Spelling tips

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- ◆ When two words join, nobody loses. (roommate, withhold)
- ◆ Adding a prefix doesn't change the root word. *(misspell)*
- ◆ Use memory tricks:

Your principal is your pal.
There's a rat in separate.
Principles are lessons to live by.
Meet Marshal Marshall.
Stationery is paper.
Seize by the neck.
Siege a city.

- ◆ Words ending in -able are formed (generally) by tacking that suffix onto an entire word. (acceptable)
- ◆ Words ending in -ible are formed (generally) by attaching that suffix to the root of a word, or words that can't stand alone (forcible). Exceptions: accessible, indispensable
- ◆ When adding ed or ing to a word, double the final consonant if
- 1) the word ends in single consonant.
- 2) the word is preceded by a single vowel.
- 3) the accent is on the second, or last, syllable.

For example: commit, yes; cancel, no

- ◆ No rule will help with *-ance*, *-ence* endings.
- ◆ When to drop the final "e": When a word ends in "e" (prove, stove, value, desire), drop the "e" before adding a suffix that starts with a vowel.
- ◆ Only one word ends in **sede**: supersede.
- ◆ Only 3 words end in ceed: succeed, proceed, exceed. Use SPEED to remember.
- ◆ 8 words end in cede: accede, antecede, cede, concede, intercede, "precede," "recede" and "secede."

Over the years, I've come to realize that good spellers are of two origins: the lucky ones come by the trait genetically, and the hard-working ones earn the moniker through just that – hard work.

The latter group can be helped by some books. "303 Dumb Spelling Mistakes" has lots of mnemonic helps. It's by David Downing, published in 1994 by National Textbook Co. Marilyn Vos Savant has a readable book about spelling, "The Art of Spelling," W.W. Norton and Co., 2000. Two of my well-worn, old favorites are "20 Days to Better Spelling," by Norman Lewis, published by Scholastic Books, and "Words Most Often Misspelled and Mispronounced" by Gallagher and Colvin, Pocket Books, 1963.

An interesting note I'll pass along is that as I worked with students who (for varied reasons) had trouble passing the school's test, I saw that a majority of them had odd pencil (pen) grips. Dr. Mel Levine, a UNC pediatrician, has written books on learning problems, including this awkward pencil grip. It's almost certainly related to poor test taking.