

personal english



Grammar Tidbit #34 Sensational Spelling

Sensational spelling is the **deliberate spelling of a word in an incorrect or non-standard way for special effects**. Sensational spellings are common in advertising and product placement. In particular, brand names such as Cadbury's "Creme Egg" (standard English spelling: cream), Weetabix (wheat), Blu-ray (blue), Kellogg's "Froot Loops" (fruit) or Hasbro's Playskool (school) may use unexpected spellings to **draw attention** to or trademark an otherwise common word.



In video games, a well-known example of sensational spelling is Mortal Kombat (combat); some versions of this game also include an "Insert Koin" (coin) prompt in the arcade mode. Sensational spelling may take on a cult value in popular culture, such as the **heavy metal umlaut** (also known as rök dōts, e.g. Motörhead). During the 1960s, **bands** often included in their names **misspelled words** and/or **homophones** that played on **double meanings** of the names as spoken. Examples include The Beatles, an intentional misspelling of "beetles", the Byrds, and Led Zeppelin, in which "led" was deliberately misspelled to make clear it is pronounced /lɛd/ (as in the metal lead) rather than the other pronunciation of "lead", /li:d/.



In the 1980s it became common with funk artists such as Prince (e.g. "U Got The Look", "I Would Die 4 U"), and came to be epitomized in the rap and hip hop genres, with both **song titles** (e.g. T-Pain's *Buy U A Drank*) and artists' names (e.g. Gorillaz, Phanatik, Xzibit,) using the form. Sensational spelling was common amongst **nu metal bands** of the late 1990s and early 2000s (e.g., Korn, Linkin Park and Limp Bizkit). The term 'nu metal' itself is a sensational spelling of 'new metal', and sometimes even stylized as 'nü-metal', with an additional metal umlaut.