

Take your whisky straight, or with an 'e'

By Theodore M. Bernstein

Two kinds of drinks. At the end of an article last month I had *whiskey*. Samuel C. Brown of Boston writes to say that the word was spelled improperly and he lays down a guide to the proper spelling of two kinds of liquor: Scotch *whisky* and Bourbon *whiskey*. But he doesn't go far

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on words

enough. The facts are that American and Irish booze is spelled *whiskey*, while British and Canadian spirits are spelled *whisky*. And now, folks, drink . . . hic . . . up.

Wrongoff-Righton! It's a new game we have invented, which might be helpful in English instruction, and we named it *Wrongoff-Righton!* Here's the way it works: We present to you several sentences each of which contains one wrong word. When you think of the right word for sentence No. 1 you put it down to be the first word of a new sentence we are trying to build. Then you go to sentence No. 2, you discover the wrong word in that one, and you set down the word it should have been as the second word of the new sentence. And so on. Here we go, then, with eight sentences, each containing one wrong

word. What you are to do is find the right word that should have been used in each instance, set it down, go to the next sentence, then the next and the next until you have completed the eight-word target sentence.

1. Our cat lays down after every meal.
 2. The ninety members of the club is to meet next week.
 3. The candidates insulting remark was unexcusable.
 4. Irregardless of the heavy rain, the party went out fishing.
 5. The Presidential Palace is east from Beirut.
 6. Whom shall I say is calling?
 7. She say she is too tired to swim.
 8. For they who love their city the tax is not too bad.
- The *Righton* sentence appears below.

The *righton* sentence: "Lies are inexcusable regardless of who says them."

Now for something good. Suppose the home team lost and a home town sports writer said that the opposing team "went ahead *for good*" in the second quarter. Some home town readers might ask, "What was good about it?" J. V. Williams of Philadelphia asks whether the phrase *for good* is a colloquialism or perhaps Pennsylvania Dutch. It is neither, it has been in use in English since the early 17th century. Sometimes it appeared — and still appears — as *for good and all*. It suggests a valid conclusion, a condition of finally indicating no further cause for concern. In that sense *good* could be taken to mean good.

Wood oddities. "Did you ever eat a *hamburger* made with ham?" asks Ralph Berelli of Ambler, Pa., "Then why are they called *hamburgers*?" They are called *hamburgers* because they originated in the German city of Hamburg. Originally, almost a century ago, these chopped beef dishes were called *hamburg steaks*, then they became *hamburger steaks* and when they developed into sandwiches they were termed *hamburgers*. (During World War I *hamburger steaks* were called *salisbury steaks*.) The *ham* part of *hamburger* apparently deceived many people because the *-burger* part came to be regarded as a suffix and that brought into being *cheeseburger*, *chickenburger*, *porkburger* and — you name it. Better yet, you eat it.

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