

# THE ARTICLE

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210414-spelling.html>

A university in England has said students will not lose marks for spelling, punctuation and grammar mistakes. Hull University said that requiring English with no mistakes is "elitist". It said such a requirement could be seen as "homogenous, North European, white, male, and elite". Officials at the university said insisting on a high proficiency in written English discriminated against ethnic minorities and students who went to schools where average grades were low. The university said it wants to make writing and tests "more inclusive". It wants teachers to be more flexible when they mark and grade students' writing. It hopes to reduce the number of poorer students who drop out from university.

The university said many students suffer at school and in life because their written English contains mistakes. This includes students with dyslexia. This is a learning disorder that affects language. People with dyslexia have difficulty in relating to letters and words. This means it is harder for dyslexics to produce writing free of mistakes. Dyslexia affects areas of the brain that process language. The university also said that requiring well-written English could discourage students for whom English is a second language from going to university. Teachers at another university have been told it is fairer to judge students on their ideas and knowledge of a subject and not their spelling and grammar.

Sources: <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9457171/Fury-education-regulator-tells-universities-marking-students-bad-spelling-ELITIST.html>  
<https://www.msn.com/en-gb/news/uknews/universities-told-marking-students-down-for-bad-spelling-is-elitist/ar-BB1fwa3k>  
<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/its-elitist-to-mark-down-bad-spelling-universities-insist-bmw5j2jlf>

# WARM-UPS

**1. SPELLING:** Students walk around the class and talk to other students about spelling. Change partners often and share your findings.

**2. CHAT:** In pairs / groups, talk about these topics or words from the article. What will the article say about them? What can you say about these words and your life?

university / spelling / punctuation / grammar / elitist / proficiency / tests / grade / low suffer / mistakes / dyslexia / language / brain / second language / judge / knowledge

Have a chat about the topics you liked. Change topics and partners frequently.

**3. MISTAKES ARE OK:** Students A **strongly** believe spelling mistakes in writing and tests are OK; Students B **strongly** believe otherwise. Change partners again and talk about your conversations.

**4. LEARNING ENGLISH:** What is most difficult about learning these things? What are the best ways to learn them? Complete this table with your partner(s). Change partners often and share what you wrote.

	Most Difficult	Best Ways
Spelling		
Listening		
Punctuation		
Vocabulary		
Grammar		
Writing		

**5. MISTAKE:** Spend one minute writing down all of the different words you associate with the word "mistake". Share your words with your partner(s) and talk about them. Together, put the words into different categories.

**6. ENGLISH:** Rank these with your partner. Put the most difficult things to learn about English at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Spelling
- Grammar
- Listening
- Writing
- Punctuation
- Pronunciation
- Vocabulary
- Politeness

# VOCABULARY MATCHING

## Paragraph 1

- |                    |                                                                                                                                                        |
|--------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. mark            | a. A group that has different national or cultural traditions from the main population.                                                                |
| 2. punctuation     | b. A point given for a correct answer or for proficiency in an examination or competition.                                                             |
| 3. requiring       | c. Ability.                                                                                                                                            |
| 4. elite           | d. Full stops, commas, question marks, brackets, etc. and other things used in writing to separate sentences and help the writer make meaning clearer. |
| 5. proficiency     | e. The top part of a group that is (seen as) better to the rest in terms of ability or qualities.                                                      |
| 6. discriminated   | f. Needing.                                                                                                                                            |
| 7. ethnic minority | g. Treated people differently (badly) of their colour, sex, or age.                                                                                    |

## Paragraph 2

- |                |                                                                                         |
|----------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8. include     | h. Have or contain as part of a whole.                                                  |
| 9. disorder    | i. Facts, information, and skills acquired by a person through experience or education. |
| 10. relating   | j. A state of confusion.                                                                |
| 11. process    | k. Form an opinion or conclusion about.                                                 |
| 12. discourage | l. Making or showing a connection between.                                              |
| 13. judge      | m. A number of actions or steps taken in order to reach a goal.                         |
| 14. knowledge  | n. Cause someone to lose confidence or enthusiasm.                                      |



# BEFORE READING / LISTENING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210414-spelling.html>

## 1. TRUE / FALSE: Read the headline. Guess if a-h below are true (T) or false (F).

- a. A UK university suggested that making spelling mistakes is OK. **T / F**
- b. The university said expecting well-written writing is elitist. **T / F**
- c. The university said ethnic minorities always do very well in spelling. **T / F**
- d. The university wants teachers to be inflexible when grading writing. **T / F**
- e. The university said people suffer in life because of writing mistakes. **T / F**
- f. People with dyslexia find it more difficult to relate to letters and words. **T / F**
- g. There is an increase in overseas students attending UK universities. **T / F**
- h. A university said correct spelling is more important than students' ideas. **T / F**

