

Spelling

Writers follow the conventions of spelling to save their readers the labor of figuring out which words they mean. Some misspellings simply look strange; others may confuse. The most common spelling error in college essays is confusion of the two little words *it's* and *its*. *It's* is a contraction of *it is*. *Its* is the possessive form of *it*. The second most common spelling error is confusion of *affect* and *effect*.

affect (verb)	(1) To act upon or influence. <i>The accident affected her significantly.</i> (2) To feign or pretend. <i>He affected an interest in boxing.</i>
effect (noun)	Something that follows from a cause or agent. <i>The accident produced this effect: she refused to drive again.</i>
effect (verb)	To cause to come into being or to bring about. <i>The protest effected small changes in the hiring procedures.</i>

The Geneseo Psychology Department sees the following words frequently misspelled:

- questionnaire
- psychology
- environment
- independent
- separate
- accommodate
- aggression
- judgment
- definite
- development
- experimenter
- significant
- biased (write *biased sample*, not *bias sample*)
- prejudiced (write *They are prejudiced*, not *They are prejudice*.)
- led (past tense of *to lead*, as in *The results led the researchers to the following conclusions*.)
- cited (*The researchers cited several previous studies*. Don't confuse with *sighted* or *sited*.)

Professor Robert Goeckel of Political Science notes that students confuse *capitol* and *capital*, *bloc* and *block*. For additional discipline-specific information about spelling, see:

The Psychology Department Writing Guide

Professor of History Bill Cook's list of commonly misspelled words.