


NuSpel Solutions to Homographs

bass: <i>a type of fresh and salt water fish</i>	bas
bass: <i>low, deep sound, voice or tone</i>	bæs
lead: <i>guide, direct, show the way, be first</i>	lid
lead: <i>a soft, heavy metal; the element Pb</i>	led
live: <i>to be alive, have life, spend one's life</i>	liv
live: <i>having life, not dead or extinct</i>	līv

and Homophones

aisle: <i>a passageway between rows of seats</i>	aɪl
isle: <i>an island, especially a small one</i>	īl
ate: <i>the past tense of to eat</i>	ɛt
eight: <i>cardinal number between 7 and 9</i>	eɪt
hour: <i>a length of time equal to 60 minutes</i>	auər
our: <i>belonging to or done by us</i>	aur

Hall

A publication of
Great Adventure 2000
A Non-Profit Corporation Dedicated to
Space-Age Literacy, Unlimited 

**Twenty-first century approaches
to easier, speedier acquisition
of reading and writing skills**

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Homographs and Homophones

Wendell H. Hall

First, a clarification of terms. Homographs are defined as words with the same spelling but different meanings and pronunciations. Well-known examples of such roadblocks to easy comprehension are *bow* and *bass*. Aboard a U.S. Navy vessel in front of officers, seamen, and members of the media, President Bill Clinton, a Rhodes scholar, referred to the bow of the ship as the *bo* rather than the *baw*, so it should be no surprise if a little child calls a common percussion instrument a *bas* drum—calling to mind a species of fish. Capitalization may be disregarded in compiling lists of homographs; e.g., *polish* and *Polish*, *lima* and *Lima*. The bean is *limə* and the capital of Peru, of course, is *Limə*.

Homophones (also called homonyms) are words with different meanings and spellings that are pronounced the same (*for* and *four*, *sun* and *son*, *pray* and *prey*, *isle*, *aisle* and *I'll*, *to*, *too*, and *two*, for instance). Though the difference in spelling is very slight, capitalized and non-capitalized pairs could be included in this category: *Ray*, *ray*, *Doe*, *doe*, *China*, *china*, *Cologne*, *cologne*, etc.

English homographs and homophones have tripped up and embarrassed speakers of English for centuries. These slip-ups are quite understandable and can happen to anyone, so we should go easy on the shame, though not the blame, which falls on our inherited non-system of spelling. And yet, in a supposedly enlightened Space Age of spectacular advances in knowledge and technology, if we do nothing to wrest our spelling from the rigid grip of the Dark Ages, allowing it to continue to inflict itself upon innocent children who trust us to do the best for them, that, yes, will be a humongous embarrassment.

How explain our odd, unbelievable complaisance? Alexander Pope's famous words describe a process but give no real insights as to why, in many aspects of life (for reasons that are unclear) clearly injurious things are endured as if beyond our power to resist, correct or change, as though that's just the way things are, the way they've always been, and there's nothing we can do about it. Please take another look at the poster based on Pope's verse.

It may be that there is something sadistic and masochistic in our nature, our makeup, that leads us to inflict harmful things on others and ourselves. Does a perverse esthetic sense at times overcome our common sense, cause our good sense to stand aside? Certain eye shadows used in the past and, possibly, today can be injurious to the eyes. So what? More important, is drawing attention to ourselves, making ourselves stand out, perchance titillating the susceptible. Is this why we continue, in the Space Age, to spell *il isle*? There's no accounting for tastes, but if we prefer *aisle*, etc. over making spelling, reading and writing simple, easy and scientific for ourselves and future generations—and more in line with progressive, dynamic, 21st century, new millenium tastes—maybe we need an "I" check.

Have a long look at the poster based on binding little girls' feet. The natural feet of those on whom this was not inflicted were viewed as coarse and ugly among those Chinese who prized, admired and adored it in poor women who could barely, painfully, totter along on their tiny, horribly deformed "golden lilies." "What a barbaric custom!" we are apt to scornfully exclaim. And yet, though we know how they can hurt and harm the feet, many must admit (even old geezers) that there is something about women's high heels that is extremely attractive; which, if we don't watch it—or, rather, if we do—really sends us.

