

# Mnemonize Your Editing Choices

Presented at ACES 2016 Pecha Kucha

“Fluoride” and “flux” are cousins. To remember the “flu” start to what’s in your toothpaste, think of what you use to solder pipes.

You stand on your “feet.” That EE in the middle also is a shoe width. A “feat” is an achievement, related to the word “fact.”

Complement, a thing that completes (remember the “e”), spawned a new meaning and spelling: “compliment,” an expression of praise.

If it’s free, it’s “complimentary,” from the idea that a business is paying you a compliment. “I really like your ...” often starts a compliment. Remember that “I” for the middle letter.

The root of “minuscule” is “minus,” not “mini.” “Miniscule” is common enough to get some acceptance, but be safe with “minus.”

“Humerus,” as with “elbow,” is spelled with an “e.” “Humorous” is not related to the bone of the upper arm.

The root of “exult,” to rejoice, means leap or dance. “Exalt” is to raise up or praise and is related to “altitude.”

“Assent” is agreement; “ascent” is gaining higher ground. Think “sc”aling a mountain for “ascent” (which comes from “descend”).

An actor’s lines once came on a “roll” of parchment, or “rolle” in Old French. Remember “each” and “every” part is a “role” with an “e.”

“Elicit,” a verb, means draw out. “Illicit,” an adjective, is unlawful or wrong. Think of the negative il- prefix. (Yes, licit is a word.)

Mothers “weaning” their babies can remember the spelling shares the “ea” of “breast.” The archaic “ween” is to think or suppose.

“Hone” means “to sharpen,” as in a blade or a skill, and is incorrectly transferred to “hone in on.” But remember the pigeon and “home in.”

A “sight” is something seen and a “site” is where something sits (“sit” is probably unrelated, but it’s a good memory trick).

Palate, part of the mouth or sense of taste, ends in “ate.” Palette, the board for mixing colors, starts “pale.” Carry it all on a pallet.

“Faze” is an Americanism, but its roots go back a thousand years. “Phase” is unrelated. Think “period” for the one that starts with “p.”

A “playwright” is the person who has “wrought” or “worked” a play, as with millwright or shipwright. “Write” is unrelated.

“Gray” is the U.S. spelling; “grey” is British. Either is acceptable, but it’s better to use “a” for American, “e” for English.

“Renumerate” is a common misspelling. The word, like “money,” has the “m” before the “n.” So, “remunerate.” Or you could just say “pay.”

“Weak” is spelled with an “a,” as are associated words anemic, ailing, atrophied. “Week” has a double “e,” as does “seven.”

Appetites are “hearty;” so is a jovial or energetic person. “Hardy” is robust or resolute. Similar words, but remember “heart” and “hard.”

“Stationery” comes from a stationer, once a bookseller who sold from a stationary—unmoving—shop. Remember the “e” in envelope.

“Breach” is related to “break” and keeps the “ea” spelling. If you use “breech,” you’re probably talking about childbirth. “Breeches” are short trousers and, by extension, buttocks. Hence, breech birth.

“Bated” is what your breath is when you are waiting expectantly. “Bate” is an old shortening of “abate.” “Bait” is unrelated.

Dessert, the thicker of the spellings, can make you fat; time in the desert can make you thin.

If one gets one's "just deserts," say it like its kin "dessert;" spell it like its kin "desert;" remember it by its kin, "deserve."

If I'm asked to sign a "waiver," I may "waver" in indecision. To "waive" (relinquish) originally meant to abandon someone as a "waif."

Rack and wrack have different origins. "Wrack" as in "wrack and ruin" means destruction. "Racked with pain" refers to the torture device.

If you're tempted to spell "definitely" with an a, remember the root "define."

For words ending with a "seed" sound, "supersede" is unique.

Ambivalent means you can't decide between two choices. The "bi" in the middle means "two." It does not mean you don't care.

An island is land surrounded by water.

First you graduate, then you congratulate. D comes before T.

For which letter to double in the Philippines, remember King Philip pined for those islands. The people and language are Filipino.

For some reason, we want to put an "n" in dilemma, but it simply is not spelled that way. Just remember Emma faces a dilemma.

"Principle" is a rule or belief. For people, money and the primary thing, it's "principal." In school they told me it's princiPAL.

You might have to "raze" a barn your grandfather "raised." "Raze" (related to "razor") and "raise" are homonyms and antonyms

"Discrete" means distinct or separate (the island of Crete is a discrete part of Greece). "Discreet" means quietly careful or judicious.

"Premier" means top or foremost, including a head of government. Add an "e" (as in "entertainment") and "premiere" is the first performance.

Believe is spelled with a "lie" in the middle of it.

Capital is a city, money or uppercase letter. Capitol (think of the shape of a dome) is a building, and it's capitalized if it's specific.

"To bare," with just an "a," is to uncover your ankles, arms or other parts. "Bear" is the animal; the unrelated verb "bear" means to carry.

To remember the double "l" in generally, remember that a general is a good ally.

If you're talking financiAL capitAL, the spelling you want is principAL.

The "bow," or "shoulder," of a boat is the front, just as your shoulders go forward when you take a bow. (These two "bows" are unrelated.)

A horse traveling at a moderate pace to Canterbury gives us the word "canter." A singing horse might be a "cantor."

It might be helpful to remember fare as a fee for traveling and fare as goods both relate to "far" and both end in "e," as in "economics."

The "heel" of a foot or shoe has a double "e," like "feet" and a shoe width. And it's what a dog does. "Heal" is to get well.

A "leech" is a bloodsucking worm (or, originally, a doctor); to "leach" is to remove by percolation. Mnemonic: "Eek, a leech!"

On a mantel, you could place a telephone, which would help you remember the -tel spelling. A mantle is a literal or figurative cloak or the art outside the core of the earth.

I get nervous typing "meat" or "meet." But the one eaten is the one with "eat" in it.

"Port" is the left side of a ship. "Port" and "left" both have four letters, both end in "t," etc. The right is "starboard."

"Steer" and "stern" are related words. The back of the boat, the stern, is where the steering takes place.

"Waste," noun or verb, means "trash." The waist, with an "i," lies between the ribs and hips.

You are "wary" if you are cautious, and you are "weary" if you are tired. Remember that "wary" is closely related to "aware."