

new, experience. Familiarization with MCQ, MEQ, and viva techniques is in no way cheating and knowledge of these examination methods is not something which can be assumed in a 'competent' practitioner unless he is a trainer. Before risking the application fee it is sensible, for the 'established' practitioner especially, to seek such a course.

In Coventry we have been organizing MRCGP courses since 1971 and find no conflict in simultaneously supporting the College in its assessment of competence. Our next course will be in the spring of next year and if a little knowledge is gained or an attitude modified at the same time, so much the better.

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JOURNAL STYLE

Sir,

I enjoyed Dr Stoddart's erudite discussion on how to spell analyse/analyze (November *Journal*, p. 699) and agree that the arguments for the 's' spelling are probably stronger. However, the special case of analyse should not be allowed to obscure the issue of -ise/-ize spellings in general. The *Journal* is to be commended for its recent change to -ize spellings and is now one of the few British medical journals that accords such words their correct spelling.

When a verb is derived from a noun or an adjective (or from a nominal or adjectival stem) using the Greek suffix *-izein*, meaning, loosely, 'to make', then the English form is -ize. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (and the whole of the Oxford University Press), the Cambridge University Press, *The Times*, Webster (hence American usage), and Fowler, leave us in no doubt as to the correctness of this view. Most other Western European languages, except French and German, also adopt the 'z' spelling, as of course does Latin (*-izare*).

However, the following should be noted:

1. The 's' spelling is correct in verbs derived from certain Latin roots, namely *visum* (advise, devise, improvise, supervise, revise, televise), *misum* (surmise, compromise), *prensum* (comprise, surprise, apprise, prise), *spectrum* (despise), and *cisum* (excise, incise, circumcise). Although these 's' spellings are few in number compared with the 'z' spellings, most of them are in frequent use. Owing to their familiarity, and since the -ise ending is clearly not a suffix, and does not mean 'to make',

these words are unlikely to be spelt incorrectly. It should be noted though, that despite its derivation, 'prise' (to lever) is spelt with a 'z' by many authorities.

2. In a few verbs derived from certain French *-ir* verbs, the particle *-iss-* that occurs in some parts of these verbs has become *-ise* in English (advertise, enfranchise and its derivatives), instead of the more usual *-ish* (polish, perish, furnish, ravish etc). Whether or not these *-ise* spellings can be assimilated to *-ize* is debatable. The English verb derived from the French *agrandir* is often spelt 'aggrandize' (to make grand), so it may be considered that there is a precedent for the form 'advertize' (to make an 'advert'), and indeed, this spelling is allowed by Webster, although as a second choice. Alternatively, it may be felt that in view of their derivation (from *agrandissement* and *avertissement*, respectively), both of these verbs should be spelt with an 's'. In the case of 'enfranchise', no dictionaries allow the 'z' spelling (although it means 'to make free'), perhaps because it is felt that the *-s-* really derives from the French noun *franchise* (ultimately from the Latin *-itia*), and is therefore more admissible than if it had originated from the *-iss-* of *enfranchissement*.

The derivation of 'chastise' is not clear, but this verb is usually spelt with an 's', and this seems to have been acquired by assimilation into this *-iss-* group, even though there is no French *-ir* verb or *-iss-* particle (*châtier*, *châtiment*). Webster and certain other authorities, however, although they adopt the 's' spelling, more plausibly consider this verb to be of the *-izein* type. 'Chastize' is in fact allowed by the *Shorter Oxford Dictionary*.

3. Verbs which have been formed from the Latin nominal suffixes *-itius*, *-itia*, or *-itium* have occasionally become *-ise* in English (exercise, merchandise), instead of the more usual *-ice* (service, notice, police etc.). No serious attempt appears to have been made to assimilate verbs in this category to *-ize*, although interestingly, 'gormandize' is said to derive from the French noun *gourmandise*, and 'prize' (to value) derives, like 'price', from the Latin *pretium*. 'Exorcize', which is undoubtedly an *-izein* derivative (meaning 'to make an oath'), is frequently misspelt 'exorcise', perhaps by wrongful association with 'exercise'.

The prevalent practice of employing the 's' spelling irrespective of derivation is illogical and betrays a lack of linguistic awareness. When the Earl of Kent in *King Lear* declared 'Thou whoreson zed! Thou unnecessary letter!', it cannot be assumed that he

was advocating that we forgo the letter 'z' at the expense of etymological principles!

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Sir,

Oh what a tangled web I wove, when first I practised to improve! (A poor rhyme, but there are respectable precedents). I read Dr Stoddart's courteous and erudite letter (November *Journal*, p.699) with great interest, but noted that he adduced no positive evidence for the correctness of 'analyze' as distinct from 'analyse'. He based himself entirely on little sideswipes at the respectability of 'analyse', but generously admitted in his last paragraph that on balance we are right to use it. Well and good, and I will now with equal generosity cede a point. Were my arm to be twisted, and my admission to Heaven to depend on it, I would proclaim that the correct verb form of analysis is 'analysize'—but I would go to the stake reaffirming that it is a "pedantically correct horror", for in print it is ugly and in speech has the same effect on the upper denture as dried figs.

I much enjoyed Dr Stoddart's divagations from the main theme, especially his examples of the strange American use of 'haemolyze' and 'electrolyze'. But did I detect a soft impeachment that I might be among those who do not use an "intellectually respectable way of adjudicating on the merits of this problem"? Let me state unequivocally that I have for long considered that the umbilical cord between English and American was cut about a century ago, and that the latter is now completely viable on its own—and a good thing too—differing as it does so widely in pronunciation, spelling, and syntax. How many Englishmen, for instance, would reply to the question "Have you any money?" by using the American "Yes, I do"? And how many English writers would expect to be understood *alla prima* were they to use the negative of the great American subjunctive?

I stress this last point so that I not be misunderstood—if you see what I mean. Clearly, we may no longer quote the American language in our defence.

All in all, this gentle little controversy has achieved nothing but good. You, sir, have graciously admitted the error of your ways, and sin no more: Dr Stoddart and I have enjoyed an amiable stroll through the groves of Academe, in company with the great Authorities, and all is gas and gaiters (American: hunky-dory)! Analyse rules, OK?

JOHN MILES