

# Spelling Rules

## ✚ Important Spelling Rules in English

- ❖ When 'see' and 'sea' both have the same pronunciation and when 'through' and 'trough' have two different pronunciations, it is not that easy for a new language learner to understand why it is so. It is to help with such scenarios that we have spelling rules. Not everything can be made sense of using spelling rules. For some words (no matter how much you try to reason out), it is just the way it is. However, here are some of the most important spelling rules to help you understand how a particular word should be spelt.

## ✚ Adding Prefixes

- ❖ In most case scenarios, the spelling of the base word does not change when adding prefixes. Prefixes like un-, in-, dis-, im-, re-, pre-, post-, mis-, under-, over- and non- are merely added to the words without changing its spelling. Understanding which prefix to use can also be a challenge at times. Take a look at the following examples to understand how prefixes work.

Unsatisfactory	Undecided	Unorganised	Unethical	Unplanned
Unemotional	Unemployed	Unintentional	Unobtrusive	Underline
Underrated	Overrated	Misunderstand	Mislead	Misplace
Non-smoker	Non-alcoholic	Indisciplined	Impotent	Impatient
Insane	Independent	Reassure	Prepone	Postpone
Postmodern	Preproduction	Rejoin	Underestimate	Reiterate
Overconfidence	Discourage	Discomfort	Preview	Overlay

## ✚ Adding Suffixes

- ❖ You have to be careful when adding suffixes. Unlike prefixes, there would be a change in the spelling of the word to which the suffix is added, though not always. Take a look at the following table and analyse how the words are spelt.

Fatter	Reddish	Swimming	Sadness	Pollution
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Propeller	Cancelled	Pavement	Adorable	Sizeable
Dying	Courageous	Manageable	Seeing	Lately
Beautiful	Buyer	Brotherhood	Happiness	Movement
Friendship	Betterment	Invention	Falsehood	Amusement

### ❖ 'Ei' or 'Ie'?

- ❖ The decision to use 'ie' or 'ei' might be one of the most confusing things you will come across when learning English spellings. Even a person who is fluent in the language might end up being confused which one to use every now and then. If you are wondering how these spellings work, here is how.
  - In words that have a 'c', make sure you use 'e' and then 'i'. For example: receive, deceive, perceive, ceiling, etc.
  - For words where 'ei' is used as a diphthong (pronounced as 'a'), 'e' comes first. For example: neigh, neighbour, eight, reign, freight, weight, sleigh, weigh, feisty, etc.
  - For all other words, 'i' comes first. For example: thief, friend, belief, chief, priest, field, grief, etc.
  - However, there are some words which do not fall into any of these. For example: weird, conscience, science, either, neither, leisure, sufficient, species, seize, height, foreign, forfeit, heist, their, sovereign, etc.

### 🌈 Silent Letters

- ❖ There are times when you would wonder why a particular alphabet is part of the word when it is not pronounced. Haven't you? Letters such as 'a', 'b', 'c', 'e', 'g', 'h', 'k', 'l', 'n', 't', 'u', 'w' come under that category. Take a look at the following examples.

#### Words with Silent 'A'

Encyclopaedia	Ready	Orthopaedic	Instead
Steady	Bread	Peacock	Sea
Peace	Spread	Lead	Read

#### Words with Silent 'B'

Debt	Dumb	Lamb	Crumb
Womb	Doubt	Numb	Comb
Subtle	Thumb	Limb	Succumb

### Words with Silent 'C'

Descend	Ascend	Crescent	Scent
Scenery	Scene	Science	Disciple
Obscene	Scenario	Muscle	Fascinate

### Words with Silent 'D'

Badge	Ledger	Edge	Budget
Budge	Handsome	Hedge	Bridge
Handful	Grandson	Sandwich	Wednesday

