

Note on Methodology

The basis of the selection was that the scheme should enable more efficient reading by someone who was familiar with the new code. In technical terms, this would mean that there should be better matching between phonemes and graphemes. It should also mean that homophones (words that sound the same) should continue to be distinguished in spelling, so far as possible, as this would make reading easier. Hence more than one grapheme is permissible for each phoneme. A final factor was that the scheme should try to avoid confusion with existing spellings of words. It was not considered an advantage if words came to have new spellings that are currently used by different words.

These criteria led to specific instances where spelling criteria in schemes led to their being selected or rejected. Examples were:

1. The spelling of <oo>, as used in both <foot> (little <oo>) and <mooon> (long <oo>). It was seen as an advantage if their spellings were distinguished.

Schemes that failed variously used <u> for the little <oo>, as in:

| | |
|-----|------|
| fut | foot |
| gud | good |
| put | put |

This was rejected on the grounds that the letter <u> is already too well established for the short <u>, as in <fun>, <gut>, <pub>. The use of <uu> for little <oo> was seen as a good choice, but other choices were also accepted.

2. A number of schemes failed to propose spelling changes for words where the changes seemed necessary, and relatively obvious. Examples were:

| | |
|------|-------|
| juj | judge |
| aje | age |
| wosh | wash |
| moov | move |
| wen | when |

3. Some schemes made changes to the phoneme value of the letter <a>. One scheme used it for the short <u> sound. This led to the proposed spellings of:

| | |
|-----|-----|
| san | sun |
| bad | bud |

Such changes were seen as likely to be too confusing in use. The short vowel letters are seen as being too well established to be changed.

4. It was seen as an advantage to distinguish the voiced <th> (as in <this>) from the unvoiced (as in <thin>). A common logical way was to use the spelling <dh> for the voiced <th> (as in <dhis>).
5. A feature across several schemes was the use of a particular spelling rule across many different phonemes. This failed to give a consistent value to that spelling pattern, and would make reading harder. One example used the <o-e> spelling for little <oo> as in:

| | |
|------|------|
| fote | foot |
| gode | good |

 and for the long <oo> as in:

| | |
|------|-------|
| gose | goose |
|------|-------|

 and for the long <o> as in:

| | |
|-------|------|
| gote | goat |
| colde | cold |
6. There were a few instances, though not many, where schemes proposed the same spellings for homophones which had previously been distinguished. An example was the proposed spelling <no> for both <no> and <know>. This was not seen as an advantage, as such homographs would facilitate writing but make reading harder.

There were six schemes selected, as requested. The committee had requested that some more controversial schemes might be included in the mix. This would allow a broader range of options to be considered, as well as providing publicity options for a shortlisted scheme, even if it was not successful.

Of the selected schemes, Lytspel, RichSpel-Long, SoundSpel, and Traditional Spelling Revised could be described as conventional, in that they did not use any diacritics or new letters. RichSpel-Short had a modest use of diacritics, while Readsript used a wide but logical range of new letters making it worthy of further consideration.

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