

Spelling rules

The *or* sound spelt *a* before *l* and

ll

Call fall small

also almost always

The *l* is silent in these words

tal*l*k wal*l*k chal*l*k stal*l*k

Soft c

In French, the letter **c** makes the **s** sound.

We still use the French **c** to make the **s** sound in lots of our English words today. We call it 'soft c'.

city mice icy cycle fancy

Adding the suffix -y

Suffix - letters that are added to the end of a root word.

Double the consonant before adding **-y**.

spot spott**y**

sun sun**ny**

chat chatt**y**

Adding the suffix -y (2)

Suffix - letters that are added to the end of a root word.

Drop the *e* before adding *-y*

shine shine + *y* shiny

breeze breeze + *y* breezy

Adding the suffix -ly

It is very easy to make an adverb by adding the suffix ~~-ly~~ to an adjective

We don't usually have to swap, double or drop any letters when we add the suffix ~~-ly~~

slow + ~~ly~~ slowly

quiet + ~~ly~~ quietly

When an adjective ends in **y**, we have to swap the **y** for an **i** before adding ~~-ly~~

Happy happily

The **n** sound spelt **kn** and **gn**

Lots of old English words have a silent letter **k** in them, however the Ancient English used to pronounce the **k**.

knew

know

knot

knight

knit

kneel

The *igh* sound spelt **y**

If the end of a word sounds like *igh*,
It is almost always spelt with a **y**.

shy sky

dry cry

fly reply

Adding the suffix **-ing** (1)

Some words we don't need to make any changes before we add **-ing**.

playing creeping sighing glowing annoying

If a verb ends in a short vowel sound (**a, e, i, o** or **u**) + a consonant, we have to double the consonant before adding **-ing**.

root word	double the consonant before adding -ing
sip p	sip pp ing
put t	put tt ing
gra b	gra bb ing

Adding the suffix **-ing** (2)

Drop the **e** before adding **-ing**.

root word	drop the e before adding -ing
make e	making
rattle e	rattling
chuckle e	chuckling

There are a few verbs that end in **-ie**, we have to swap the **-ie** for a **-y** first.

Swap the **-ie** for a **y** before adding **-ing**.

lie **lying**
die **dying**
tie **tying**

The *j* sound

The *j* sound is often spelt with the letter **g** before **e**, **i** or **y**.

Gentle

gem

giant

giraffe

energy

The *j* sound can be spelt with the letters **ge** at the end of words.

charge

large

fringe

barge

The *j* sound is spelt with the letters **dge** at the end of a word after the **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u** or **oo** sounds.

badge

ledge

bridge

splodge

The **o** sound spelt **a** after **w** and **qu**

Spell **o** with an **a** after **w** as in wash

Spell **o** with an **a** after **qu** as in squash.

was want

what watch

wander squat

squash quality

Adding the suffix **-ed** (1)

Words that end in 2 consonants, all we have to do to make the past tense is add **-ed**.

hunt hunted

jump jumped

lick licked

Words ending in a short vowel sound (**a, e, i, o** or **u**) + a consonant letter, double the consonant before adding **-ed**.

root word	double the consonant before adding -ed
spot	spott ed
tap	tapp ed
clip	clipp ed

The *r* sound spelt *wr*

The *w* is silent in these *wr* words

*w*rap

*w*rong

*w*reck

*w*rist

*w*riggle

*w*rote

We just have to remember to write *wr* when
we spell them

Adding the suffixes **-er** or **-est**

There are lots of root words that do not have to be changed before we add

-er and **-est**.

tall taller tallest

hard harder hardest

Drop the e before adding **-er** or **-est**.

nice nicer nicest

fine finer finest

Adding the suffixes **-er** or **-est**

Swap the **y** for an **i** before adding **-er** or **-est**

jolly jollier jolliest

tricky trickier trickiest

Adding the suffixes **-er** or **-est**

If a word ends in a short vowel + a consonant,
double the consonant before adding **-er** or
-est.

hot hotter hottest

big bigger biggest

The **ee** sound spelt **ey**

Key **money** **donkey** **journey**

It is easy to make words ending in **ey** into plurals. Just add the suffix **-s**.

