

The scheme summarised below was one of 35 that passed the sifting process and was forwarded to the Expert Commission following the first session of the Congress.

IESC 6

## **Traditional Spelling Revised**

**by Stephen Linstead**

Traditional Spelling Revised ('TSR') is a minimum respell system. It seeks to identify the underlying rules of traditional spelling and to apply them consistently. It does not achieve two-way phonemicity (the ability to predict the spelling from the pronunciation and vice versa) but it does go a long way towards one-way phonemicity – the ability to predict the pronunciation from the spelling. It therefore makes English spelling altogether much more predictable and greatly reduces the number of irregularities that have to be learned.

### **1. Underlying Principles**

- A grapheme (letter or letter combination<sup>1</sup>) can usually only represent one phoneme (sound<sup>1</sup>). Where exceptionally it can represent more than one phoneme, rules indicate which pronunciation is to be followed.
- Certain ambiguities in Traditional Spelling (TS) are removed; in particular, the manner in which a number of phonemes can be represented by graphemes is rationalised.
- The 'magic E' and 'doubling' rules are defined and applied much more consistently.
- Sub-groups of graphemes that do not follow the ordinary rules, but are fairly reliable, are retained to reduce the amount of respelling required.
- Irregular or 'sign' words are greatly reduced and confined largely to certain categories (e.g. numbers, days of the week etc.)
- Other words which cannot be brought within the rules of TSR are respelled.

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<sup>1</sup> The symbol / / indicates a phoneme as shown by SAMPA ; the symbol < > indicates grapheme(s).

## 2. The phonemes of spoken and English and how TSR represents them

### Vowel sounds

No.	Phoneme / /	Graphemes < >	Remarks
i			The short vowels: /{/, /e/, /I/ /Q/, /V/ are represented by the same letters as in TS: <pan>, <pen>, <pin>, <pond>, <pun>
ii	eI	face, laid, stay, neigh, they	
iii	i:	scene, feed, lead	<ie> never represents this sound; <believe> is respelled <beleev>.
iv	aI	side, die, why, dye, buy, sigh	
v	@U	bone, banjo, floe, moan	<ow> is never used for this sound; e.g. <low> is respelled <loe>.
vi	ju:	tune, due, usual, few, Europe	<eu> for words of Greek origin only.
vii	U	stuud, puuding	As there is no distinctive grapheme in TS for this phoneme, TSR introduces a new one - <uu>.
viii	OI	boil, boy, deploying	<oi> is default; <oy usually at end of words or before a vowel.
ix	u:	food	
x	aU	proud, now, gown, bough	<ou> is default; <ow> at end of words, before vowel or before <n>; <ough> is rare and only represents /aU/; <cough> is respelled <coff>.
xi	e@ or e <sup>r</sup>	stair, bare	<ear> no longer represents this phoneme; <bear> is respelled <bair>.
xii	A: or A: <sup>r</sup>	star, far	Double the <r> to open the vowel - <harry>.
xiii	A: (non-rhotic)	faather, palm	<aa> is a new grapheme, but used rarely.
xiv	O: <sup>r</sup>	for	Double the <r> to open the vowel - <horrid>.
xv	O: (non-rhotic)	fraud, law, lawyer, call, always, daughter, ought	<au> is default; <aw> usually at end of word, before vowel or -<yer>’ <al> only at beginning of words and where implying totality; exceptions: words of Arabic origin - <algebra>.
xvi	3: or 3: <sup>r</sup>	her, fir, fur	Double the <r> to open the vowel: <herring>, <stirrup>, <hurry>.
xvii	i:	fairy, fairies	<-y> becomes <ies> for plurals.
xvii	@	afraid, defence, invisible, unsound	Schwa. See below