### Words with Silent 'E'

Bake	Take	Plague	Vegetable
Breathe	Like	Desire	Envelope
Shine	Kite	Fire	Excite

### Words with Silent 'G'

Foreign	Reign	Benign	Design
Align	Resign	Sign	Gnarl
Light	High	Gnaw	Weight

### Words with Silent 'H'

<b>H</b> our	<b>H</b> onest	<b>H</b> onour	<b>A</b> ncor
<b>C</b> horus	<b>A</b> rchitect	<b>T</b> echnology	<b>G</b> host
<b>P</b> sychology	<b>A</b> che	<b>E</b> cho	<b>C</b> haos

### Words with Silent 'K'

<b>K</b> nife	<b>K</b> nee	<b>K</b> nowledge	<b>K</b> not
<b>K</b> now	<b>K</b> nit	<b>K</b> neel	<b>K</b> nack
<b>K</b> nuckle	<b>K</b> nead	<b>K</b> nock	<b>K</b> nell

### Words with Silent 'L'

<b>C</b> alm	<b>A</b> lms	<b>B</b> alm	<b>A</b> lmond
<b>C</b> alf	<b>S</b> hould	<b>C</b> ould	<b>P</b> alm
<b>T</b> alk	<b>W</b> alk	<b>H</b> alf	<b>S</b> talk

### Words with Silent 'N'

<b>C</b> olumn	<b>A</b> utumn	<b>C</b> ondemn	<b>H</b> ymn
<b>S</b> olemn	<b>D</b> amn	<b>L</b> imn	<b>B</b> edamn

### Words with Silent 'P'

<b>P</b> sychology	<b>P</b> soriasis	<b>P</b> neumonia	<b>P</b> seudopodia
<b>P</b> salm	<b>P</b> sychiatric	<b>P</b> seudonym	<b>P</b> sychosis
<b>C</b> upboard	<b>R</b> eceipt	<b>R</b> aspberry	<b>P</b> sycho

### Words with Silent 'T'

Listen	Hasten	Fasten	Witch
Stitch	Crutches	Patch	Stretch
Batch	Often	Apostle	Glisten

### Words with Silent 'U'

Guide	Plague	Guilty	Build
Guitar	Biscuit	Silhouette	Disguise
Building	Guilt	Rogue	Guest

### Words with Silent 'W'

Wrong	Wrath	Wrap	Who
Wholesome	Wrestle	Whole	Wreck
Wrist	Write	Wrinkle	Wreath

### 'U' after 'Q', no 'S' after 'X'

Every word that has a 'q' in it will be followed by 'u'. A few examples of this case are given below.

- Quest
- Queue
- Quench
- Plaque
- Quality
- Qualify
- Quantity
- Quick

Not a word in the English language will have the letter 's' following 'x'. Check out the following words.

- Excite
- Excitement
- Excellent
- Exceed
- Excessive
- Excited
- Exceptional
- Excellence

### No 'Vs' or 'Js' at the End of Words

This is a peculiar feature of the English language. While there are words ending in every other consonant, you will never find a word ending with the letter 'v' or the letter 'j'.

### Words Ending in 'ck'

Monosyllabic words that have the /k/ sound at the end are seen to have 'ck' in their spellings. Examples of such words are given in the table below. Check them out.

Crack	Knack	Check	Rack
Pack	Back	Hack	Tick
Chick	Prick	Stick	Slack
Stack	Neck	Peck	Kick

### Similar Phonetic Sounds

Multiple words in the English language seem to have the same/similar pronunciations but different spellings. **Homonyms** – **homophones** and **homographs** belong to this category. Here are a few examples.

Homonyms			
Word 1	Word 2	Word 1	Word 2
Steel	Steal	Eyes	Ice
Deer	Dear	Sea	Sea

Write	Right	Knot	Not
No	Know	Whole	Hole

## Forming Gerunds

Forming **gerunds** is one of the easiest things to do in the English language. All you have to do is add an ‘-ing’ to the end of the word. However, there are cases in which the last consonant has to be doubled before adding ‘-ing’. Check out the table below for a few examples of this kind.

