5. Spelling
(See also Chapter 7 “Compounding Examples” and Chapter 9 “Abbreviations and Letter Symbols”)

5.1. GPO uses Webster’s Third New International Dictionary as its guide for the spelling of words not appearing in the GPO Style Manual. Colloquial and dialect spellings are not used unless required by the subject matter or specially requested. The tendency of some producers of computer-assisted publications to rely on the limited capability of some spell-checking programs adds importance to this list.

**Preferred and difficult spellings**

5.2. In addition to indicating the preferred forms of words with variant spellings, the list also contains other words frequently misspelled or causing uncertainty. (See also “Word Division,” a supplement to the GPO Style Manual.)

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<th>all right</th>
<th>aqueduct</th>
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<td>adjuster</td>
<td>altogether</td>
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<td>aberration</td>
<td>ad nauseam</td>
<td>all together</td>
<td>arrester</td>
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<tr>
<td>abetter</td>
<td>adviser</td>
<td>(collectively)</td>
<td>artifact</td>
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<tr>
<td>abettor (law)</td>
<td>advisor (law)</td>
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<td>adz</td>
<td>ambidextrous</td>
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<td>aegis</td>
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<th>backward</th>
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bargainor (law)
baritone
bark (boat)
barreled, -ing
bastille
bathyscaphe
battalion
bazaar (event)
bizarre (strange on absurd)
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Britannia
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buncombe
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caffeine
calcareous
calcimine
caldron
calendar
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caliber
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Caribbean
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cigarette
citable
cite (quote)
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commentor (law)
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commiserate
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connector (road)
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forgettable
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hemorrhage
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hiccup
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hijack
homeopath
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hypotenuse
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eminent (famous)
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imperiled, -ing
impostor
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ingenuous (simple)
innocuous
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instill, -ed, -ing
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ensure (guarantee)
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interceptor
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internment (jail)
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kopek
kumquat
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lathe (machine)
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libelant
libeled, -ing
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licensor (grantor)
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likable
lilliputian
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lineage (descent)
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liquor
liqueur
liter
livable
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loathe (detest)
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lodestone
lodgment
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luster
lyonnaise
M
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Mafia
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millinery (hats)
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misspell
mite
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modeler
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mollusk
molt
moneys
monogramed, -ing
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mortality
movable
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Muslim
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N
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Navajo
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neophyte
niacin
nickel
niter
nonplused
northward
Novocain
(trademark)
novocaine
(anesthetic)
numskull
O
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obloquy
ocher
octet
offal
offense
omelet
ophthalmology
opossum
orangutan
orbited, -ing
ordinance (law)
ordnance (military)
organdy
overseas or overseas
P
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plow
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pommeled, -ing
pontoon
porcellaneous
practice (n., v.)
precedence
(priority)
precedents (usage)
prerogative
pretense
preventive
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### Anglicized and foreign words

5.3. Diacritical marks are not used with anglicized words.

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<td>debris</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>brassiere</td>
<td>debut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cabana</td>
<td>debutante</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cafe</td>
<td>decollete</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crepe</td>
<td>dejeuner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>denouement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>crepe de chine</td>
<td>depot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>elite</td>
<td>dos-a-dos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>entree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>etude</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>facade</td>
<td>faience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>faux pas</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fete</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fiance (masc., fem.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>frappe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>garçon</td>
<td>grelote</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>grille</td>
<td>gruyère</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>habitue</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4. Foreign words carry the diacritical marks as an essential part of their spelling.

| I   | ingénue         | moire                  | portière          | seance       |
| J   | jardinière      | naïve                  | poussé café       | senor        |
| L   | laissez faire   | naivety                | première          | smorgasbord  |
|     | litterateur     | née                    | protège (masc., fem.) | soiree     |
| M   | matériel        | opéra bouffe           | puree             | soufflé      |
|     | matinée         | opéra comique          |                   | suède        |
|     | melange         |                        |                   |              |
|     | melee           |                        |                   |              |
|     | menage          |                        |                   |              |
|     | mesalliance     |                        |                   |              |
|     | métier          |                        |                   |              |

| N   | moire           | portière              | seance           |
|     | naïve           | poussé café           | senor            |
|     | naivety         | première              | smorgasbord      |