### Consonant sounds

No.	Phoneme / /	Graphemes < >	Remarks
i			b, d, g, h, l, m, n, p, r, t, v, & w are represented by the same letters as in TS: <u>b</u> un, <u>d</u> og, <u>g</u> un, <u>h</u> at, <u>l</u> ink, <u>m</u> an, <u>n</u> ot, <u>p</u> en, <u>r</u> un, <u>t</u> ip, <u>v</u> an, <u>w</u> ine.
ii	k	<u>k</u> id, <u>c</u> ream, <u>f</u> lick, <u>ch</u> emistry	k is default; <c> represents /k/ other than before /e/, /I/, /i:/, /aI/ where it represents /s/ - cent, city, cede, cyber etc.
iii	f	<u>f</u> rog, <u>ph</u> one	<ph> in words of Greek origin only.
iv	dZ	<u>j</u> am, <u>g</u> in	<j> is default; <g> when before /e/, /I/, /i:/, /aI/; where this rule is broken, add a <u> - <guide>
v	tS	<u>ch</u> urch, <u>sw</u> itch	<tch> at end of words.
vi	s	<u>s</u> un, <u>hiss</u> , <u>ci</u> ty	<s> represents /s/ at beginning of words, before or after /k/, /f/, /p/, /t/ : <cliffs>, <crisp> otherwise usually = /z/.
vii	T	<u>th</u> ing	<th> is default for /T/ - for /D/ see below.
viii	D	ba <u>th</u> e, o <u>th</u> er, <u>th</u> is	<th> represents /D/ between vowels or in certain common sign words - e.g. <the>, <this>, <that>, <then>, <there> etc.
ix	S	<u>sh</u> ed, <u>na</u> tion, <u>mi</u> ssion, <u>mu</u> sician, <u>gr</u> acious, <u>ch</u> ef	<ch> represents /S/ only in words of French origin. May be treated as loan words and italicised – see below.
x	w	<u>w</u> isp, <u>w</u> hy	
xi	z	<u>z</u> ebra, <u>jazz</u> , <u>lens</u>	For when <s> = /z/ see above.
xii	j	<u>y</u> et, <u>ba</u> stion	
xiii	kw	<u>q</u> ueen	
xiiiv	ks	<u>ex</u> terminate	But <x> = /gz/ when followed by a stressed vowel – e.g. example.

### 3. Sub-Groups Commonly Found in TS and Retained in TSR

TSR recognises some letter combinations that do not follow the main principles of spelling but can usually represent certain phonemes. The principal ones are:

i	The <-alm> / <-alf> combinations at end of words such as alms, balm, calm, palm, psalm / calf, half. Not to be confused with the few words mainly of Arabic origin that begin with this formula (e.g. algebra, algorithm).
ii	The <-alk> combination at end of words such as balk, calk, stalk, talk, walk.
iii	The <ange> combination in words such as angel, change, danger, mange, manger, range, ranger. Some words respelled: flan <u>j</u> .
iv	The <-aste> combination at the end of words such as baste, haste, paste, taste, waste.
v	The <-ign> combination at the end of words and stressed as in sign, assign, malign – but not at the beginning of words (e.g. igneous, signet).
vi	The <-ild> combination in single syllable words such as mild, child, wild, etc.
vii	The <-ind> combination in single syllable words such as bind, find, kind, mind, rind, wind (verb) (TS wind (noun) respelled winnd).
viii	The <old> combination at the end of words such as old, bold, cold, fold, sold, told, wold (plus combinations such as folder).
ix	The <-olk> combination in folk and yolk.
x	The <-ost> combination at the end of words such as host, post, most, almost, (cost respelled cosst, frost respelled frosst).
xi	The <-ould> combination in “could”, “should”, & “would”. The sound /U/ in all other words is represented by <uu> (e.g. stuud -TS stood).

xii	The <-other> group in words such as other, brother, mother, another, smother. Stress is on the <o> and must be followed by <-ther>. Requires 'bother' to be respelled 'botther.'
xiii	The <war->combination at the beginning of words such as war, ward, warn, warp, warble, warden, wart.
xiv	The <wor->combination at the beginning of words (e.g. word, work, worship) exception: worn.

The usual affixes do not change the spelling (e.g. brothers, smothered, folding).

