Spelling

With the evolution of computer programs such as Microsoft Word, the majority of the writing world has become reliant on the use of spell-check programs. However, spell-check is not foolproof, as it does not understand context: that is, the fact that a word that is spelled correctly in one context may be spelled incorrectly in another.

Such words are known as **HOMOPHONES**: **words that sound the same, but have different spellings and meanings.** Common homophones include

- Principal (n., one who runs a school); principle (n., a truth)
- Loose (adj., not securely attached); lose (v., to fail to keep)
- Affect (v., to exert an influence); effect (v., to accomplish; n., a result)
- Its (prn., of or belonging to it); it’s (it is)
- Their (prn., belonging to them); they’re (they are); there (adv., that place)
- Who’s (who is); Whose (who, in possessive form)
- Your (you, in possessive form); you’re (you are)

Other spelling rules:

**PLURALITY**: Add -s to form the plural of most nouns

- *Dog, dogs; table, tables*

Add –es to form the plural of nouns ending in –s, -sh, -ch, and –x

- *Church, churches; Xerox, Xeroxes*

To form the plural of a hyphenated compound word, add an –s to the chief word:

- *Mother-in-law, mothers-in law*

**AND DON’T FORGET:**

- ‘I’ before ‘e’: relieve, believe, fierce
- Except after ‘c’: conceive, deceive
- Exceptions: seize, either, neighbor, weigh, inveigh, height, foreign, leisure, eight, freight

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This handout is adapted from University of Alabama Writing Center Website. Only the format has been changed.