Plural forms

5.5. Nouns ending in o immediately preceded by a vowel add s to form the plural; nouns ending in o preceded by a consonant add es to form the plural, except as indicated in the following list.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>albinos</th>
<th>falsettos</th>
<th>merinos</th>
<th>sextodecimos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>armadillos</td>
<td>gauchos</td>
<td>mestizos</td>
<td>sextos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>avocados</td>
<td>ghettos</td>
<td>octavos</td>
<td>siroccos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>banjos</td>
<td>halos</td>
<td>octodecimos</td>
<td>solos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cantos</td>
<td>indigos</td>
<td>pianos</td>
<td>tangelos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cascos</td>
<td>infernos</td>
<td>piccolos</td>
<td>tobaccos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>centos</td>
<td>juntos</td>
<td>pomelos</td>
<td>twos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>didos</td>
<td>kimonos</td>
<td>provisos</td>
<td>tyros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>duodecimos</td>
<td>lassos</td>
<td>quartos</td>
<td>virtuosos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dynamos</td>
<td>magnetos</td>
<td>salvos</td>
<td>zeros</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>escudos</td>
<td>mementos</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.6.  When a noun is hyphenated with an adverb or preposition, the plural is formed on the noun.

- comings-in
- fillers-in
- goings-on
- hangers-on
- markers-up
- listeners-in
- passers-by
- lookers-on
- swearers-in

5.7.  When neither word is a noun, the plural is formed on the last word.

- also-rans
- come-ons
- go-betweens
- higher-ups
- run-ins
- tie-ins

5.8.  In forming the plurals of compound terms, the significant word takes the plural form.

**Significant word first:**
- adjutants general
- aides-de-camp
- ambassadors at large
- attorneys at law
- attorneys general
- billets-doux
- bills of fare
- brothers-in-law
- chargés d’affaires
- chiefs of staff
- commanders in chief
- comptrollers general
- consuls general
- courts-martial
- crepes suzette
- daughters-in-law
- governors general
- grants-in-aid
- heirs at law
- inspectors general
- men-of-war
- ministers-designate
- mothers-in-law
- notaries public
- pilots-in-command
- postmasters general
- presidents-elect
- prisoners of war
- reductions in force

**Significant word in middle:**
- assistant attorneys general
- assistant chiefs of staff
- assistant comptrollers general
- assistant surgeons general

**Significant word last:**
- assistant attorneys
- assistant commissioners
- assistant corporation counsels
- assistant directors
- assistant general counsels
- brigadier generals
- deputy judges
- deputy sheriffs
- general counsels
- judge advocates
- judge advocate generals
- lieutenant colonels
- major generals
- provost marshals
- provost marshal generals
- quartermaster generals
5.9. Nouns ending with *ful* form the plural by adding *s* at the end; if it is necessary to express the idea that more than one container was filled, the two elements of the solid compound are printed as separate words and the plural is formed by adding *s* to the noun.

- five bucketfuls of the mixture (one bucket filled five times)
- five buckets full of earth (separate buckets)
- three cupfuls of flour (one cup filled three times)
- three cups full of coffee (separate cups)