#### 4. The magic e and the doubling rules – the basics

- *Magic e* – adding the silent letter <e> after the consonant in single syllable words lengthens the preceding vowel, e.g. pan / pane, set / scene, snip / snipe, rot / rote, fun / fury.
- *Doubling rule* – in words of more than one syllable, and where there is a **stressed** vowel followed by a consonant and another vowel, the preceding vowel is usually lengthened (e.g. sad / sadist, set / scenic, bit / biter, fun / fuming).
- *To reverse this rule*, double the consonant - e.g. fat / fate/ fatter; pet / Pete/ petting; bit / bite / bitter; rot/ rote / rotter.

#### 5. The magic e and the doubling rules – additional rules

*NB. THERE ARE A LOT OF VARIATIONS ON THE BASIC RULES - THE FOLLOWING (LARGELY FROM TS) ARE CONTINUED IN TSR*

- The combination <i> consonant <i> - here the first <i> is usually short (l*iv*id, ins*i*pid, sensib*i*lity); but is long in words where the main stem has a long vowel (e.g. <str*i*de, str*i*ding>).
- <i> is not lengthened in the following combinations: <-ition>, <ission>, <-ision>, <-ician>, <icious>.
- Where there are two or more consonants between a stressed vowel and the other vowel, the first vowel usually remains short - e.g. reckon, wished, filled. BUT some combinations of letters act as if they were a single consonant for the purposes of the doubling rule - e.g. able idle etc.
- The suffix <-sure> does not normally lengthen the preceding vowel - e.g. <plesure>, <mesure>.
- The suffix <-sion> always lengthens the preceding vowel provided it is not <i>. Thus <lesion> but <rescision>.
- The letter <x> does not lengthen the preceding stressed vowel (e.g. <oxen>, <execute>).
- The letter <u> generally obeys the Magic E rule but additionally:
  - it is almost invariably long (i.e. representing /ju:/) at the beginning of a word - <unite>; exceptions - words beginning in <un> with a negative meaning - <uninspiring>; words beginning in <up> - <upend>, or when preceding two consonants - <ugly>, <usher>;
  - it is usually long when stressed and preceding another vowel, (e.g. <fuel>, <dual>);
  - it is usually long when unstressed following a vowel and consonant(s), e.g. <monument>, <natural>, <situation>.

## 6. The letter combinations <er>, <ir> and <ur> (short or long)

### Single syllable words

- i <ar> - a final <e> usually turns the sound from ar (as in bar) to that in bare, stare, care etc.;
- ii <er> obeys the Magic E rule, e.g. mere, here;
- iii <ir> obeys the Magic E rule e.g. dire, ire, mire, tire;
- iv <or> - an added <e> does not generally affect the or sound: pore, snore; TSR usually drops the e as redundant (e.g. snor);
- v <ur> - obeys the Magic E rule: cure, endure, lure etc.

### Double & Multi-Syllable words - syllable stressed

- i <ar> - the syllable usually keeps the long sound, (caring, staring etc.). TSR respells when there might be confusion as to pronunciation between two similar words (e.g. stairing (looking at) and staring (featuring in));
- ii <er> - the syllable keeps the long sound (serious);
- iii <ir> - the syllable keeps the long sound (firing, wiry);
- iv <or> - the syllable usually keeps its long (boring);
- v <ur> - the syllable usually keeps its long sound (fury, jury).

### Double & Multi-Syllable Words - syllable unstressed

Vowels are usually short or form a version of the schwa (e.g. arachnid, erase, restoration, etc.). EXCEPTIONS: direct, irenic, which TSR does not double.

## 7. Other Rules

- i Doubling a consonant at the end of a word is normal with words ending in <f>, and <l>, (e.g. stuff, fill), although this does not in any way affect the pronunciation.
- ii <-ed> is normally added at the end of a word to indicate passive mood or past tense (murdered).
- iii <gu> normally represents the sound /gw/ as in TS (language, Guanche).
- iv A diaeresis (or if needs be a hyphen) is optionally used to distinguish two sounds in a digraph (e.g. <reäl>, <diägram>, <biömetric >. This also lengthens the first vowel. The diaeresis is only used when the digraph would otherwise represent the wrong sound(s). Thus: words such as 'bastion' don't need any diaeresis because in TSR <io> does not represent a single phoneme and because the <i> in this instance is short. On the other hand <ea> without the diaeresis would represent /i:/ (mean).
- v <sc> follows the rules for the pronunciation of <c> (e.g. scam, scene, scythe etc).
- vi <sch> represents /sk/ and never /S/ e.g. school. Exceptions: German origin words such as *schmaltz*, but these can be treated as loan words and italicised.

