

Spelling Rules

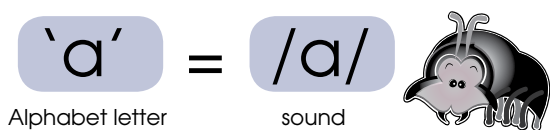
Important information about English



English is an alphabetical language. This means that we use letters of the alphabet to write down each of the sounds that we hear when we say a word. The alphabet letters are like a code for sound.

There are 44 English sounds but only 26 letters of the alphabet. This means we have to write down some of the sounds using a combination of two or more letters.

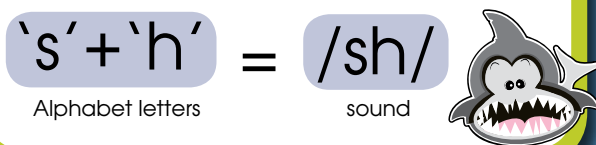
We use the letter 'a' to write down the /a/ sound as in ant.



Alphabet letter

sound

We use the letters 's' and 'h' together to write down the /sh/ sound, as in shark.



Alphabet letters

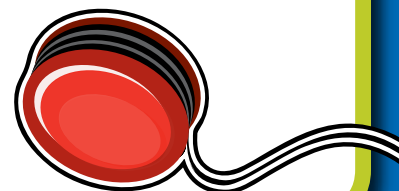
sound

The English Alphabet

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Y*	Z
a	b	c	d	e	f	g	h	i	j	k	l	m	n	o	p	q	r	s	t	u	v	w	x	y	y*	z

The **vowels** in the alphabet are a, e, i, o, u and y when y is used to write down the /i/, /i/ or /ē/ sound – gym, sky, happy

The **consonants** in the alphabet are b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, z and y to write down the /y/ sound - yo- yo. We always use 'y' = /y/ at the beginning of words – yo- yo, yellow, yesterday



Words are made up of syllables –

cat, skipped, hap/py, pic/nic, el/e/phat, hip/po/pot/a/mus.

Each syllable is like a beat within the word. It is a separate unit of speech.



Words can have one or more syllables.

When we spell a word we need to listen for the syllables and write each one down.



Every syllable contains a vowel (sound)

cat, skipped, hap/py, pic/nic, el/e/phat, hip/po/pot/a/mus,*

* There is only one syllable in *skipped* because there is only one vowel sound. We pronounce the 'ed' as a /t/ sound.

Spelling Rules

Plurals (more than one)



When we change a word from a singular form (one of something) to a plural form (more than one) we often change the spelling of the base word.

1

Add an 's'

With most words we just add an 's' to make a plural.

1 cat, 2 cats.



2

Adding 'es'

With words ending in 'ch' 'sh' 's' 'ss' 'x' or 'z' we add an 'es' to make a plural.

1 box, 2 boxes.

Except: stomachs, monarchs (the 'ch' represents the /k/ sound in these words).

3

Words ending in consonant 'y'

With words ending with a **consonant** followed by a 'y' we change the 'y' to an 'i' and add 'es'.

1 pony, 2 ponies.

4

Words ending in vowel 'y'

With words ending with a **vowel** followed by a 'y' we just add an 's' to make a plural.

1 monkey, 2 monkeys.

5

Words ending in 'f' or 'fe'

With words ending in 'f' or 'fe' we change to a 'ves' ending to make a plural.

1 knife, 2 knives.

Except: roof/roofs.

6

Words ending in 'o'

With words ending in 'o' add 'es' to make a plural.

1 tomato, 2 tomatoes.

Except: pianos, radios, solos, banjos, Eskimos.



7

Words that don't change

Some words are the same even when we change them to plural.

*1 fish, 2 fish.
1 sheep, 2 sheep.
1 moose, 2 moose.*



8

Plurals that create a new word

Some plural words are completely different from their singular form.

*1 mouse, 2 mice.
1 foot, 2 feet.
1 man, 2 men.*

9

Words that are ALWAYS plurals

Some words are never used in singular form.

trousers, tongs, pliers, measles, scissors.

We usually say:

*one pair of trousers—two pairs of trousers,
one set of tongs—two sets of tongs.*

Spelling Rules

Words ending in the letter 'e'



Many English words end in 'e' and often the 'e' is silent. The silent 'e' changes the way words sound.

