

THE CHAOS / DE CHAOS

"The Chaos" is a poem demonstrating the irregularity of English spelling and pronunciation. Written by Dutch writer, traveller, and teacher Gerard Nolst Trenité (1870–1946) under the pseudonym of Charivarius, it includes about 800 examples of irregular spelling.

Dearest creature in Creation,	Daughter, laughter and Terpsichore,	Toward, to forward, to reward,
Studying English pronunciation,	Typhoid; measles, topsails, aisles;	And your pronunciation's O.K.
I will teach you in my verse	Exiles, similes, reviles;	When you say correctly croquet;
Sounds like corpse, corps, horse and worse.	Wholly, holly; signal, signing;	Rounded, wounded; grieve and sieve;
It will keep you, Susy, busy,	Thames; examining, combining;	Friend and fiend; alive and live;
Make your head with heat grow dizzy;	Scholar, vicar and cigar,	Liberty, library; heave and heaven;
Tear in eye your dress you'll tear.	Solar, mica, war and far.	Rachel, ache, moustache; eleven.
So shall I! Oh, hear my prayer,	<i>[From "desire": desirable—</i>	We say hallowed, but allowed;
Pray, console your loving poet,	<i>admirable from "admire";</i>	People, leopard; towed, but vowed
Make my coat look new, dear, sew it?	<i>Lumber, plumber; bier but brier;</i>	Mark the difference, moreover,
Just compare heart, beard and heard,	<i>Chatham, brougham; renown but known,</i>	Between mover, plover, Dover,
Dies and diet, lord and word,	<i>Knowledge; done, but gone and tone,</i>	Leeches, breeches; wise, precise;
Sword and sward, retain and Britain,	<i>One, anemone; Balmoral;</i>	Chalice but police and lice.
(Mind the latter, how it's written!)	<i>Kitchen, lichen; laundry, laurel;</i>	Camel; constable, unstable;
Made has not the sound of bade,	<i>Gertrude, German; wind and mind;</i>	Principle, disciple; label;
Say—said, pay—paid, laid, but plaid.	<i>Scene, Melpomene, mankind;</i>	Petal, penal and canal;
Now I surely will not plague you	<i>Tortoise, turquoise, chamois-leather,</i>	Wait, surmise, plait, promise; pal.
With such words as vague and ague,	<i>Reading, Reading, heathen, heather.</i>	Suit, suite, run, circuit, conduit
But be careful how you speak,	<i>This phonetic labyrinth</i>	Rime with "shirk it" and "beyond it",
Say break, steak, but bleak and streak,	<i>Gives moss, gross, brook, brooch,</i>	But it is not hard to tell,
Previous, precious; fuchsia, via;	<i>ninth, plinth.</i>	Why it's pall, mall, but Pall Mall.
Pipe, snipe, recipe and choir,	<i>Billet does not end like ballet;</i>	Muscle, muscular; gaol; iron;
Cloven, oven; how and low;	<i>Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet;</i>	Timber, climber; bullion, lion,
Script, receipt; shoe, poem, toe,	<i>Blood and flood are not like food,</i>	Worm and storm; chaise, chaos, chair;
Hear me say, devoid of trickery:	<i>Nor is mould like should and would.</i>	Senator, spectator, mayor.
	<i>Banquet is not nearly parquet,</i>	Ivy, privy; famous, clamour
	<i>Which is said to rime with "darky".]</i>	And enamour rime with "hammer."
	Viscous, viscount; load and broad;	

Pussy, hussy and possess.

Desert, but dessert, address.

Golf, wolf; countenance; lieutenants

Hoist, in lieu of flags, left pennants.

River, rival; tomb, bomb, comb;

Doll and roll and some and home.

Stranger does not rime with anger,

Neither does devour with clangour.

Soul, but foul and gaunt, but aunt;

[*Font, front, wont; want, grand, and, grant,*

Shoes, goes, does.[1]) *Now first say: finger,*

And then: singer, ginger, linger.

Real, zeal; mauve, gauze and gauge;

Marriage, foliage, mirage, age.

Query does not rime with very,

Nor does fury sound like bury.

Dost, lost, post and doth, cloth, loth;

Job, Job, blossom, bosom, oath.

Though the difference seems little,

We say actual, but victual,

Seat, sweat, chaste, caste; Leigh, eight, height;

Put, nut; granite, but unite.

Reefer does not rime with "deaffer,"

Feoffer does, and zephyr, heifer.

Dull, bull; Geoffrey, George; ate, late;

Hint, pint; senate, but sedate;

Scenic, Arabic, pacific;

Science, conscience, scientific;

Tour, but our, and succour, four;

Gas, alas and Arkansas!

Sea, idea, guinea, area,

Psalm; Maria, but malaria;

Youth, south, southern; cleanse and clean;

Doctrine, turpentine, marine.

Compare alien with Italian,

Dandelion with battalion,

Sally with ally; yea, ye,

Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, key, quay!

Say aver, but ever, fever,

Neither, leisure, skein, receiver.

Never guess—it is not safe;

We say calves, valves, half, but Ralf!

Heron; granary, canary;

Crevice, and device, and eyrie;

Face but preface, but efface,

Phlegm, phlegmatic; ass, glass, bass;

Large, but target, gin, give, verging;

Ought, out, joust and scour, but scouring;]

Ear, but earn; and wear and tear

Do not rime with "here", but "ere".

Seven is right, but so is even;

Hyphen, roughen, nephew, Stephen;

Monkey, donkey; clerk and jerk;

Asp, 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 groats?

It's a dark abyss or tunnel,

Strewn with stones, like rowlock, gunwale,

Islington and Isle of Wight,

Housewife, verdict and indict!

Don't you think so, reader, rather,

Saying lather, bather, father?

Finally: which rimes with "enough,"

Though, through, plough, cough, hough, or tough?

Hiccough has the sound of "cup".....

My advice is—give it up!