
quick (qu)	qik
quake (qu)	qaek
quality (qu)	qolity
qualm (qu)	qaam
quit (qu)	qit
quill (qu)	qil
quiz (qu)	qiz
quite (qu)	qiet
quiet (qu)	qieet
question (qu)	qeschon
quell (qu)	qel
choir (ch)	qier
quarter (qu)	qorter
queen (qu)	qeen
quote (qu)	qoet
quart (qu)	qort
quorum (qu)	qorum
queue (que)	cue

q

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
rat (r)	rat
rhythm (rh)	rithm
catarrh (rrh)	catar
wrist (wr)	rist
colonel (l)	curnel
corps (rps)	cor
mortgage (rt)	morgej
quandary (ar)	qondry
velours (rs)	veluur

r

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
set (s)	set
city (c)	sity
fencing (c)	fensing
icing (c)	iesing
icy (c)	iesy
facing (c)	faesing
scene (sc)	seen
blessing (ss)	blesing
psychic (ps)	siekik
schism (sch)	sizm
house (se)	hous
worsted (rs)	wuusted
listen (st)	lisen
isthmus (sth)	ismus
sword (sw)	sord
waltz (z)	waults

s

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
is (s)	is
his (s)	his
has (s)	has
hers (s)	hers
theirs (s)	thaers
these (s)	thees
those (s)	thoes
ways (s)	waes
days (s)	daes
shoes (s)	shoos
shows (s)	shoes
eyes (s)	ies
lies (s)	lies
boys (s)	boys
girls (s)	gurls
babies (s)	baebys
cats (s)	cats
dogs (s)	dogs
Jews (s)	Joos

-s

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
ice (ce)	ieess
dice (ce)	diess
face (ce)	faess
fleece (ce)	fleess
niece (ce)	neess
police (ce)	poeleess
false (se)	faulss
pulse (se)	pulss
farce (ce)	farss
sparse (se)	sparss
hearse (se)	hurss
tense (se)	tenss
rinse (se)	rins
close (se)	cloess
purse (se)	purss
juice (ce)	jooss
loose (se)	looss
spruce (ce)	sprooss
princess (ess)	priness
duchess (ess)	duchess
largesse (esse)	larjess
convalesce (sce)	convaless
caress (ess)	caress

-ss

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
hit (t)	hit
little (tt)	litl
indict (ct)	indiet
asked (ed)	askt
hoped (d)	hoept
debt (bt)	det
yacht (cht)	yot
veldt (dt)	velt
receipt (pt)	reseet
thyme (th)	tiem
two (tw)	too
bought (ght)	baut

t

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
zip (z)	zip
puzzle (zz)	puzl
fairs (s)	faers
scissor (ss)	sizor
business (si)	biznes
scores (es)	scors
raspberry (sp)	razberry
raise (se)	raez
asthma (sth)	azma
czar (cz)	zar
xanthic (x)	zanthik
xenophobia (x)	zeenofobia
anxiety (x)	angzieity
sneeze (ze)	sneez

z

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
chip (ch)	chip
niche (che)	nich
cello (e)	chelo
match (tch)	mach
righteous (ght)	rieechus
question (ti)	qeschon
structure (t)	strukcher

ch

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
shop (sh)	shop
machine (ch)	masheen
ocean (ce)	oeshan
special (ci)	speshal
sure (s)	shuur
fuchsia (chsi)	fuesha
crescendo (sc)	reshendo
conscience (sci)	conshenss
schist (sch)	shist
nauseous (seo)	naushus
pension (si)	penshon
issue (ss)	ishoo
nation (ti)	naeshon
negotiate (t)	negoeshiaet
mission (ssi)	mishon
luxury (x)	luxshery
anxious (xio)	ankshus
appreciate (c)	apreeshiaet
mustache (che)	mustash

sh

TRADITIONAL	SOUNDSPEL
azure (z)	azher
Zhivago (zh)	Zhivaago
pleasure (s)	plezher
vision (si)	vizhon
rescission (ssi)	resizhon
brazier (zi)	braezher
equation (ti)	eqaezhon
jabot (j)	zhabo
garage (ge)	garaazh
regime (g)	rezheem

zh

This proposal for an alternative orthography for English that goes by the name *SoundSpel* is offered in response to the widely held conviction that English spelling is more complex than it needs to be. Tens of millions share this view. Illiteracy's connection with our massive social problems makes it imperative that we now re-examine our contorted orthography in light of emerging changes in pedagogy and the very important contribution that computers can make in accelerating and easing the adjustment to reform.