If we prize, admire, adore, and are titillated and sent by *through, though, laugh, sugar, knee, women, does, sieve, sword, busy, half, etc., etc., etc.*, would it surprise, shock, appall and offend us to know that speakers of other languages scornfully view our spelling as treacherously irregular and unreliable, unbelievably out-of-date and incredibly, horribly barbaric? Heaping ridicule on us over it may alleviate to some extent the frustration they feel in attempting to cope with it. Oh, that this contempt might constitute one more prod to induce us to reform it. But enough philosophizing. Let's move on.

One of the oldest, most vacuous arguments against spelling reform is that it would eliminate traditional distinctions between homophones. Strangely, suspiciously, and with good reason, the enemies of reform never mention homographs. In his very significant book **English Spelling: Roadblock to Reading**, Godfrey Dewey responds to this strange contention in some detail. We highly recommend his treatise to those who want to pursue this and other aspects of English spelling and familiarize themselves with his cogent, detailed, persuasive arguments in favor of reform.

Our approach here is simply to demonstrate by the use of numerous examples how NuSpel solves problems of this sort which have plagued us for so long. The proof is in the pudding. Have a good look at the examples and see for yourself how NuSpel can differentiate among homophones much better than OldSpel (while clearly signalling—unlike OldSpel—the correct pronunciation) and see if you can add to the list. This topic is mentioned briefly in Issue I, Volume I of **Space-Age Literacy Unlimited**, our NuSpel newsletter. Send in your suggestions and solutions and get them published.

The beauty of NuSpel with regard to homographs, is that if words are pronounced differently they invariably are spelled differently. So that's *ōat!* (And *bow* is *bāv* or *bo* and *bass* is *bēs* or *bas*.) Absolutely no more confusion over the front end of a ship and the part of a weapon that goes with an arrow or over a deep musical note and a type of fish, etc., etc. All this is ended forever. So let's hear it for NuSpel!

The NuSpel Alphabet first published in **Update to AlphaPower** (jokingly) as Version 6.01b shows how NuSpel can forestall and allay fears that NuSpel will impinge impiously and improperly on that which is cherished. Though we all accept the spelling *Yukon*, for example, as a matter of course and without hesitation or objection, just about everyone would object to *Yunaitəd* in place of *United* as in The United States of America. Likewise, accustomed to conceive of ourselves orthographically as *I*, we might object to *ai*. Hmmph! Not even capitalized! Now that is patently improper! The Germans, by the way, poke gentle fun at us for writing *I* large and *you* small while they do the opposite (*ich* vs. *Sie*).

To respect our sensitivities, therefore, W. H. Hall providently made provision for this and related problems by inventing one new letter (*v*), a combination of Y and U, and appropriating *ī*, the familiar dictionary symbol for what customarily is called *long i*. This gives us *Unīted*, which ought to placate all patriotic citizens, including myself, a veteran of World War II—an infantryman who fought in France, Germany and Austria. But, but, but... you can't do that! Our alphabet has 26 letters, and that's sacred! But, but, but... this is the Computer Age, and presents no problem. In fact, in this Information Age, it's positively advantageous. For a brief discussion of this, please read pp. 27-29 in **Update to AlphaPower**.

So thanks to some additional letters and a little creativity, we can differentiate nicely among homophones. See if you can categorize the ways employed below and perhaps suggest some improvements. Only more common words are included. There are many more.

1. Homographs

Please see the Introduction to *Öä Först NuSpel Dikjæneri* for explanations regarding the use of bold type for accentuation, the choice of Δ and ə , etc.

A

absent **absənt** not present
absent **absənt** keep oneself away

abstract **abstrakt** a statement of essentials, a summary
abstract **abstrakt** to draw from, to separate

abuse Δ bʊs mistreatment
abuse Δ bʊz to mistreat

agape Δ gɛp wide open
agape ə gəpɛ altruistic love

agglomerate Δ glɔməret jumbled heap
agglomerate Δ glɔməret to gather into a cluster or mass

alternate **alternət** occurring by turns
alternate **alternət** to occur by turns

alum ə lɔm a chemical
alum Δ lɔm short for *alumna/alumnus*

appropriate Δ prɔpriət fitting, proper
appropriate Δ prɔpriət to take over

approximate Δ prɔxəmət near, close
approximate Δ prɔxəmət to come near, close

aspirate **aspərət** a speech sound [h...]
aspirate **aspərət** to inhale, etc.

attribute **atrəbʊt** a characteristic quality
attribute Δ trɪbʊt to assign, ascribe

axes **axiz** rotation lines or points
axes **axɛz** cutting tools

aye a affirmative vote
aye e always, ever (poetic)