5.10. The following list comprises other words the plurals of which may cause difficulty.

- addendum, addenda
- adieu, adieus
- agendum, agenda
- alga, algae
- alumnus, alumni (masc.); alumna, alumnae (fem.)
- antenna, antennas (antennae, zoology)
- appendix, appendixes
- aquarium, aquariums
- automaton, automatons
- axis, axes
- bandeau, bandeaux
- basis, bases
- bateau, bateaux
- beau, beaus
- cactus, cactuses
- calix, calices
- cargo, cargoes
- chassis (singular and plural)
- men employees
- secretaries-treasurers
- women aviators
- No word significant in itself:
  - forget-me-nots
  - hand-me-downs
  - jack-in-the-pulpits
  - man-of-the-earths
  - pick-me-ups
  - will-o’-the-wisps
focus, focuses  
folium, folia  
formula, formulas  
forum, forums  
fungus, fungi  
genius, geniuses  
genus, genera  
gladiolus (singular and plural)  
helix, helices  
hypothesis, hypotheses  
index, indexes (indices, scientific)  
insigne, insignia  
italic (singular and plural)  
Kansas Citys  
lacuna, lacunae  
larva, larvae  
larynx, larynxes  
len, lenses  
lira, lire  
locus, loci  
madam, mesdames  
Marys  
matrix, matrices  
maximum, maximums  
medium, mediums or media  
memorandum, memorandums  
minimum, minimums  
minutia, minutiae  
monsieur, messieurs  
nucleus, nuclei  
oasis, oases  
octopus, octopuses  
opus, opera  
parenthesis, parentheses  
phenomenon, phenomena  
phylum, phyla  
plateau, plateaus  
podium, podiums  
procès-verbal, procès-verbaux  
radius, radii  
radix, radices  
referendum, referendums  
sanatorium, sanatoriums  
sanitarium, sanitariums  
septum, septa  
sequela, sequelae  
seraph, seraphs  
seta, setae  
ski, skis  
stadium, stadiums  
stimulus, stimuli  
stratum, strata  
stylus, styles  
syllabus, syllabuses  
symposium, symposia  
synopsis, synopses  
tableau, tableaus  
taxi, taxis  
terminus, termini  
testatrix, testatrices  
thesaurus, thesauri  
thesis, theses  
thorax, thoraxes  
vertebra, vertebrae (vertebrae, zoology)  
virtuoso, virtuosos  
vortex, vortexes

Endings “ible” and “able”

5.11. The following words end in *ible*; other words in this class end in *able*.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>ible</em> Words</th>
<th><em>able</em> Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abhorrible</td>
<td>appetible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accendible</td>
<td>apprehensible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accessible</td>
<td>audible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addible</td>
<td>avertible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adducible</td>
<td>bipartible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admissible</td>
<td>circumscripible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abhorrible</td>
<td>coctible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accendible</td>
<td>coercible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accessible</td>
<td>cognoscible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addible</td>
<td>cohesible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adducible</td>
<td>collapsible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admissible</td>
<td>collectible(s)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abhorrible</td>
<td>combustible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accendible</td>
<td>comestible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accessible</td>
<td>commonsensible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>addible</td>
<td>compatible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>adducible</td>
<td>compatible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>admissible</td>
<td>compatible</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Endings “ise,” “ize,” and “yze”

5.12. A large number of words have the termination ise, ize, or yze. The letter l is followed by yze if the word expresses an idea of loosening or separating, as analyze; all other words of this class, except those ending with the suffix wise and those in the following list, end in ize.

advertise
advise
affranchise
apprise (to inform)
apprise (to appraise)
arise
chastise
circumcise
comprise
compromise
demise
despise
device
disenfranchise
disfranchise
disguise
empire
enfranchise
enterprise

excise
exercise
exorcise
franchise
improvise
incise
merchandise
misadvise
mortise
premise
prise (to force)
prize (to value)
reprise
revise
rise
supervise
surmise
surprise
televise

Endings “cede,” “ceed,” and “sede”

5.13. Only one word ends in sede (supersede); only three end in ceed (exceed, proceed, succeed); all other words of this class end in cede (precede, secede, etc.).
Doubled consonants

5.14. A single consonant following a single vowel and ending in a monosyllable or a final accented syllable is doubled before a suffix beginning with a vowel.

- bag, bagging
- format, formatting
- input, inputting
- red, reddish
- rob, robbing
- transfer, transferred
- total, totaled, totaling
- travel, traveled, traveling

5.15. If the accent in a derivative falls upon an earlier syllable than it does in the root word, the consonant is not doubled.