1

Silent 'e' rule (VCe rule)

One syllable words that end in **vowel + consonant + 'e'** (VCe) make the **vowel** sound long. The silent 'e' makes the **vowel** "say its name".

rat-rate, pet-Pete, sit-site, hop-hope, tub-tube.

Note: Silent 'e' makes the letter 'y' say the long /i/ sound: type, style.

This is sometimes called the 'magic e' or 'fairy e' rule.



2

Silent 'e' after 'v'

One syllable words that end in **vowel + 'v' + 'e'** (Vve) only **sometimes** make the **vowel** sound long.

Short **vowel** sounds: *live, give, have, love.*
Long **vowel** sounds: *five, dive, gave, strove.*

3

Dropping the silent 'e'

When we add a suffix that starts with a **vowel** to a **vowel + consonant + 'e'** (VCe) word we drop the silent 'e' from the word. This keeps the **vowel** sound long.

take-taking, late-later, bone-bony, ride-riding.



4

Keeping the silent 'e'

When we add a suffix that starts with a **consonant** to a **vowel + consonant + 'e'** (VCe) word we keep the silent 'e'. This keeps the **vowel** sound long.

hope-hopeful, late-lateness, state-statement, pave-pavement, safe-safety, nine-ninety, lone-lonely.

5

Other words ending in 'e'

If the final 'e' is not silent or is part of a double **vowel** then we do not drop the final 'e'.

be-being, see-seeing, flee-fleeing, canoe-canoeing, tiptoe-tiptoeing.

*The 'e' is kept when we write whingeing and singeing (both short vowel sounds).



Spelling Rules

Double trouble – when do we use double consonants?



When we add suffixes to words that end in a consonant we often double the consonant before adding the suffix.

When we do

1

Words ending in 'f', 'l', 's' or 'z'

We double the final f, l, s and z immediately after a single **vowel** in a one-syllable word. This happens at the end of a word, never at the beginning.

sell, tall, fluff, staff, grass, mass, buzz, jazz.

*Except: If the final 's' has a /z/ sound, it is never doubled – as, is, was, has, his

Other exceptions: if, gas, this, us, yes, bus, plus, quiz

2

Words ending in one consonant

If a short **vowel** is followed by one **consonant**, double the **consonant** before adding a suffix that starts with a **vowel**.

'ed', 'ing', 'er', 'ish', or 'y'

hop-hopped, swim-swimming, big-bigger-biggish.

Except: words ending in x ('x' has two **consonant** sounds – /ks/) fix-fixed, tax-taxing.

Note: the letters x, y, and w are never doubled.



3

Words ending in -ble, -dle, -gle or -tle

When a short **vowel** comes immediately before -ble, -dle, -gle or -tle, then the first **consonant** of the (C)le pattern should be doubled.

bubble, rattle, juggle, middle.



When we don't

4

Words ending in two consonants

If a short **vowel** is followed by two **consonants**, do not double the last letter before adding a suffix starting with a vowel.

'ed', 'ing', 'er', 'ish', or 'y'

jump-jumped, rush-rushing, dust-duster, spy-spying, camp-camping.



5

Words with long vowel sounds or double vowels

Consonants are never doubled after a long **vowel** sound or a double **vowel**.

tape-taped, smile-smiling, cook-cooked, steam-steaming, peel-peeling.

When we sometimes do / sometimes don't

6

Words with more than one syllable

If the word ends in a **vowel** plus the letter 'l', always double the 'l' when adding 'ed' or 'ing'.

travel-travelling, cancel-cancelled, pedal-pedalling.

The 'l' is not doubled when adding suffixes that start with the letter 'i' (apart from 'ing')

moral-morality, equal-equality, angel-angelic.

(Note: We often place the stress or emphasis on the syllable ending in 'l' in these words.)

Spelling Rules

Tricky Letters & Spelling Rules



In English some letters are used to write down more than one sound and some sounds are represented by more than one letter.

1 The letter 'c'

The letter 'c' usually represents -
1) A /k/ sound when it is followed by the vowels 'a', 'o' or 'u'

cat, cot, cut.

2) A /s/ sound when it is followed by the vowels 'i', 'e', or 'y'

city, cents, cycle, rice.

We create a new sound when we add
c + h = /ch/
at the beginning or end of words
such as

chop, chat, teach.

In Greek words the letters 'ch' = /k/ as in chemistry and Christmas.

In French words the letters 'ch' = /sh/ as in chef and machine.

2 The letter 'g'

The letter 'g' usually represents -
1) A /g/ sound when it is followed by the vowels 'a', 'o' and 'u'

gap, got, gulp.

