

How closely do you pay **attention**?

An article appeared today on the BBC News website that caught my eye: Spelling mistakes 'cost millions' in lost online sales focusing on how “a single spelling mistake can cut online sales in half” according to Charles Duncombe, boss of **of** Tightsplease.co.uk. As someone with a reputation for being a grammar rottweiler, I know how spelling mistakes makes me feel when I see them in an advertising by-line or on-line description, I assume that the **the** writer doesn't pay attention to detail. And if they don't attend to what **their** (should be “they're”) writing, what else might they miss?

Whilst spell check software **if** (should be 'is') very useful, it does not uncover every error, especially if the word is correctly spelled (spelt?) but used wrongly (incorrectly?). To a lot of people it doesn't matter - which may be fine, but if your customer is one of those fussy types like me, it can make **the the** difference between a sale and a miss. And by the looks of the news report, there are more fussy types out there that you might **of** (should be “have”) thought!

But it's not as easy to spot mistakes as you might think, certainly if **your** (should be “you're”!) self-editing. Our brains have a clever way of filling in blanks or correcting errors without us even being consciously aware of them. For example, read this sentence: FINISHED FILES ARE THE RESULT OF YEARS OF SCIENTIFIC STUDY COMBINED WITH THE EXPERIENCE OF YEARS. How many F's were in that sentence? 80% of you reading this will come up with the wrong answer!

Have you checked your promotional material recently and spotted all the mistakes, because you may be giving away sales without even realising!

So, one last question: how many deliberate errors have you spotted in this article? Have a re-read! And if it's going to drive you to distraction, click here for the answer!

You probably guessed 3 or 4 F's in that sentence - the actual answer is 6! Like the repeated words in the various sentences above, our brain reads over 'filler' words that help make grammatical sense.