## 8. Irregular or sign words

TSR retains as few irregular spellings as possible from TS. Most of them fall into certain categories such as numbers, days of the week etc. so they can more easily be memorised. Disregarding proper nouns, compounds of irregulars and the sub-groups, the number of such words to be learned by heart is not much more than 60. These are the main ones:

- i Proper Nouns and Adjectives (e.g. London, Spanish)
- ii Personal Pronouns and Adjectives : I, you, he, she, we, me, us, your, their(s), them
- iii Parts of the verbs to be, to do, and to have: are, was, were, do, does, done, have, having.

- iv Numbers: some, (n)one, two, four, seven, eleven, twelve, fourteen, seventeen,
- v Days of the Week: Monday, Wednesday, Saturday.
- vi Months of the Year: January, February, April, June, July.
- vii Seasons: Autumn.
- viii The definite article: the
- ix Demonstrative adjectives and adverbs: this, that, these, those, there, then, thus.
- x Interrogative adjectives and pronouns: what, where, who, whose,
- xi The following common words, including their compounds: of, to(day), any(one), (n)(e)ver(y), only, (n)either, nothing, woman, women, yes.

*NB in some cases the irregularity is due to <th> representing <D> rather than /T/ and in others to the fact that the final <s> represents /s/ rather than /z/.*

## 9. Words that TSR changes

The general rule is whether the TS spelling could leave any doubt as to the pronunciation. If it could not, then the spelling is not normally changed. Subject to that overriding principle:

- TSR removes letters that are redundant and whose retention could lead to confusion of pronunciation – e.g. ~~w~~rong, ~~g~~nash, ~~h~~onour /~~h~~onor.
- Final <e> is generally omitted when the preceding vowel is short, - e.g. dove becomes ~~duv~~, live (verb int.) becomes ~~liv~~.
- It corrects instances where the doubling rule has been misapplied by TS – ~~comm~~ittee, ~~ace~~ommodate.
- TSR respells words such as 'dystopia' as <distopia> to avoid confusion of pronunciation. In TSR <y> normally represents /aI/ except at the beginning and ending of words. So in these cases /I/ must be represented by <i>.

An impression of the changes made can be seen from the transcriptions, where words respelled are shown in blue and sign words are shown in red. Although between a fifth and a quarter of the common words are respelled, the percentage tends to be much smaller for sample texts as seen in the Gettysburg Address.

## 10. Stress

TSR does not make any specific provision for indicating stress. In the author's opinion this would require either diacritics or else other undesirable complications to the scheme, one of whose priorities is to avoid unnecessary change.

The default stress in English words falls on the penultimate syllable. Exceptions have to be learned although there are some not totally reliable rules that may help (e.g. certain prefixes such as ac-, de-, pro- etc. shift the stress to the last syllable).

American stress patterns often differ from those in other pronunciations, particularly in two syllable words (e.g. address).

## 11. Homonyms

As some common sign words are retained and as TSR allows some phonemes to be represented by more than one grapheme, this usually permits homonyms with different spellings to be retained from TS. (e.g. stare / stair, sight / site, none / nun). Where the removal of a redundant letter might result in confusion of meaning, one may insert an apostrophe to indicate the letter omitted, thereby allowing the difference in meaning to be retained - e.g. 'our (hour) / our (possessive adjective)).

## 12. Interpretation of TSR in Different Dialects

TSR seeks to provide common graphemes for all the main phonemes of spoken English in a manner that will permit speakers of different accents to interpret the graphemes according to their own traditions.

