



# Spelling Rules

In Conjunction with  
National Literacy Strategy

Name:

Spelling can be terrifying

Some words you just have to learn letter by letter - and that's hard going.  
But if you know the rules in this booklet then huge amounts of words become easy.

### Learn Your Spellings

1. When you're learning to spell a word for the first time, look at it written down, and say it again and again.
2. Copy it out over and over again.
3. Say the word one syllable at a time (over and over again). e.g. **ex-tra-ord-in-ar-y**.
4. Write a sentence to help you remember. e.g. **might Moths In Gardens Hug Trees**.

### If You Forget How To Spell A Word

1. Think about the rules in this booklet
2. Think about words that sound familiar. Maybe your tricky word is spelt in a similar way. e.g. **sign, design**.
3. Try writing the word down a few different ways - sometimes one way will just look right.
4. If you're not doing a test you can look it up in a dictionary.

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## Sneaky words that sound the same

There are lots of words that sound the same, but have different spellings.  
Homophones.

no	know	see	sea
new	knew	great	grate
bow	bough	I	eye
be	bee	in	inn
right	write	heard	herd
threw	through	might	mite
hole	whole	place	plaice
for	four	our	hour
	to	two	too
	their	there	they're
	you	yew	ewe

Use this space to add your own.

## Adding s to make words plural

To make most words plural, just add s.

dog  $\implies$  dogs

worm  $\implies$  worms

pill  $\implies$  pills

If the word ends in h, s or x, add es.

wish  $\implies$  wishes

brush  $\implies$  brushes

bus  $\implies$  buses

glass  $\implies$  glasses

box  $\implies$  boxes

fox  $\implies$  foxes

For words that end with a consonant and y,  
take off the y and add ies.

fly  $\implies$  flies

city  $\implies$  cities

jelly  $\implies$  jellies

berry  $\implies$  berries

These plurals don't end in s - you have to  
learn them.

teeth

mice

children

feet

deer

men

lice

fish

women

## Making words ending in o or a plural

To make most words ending in o and a plural, just add s.

armadillo	⇒	armadillos	samosa	⇒	samosas
igloo	⇒	igloos	umbrella	⇒	umbrellas
piano	⇒	pianos	pizza	⇒	pizzas
cello	⇒	cellos	sofa	⇒	sofas

You have to add es to some of the words that end in o to make them plural.

hero	⇒	heroes	echo	⇒	echoes
buffalo	⇒	buffaloes	flamingo	⇒	flamingos
domino	⇒	dominoes	mango	⇒	mangoes
volcano	⇒	volcanoes	tornado	⇒	tornadoes

## Making words ending in f plural

Add **s** to any word ending in ff to make it a plural.

cuff  $\Rightarrow$  cuffs

earmuff  $\Rightarrow$  earmuffs

cliff  $\Rightarrow$  cliffs

puff  $\Rightarrow$  puffs

Add **es** to a word ending in f or fe, and change the f to a v.

half  $\Rightarrow$  halves

calf  $\Rightarrow$  calves

loaf  $\Rightarrow$  loaves

wolf  $\Rightarrow$  wolves

scarf  $\Rightarrow$  scarves

leaf  $\Rightarrow$  leaves

shelf  $\Rightarrow$  shelves

knife  $\Rightarrow$  knives

thief  $\Rightarrow$  thieves

wife  $\Rightarrow$  wives

Look out for these words that break the rule - the f doesn't change

belief  $\Rightarrow$  beliefs

chief  $\Rightarrow$  chiefs

## Words with an 'ow' sound

'ow' sounds can be spelt ow or ou

'ow'

how

owl

cow

howl

shower

scowl

towel

growl

fowl

power

'ou'

out

found

shout

pound

hour

hound

flour

ground



## Words with an 'oy' sound

You can spell and 'oy' sound oy or oi

'oy'

toy

soya

boy

employ

joy

coyote

royal

ahoy

'oi'

oil

coin

boil

hoist

foil

point

soil

poison

If your trying to spell a word with an 'oy' sound, think about whether you need an 'oy' or an 'oi'.