B

bass **bas** an edible fish
bass **bɛs** low, deep voice, etc.

bases **bɛsɛz** plural of *base*
bases **bɛzɪz** plural of *basis*

bow **bɔ** device for shooting arrows
bow **bəʊ** forward part of ship, etc.

buffet **bʌfət** to hit; a shock or blow
buffet **bɛfɛ** counter for serving food

C

close **klos** nearby
close **kloz** to shut

combine **kɔmbɪn** threshing machine
combine **kəmbɪn** join together

commune **kɔmʊn** collective farm, etc.
commune **kəmʊn** to talk together intimately, etc.

compress **kɔmpres** a pad for applying pressure
compress **kəmpres** to press together

conduct **kɔndəkt** behavior
conduct **kəndəkt** to lead or direct

console **kɔnsɔl** cabinet, panel
console **kənsɔl** to comfort

consort **kɔnsɔrt** spouse, companion
consort **kənsɔrt** to associate with

consummate **kɔnsəmət** complete, perfect
consummate **kənsəmət** to finish, complete

content **kəntent** pleased, happy
content **kɔntent** subject matter, etc.

a at a all Δ up ɛ eight e let ə open ɪ it ī ice o cot o oh u ooh v book u use c cello ð the n sing f show θ think ʒ azure

contract kɒntrakt agreement
contract kəntrakt to shrink, etc.

converse kɒnvɜrs something opposite
converse kənvɜrs to engage in
conversation

convert kɒnvɜrt a person converted to a
religion, etc.

convert kənvɜrt to change from one
thing to another

convict kɒnvɪkt person imprisoned
for a crime
convict kənvɪkt to prove guilty

crooked krʊkt bent, twisted
crooked krʊkəd dishonest

cussed kʌst cursed, object of cussing
cussed kʌsəd obstinate, cantankerous

D

degenerate dɪjənərət morally corrupt
degenerate dɪjənərət to decline,
deteriorate

deliberate dəlibərət intentional
deliberate dəlibərət to consider carefully

desolate desələt solitary, uninhabited
desolate desələt to lay waste, devastate

diffuse dɪfʊs scattered, not
concentrated
diffuse dɪfʊz to spread out, disperse

digest dɪjest to assimilate food, etc.
digest dɪjest a summary, synopsis

discriminate dɪskrɪmənət distinguish-
ing carefully

discriminate dɪskrɪmənət to
distinguish, make distinctions

do du to perform, act
do do first tone of the musical scale

dove daʊ a bird of the pigeon family
dove doʊ past tense of *to dive*

drawer drɑr sliding compartment of a
desk, etc.

drawer draər a person who sketches

E

elaborate ələbərət highly developed
or worked out

elaborate ələbərət to develop in great
detail

essay ɛse a short literary composition
essay ɛse to try, attempt

entrance ɛntrəns point of entry
entrance ɪntrəns to carry away with
emotion, etc.

excuse ɛkʊs a justification
excuse ɛkʊz to free from blame, etc.

F

federate fedərət centrally united
federate fedərət to unite centrally

ferment fɜrment a state of excite-
ment, etc.

ferment fɜrment to undergo
fermentation

fine fɪn of superior quality, not coarse
fine fɪn end

forte fort a person's strong point
forte fortɛ strong, loud

fragment frəgmənt a part broken off
fragment frəgmənt to break up

frequent frɪkwənt occurring often
frequent frɪkwənt to go to often

a at ʌ all ʌ up ɛ eight e let ə open ɪ it i ice ɔ cot o oh u ooh v book u use c cello ð the n sing ʃ show θ think ʒ azure

G

gill *gil* a liquid measure, 1/2 pint
 gill *gɪl* breathing organ for fish, etc.

grave *græv* burial place, etc.
 grave *græv* accent, solemn, heavy

H

halo *hælo* circle of light
 halo *halo* containing halogen

heavy *hevi* having great weight
 heavy *hivi* afflicted with the heavens

hinder *hɪndər* interfere with, obstruct
 hinder *hɪndər* situated behind

his *hɪz* belonging to *him*
 his *hɪz* plural of the greeting *hi*, etc.

house *haʊs* a building, dwelling
 house *haʊz* to provide lodging

I

imprint *ɪmprɪnt* a mark or impression
 imprint *ɪmprɪnt* to make a mark, etc.