Many words are pronounced differently in different dialects, in particular American /Canadian and British. However, most of these differences are relatively slight, in most cases insufficient to warrant different spellings. In seeking common graphemes, TSR's strategy is as follows:

- Proper nouns are not amended - this can come later.
- Stress is not marked, so pronunciation differences linked solely to stress can usually be spelled with common graphemes.
- Foreign words spelled according to the language of origin are not amended - instead they are put in *italics* so that the reader will know that non-TSR spelling rules apply (e.g. *chaise longue, Liedert, junta, carabinieri*).
- Retention of TS graphemes for most unstressed syllables means that in general divergent pronunciations arising from stress differences can be covered by the same grapheme, as at present.
- American/Canadian pronunciation may be assumed where that and other traditions diverge **but only where the above rules do not provide a solution.**
- Where local pronunciations diverge greatly, different spellings may exceptionally be used.

The further details of this strategy are set out in the full version of this scheme reference: (Publications>Miscellaneous).

## 13. Implementation

Essentially, TSR would be a one-stage reform, rather than one introduced in stages. However, respelling of proper nouns could come later once the main reforms had been implemented. It would be open to individuals and owners of proper nouns (e.g. place names) to change the spelling immediately or when it suited them. If TSR became generally established, one might move at a later stage to respelling of at least some of the sign words.

The author accepts that some changes to the details of the proposals as set out in this summary could be altered in the light of comment and experience, either during the second session of the IESC or subsequently.

## 14. Transcriptions (Two examples - for the rest, see the full scheme)

### Gettysburg Address

Fourscore and seven years ago our faathers brought forth, on this continent, a new nation, conceeved in liberty and deddicated to the proposition that all men are created equal. Now we are engaged in a grait civil war, testing whether that nation, or any nation so conceeved, and so deddicated, can long endure. We are met on a grait battle-feeld in that war. We have cum to deddicate a portion of that feeld, as a final resting place for those who here gave their lives, that that nation might liv. It is altogether fitting and propper that we should do this, but in a larger senss we cannot deddicate, we cannot consecrate, we cannot hallo this ground. The brave men, living and ded, who struggled here, have consecrated it far abuv our poor power to add or detract. The world will little note, nor long remember, what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here. It is for us the living, rather, to be deddicated to the grait task remaining befor us that from these onored ded we take increased devotion to that cause for which they gave the last fuul mesure of devotion - that we here highly resolv that these ded shall not have died in vain, that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom, and that government of the peeple, by the peeple, for the peeple, shall not perrish from the erth. (35 /243; changed -14%)

Words respelled 35 - *italics indicate changes due to proper application of doubling rule*

Sign words - 60

Sub-groups - 2

### Common Words

the, a, to, for, on, they, his, n't, as, can, would, make, their, when, me, into, your, than, then, mor, luuc, because, no, thing, only, very, any, us, work, should, school, too, state, high, another, out, while, student, same, seem, where, start, sho, place, few, cumpany, right, question, government, off, night, belevv, happen, large, home, 'rite, munny, munth, studdy, home, side, far, little, since, around, sit, 'our, line, ever, however, meet, incloud, comunity, once, lern, minit, kid, ago, understand, together, create, others, add, helth, such, within, change, lo, guy, moment, force, education, fuut, toward, pollicy, music, actualy, wait, send, bild, nation, interest, experiënce, kill, uess(n), controle, elss, major, devellopment, better, decide, hart, light, police, return, report, explain, devellop, town, throo, difference, internattional, moddel, position, reccord(n), speccial, suport, matter, site, baiss, need, American, situation, figgur, itself, cuvver, practice, describe, patient moovee, personal, third, baby, draw, sorce, chooz, point, difficult, billion, period, réalize, likely, letter, single, south, campain, call, church, current, involv, security, west, per, rest fight, past, order, focus, blud, nature, stor, fine, page, common, race, similar, usually, animal, shoot, artist, career, thus, exactly, size, ocur, thought, quollity, hard, meeting, whatever, particularly, reccognise, loss, herself, TV, deal, lay, bill, arrive, sex, section, skill, operation, OK, design, ten, bloo, clearly, trooth, check, public, guess, proov claim, help, network, form, green, seat, triäl, firm, manngement, tonight, close (v), theöry, maintain, onto, employee, hed, aply, shake, chair, structure, weight, top, eveningq, unit, wurry, individdual, neccessary, sholder, dream. (62/ 243; changed - 25%)

Words respelled 62 - *italics indicate proper application of doubling rule*

Sign words 16

Sub-groups 6

Loan word 1