## Words with an 'air' sound

'air' sounds are spelt air, ear, are or ere

'air'

'ear''

hair

stairs

pear

wear

pair

aircraft

bear

tear

'are''

care

bare

flares

rare

hare

beware

dare

share

nightmare

fare

scare

square

'ere''

where

there

## Words with an 'er' sound

You can spell 'er' sound er, ir or ur

'er'

her	bigger	herd	hunger
tiger	longer	other	danger
baker	certain	person	beefburger

'ir'

stir	circle
bird	dirty
girl	whirl

'ur'

purple	turn
curve	burn
curl	gurgle

## Words with an 'or' sound

You can spell 'or' sound ore, aw, oor or au

### 'ore'

more

score

sore

chore

gore

shore

core

before

### 'aw''

saw

straw

raw

thaw

paw

coleslaw

claw

jackdaw

### 'our'

yours

pour

four

mourn

### 'oor''

door

poor

floor

moor

### 'au'

sauce

autumn

pause

aura

cause

trauma

qu words

Every time you write a **q** follow it with a **u**

quick

question

queen

squeeze

quiet

quaver

quite

quay

quack

quiver

quality

quiz

quantity

queue

quarrel

quit

quarter

squid

squash

Quebec

square

Quasimodo

## Words with ce, ci or cy

A c before an e, i or y sounds like an 's'.  
Don't forget to use a c when you're writing these words

### 'ce words'

cereal	celery	receive	century
ceiling	recent	descend	centigrade
December	cell	except	centipede

### 'ci words'

circle	city	cinema	decimal
circus	citizen	cinnamon	accident
circuit	civil	incisor	discipline

### 'cy words'

fancy	bicycle	cylinder	cypress
lacy	cyclist	mercy	cyclone

## Words with a gh

Spell the 'f' in these words gh

tough rough enough cough trough

You can't hear the gh in these words.  
Don't forget it when you're writing.

### ough

dough thought

though bought

thorough brought

through drought

plough sought

bough fought

### igh

eight bright

light sight

might tight

right weight

fight freight

night height

ie words

These words are all spelt with ie

lie

thief

piece

pie

brief

chief

tie

belief

medieval

fried

fierce

patient

fiery

pierce

friend

field

priest

mischief

shield

niece

handkerchief



## ei words

These words are spelt with ei. You can tell because ei sounds a but like a capital 'A'. k

eight

reins

veil

reign

weigh

vein

freight

neighbour

I before E except after C and when sounding like A such as neighbour and weigh

After c you nearly always put ei

receive

receipt

ceiling

deceive

A few words break this rule.

science

glacier

ancient

These ei words don't follow a rule, so you just have to learn them.

either

their

protein

foreign

neither

weird

height

sovereign

## Silent k and silent g

These words all start with a k.  
Don't forget the k when you write them down.

know

knob

knuckle

knot

knife

knit

knee

knock

knickers

kneel

knight

Don't say the k out loud  
when you're reading.

These words all start with a g.  
Don't forget the g when you write them down.

gnaw

gnashed

Don't say the g out loud  
when you're reading.

gnat

gnarled

gnu

gnomes

## Silent l and silent h

These words all have a silent l.  
Don't forget the l when you write them down.

half

yolk

would

calm

folk

could

chalk

salmon

should

calf

Don't say the l out loud when  
you're reading.

These words all have a silent h.  
Don't forget the h when you write them down.

where

wheat

chemist

when

whale

rhubarb

what

whine

rhyme

Don't say the h out loud  
when you're reading.

whirl

rhino

## Silent w and silent b

These words all have a silent w.  
Don't forget the w when you write them down.

write

wrist

wrapper

wrong

wrinkle

wretch

answer

sword

wrestle

Don't say the w out loud  
when you're reading.

wreck

wrangler

These words all have a silent b.  
Don't forget the b when you write them down.

lamb

tomb

debt

numb

bomb

doubt

dumb

crumb

subtle

thumb

plumb

Don't say the b out loud  
when you're reading.

Letters that are hard to hear

When you say these words, you can't hear all the letters properly. Learn the spellings now so you get them right.

