English Spelling Reform

The aim is simple – to organise a limited number of letters to best represent the 40-odd sounds of the English language. The basic criteria are:

1. *The simplest and most logical spelling system will be the easiest to learn and use*
2. *The spelling system should be accessible for those who can already read English*

The Case for RichSpel-Short

RichSpel-Short offers significant advantages. The obvious, but crucially important one, is that it very easy to use: when reading, words can be consistently sounded out phonetically; when writing, it requires very little thought and uses simple letter combinations, nearly all from traditional spelling. There are not many rules to remember, and the whole scheme can fit on a single sheet of paper, as laid out on the next page. The use of acute accents to denote the long vowels can be explained in a sentence, and their use simplifies and shortens words considerably, making them easier to read.

Concerns have been raised that the scheme may look a little too different to be accepted. However, moderate schemes in the past have not had much success – a radical scheme may actually be more appealing and receive more attention. It may also provide particular advantages for the millions of adults who currently struggle with reading and writing – a new, radically different, and easy to learn spelling system could provide a viable second chance. A major difference from the past is that real-time translation software will allow traditional spelling to be bypassed: unthinkable until recently.

RichSpel-Short is very easy to learn. It is phonetic and based on common representations from traditional spelling. It provides a logical way of equipping new learners with phonetic skills which can be built upon for learning traditional spelling - which will be necessary during any transition period. Almost all letter combinations proposed are derived from traditional spelling, so there is little conflict. However, there is also a sufficient distinction in appearance between RichSpel-Short and traditional spelling to minimise the potential for confusion.

Potential Modifications to the Scheme

1. *Could the scheme name be changed?*
   RichSpel-Short was simply a working name for the scheme, which could easily be changed.

2. *Should the letters q and x be retained, as they can be represented by kw and gz respectively?*
   This is an issue affecting a small proportion of words, and I would be happy to consult further.

3. *Should there be a unique representation for the weak indistinct vowel sound (schwa)?*
   RichSpel-Short provides rules to allow schwa to be identified. If schwa could be represented in a unique way instead, these rules could be eliminated. Although I would be concerned about introducing another non-standard innovation, I would welcome taking the discussion forward.

The Vote

RichSpel-Short is the easiest to lean, most intuitive and straightforward of the 6 New Spelling systems proposed, which hopefully makes your decision easy and straightforward.

RichSpel-Short: Quick Reference Guide

[Traditional Spelling is shown in square brackets]

Vowel sounds

Letters	Examples
Short	
a	p**a**t
e	p**e**t *(see Note 1)*
i	p**i**t
o	p**o**t
u	p**u**n
Long	
á	p**á**d [paid]
é	f**é** [fee], bod**é** [body]
í	p**í** [pie]
ó	fl**ó**t [float]
ú	h**ú** [hue] *(see Note 2)*
Rhotic (with 'r' sound)	
air	h**air**
ar	h**ar**d
ér	b**ér** [beer]
or	f**or**d
ur	f**ur**
er	amb**er** *(see Note 1)*
Other	
aa	b**aa**
au	fr**au**d
oi	v**oi**d
oo	f**oo**d
ou	f**ou**l
uu	p**uu**t [put]
Schwa (indistinct sound)	
e	giv**e**n *(see Note 1)*

Consonant sounds

Letters	Examples
b*	**b**at
ch	**ch**at
d*	**d**og
f*	**f**rog
g*	**g**et
h	**h**ad
j*	**j**am
k*	**k**it
l*	**l**ap
m*	**m**an
n*	**n**ap
ng	ri**ng**
p*	**p**un
q	**q**it [quit] *(see Note 2)*
r*	**r**un *(see Note 3)*
s*	**s**un
sh	**sh**ip
t*	**t**ap
th	**th**at
thh	**thh**in [thin]
v*	**v**at
w	**w**in
x*	e**x**am *(see Note 2)*
y	**y**es
z*	**z**oo
zh	me**zh**er [measure]

* See Note 1 for when to use doubled consonant

Standard words

the, **I**, **U** [you], **Mr**, **Mrs**, **Dr**

Suffixes

Letters	Examples
Plurals	
-z	kat**z** [cats], dog**z** [dogs]
-ez	bus**ez** [buses]
Third person singular verbs	
-z	sit**z** [sits]
-ez	rins**ez** [rinses]
Possessive nouns (no apostrophe)	
-z	kat**z** [cat's or cats']
-ez	hors**ez** [horse's]
Past tense of verbs	
-d	splash**d** [splashed]
-ed	plant**ed**
Contractions	
'd	hé**'d** [he'd]
'l	shé**'l** [she'll]
'm	I**'m**
'r	thá**'r** [they're]
's	let**'s**
n't	wó**n't** [won't]
'v	wé**'v** [we've]
'z	it**'z** [it's]

Note 3: Use of 'rr'

rr is used after short vowels instead of **r** to avoid confusion with rhotic vowels:	ba**rr**el
	fe**rr**et
	mi**rr**er [mirror]
	su**rr**ound
	to**rr**ent

Numbers

normal use:	**1 5 15,000**
big numbers:	**9 milyen** [9 million]
fractions:	**1/2 2/3 3/4**
as words:	**wun, too** [one, two]

Note 1: 'e' – short vowel or schwa?

e represents the short vowel sound when:

• it is in first the syllable of a word:	**e**nd, p**e**t, d**e**sktop
• or followed by doubled consonant:	nutsh**e**ll, distr**e**ss
• or followed by multi-letter consonant:	afr**e**sh

Otherwise, **e** represents:

• the indistinct vowel sound (*schwa*):	giv**e**n, probl**e**m
(**er** is used for rhotic version of schwa):	(amb**er**, und**er**)

Note 2: Choice in combined sounds

ú:	always use	h**ú** [hue]
yoo:	never use	-
q:	generally use	**q**it [quit]
kw:	compound words	boo**kw**orm [bookworm]
x:	generally use	e**x**am
gz:	compound words, or with a '**z**' suffix	zi**gz**ag, do**gz** [dogs]

Abbreviations

Where letter names are sounded:	
Use all CAPITAL letters:	**TV**
	OK
Where letters are omitted:	
Show full spelling in (brackets):	**Aug.** (August)
	Ch. (Church)

Proper nouns and foreign words (use scheme spelling where practical)

Underline or *italicise* and provide scheme spelling in brackets or footnote:	*John (Jon)*	*Moscow*[1]

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[1] Moskó