Shopping	Beginning	Getting	Swimming
Winning	Spinning	Occurring	Letting
Setting	Whipping	Skiping	Running

In other cases, you will have to remove the last ‘e’ from the verb before adding ‘-ing’. Here are a few examples.

Having	Achieving	Gaming	Taking
Managing	Receiving	Entitling	Reciting
Biking	Skating	Exercising	Reducing

There are many more such gerunds. Check out the article on gerunds for more examples.

## Change of Spelling with Change of Tense

The change in tense is always indicated by the addition of **helping verbs** and change in spelling of the **main verb**. Very few **verbs** like read, lead, beat, cut, let, put, etc. have the same spelling when used as a past participle or a present participle. Here is a table with some examples.

Verb	Past Participle	Present Participle
Bring	Brought	Brought
Sing	Sang	Sung

Swim	Swam	Swum
Fly	Flew	Flown
Spring	Sprang	Sprung
Teach	Taught	Taught
Know	Knew	Known
Grow	Grew	Grown
Close	Closed	Closed
Appear	Appeared	Appeared
Speak	Spoke	Spoken
Cry	Cried	Cried

Check out regular verbs and irregular verbs for more examples.

### Change of Spelling in the Plural Form

Changing a singular noun into a plural noun also requires a change of spelling in most cases. There are only a few nouns that don't need to have a change in spelling when used in the plural form. Most probably, a noun is changed to its plural form just by the addition of the letter 's', some with the addition of 'es', a few others with 'ies' and others with the addition of 'ves'. Even so, there are some nouns which do not fall in any of these categories. A few examples of nouns with different spellings in the plural form are given below. Go through them and try to understand how it works.

Adding 's'		Adding 'es'	
Singular Noun	Plural Noun	Singular Noun	Plural Noun
Table	Tables	Mango	Mangoes
Bed	Beds	Tomato	Tomatoes
Dog	Dogs	Watch	Watches



Place	Places	Bench	Benches
<b>Adding 'ies'</b>		<b>Adding 'ves'</b>	
Singular Noun	Plural Noun	Singular Noun	Plural Noun
Chilly	Chillies	Wife	Wives
Peony	Peonies	Loaf	Loaves
Daisy	Daisies	Leaf	Leaves
Lily	Lilies	Knife	Knives
<b>Irregular Nouns</b>		<b>Nouns that stay the same</b>	
Singular Noun	Plural Noun	Singular Noun	Plural Noun
Child	Children	Furniture	Furniture
Ox	Oxen	Sheep	Sheep
Alumnus	Alumni	Fish	Fish
Bacterium	Bacteria	Scissors	Scissors

### Double 'Fs', 'Ls' and 'Ss' at the End of Monosyllabic Words

You would have come across multiple words with double consonants in their spellings. Have you ever wondered if there is a logical way to explain why it is so? Well, there is. If you analyse, you will see that monosyllabic words which have a vowel before the last letter, the last letter being 'l', 'f' or 's' seem to have double consonants. Take a look at the following table to understand.

Words ending with double 'f'	Words ending with double 'l'	Words ending with double 's'
Sniff	Still	Miss
Stiff	Chill	Chess

Puff	Till	Kiss
Cuff	Mill	Fuss
Chaff	Stall	Floss

### **Doubling Consonants of Monosyllabic Words When Forming the Comparative Degree and Superlative Degree**

Every adjective can have three degrees of comparison namely the positive degree, the comparative degree and the superlative degree. While the superlative degree is formed by the addition of 'est' to the adjective and the comparative degree is formed by adding 'er', there are some adjectives which require a doubling of the final consonant before adding 'er' to form the comparative degree. This is mainly the case with monosyllabic adjectives. Given below are a few examples. Check them out.

Fatter	Bigger	Redder	Wetter
Fattest	Biggest	Reddest	Wettest
Hotter	Sadder	Thinner	Slimmer
Hottest	Saddest	Thinnest	Slimmest