Wedunesday

autumn

government

centre

a

i

dictionary

stationary

business

easyly

library

primary

family

definite

e

o

general

stationery

factory

category

different

frightening

poisonous

catholic

interesting

jewellery

memorable

explanatory

Other examples of letters that are not heard.

grandmother

handkerchief

raspberry

windmll

handbag

cupboard

## Words ending with ing

To make most words end with ing, just add ing.

doing

pulling

meeting

walking

pushing

ticking

talking

saying

painting

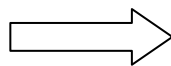
singing

reading

guarding

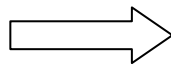
If there's an e, take it off before you add ing.

write



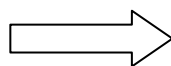
writing

take



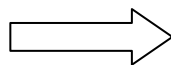
talking

make



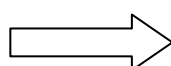
making

stare



staring

smile



smiling

## Words ending with ing

When you add ing, double the last letter of a word if it comes straight after a short vowel.

A short vowel is the a as in plan, a long vowel sound is the a in plane.

sit → sitting

run → running

hop → hopping

shut → shutting

clap → clapping

shop → shopping

chat → chatting

plan → planning

tip → tipping

bet → betting

win → winning

## Changing y to i

Change y at the end of a word into i when you add letters

### Adding er

funny → funnier

crazy → crazier

lucky → luckier

### Adding est

happy → happiest

chilly → chilliest

runny → runniest

### Adding ed

fry → fried

spy → spied

marry → married

carry → carried

### Adding es

cry → cries

rely → relies

try → tries

hurry → hurries

### Adding ed

dirty → dirtiness

lazy → laziness

windy → windiness

empty → emptiness

### Adding es

happy → happily

pretty → prettily

heavy → heavily

ready → readily



## Words ending with ful

There are no words ending in 'full'. Always use ful.

handful

painful

wonderful

mouthful

hopeful

colourful

playful

careful

harmful

fearful

wakeful

faithful

thankful

doubtful

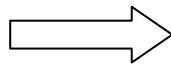
scornful

fearful

boastful

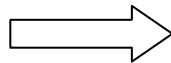
Turn y at the end of word into i when you add ful

beauty



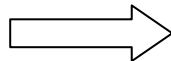
beautiful

plenty



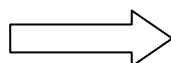
plentiful

fancy



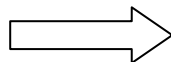
fanciful

mercy



merciful

pity



pitiful

## Words ending with ic

Some words ending with a 'k' sound, end in ic

comic

magic

music

angelic

manic

rhythmic

traffic

energetic

scientific

metallic

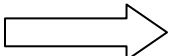
atomic

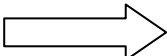
acidic

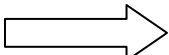
epidemic

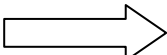
supersonic

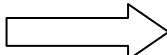
Remove the y at the end of a word when you add ic

history  historic

horrify  horrific

allergy  allergic

terrify  terrific

photography  photographic

## Words ending with i, u and v

There are hardly any words that end in i, u or v

### Words ending in i

mini

taxi

### Words ending in u

gnu

guru

### Words ending in v

spiv

(a person who makes money  
on the black market)

If you write a word ending with i, u or v, stop and think.  
You might have left off an e.

love

live

wave

blue

rescue

tissue

eerie

avenue

genie

## Words ending with le, el and al

The word endings le, el and al, all sound the same.  
You've got to learn the ending for each word.

**le**

table	middle	uncle
little	apple	circle
marble	kettle	bicycle
tickle	bubble	candle
pickle	puddle	needle
chuckle	wobble	poodle

**el**

parcel

model

tunnel

**al**

metal

magical

practical

## Words ending with ible and able

### These words all end with ible

horrible

invincible

terrible

edible

responsible

reversible

possible

sensible

incredible

indestructible

### These words all end with able

able

miserable

reliable

envious

enjoyable

breakable

probable

respectable

valuable

disposable

adorable

agreeable

## Words ending with tion and ian

The last bit of these words sounds like 'shun', but you spell it tion.

lotion

attention

conversation

fiction

punctuation

education

direction

correction

communication

motion

pronunciation

position

fraction

pollution

construction

subtraction

vibration

revolution

Words about where people or things come from usually end in ian, not ion

Russian

Martian

Venetian

Croatian

Use this space to add your own.

## Words ending with sion and cian

The last bit of these words is spelt sion, but there are two different ways it can sound.

### Sounds like 'shun'

extension

tension

session

percussion

discussion

### Sounds like 'sion' in vision

television

division

confusion

explosion

decision

The last bit of these words sound like 'shun' but you spell them cian.

electrician

magician

optician

physician

politician

Use this area to make a note of the most commonly used words within your qualification.