This updated online version of the text is based on an original document bearing the name *Dictionary of simplified AMERICAN SPELLING: An alternative spelling for English*, published in 1986 by Edward Rondthaler and Edward J. Lias.

It was intended primarily as a *scholar's edition* and was not considered a *fait accompli* at the time. The original reformed spellings were determined on the basis of a careful consideration of the data in the original appendix combined with and guided by the contributions of respected authorities as reflected in the original bibliography.

R. J. McGehee made some changes to the original system, and it has since been renamed SOUNDSPEL. Most of the changes are relatively minor, but a great many *facts on the ground* have changed since the publication of the earlier work. SoundSpel has been standardized to the point where a great many documents are now being written in it. It is no longer possible to change the essential principles of this system of reformed orthography, but a few minor details still need to be worked out, particularly in respect to the differences in pronunciation between American and British English, since of this writing there is no standard for *British SoundSpel*. Frequency analysis and AI might serve as a basis to *tweak* some minor spelling issues, but SoundSpel is clearly as well thought out as the orthographies of other modern languages such as Dutch or Indonesian, so there is no need for further reform at this point, only implementation. Naturally, questions and comments relevant to this system are still welcome from all – phoneticians, linguists, educators, publishers, those with a special interest in the subject and, very importantly, the public at large. The newly expanded and updated appendix is designed to encourage such participation. A major push at this time is to translate this document into as many different languages as possible. A second edition benefiting from comments received should go a long way toward supplying an authentic and much needed tool for the repair of a chronic flaw in our culture.

Dictionary of
SOUNDSPEL

A SIMPLIFIED ALTERNATIVE SPELLING
FOR THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Written as it Sounds
Pronounced as it's Written

EDWARD RONDTHALER AND EDWARD J. LIAS
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SCHOLAR'S EDITION
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ONLY THOSE WHO CAN READ & WRITE
HAVE ENOUGH INFLUENCE
TO BRING ABOUT SPELLING REFORM
BUT –

DO THEY HAVE THE HUMANITY,
or THE COMPATION,
or THE GENEROSITY,
or THE VISION,
or THE WISDOM,
or THE COURAGE?

FOREWORD TO THE FIRST ADDITION

The authors of much of the background for this book do not appear on the title page. They are the phoneticians, linguists, and spelling reformers, many listed in the bibliography, who for over a hundred years and in a variety of ways have sought to improve our notation for recording speech. Special recognition is accorded the British lexicographer Walter Ripman, the American scholar and linguist Godfrey Dewey, and the too often anonymous pronunciation specialists of our great dictionaries. The writings of these dedicated persons have had a broad impact on the present research. Their wisdom and experience has helped steer a steady course through stormy phonetic seas.

In retrospect it is clear that the direction of the present work was set while visiting Dr. Dewey in Lake Placid during the fall of 1973. After a couple of days in heady discussion, the lifelong champion of spelling reform said, in essence, "Before you leave I want you to know why I invited you here. Unlike most of my colleagues, I believe that printers have much to contribute to spelling reform. Historically they are partly to blame for our confused spelling; yet they are uniquely positioned to help repair it. Without their support I doubt if the battle will ever be won. Let me illustrate my point: An airline's board of directors may order its pilots to land their planes safely and smoothly. In theory that should be enough; that should bring the planes down safely and comfortably. In reality that is not enough. The man in the cockpit – the man whose hand rests on the controls – has the last word. Not only has he the last word, but he can likely tell the board a thing or two they've never known about landing a plane; he is master of the nitty-gritty. As to your industry, it is rightly proud of Benjamin Franklin, printer. It boasts of his statesmanship and quotes his pithy maxims, but it has forgotten the great challenge he passed along to future generations of printers: the reform of our spelling. What I have seen of your work gives me hope that the visually sensitive skills and day-to-day expertise of typographers can be linked up with the academic expertise of our phoneticians and linguists. Such an alliance is our best hope."

Using new techniques and building on the wisdom of the past, this volume moves towards meeting that challenge. Generous help has come from a number of sources:

The large computer facility at Ocean County College in New Jersey forwarded the project in the late '70s when it enabled its brilliant director, Dr. Edward Lias, to pursue his interest in laying the foundation for a computer translating program – a program that promises to play a crucial role in the practical application of spelling reform by relieving the stress that changeover would otherwise cause at the keyboard.

