

Uncovering the Logic of English

Denise Eide

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Multiple award-winning book on reading and spelling education that will transform how you think about English! Discover the method that Dr. Temple Grandin called "really helpful for teaching reading to children who are mathematical pattern thinkers..."

For the past 70 years students have needed to break the complex code of English without help. This has resulted in low literacy rates and highly educated professionals who cannot spell. The principles taught in Uncovering the Logic of English describe 98% of English words and eliminate the need to guess.

Simple answers are given for questions such as:

- * Why is there a silent final E in have?
- * Why don't we drop the E in noticeable?
- * Why is discussion spelled with -sion rather than -tion?

As the rules unfold it becomes apparent how this knowledge is vital to reversing the educational crisis that is plaguing America. This slim volume is easy to read and accessible to parents and classroom teachers.

Uncovering the Logic of English Details

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From Reader Review Uncovering the Logic of English for online ebook

Ashley Strukel says

Fascinating and a great reference tool. I'm a good read and speller without being taught most of this explicitly, but I'm so glad I to have it as a reference for helping my kids develop literacy skills.

blake says

Normally, if you say a book has big print and lots of whitespace and tables, that's kind of a bad thing. But, when the book purports to explain the rules of spelling in English, it becomes a very good thing indeed.

I'm sure it's not unusual among readers to be good spellers—though obviously there are many exception—and you may have had this sort of experience with someone who was *not* a good speller.

"How do you spell 'stopping'?"

"S-T-O-P-P-I-N-G"

"Why isn't it 'S-T-O-P-I-N-G'?"

"Because that would be 'stow-ping'."

That, by the way, is covered in Rule 14 in this book. There are 31 rules in toto, though #12, covering the use of the silent "e", has nine parts.

Here's another one you might have encountered:

"How do you spell 'give'?"

"G-I-V-E."

"Why isn't it 'G-I-V'?"

"Because...that's weird looking."

Well, it's weird looking because (rule 3) English words don't end in V, I, U or J. (And those words you're thinking of, like Krav Maga, macaroni, parvenu and Taj Mahal aren't English, though more on that in a bit.)

So, somehow, and I have no idea how, I have internalized most of these rules (which explains my objection to the American spelling of "judgment") but since I was never taught (or have forgotten being taught) them, I did not have them codified in a way that makes sense. Nor did it occur to me that these rules were comprehensive enough to cover 98% of the language. So, after a while, I just assumed (as is often said these days) that I memorized all these spellings.

I don't know if Ms. Eide's assertion that memorization on this scale isn't possible for humans (though she has a citation and I just have an opinion), but I do know that it's much less effort and more likely to be successful than all the other spelling things I've seen. (I mean, I have a book here I got for a troubled speller that's just a big list of frequently misspelled words. Can anyone ever have used that successfully?)

I also notice that what she describes in terms of figuring out how to spell things—the tactics she

endorses—are very much like what I do if I have trouble with a word. Things like emphasize the syllables in pronunciation (our language has a not insubstantial aural component) or trying different spellings and hearing how they would sound with that configuration of letters.

This is good stuff. I presume teaching children 31 rules to memorize will be considered inhumane and regressive, so this book will mostly find its use amongst homeschoolers and rebellious teachers tired of failing. The author has a website with drills, too, and games to make it easy, so that's cool.

I had some objections but they were mostly in the gray areas. The one that wasn't was that, as far as I recall, she didn't really explain the diacriticals over the vowels. You could quickly sound out what they were, like a? in "able" but if you didn't know short sound, long sound, broad sound, you might panic. It's also a little hard to read which diacritic it is sometimes, but I'll blame that on my eyes.

A minor objection was the classification of "English word". It's a fine line between "that's English" and "that's [source language]". A fine and, I think, *arbitrary* line. "parvenu" is a good example of that, I think. It's *from* French but it's English, and it does end with a "u". Meanwhile, she calls out both "karate" and "kamikaze" as exceptions at various points...I guess what I'm getting at is, I don't know what it takes to gain entry into the official club of "English words".

