

Spelling Tips 8 – Elided syllables

Ceremony used to present us with a spelling problem when the stress was on the first syllable and all the rest was a blur of indeterminate syllables. Now that we are following the American pattern and giving a secondary stress on *-mon-*, as in 'se-ruh-mohn-ee', perhaps it won't cause the same problem.

The reason that *Wednesday* and *secretary* present a spelling problem to us is that over time we have elided a whole syllable in each word. *Wednesday* has gone from three syllables to two, *secretary* from four to three.

The solution has been to fill in the gaps, pronounce the word in an artificial way with every syllable intact, and retain that pronunciation memory as a guide to spelling. We call it rapping the word out, as if you were a rap performer putting the word to a beat. Say *advertisement* as 'ad-ver-tize-ment' and you will have no difficulty with the spelling. Say *Wednesday* as 'wed-nes-day' and your problems are solved.

Here are some more to remember:

derogatory: The final *o* is usually not pronounced. Rap it out as *de + rog + a + tor + y*.

February: Many people don't pronounce the sound of the *r*, but it should always be there when you spell it. Rap it out as *Feb + ru + ar + y*.

itinerary: Don't forget the *ary* ending (although the *a* is not pronounced). Rap it out as *i + tin + er + ary*.

miserable: This word is usually pronounced without the middle *er*. Rap it out as *mis + er + a + ble*.

sanctuary: Don't forget the *u* before the *ary* ending, which you often do not hear when the word is pronounced. Rap it out as *sanc + tu + ar + y*.

sovereign: The middle *e* is not usually pronounced. Rap it out as *sov + er + eign*.

temporary: This word has four syllables, although you hear only two when you say it. So concentrate on the *orary* ending and rap it out as *tem + por + a + ry*.

vegetable: Don't forget the second *e* which you usually don't hear when people say the word. Rap it out as *ve + ge + ta + ble*.

voluntary: Remember that **voluntary** ends with *ary*, although the *a* is usually not pronounced. Rap it out as *vol + un + ta + ry*.

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