Among those in the academic community who have been helpful are Professors Harvie Barnard, Helen Bonnema Biscard, Stanley Hess, Harry Lindgren, John Henry Martin, Olivia Parmore, Ann TenEyck, Newell Tune, Ben Wood, Valerie Yule, and the staffs of libraries in New York, London, Edinburgh, Croton-on-Hudson, White Plains and Columbia University.

Above all has been the generous support of Photo-Lettering Inc., New York's distinguished typographic house, guardian of the world's largest collection of alphabet designs, and a pioneer in the legibility and the esthetics of print. The organizations unique tools, helpful personnel, and seasoned expertise have undergird the research with a strength manifesting true corporate commitment to social responsibility and firm resolve to make a significant contribution to the welfare of society – a fitting response to the challenge voiced by Ben Franklin, statesman and printer.

ABOUT THE FORMER AMERICAN LANGUAGE ACADEMY

The American Language Academy, the predecessor to the American Literacy Council, was chartered in 1985 by the state of Delaware, but it was merely a continuation of what is now a 150-year-old organization which has worked to mitigate the damage done by our disastrous spelling. Its earliest American ancestor was the Spelling Reform Association, founded in 1876. In 1946 the SRA merged with the Simplified Spelling Board (founded 1906) to form the Simpler Spelling Association, grandparent of the subsequent American Language Academy, and great-grandparent of today's American Literacy Council, thus preserving organizational continuity.

The genius of alphabet, the one-to-one sound-to-letter correspondence, is largely obscured in our writing. English is by far the most erratically spelled of modern languages. The forty-odd sounds we speak are spelled in well over four hundred different ways. For those literate in English it is an inefficient and expensive absurdity. For those learning to write and read it is a disaster – a dragon at the gate – encountered by children almost on their first day in school. It is indeed a major factor in creating our mass of English-speaking functional illiterates, minimally estimated at 10 percent of the population.

The central concern of what developed into a spelling reform movement was first expressed by John Hart in England in 1554 and by Benjamin Franklin in America in 1768, followed on both sides of the Atlantic by eminent personages among whom were Noah Webster, Mark Twain, Theodore Roosevelt, Melvil and Godfrey Dewey, John Dewey, Robert McCormick, Andrew Carnegie, Isaac Funk, Nicholas Murry Butler, Frank Laubach, Isaac and James Pitman, George Bernard Shaw, and many others including for former HRH Prince Phillip.

At the time of its inception, the American Language Academy was sponsoring two parallel projects to achieve the goal of a simplified phonetic spelling for general use.

The first project used phonetic spelling to teach traditional spelling. It began by teaching children the basic concepts of letters: a reliable one-to-one relationship between letter and sound. Thus the discouragement of early failure was avoided. Once a child became skilled in converting sound to sight phonetically, then a gradual changeover to the irregularities of traditional spelling was undertaken. This computer-assisted instructional system was known as the "Writing to Read" program. It was developed by John Henry Martin (then the vice-president of the ALA) and was made available through IBM. At the time more than 150,000 children in schools coast to coast were being introduced to writing and reading by this innovative method.

The second project of the American Language Academy was just getting underway at the time. Its goal was to expand the phonetic "Writing to Read" notation along a broad front into a regularized, optional, alternative, 26-letter "American" spelling for general use (as SoundSpel was known at the time). Certain adjustments were made in the notation to render it sufficiently compatible with traditional spelling so that the two could be used interchangeably. The project foresaw a time when this new orthography would largely replace traditional spelling in print and for general use. The project's principal tools – a large dictionary corpus and a transliteration program for typesetting – were the brainchild of Edward Rondthaler (a trustee of the ALA) and Edward Lias (a specialist in computer technology) using the research facilities of the Typographic Council for Spelling Reform based at Photo-Lettering Inc.

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How Widespread is Illiteracy?

How many English-speaking adults in the U.S. are totally illiterate? Nobody knows. But there are millions who cannot read, write, and comprehend on familiar subjects, and do not understand the signs and written instructions they encounter every day. These are the semi-illiterates – a fast-growing population with reading and writing problems so serious that they cannot function smoothly in modern society. They number between 25 and 55 million: one in seven of us; perhaps one in four. From the very limited statistics available it is estimated that more than 40 nations have a higher percentage of literates than the United States.

Such figures are staggering: a shocking disgrace to the nation whose education system, moneywise, is the best in the world.

Jonathan Kozol's book *"Illiterate America"* tells about a commercial artist, skilled in his work, who keeps himself informed through news broadcasts, but cleverly hides his illiteracy by conspicuously carrying a copy of the New York Times – unread.