Nonetheless—and I'm sure there are nits to pick all over the place, linguistics is a messy thing—as a tool, this book carries both the message of "No, English spelling DOES make sense" and "Here's how!" which is invaluable.

Patricia Mccabe says

I agree with many of the other reviewers that this book was easy to read and presented practically with its many tables and charts. It also makes so much sense to me even though I'm not a mathematical pattern thinker. I would definitely recommend this to English teachers.

Sarah Bayless says

Wow! This book was surprisingly interesting and many "ahhhh!" moments while reading it. Great for any parent teaching their child to read.

Austin Hoffman says

There is a method to the madness.

There are more phonograms and phonemes in English than we usually teach. This book is phonics on steroids.

Helpful rules and appendices attaches.

Keesa says

Oh. My. Goodness! This book was awesome. I loved how the author clearly and methodically explained the genuine simplicity and logic of English. (Does that sound impossible? I thought so, too, until I read it!)

I am an intuitive reader. I figure things out quickly based on "what sounds right/what looks right" and since I read a LOT as a child, and I have a fairly good memory, reading and spelling have always been easy for me. That's great for me as a reader, but not so great now that I'm teaching English and reading in a foreign country. Sure, it's easy to say "This is written this way, and you pronounce it this way." But when you're teaching, you get a lot of people who ask you "Why?" Why is it like that? Why is it this way here, but that way there? Why? Why? WHY? And as an educator, it's frustrating to have to say, "I don't know; it's just English, I guess." One of my favorite (and most-used phrases!) before reading this book was "Don't blame me! I didn't invent the language, I just teach it!"

Now I won't have to say that anymore. Now I can *explain* why, because now I *know* why. And that is an incredible feeling. :-D

Frank Theising says

A must read for educators and parents of young children. I really wanted to give this five stars based solely on how much it explains the complexity and seemingly illogical spelling/pronunciation challenges of the English language. The only reason I marked it down to four stars was because the book presents itself as a silver bullet to the nation's "literacy crisis." The author uses a sampling of various statistics to explain what she means by the literacy crisis in America (26% of 8th graders are functionally illiterate and 69% read below their grade level; 48% of adults are not proficient readers; only 10% of college grads read at a high level of proficiency, etc). I'd argue that this problem goes much deeper than which curriculum or system is used to teach children how to spell. Parental involvement, student socioeconomic status, one-size-fits-all national education standards (aka No Child Left Behind, Common Core), the influence of teachers' unions, the breakdown of discipline, and a host of other factors can contribute to the problem of poor reading proficiency in America. If "The Logic of English" were adopted across the nation tomorrow it would help many students, but it would hardly solve the problem.

The core content of the book on the other hand was enlightening, if somewhat overwhelming in the number of rules used to explain English spelling. The author argues that the reason so many people have trouble spelling is that we were never taught the rules of English. We all learned some rules, like "I before E except after C" only to grow frustrated with an endless number of exceptions (eight, protein, efficient, glacier, species, science, sufficient, seize, weird, vein, their, foreign, feisty, heist, either, heinous, leisure, neither, seize, etc, etc). Compared to other languages which often follow the rules more closely, this seeming inconsistency can be infuriating. Through a series of 30 rules and 74 phonograms (individual or groups of letters that are pictures of specific sounds), the author explains the logic behind 98% of all English words (and many of the exceptions that constitute that 2% are actually foreign words brought into the language).

I don't intend to list all 30 rules here but a quick sampling to give you an idea of what you can expect from this book:

The phonogram “C” makes two sounds /s/ as in center and /k/ as in cat. So how do we know when the C says which sound? Likewise, how do we know when the letter G says the /j/ sound like in agile or the /g/ sound like in gum?

Rule 1: C always softens to /s/ when followed by E, I, or Y. Otherwise C says /k/. For example: Center (c followed by e) or icy (c followed by y) results in the /s/ sound. In words where c is not followed by E, I, or Y, the C makes the /k/ sound: Cat, Cot, balCony, etc. Notice words with two Cs might make both sounds based on this rule: accent (first C makes /k/ sound while the second C makes the /s/ sound being followed by an E) or CirCus (first C followed by I says /s/ and the second C says /k/).

