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Crazy English Pronunciation

1. The Chaos by Gerard Nolst Trenité

The Chaos is a poem by the Dutch writer and traveler, Gerard Nolst Trenité, which is meant to demonstrate the extreme irregularity of the English language. This classic English poem contains about 800 of the worst irregularities in English spelling and pronunciation.

See if you can pronounce the entire poem. If so... you're doing better than 9 out of 10 people out there!

Read it aloud (good luck!):

Dearest creature in creation,
Study English pronunciation.
I will teach you in my verse
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse, and worse.
I will keep you, Suzy, busy,
Make your head with heat grow dizzy.
Tear in eye, your dress will tear.
So shall I! Oh hear my prayer.

Just compare heart, beard, and heard,
Dies and diet, lord and word,
Sword and sward, retain and Britain.
(Mind the latter, how it's written.)
Now I surely will not plague you
With such words as plaque and ague.
But be careful how you speak:
Say break and steak, but bleak and streak;
Cloven, oven, how and low,
Script, receipt, show, poem, and toe.

Hear me say, devoid of trickery,
Daughter, laughter, and Terpsichore,
Typhoid, measles, topsails, aisles,
Exiles, similes, and reviles;
Scholar, vicar, and cigar,

Solar, mica, war and far;
One, anemone, Balmoral,
Kitchen, lichen, laundry, laurel;
Gertrude, German, wind and mind,
Scene, Melpomene, mankind.

Billet does not rhyme with ballet,
Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet.
Blood and flood are not like food,
Nor is mould like should and would.
Viscous, viscount, load and broad,
Toward, to forward, to reward.
And your pronunciation's OK
When you correctly say croquet,
Rounded, wounded, grieve and sieve,
Friend and fiend, alive and live.

Ivy, privy, famous; clamour
And enamour rhyme with hammer.
River, rival, tomb, bomb, comb,
Doll and roll and some and home.
Stranger does not rhyme with anger,
Neither does devour with clangour.
Souls but foul, haunt but aunt,
Font, front, wont, want, grand, and grant,
Shoes, goes, does. Now first say finger,
And then singer, ginger, linger,
Real, zeal, mauve, gauze, gouge and gauge,
Marriage, foliage, mirage, and age.

Query does not rhyme with very,
Nor does fury sound like bury.
Dost, lost, post and doth, cloth, loth.
Job, nob, bosom, transom, oath.
Though the differences seem little,
We say actual but victual.
Refer does not rhyme with deafer.
Foeffer does, and zephyr, heifer.
Mint, pint, senate and sedate;
Dull, bull, and George ate late.
Scenic, Arabic, Pacific,
Science, conscience, scientific.

Liberty, library, heave and heaven,
Rachel, ache, moustache, eleven.
We say hallowed, but allowed,
People, leopard, towed, but vowed.
Mark the differences, moreover,
Between mover, cover, clover;

Leeches, breeches, wise, precise,
Chalice, but police and lice;
Camel, constable, unstable,
Principle, disciple, label.

Petal, panel, and canal,
Wait, surprise, plait, promise, pal.
Worm and storm, chaise, chaos, chair,
Senator, spectator, mayor.
Tour, but our and succour, four.
Gas, alas, and Arkansas.
Sea, idea, Korea, area,
Psalm, Maria, but malaria.
Youth, south, southern, cleanse and clean.
Doctrine, turpentine, marine.

Compare alien with Italian,
Dandelion and battalion.
Sally with ally, yea, ye,
Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, and key.
Say aver, but ever, fever,
Neither, leisure, skein, deceiver.
Heron, granary, canary.
Crevice and device and aerie.

Face, but preface, not efface.
Phlegm, phlegmatic, ass, glass, bass.
Large, but target, gin, give, verging,
Ought, out, joust and scour, scourging.
Ear, but earn and wear and tear
Do not rhyme with here but ere.
Seven is right, but so is even,
Hyphen, roughen, nephew Stephen,
Monkey, donkey, Turk and jerk,
Ask, grasp, wasp, and cork and work.

Pronunciation — think of Psyche!
Is a paling stout and spikey?
Won't it make you lose your wits,
Writing groats and saying grits?
It's a dark abyss or tunnel:
Strewn with stones, stowed, solace, gunwale,
Islington and Isle of Wight,
Housewife, verdict and indict.

Finally, which rhymes with enough –
Though, through, plough, or dough, or cough?
Hiccough has the sound of cup.
My advice is to give up!!!

2. The Spell Checker

Eye halve a spelling chequer,
it came with my pea sea.
It plainly marques, for my revue,
miss steaks eye kin knot sea.
Eye strike a key and type a word
and weight for it two say,
Weather eye am wrong oar write
it shows me strait a weigh.
As soon as a mist ache is maid,
it nose bee fore two long.
And eye can put the error rite,
it's rare lea ever wrong.
Eye have run this poem trew it,
I am shore your pleased two no.
Its letter perfect awl the weigh,
my chequer tolled me sew.

Ewer thawts pleaz.

3. English Around The World

My bed has three blankets and a large guilt my parents gave me.

I always ate lunch at school. But every day my mother made me suffer.

It is dangerous to smoke while you are becoming pregnant.

In a Tokyo bar: Special cocktails for the ladies with nuts

In a Czechoslovakian tourist agency: Take one of our horse-driven city tours - we guarantee no miscarriages.

Sweden: in the window of a Swedish furrier: Fur coats made for ladies from their own skin.

In a Rome laundry: Ladies, leave your clothes here and spend the afternoon having a good time.

A sign posted in Germany's Black Forest: It is strictly forbidden on our black forest camping site that people of different sex, for instance, men and women, live together in one tent unless they are married with each other for that purpose

Thailand: an ad for donkey rides asked "Would you like to ride on your own ass?"

Denmark: in a Copenhagen airline ticket office: We take your bags and send them in all directions.

4. "Ough" A Phonetic Fantasy by William Thomas Goodge.

The baker-man was kneading dough
And whistling softly, sweet and lough.

Yet ever and anon he'd cough
As though his head were coming ough!

"My word!" said he, "but this is rough:
This flour is simply awful stough!"

He punched and thumped it through and through,
As all good bakers dough!

"I'd sooner drive," said he "a plough
Than be a baker anyhough!"

Thus spake the baker kneading dough;
But don't let on I told you sough!

5. *More -ough*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NjwwgFhhZGg&feature=youtu.be>

Though I thought investing would be tough, after thoroughly ploughing through the borough ... I rethought ... due to a drought the price of dough was enough to make one cough, hiccough and splutter. The shares were worth nought – I have since thrown them in the lough. Maybe Nessie will slough her skin when she sees them. I ought to have known better! Investing really is a series of peaks and troughs!

6. *More -ough*

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F6_AaQ6txu8

7. *More -ough*

A rough-coated, dough-faced ploughman strode through the streets of Scarborough, coughing and hiccoughing thoughtfully.

I thought it would be tough to plough through the soil, though it was falling into the lough at the end of the field that left me thoroughly coughing and hiccoughing.