The story arouses a searching question: Why could the young man master the tools of his art, but not the tools of literacy?

Good tools are good teachers. Poor tools make poor pupils. No art instructor would give his students blunted pencils, whiskered brushes, rusty pens or crooked T-squares. English spelling – the basic tool of writing and reading – is whiskered, blunted, crooked, and rusted. It is the only branch of learning that has undergone no serious update or repair since the last 16th Century. Other disciplines receive continuous updating. But not spelling.

The book in hand directly addresses our tortured orthography. It sees new light coming from too directions. The very latest methods of teaching children to write before they read, and the use of computers in typesetting – neither of which were developed with spelling reform in mind – are precisely what is needed to achieve reform. How these too developments can work together to solve our illiteracy problem is discussed on the following pages.

Hearty guffaws are sure to greet this effort. They reflect the traditional blindness behind our failure to come to grips with this vitally important but sadly fossilized tool of our culture.

The Case for Spelling Reform

This ENGLISH-SOUNDSPEL DICTIONARY focuses directly on the prospect of expanding the phonetic “teaching spellings”, used more and more widely in primary education, into a fully accredited alternative spelling for general use. The key word is *alternative*.

Several factors point to the timeliness of this endeavor:

1. Increased use of typewriters, computers, and phonetic spelling in the teaching of writing. Convincing evidence that when writing is taught before reading, the ability to read comes naturally, as a by-product: A child learning to write is also learning to read.
2. The fact that many of our children, even some of the brightest, find their senses of logic unable to cope with the illogic and disorderliness of traditional English orthography. Acknowledgement that remedial efforts for adults reach scarcely five percent of those in need.
3. Astonishment of most literate English speaking adults upon learning that only in English-speaking schools is it necessary to teach spelling. As explained by a Spanish student: “In Spain the teacher tells us the sounds of the letters and then we can read or write anything we say.”
4. Surprise at finding that pronunciations always found in English dictionaries are generally omitted from foreign language dictionaries – omitted because foreign spellings adequately represent pronunciation.
5. The pressing demand for a much higher level of literacy in the United States as we move from a manufacturing economy into a sophisticated high-tech economy of services and communication.
6. Growing awareness of the connection between illiteracy and our mounting social problems: dropout, crime-in-the-streets, hard core unemployment, and poverty. It is not by chance that half of our prison inmates are illiterate.
7. The largely overlooked but very serious fact that illiteracy is a real threat to democracy. Those voters who depend on the spoken word alone – who live, as it were, in a perpetual twilight – are easily deluded and manipulated.
8. Widespread acceptance of English as the emerging lingua franca of international communication. Whatever helps immigrants and foreigners to write and speak our language without needless frustration works for the good of all. A reduction in language barriers can open diplomatic, commercial, civic, and societal doors that are now scarcely ajar. It may well broaden the avenues toward peace.
9. Recognition of the fact that traditional spelling tends to promote the mispronunciation of English, and that a regularized spelling would tend to do the opposite. A better fit between sight and sound should not only reduce illiteracy but lead to greater stability of pronunciation, to less of misunderstanding, and to more reliable communication overall.

10. An awareness that we have already accepted various alternative spellings: ax/axe, taboo/tabu, hijack/highjack, forgo/forego, dript/dripped, and many others. Applying to more words a principle that has proved fully successful with some is not breaking new ground; it is sensibly expanding what already works.
11. The prospect that a new spelling mixed with the old (even in the same sentence) need not be disruptive if it is introduced as an optional alternative for use by those, and only by those, who prefer it. Respectability for the new spelling can be anticipated by labeling it "SoundSpel" in the U.S., "British SoundSpel" (with minor changes) in the U.K., and "Australian SoundSpel" in Australia.
12. The present availability of "SoundSpel" – a no new letter system designed to be compatible with traditional spelling. This system is supported by a computer translating program currently being perfected for typesetting machines, word processors, desk top publishing, personal computers, and computerized typewriters. It is an extension of the "spelling check" programs often used today. It will automatically translate traditionally spelled input into simplified "SoundSpel" output, thus answering the concern of authors, reporters, editors, copywriters, keyboard operators and others who, understandably, would resist a change that threatened to alter their customary writing habits.

It is fortunate that as the social and economic needs for a more logical spelling increase, our new technologies overcome the blocks that have historically thwarted reform. The attainment of this worthy goal, however, depends on the foresight, sensitivity, and compassion of the literate – not on the desperation of the illiterate, whose lack of literacy robs them of any voice in the matter.