Rule 2: G softens to /j/ only when followed by E, I, or Y. Otherwise G says /g/. For example: In the word Germ, G followed by E so we say /j/ sound when pronouncing the G but in the word Gap (G not followed by E, I, or Y) the G makes the /g/ sound.

Rule 3: English words do not end in I, U, V, or J. This explains why a lot of words have the extra silent E added onto the end of the word even when it is not needed for correct pronunciation (for example: additive, adjective, value, true). Likewise this helps explain why we spell “knowledge” and similar words with the “three-letter J” phonogram “dge” instead of writing knowledj. In teaching this to our kids, my eldest daughter (currently 6 years old) easily remembers this rule and is quick to point out exceptions: “daddy, spaghetti ends in I so it is not an English word” (other exceptions are almost always because of foreign words adopted into English: Chai (Arabic), Macaroni, broccoli (Italian), alibi, fungi (Latin), calamari (Greek), sushi, origami (Japanese), kiwi (Maori)).

Besides the 30 rules, the author elaborates on various phonograms. We normally teach the alphabet and the sounds that each letter makes (i.e. each vowel makes a long and a short sound, etc). But this does not account for all the sounds in the English language. Many phonograms make more than 1 or 2 sounds. For example the phonogram “U” makes 4 different sounds /ʊ – ʊ – oo – Ū/ (up, pupil, flute, and put, respectively).

The phonogram approach has been very useful in homeschooling our daughters. Instead of teaching them to sound out individual letters we have been teaching them the phonograms. When kids try to spell out a word like L-I-G-H-T, going letter by letter, they would end up butchering the word. But because we taught them the “three letter I” phonogram “igh”, they now quickly recognize the three letter I phonogram in the middle and can correctly read words like light, might, fright, etc.

This book is a great resource for homeschooling families or anyone else interested in helping to make sense out of English spelling for their school-aged children (or for your friends that just don’t spell good). :)

Sarah Anderson says

Really interesting idea. Made me want to learn a lot more about the topic of teaching reading and spelling. Not well edited. Left a lot ambiguous - could be better organized. I picked up this book after hearing an episode of the podcast Educate called "Hard Words: Why Aren't Our Kids Being Taught to Read?" Now I have to re-listen to the podcast to remember what the current resources on phonics education are.

Shelley says

Excellent source of info!

I never knew all these spelling rules and all of the phonograms of English. This will help me greatly as a teacher of ESL.

Alaa A says

highly recommend it for any one reads and writes in English 100%

Katy says

This book provides some great information about the hows and whys of English words. It has a reference manual feel to it, though; so don't expect a page-turner. I especially hope to use the spelling rules in our homeschool. The list is also available on the author's website for quick reference, which is a bonus for me, as they copy I read came from the library and not my own shelf. However, the book is on my possible purchase list, as it would probably be handy to have around.

Jessie Adamczyk says

Using this and words their way for my spelling units. <3 <3

Jessi says

This fascinating book showed me how much I don't? even begin to understand re: English.

In my homeschool teaching now, and in my English classroom a decade ago, my favorite refrain was, "English is crazy." I fully believed that. While reading this book was great for showing me, briefly, how logical English actually is, one read-through will not give me the kind of knowledge that Denise Eide has.

That's why, before even finishing Uncovering the Logic of English, I bought Denise Eide's entire Logic of English curriculum. I realized that I wanted to know what she knows; from experience, I know that teaching would? be the best way for me to own the ideas in this book. Thus, this excellent \$12 book turned into a multi-year, multi-student, hugely expensive curriculum purchase. Beware.

Nancy says

If you think English spelling and reading make no sense, check out this book! English is morpho-phonemic,

based on meaning and sounds. This book methodically helps the reader understand what that means, with lots of examples.

Raynell McClellan says

I love this book! I recommend it to anyone, especially if you are helping someone learn to read.
