

Strictly speakin there is no G to drop when you're talkin

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■ Running or runnin? It really doesn't matter... Norfolk people say runnen anyway.

doesn't involve leaving out an h, and saying robin rather than robbing doesn't involve leaving out a g.

In Norfolk and Suffolk we don't actually say walkin anyway; we say walken.

We pronounce baking the same as bacon, and lighting the same as lighten. And we are quite right to do so.

Modern English -ing does two different jobs.

It's used to turn verbs like walk into nouns, as in "walking is good for you" – these are called gerunds.

Secondly, it produces present participles, as in "she's walking down the road".

In medieval English, the gerunds had the same -ing ending that they have today. But the present participles had -end.

Eventually, the Standard English dialect lost the distinction between the gerund and the participle, and finished up using -ing for both.

In Norfolk we also lost the distinction, but we "did different" and went the other way, using -end for both instead.

So when we say walken, it's true that there was a d there that went missing, many hundreds of years ago.

But no one here is dropping any Gs. And no one is being lazy.

I was talking to someone the other day who strongly objected to people saying runnin instead of running. She said she didn't like it because "dropping your Gs is lazy".

Lazy is a pretty odd word to use in this context.

It means "disinclined to work", and it applies to people who can't be bothered to make an effort to do things they're supposed to do. But where did the idea come from that you are "supposed to" say running rather than runnin? And is it really more of an effort to say one rather than the other? Is it easier to say goblin than gobbling, or robin than robbing? No, of course it isn't.

It's not true either to say that the pronunciation of running as runnin involves dropping a g; there was no g sound there to drop in the first place!

The two letters ng stand for a single nasal sound which bears the same relationship to n that g does to d. (Try saying bang, ban and then bag, bad, and you'll see what I mean.)

It's unfortunate that we don't have a single letter in our alphabet to represent it, so we have to use two, as we also do with sh, ch and th. Saying sip rather than ship