incense *ɪnsens* produces a fragrant
 odor when burned

incense *ɪnsens* to arouse anger or
 indignation

insert *ɪnsərt* something inserted
 insert *ɪnsərt* to place inside or between

insult *ɪnsəlt* insulting act or remark
 insult *ɪnsəlt* to treat with disrespect

intermediate *ɪntərmi:diət* in between
 intermediate *ɪntərmi:diət* to mediate

intimate *ɪntəmət* very close
 association
 intimate *ɪntəmət* to suggest, infer

invalid *ɪnvələd* sick, disabled
 invalid *ɪnvələd* having no force, null

J

junkman *ʃʌŋkmən* crew member of a
 junk
 junkman *ʃʌŋkman* dealer in junk

L

lather *ləðər* foam, froth
 lather *ləθər* one who deals or works
 with lathing

lead *led* heavy metal
 lead *lid* direct, guide, be first

legitimate *ləʃɪtəmət* lawful, proper
 legitimate *ləʃɪtəmət* to legitimize

learned *lɔ:rnd* past tense of *to learn*
 learned *lɔ:rnəd* well-informed, erudite

lied *lid* made an untruthful statement
 lied *lid* German folksong

lima *limə* a type of bean
 Lima *limə* capital of Peru

limber *limər* one who trims limbs
 from trees
 limber *limbər* flexible, resilient

live *liv* alive, transmitted immediately
 live *liv* to have life, conduct one's life

liver *livər* large glandular organ
 liver *livər* more alive

a at a all ʌ up ε eight e let ə open ɪ it i ice ɔ cot o oh u ooh v book u use c cello ð the n sing ʃ show θ think ʒ azure

R

ragged ragd teased persistently
ragged ragəd torn clothes, etc.

raven revən large black bird
raven ravən devour food greedily

read rid to decipher symbols
read red past tense of *to read*

rebel rebəl one who resists or revolts
rebel rəbəl to resist or revolt

recollect rekəlekt to remember
recollect rikəleckt to collect again

record rekərd written document,
audio recording, etc.
record rəkərd to make a recording

refuse refuz garbage
refuse rəfuz to decline, not accept

represent reprəzent to portray, etc.
represent riprəzent to present again

repress rəpres to restrain
repress riprəs to press again

resent rəzent to feel bitter about
something
resent risent sent again

resign rəzīn to give up a position
resign risīn to sign again

resort rəzɔrt vacation place, etc.
resort risort to sort again

resound rəzaund to reverberate
resound risaund to sound again

row raʊ a disturbance, quarrel
row ro move a boat with oars, etc.

S

sake sək cause, behalf, benefit
sake sake Japanese alcoholic
beverage

salve sav healing ointment
salve salv to rescue, salvage

sewer souər one who sews
sewer suər conduit for wastes

shower foər one who shows
shower fauer brief rainfall, etc.

singer sɪŋər one who sings
singer sɪnjər one who sings

slough slu marshy place
slough slʌf shed or cast off something

sow saʊ female pig
sow soo to scatter seeds

stingy stɪŋi miserly, ungenerous
stingy stɪŋi something that stings

subject sʌbjəkt matter under
discussion, etc.
subject səbjəkt reduce to submission

T

tarry teri/tari to linger, dawdle
tarry tari covered with tar

tear tir fluid from eye, teardrop
tear ter to rip

thou ðaʊ archaic form of *you*
thou θaʊ slang for 1000

tier tiər rank, row of seats, etc.
tier tiər one who ties something

tooth tuθ bony structure for eating
tooth tuð to provide with or get teeth

tower taʊər high slender structure
tower toər one who pulls or tows

a at a all ʌ up e eight e let ə open ɪ it ī ice ɔ cot o oh u ooh v book u use c cello ð the n sing ʃ show θ think ʒ azure

U

uncleanly ʌnkleɪnli not in a clean manner
uncleanly ʌnkleɪnli not cleanly, dirty

unionize ʊnyənīz to form into a union
unionize ʌnīənīz to cancel out chemical
ions

use ʊs the act of using, employing
use ʊz to employ, make use of

V

vale vɛl low area, usually with a
stream
vale vɛl goodbye (from Latin)

W

wicked wɪkt having a wick
wicked wɪkəd evil

wind wɪnd movements of the air
wind wɪnd to coil, rotate

wound waʊnd injury to the body
wound waʊnd past tense of *to wind*

a at ʌ all ʌ up ɛ eight e let ə open ɪ it ī ice ɒ cot o oh u ooh v book u use c cello ð the n sing ʃ show θ think ʒ azure