2) A /j/ sound when it is followed by the vowels 'e', 'i' and 'y'

gem, ginger, gym and page.

Except: get, give, girl, gill

We create a new sound when we add

g + h = /g/ at the beginning of words such as

ghost, ghastly, ghoul.

or

g + h = /f/ at the end of words with an 'au' or an 'ou' vowel
such as

laugh, cough, enough.

3 The letter 'k'

The letter 'k' only represents the /k/ sound. It is almost always followed by the vowels 'e' or 'i'

kettle, key, kiss, kitten, like.

Except: some words from other languages - koala, kangaroo, kayak

We use

c + k = /k/ immediately after a single, short vowel

duck, kick, pack.

We use

k = /k/ immediately after a double vowel or a VC
weak, look, leak, milk, bank, junk.

4 The letter 'x'

The letter 'x' and the letters 'cks' are used to write down the /ks/ sounds.

Singular nouns usually end in the letter 'x'

box, fox, six.

Plural nouns usually end in the letters 'cks'

rocks, sacks, decks.

Most verbs end in 'cks'

kicks, packs, pecks.

Except: fix, mix, tax.

5 The letter 'q'

We always write the letter 'q' with the letter 'u'

q + u = /kw/ as in

quick, quite, queen.

In some French words the q + u = /k/ as in
bouquet, quiche, quay.



Some Extra Spelling Rules

1) Words ending in 'ck', 'tch' and 'dge'

In words with a single vowel or short vowel sound we use

'ck' = /k/

duck, lock, stick.

'tch' = /ch/

fetch, catch, hatch.

'dge' = /j/

badge, dodge, judge.

at the end of the word. This keeps the vowel sound short.

2) The 'i' before 'e' rule

The rule 'i' before 'e' except after 'c' is correct when the 'ie' represents the /ee/ sound.

thief, piece, field.

receive, ceiling, deceit.

When the 'ie' does not represent the /ee/ sound -

'e' comes before 'i'.

weigh, leisure, foreign, neighbours.

3) Words that end in 'ice' and 'ise'

In English we generally use 'ice' at the end of nouns and 'ise' at the end of verbs.

advice (noun) - *advise* (verb)

device (noun) - *devise* (verb)

Spelling Rules

Prefixes and Suffixes



When we add prefixes or suffixes to a base word we often need to change the spelling of the base word.

1

Adding a suffix to words ending in 'y'

When a base word ends in 'y', change the 'y' to 'i' before adding a suffix starting with a **vowel**

cry-cried, copy-copied.

Except: if the suffix begins with 'i' (-ing, -ish, -ist)

fly-flying, baby-babyish.

or

If the 'y' follows a **vowel**
play-playing, boy-boyish.

2

Adding the suffix 'ly'

We often add 'ly' to base words to turn them into adverbs or adjectives

He ran *slowly*,

The *lovely* tree,

She sang *loudly*,

The *portly* man.

When adding 'ly' to words that end in 'y', change the 'y' to an 'i'

Easy-easily, angry-angrily, day-daily.



3

Adding the suffix 'ly' to words ending in 'le'

When adding 'ly' to words that end in a **consonant** followed by 'le' ('**C**le') change the 'e' to a 'y'

simple-simply, horrible-horribly, probable-probably.

When adding 'ly' to words that end in a **vowel** followed by 'le' ('**V**le') just add 'ly' after the 'le'.

pale-palely, sole-solely.

4

Adding a prefix or suffix to words ending in double 'l'

When we are adding the prefixes or suffixes 'full', 'all', 'till', 'well' or 'fill' to base words, we drop one 'l'

Full: *hope-hopeful, use-useful, joy-joyful.*

All: *so-also, most-almost, ready-already.*

Fill: *full-fulfil.*

Till: *until.*

Well: *come-welcome, fare-welfare.*

5

Adding a suffix and keeping the silent 'e'

We keep the silent 'e' after a soft 'c' or 'g' when we add the suffix 'able'

trace-traceable, replace-replaceable, notice-noticeable, charge-chargeable, change-changeable.

We also keep the silent 'e' after a soft 'g' when we add a suffix that begins with an 'o'
courage-courageous, advantage-advantageous, outrage-outrageous.

