

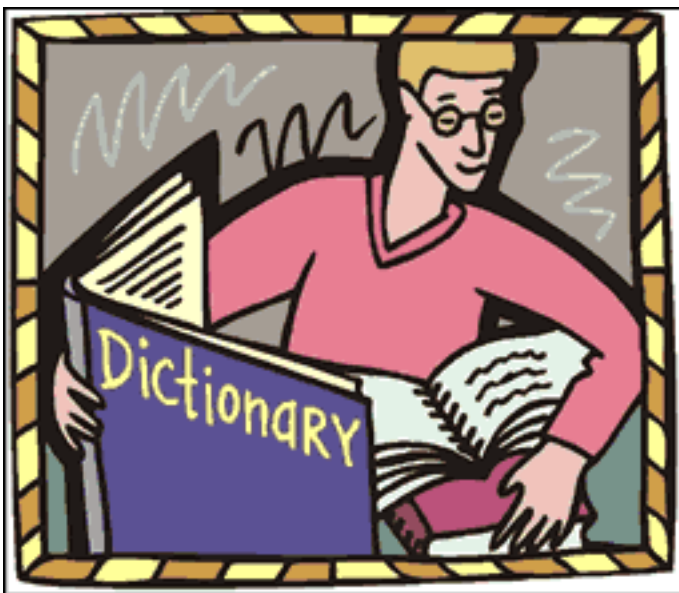


MicroModule: spelling

Understanding Spelling & Search

REVIEW Page

Below is the entire module on one page. When you are ready to take your post test, scroll to the bottom of the page and press Continue>>



How you spell a keyword will impact your search results. A misspelled keyword may return very few or even zero results. On the other hand, some misspellings are so common they still return a large number of results. This happens because search engines obediently return web pages with exact matches of a misspelled word. If you get enough misspelled results you may not even realize you are missing pages with the correct spelling. There are also European and American variations in spelling that can change the results of your search. Also what about capitalization? Will the case change between *European* and *european* make a difference in your search results?

Clearly, when it comes to searching *spelling counts!*

Here's an example of how spelling and searching interact:

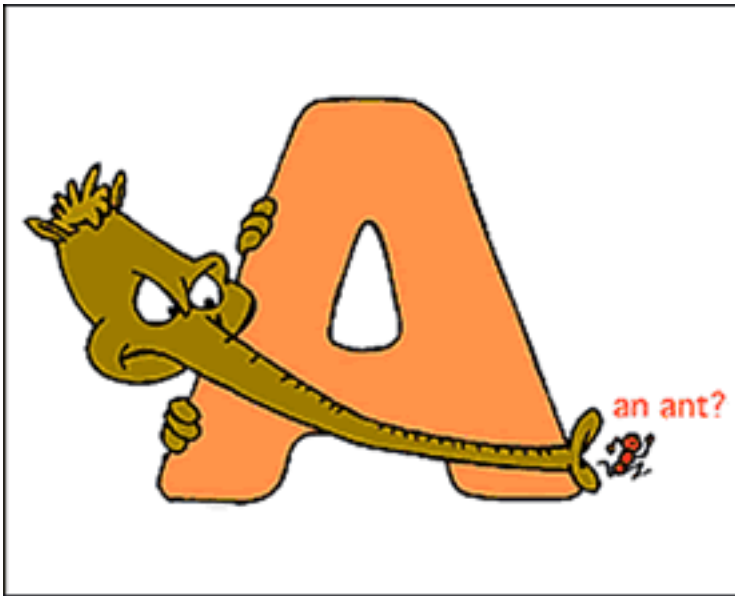
- Try searching for *Shakespear* on Google. This spelling returns about 52,000 hits.
- Try searching for *Shakespeare* on Google. This spelling returns 3,000,000 hits.

What a difference an 'e' makes!

If you begin refining your search based on a variant spelling like *Shakespear*, you eliminate important web resources that match the more popular spelling of Shakespeare's name. In other words, you miss important, relevant information. Still, don't presume that pages using an alternate spelling are of no value. Ultimately it is the content of the resource, rather than the spelling that counts.

Does case count?

Will search results differ on these terms: Pacific / pacific? Hmm..*maybe!* Most search engines ignore case. However, some search engines automatically notice capitalization and will only search for the unique upper and lower case combinations in your search terms. In other words, be aware of upper and lower case in your search terms so you can see how your search engine of choice handles this slippery topic. Google automatically searches in lowercase, even if you type your search terms using capitals. However, Google will return results that match both upper and lower case instances of your keywords. As a rule of thumb, use lower case, to broaden your search, and capitals to narrow your search.



If you decide case is crucial to the meaning of your keywords, enforce the punctuation by using the quotation marks operator. Placing quotation marks around a specific phrase, "Pacific Ocean" should instruct your search engine of choice to *exactly match* the capitalization of the terms. However, don't be surprised by the inconsistencies between search engines; expect them!

What about British vs. American spelling?

There are differences in American and British spelling. You can exploit these differences in spelling to target American or European web resources. Searching with the following British and American spellings will change your results. If you use keywords with British spelling you will usually match European web resources. American spelling usually matches web resources from the United States.

When using this technique, pay particular attention to the domain names of the web pages you retrieve. Many European sites use a two letter designator in their domain name to indicate their country of origin. For example: .uk = United Kingdom; .fr = France; .nl = Netherlands, .ge = Germany.

British	American
programme	program
colour	color
theatre	theater
aeroplane	airplane
defence	defense

To see how alternate spellings effect results, try the following example queries on your search engine of choice:

- "information literacy programme" vs. "information literacy program"
- "Defence Department" vs. "Defense Department"

How can understanding *homonyms* empower my search?

When striving to name a concept with great precision, it helps to understand the subtleties of *nyms*. The root "nym" comes from the Greek word *onoma*, a name. We use the term *nym* to identify many classes of words. As keywords, some *nyms* have an impact on your search results.

Homonyms are words that have the same sound but a different meaning and spelling. Misspelling these common homonyms can create confusion, and side track your search.

acts things done	ax chopping tool
racket illegal moneymaking scheme	racquet woven bat for tennis
right correct	rite ritual
write to inscribe	wright a maker

What would be the results of searching for *illegal racquets* or *Lizzie Borden's acts* ?

[Authored by Dennis O'Connor 2003-2004](#)



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End of Micromodule - spelling.

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