## 2. SYNONYM MATCH: (The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- |                       |                  |
|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1. <b>marks</b>       | a. condition     |
| 2. <b>requiring</b>   | b. accommodating |
| 3. <b>proficiency</b> | c. put off       |
| 4. <b>flexible</b>    | d. asking for    |
| 5. <b>reduce</b>      | e. parts         |
| 6. <b>disorder</b>    | f. understanding |
| 7. <b>areas</b>       | g. points        |
| 8. <b>discourage</b>  | h. evaluate      |
| 9. <b>judge</b>       | i. skill         |
| 10. <b>knowledge</b>  | j. cut           |

## 3. PHRASE MATCH: (Sometimes more than one choice is possible.)

- |                                          |                          |
|------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Officials                             | a. a second language     |
| 2. discriminated against ethnic          | b. out from university   |
| 3. It wants teachers to be more flexible | c. disorder              |
| 4. It hopes to reduce                    | d. minorities            |
| 5. poorer students who drop              | e. when they mark        |
| 6. many students suffer                  | f. of mistakes           |
| 7. This is a learning                    | g. on their ideas        |
| 8. produce writing free                  | h. the number            |
| 9. students for whom English is          | i. at school and in life |
| 10. it is fairer to judge students       | j. at the university     |

# COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210414-spelling.html>

1. What is the name of the university?
2. What did the university call the requirement for well-written English?
3. Who might requiring well-written English discriminate against?
4. What does the university want tests to become?
5. Who does the university want to stop dropping out of university?
6. Where does the university say many students suffer?
7. What is the name of the learning disorder mentioned in the article?
8. What does the learning disorder make it harder for people to relate to?
9. Who could be discouraged from coming to UK universities?
10. What did another university ask teachers to judge students on?

# AFTER READING / LISTENING

From <https://breakingnewsenglish.com/2104/210414-spelling.html>

**1. WORD SEARCH:** Look in your dictionary / computer to find collocates, other meanings, information, synonyms ... for the words 'spelling' and 'mistake'.

spelling	mistake

- Share your findings with your partners.
- Make questions using the words you found.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**2. ARTICLE QUESTIONS:** Look back at the article and write down some questions you would like to ask the class about the text.

- Share your questions with other classmates / groups.
- Ask your partner / group your questions.

**3. GAP FILL:** In pairs / groups, compare your answers to this exercise. Check your answers. Talk about the words from the activity. Were they new, interesting, worth learning...?

**4. VOCABULARY:** Circle any words you do not understand. In groups, pool unknown words and use dictionaries to find their meanings.

**5. TEST EACH OTHER:** Look at the words below. With your partner, try to recall how they were used in the text:

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• England</li><li>• such</li><li>• high</li><li>• average</li><li>• flexible</li><li>• drop</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• suffer</li><li>• disorder</li><li>• letters</li><li>• process</li><li>• going</li><li>• ideas</li></ul>
---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------



# SPELLING DISCUSSION

STUDENT A's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student B)

1. What did you think when you read the headline?
2. What images are in your mind when you hear the word 'spelling'?
3. What do you think of English spelling?
4. What advice do you have about English spelling?
5. How important is it to spell English words correctly?
6. What do you think of English grammar?
7. What are the most difficult parts of English grammar?
8. Does insisting on well-written English discriminate against people?
9. What do you think of writing, spelling and grammar tests?
10. How important is it to write well in English?

*No loss of marks for spelling mistakes at UK university – 14th April, 2021*  
Thousands more free lessons at [breakingnewsenglish.com](http://breakingnewsenglish.com)

---

# SPELLING DISCUSSION

STUDENT B's QUESTIONS (Do not show these to student A)

11. Did you like reading this article? Why/not?
12. What do you think of when you hear the word 'mistake'?
13. What do you think about what you read?
14. What are your biggest problems with English spelling?
15. What advice to you have for people learning English grammar?
16. How should schools help people with dyslexia?
17. What are the big differences between your language and English?
18. What do you think of the university's new policy?
19. Is it better to judge essays on the content or the spelling and grammar?
20. What questions would you like to ask the university?