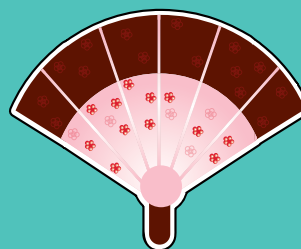


6

Adding the suffix 'ous' or 'ity'

When we add the suffixes 'ous' or 'ity' to words ending in 'our' or 'ous' we drop the 'u' from the base.

curious-curiosity, generous-generosity, monstrous-monstrosity, vapour-vaporous, glamour-glamorous.



In English there are rules about the way we construct words and there are rules about the way we construct sentences.

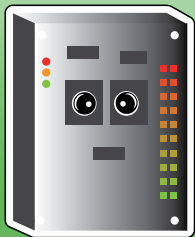
Words are made up of meaningful parts called morphemes. Prefixes, base-words and suffixes are all examples of morphemes. They can be single letters or groups of letters.

books = two morphemes → book + s

destructive = three morphemes → de + struct + ive

↓ ↓ ↓

(prefix) (base) (suffix)



Adding prefixes

We add a prefix to the beginning of a base word to change its meaning

happy-unhappy, view-preview.

Adding suffixes

We add a suffix to the end of a word to change its tense, number or to make comparisons

kick-kicked, book-books, big-bigger.

When we talk or write we need words to:

name things and people... these are **nouns** and **pronouns**

describe things and people... these are **adjectives**

name actions...these are **verbs**

describe actions...these are **adverbs**

show how one part of a sentence relates to another part...these are **prepositions**

join ideas together...these are **conjunctions**

indicate that we are about to name something... these are **articles**

exclaim! (or interject)...these are called **interjections** or **exclamations**

Sentences are made up of one or more words that express a complete idea and which follow the rules of English. Sentences need to 'make sense'.

- ALL sentences have a **verb** (action).
- MOST sentences have a **noun** (the 'subject' of the sentence) and a **verb** (the 'action' the subject is taking).



In the sentence "The black cat sat on the mat."

The black cat



is the subject

sat on the mat



is the action the cat is taking

We can describe words we use in terms of their role, or function, in a sentence. Sometimes the same word can play different roles in different sentences.

The girl read the book.



noun

Jane will book a table for dinner.



verb



Nouns

A noun is a word that names something. It can be an object, a person, an animal, a place, a 'thing' or a feeling. We can put 'the', 'a' or 'an' in front of the word and can also make it plural.

the *girl*, the *town*, the *book*, the *heat*, the *impact*, the *wind*, the *smell*, the *cat*, the *love*.

Proper Noun

A proper noun is the name of a particular person, place or thing. It always starts with a capital letter: the country – *Australia*, the boy – *Jack*, the shop – *Myer*, the month – *May*.

(The only other time we use capital letters is at the start of a sentence or for acronyms e.g. VIP - Very Important Person)

Pronouns

Pronouns take the place of nouns. We use them when we don't want to keep repeating the name of a person or an object.

Jack went to the shop.

He bought some *apples*.

They were green.

me, my, she, you, we, it, him, her, ourselves, them, their etc.

Adjectives

An adjective describes a noun. It gives us more detail about the noun so that we can imagine it more clearly. Adjectives can tell us about size, colour, quality, number and degree.

The *tall* man. The *fluffy* cat. The *six* books. The *enormous* country. The *fearless* boy. The *fearful* boy.

Verbs

Every sentence contains a verb. It is an action, feeling or tells us something exists.

Jack *kicks* the ball.

Mog *likes* milk.

Harry *is* tall.

It can be happening now (present tense), already happened (past tense), or going to happen (future tense).

There are 23 linking verbs: *is, am, are, was, were, be, being, been, have, has, had, do, does, did, shall, will, should, would, may, might, must, can, could.*

Adverbs

We use adverbs to describe verbs. Adverbs tell us how, when or where an action is happening.

How did Jack run?

Jack ran *slowly*.

When does Jack run?

Jack runs *often*.

Where did Jack climb?

Jack climbed *up*.

Articles

An article is a word that indicates we are about to name something. It comes before a noun (or an adjective + noun).

a, an, the, some, any, other, this, that, these, those.

Prepositions

A preposition is a word which tells us how something is done or positioned in relation to something else. We use them for time and place as well as for abstract ideas.

to, in, at, from, before, behind, through, on, during, about, of.

Conjunctions

Conjunctions are words that join two ideas together. They can be used to join single words or two short sentences.

and, or, but, if, because, so.



Exclamations

An exclamation (or interjection) is a single word sentence that expresses a sudden reaction.

Stop! Ouch! Wow!