- refer, reference
- prefer, preference
- infer, inference

Indefinite articles

5.16. The indefinite article *a* is used before a consonant and an aspirated *h*; *an* is used before a silent *h* and all vowels except *u* pronounced as in *visual* and *o* pronounced as in *one*.

- a historic occasion
- a hotel
- a human being
- a humble man
- a union
- an herbseller
- an hour
- an honor
- an onion
- an oyster
- but
- an H-U-D directive
- a HUD directive

5.17. When a group of initials begins with *b, c, d, g, j, k, p, q, t, u, v, w, y,* or *z,* each having a consonant sound, the indefinite article *a* is used.

- a BLS compilation
- a CIO finding
- a GAO limitation
- a WWW search
- a UFO sighting

5.18. When a group of initials begins with *a, e, f, h, i, l, m, n, o, r, s,* or *x,* each having a vowel sound, the indefinite article *an* is used.

- an AEC report
- an FCC (ef) ruling
- an NSC (en) proclamation
- an RFC (ahr) loan

5.19. Use of the indefinite article *a* or *an* before a numerical expression is determined by the consonant or vowel sound of the beginning syllable.

- an 11-year-old
- a onetime winner
- a III (three) group
- an VIII (eight) classification
- a IV–F (four ef) category (military draft)
- a 4–H Club
Geographic names

5.20. The spelling of geographic names must conform to the decisions of the U.S. Board on Geographic Names (BGN) (http://geonames.usgs.gov). In the absence of such a decision, the U.S. Directory of Post Offices is to be used.

5.21. If the decisions or the rules of the BGN permit the use of either the local official form or the conventional English form, it is the prerogative of the originating office to select the form that is most suitable for the matter in hand; therefore, in marking copy or reading proof, it is required only to verify the spelling of the particular form used. GPO’s preference is for the conventional English form. Copy will be followed as to accents, but these should be consistent throughout the entire job.

Nationalities, etc.

5.22. The table on Demonyms in Chapter 17 “Useful Tables” shows forms to be used for nouns and adjectives denoting nationality.

5.23. In designating the natives of the States, the following forms will be used.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Alabamian</th>
<th>Louisianian</th>
<th>Ohioan</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alaskan</td>
<td>Mainer</td>
<td>Oklahoman</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arizonan</td>
<td>Marylander</td>
<td>Oregonian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arkansan</td>
<td>Massachusettsian</td>
<td>Pennsylvanian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Californian</td>
<td>Michiganian</td>
<td>Rhode Islander</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloradan</td>
<td>Minnesotan</td>
<td>South Carolinian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticuter</td>
<td>Mississippian</td>
<td>South Dakotan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delawarean</td>
<td>Missourian</td>
<td>Tennessean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Floridian</td>
<td>Montanan</td>
<td>Texan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgian</td>
<td>Nebraskan</td>
<td>Utahn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hawaiian</td>
<td>Nevadan</td>
<td>Vermonter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Idahoan</td>
<td>New Hampshirite</td>
<td>Virginian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinoisan</td>
<td>New Jerseyan</td>
<td>Washingtonian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indianian</td>
<td>New Mexican</td>
<td>West Virginian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iowan</td>
<td>New Yorker</td>
<td>Wisconsinite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansan</td>
<td>North Carolinian</td>
<td>Wyomingite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kentuckkian</td>
<td>North Dakotan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.24. Observe the following forms:

- African-American
- Alaska Native (Aleuts, Eskimos, Indians of Alaska)
- Amerindian
- Native American (American Indian)
- Puerto Rican
- Part-Hawaiian (legal status)

*but* part-Japanese, etc.

Native American words

5.25. Words, including tribal and other proper names of Indian, Aleut, Hawaiian, and other groups, are to be followed literally as to spelling and the use of spaces, hyphens, etc.

Transliteration

5.26. In the spelling of nongeographic words transliterated from Chinese, Japanese, or any other language that does not have a Latin alphabet, copy is to be followed literally.