Key **keys**

Monkey **monkeys**

Adding the suffix **-ness**

The suffix **-ness** is usually added straight on to a root word. There are no letters to swap, double or drop.

sad**ness**

late**ness**

kind**ness**

Adding the suffix **-ness**

For many words we can add the suffix **-ness**, without having to **swap**, **double** or **drop** any letters.

root word	root word + suffix -ness
kind	kind ness
ill	ill ness
good	good ness

If the last letter of the root word ends in a consonant + **y** we have to **swap** the **y** for an **i**.

silly sill**i**ness
cheeky cheek**i**ness
dizzy dizz**i**ness

Words ending in **-le**

Most words with two syllables that end in the / sound, like kettle and bubble, are spelt with **-le**.

Can you hear a weak little *uh* sound before the / sound in these words?

purple

kettle

middle

Words ending in **-el**

Make the words rhyme with 'bell'. It will help you to remember how to spell words ending in **-el**.

cancel

travel

towel

Words ending in **-al**

Make the words rhyme with 'shall'. It will help you to remember how to spell words ending in all!

capital

animal

crystal

Adding the suffix **-ful**

If a suffix starts with a consonant letter (**-ful**), it is usually just added straight on to a root word. No changes are made to the root word.

cheer **cheerful**

wonder **wonderful**

joy **joyful**

We have to swap the **y** to **i** when adding the suffix **-ful**.

beaut**y** beaut**if**ful

Adding the suffix **-less**

If a suffix starts with a consonant letter (**-less**), it is almost always just added straight on to a root word. No changes are made to the root word.

thank thank**less**

hope hope**less**

fear fear**less**

Adding the suffix **-ment**

When we add a suffix to a root word, we change its meaning.

We can add the suffix **-ment** to a verb to make a noun:

root word (verb)	root word + suffix -ment
measure	measurement
replace	replacement
treat	treatment

The word 'argue' doesn't obey the rules.

We have to **drop** the **e** before adding the suffix **-ment**.

argue**e** argument

Adding the prefixes **dis-** **un-** and

in-

Each of these prefixes means 'not' or the opposite of something.

complete **in**complete

happy **un**happy

like **dis**like

Adding **im-** to root words
beginning with **m** or **p**

If a root word begins with the letter m or p,
the prefix **in-**, in-, changes to **im-**, im-.

mature **im**mature

mortal **im**mortal

mobile **im**mobile

Adding the suffix **-OUS**

If the word ends with an **e**, we have to drop the **e** before adding **-OUS**.

poison poisonous

hazard hazardous

Adding the suffix **-ly**

If the root word ends in **-le**. Then we swap the **-le**
for **-ly**

horrible horribly

gentle gently

We can just add **-ly** straight on to some root
words.

Words ending in -ture

The ending that sounds like chuh can be spelt
-ture.

adventure

picture

capture

Adding **-ation** to verbs to form nouns

If the verb ends in a consonant, we just add
the suffix.

inform + ation = information

If the verb ends in **e**, we must drop the **e**
before adding -ation.

adore + ation = adoration

Words with the **c** sound spelt **ch**

The letters **ch** made the **c** sound in the Greek language.

character

chaos

chemist

chorus

school

echo

mechanic

stomach

Words with the **sh** sound spelt **ch**

In the French language, the **sh** sound is almost always spelt with the letters **ch**. There are quite a lot of English words that have been borrowed from the French language and have kept the French spelling.

chef
chalet
chandelier
chute
machine
brochure
moustache
parachute

Adding the suffix **-ion**

If the verb ends in the letter **t** we just add **-ion**:

collect**t** + ion = collection**t**

But if the verb ends in **te** we must drop the **e** before adding **-ion**:

concentrate**te** + ion = concentrat**t**ion

root word	root word + suffix -ion OR drop the e before adding -ion
correct t	correct t ion
attract t	attract t ion
construct t	construct t ion
locate te	locat t ion
concentrate te	concentrat t ion
exaggerate te	exaggerat t ion

When you say words aloud ending in **-tion** say shun.

When you spell words ending in **-tion** say the sounds **ti o n** in an exaggerated way.

Adding the suffix **-ian**

So if the root word ends in the letter **c** we just add **-i-a-n**:

magic**c** + **ian** = magician

root word	root word + suffix -ian
magic c	magic ian
electric c	electric ian
music c	music ian

If the root word ends in **cs** we must drop the **s** before adding **-ian**:

politic**cs** + **ian** = politic**ian**

Adding the prefix **re-**

're' means 'again' or 'for a second time'

We can just add the prefix **re-**? There are no letters to **swap**, **double** or **drop**.

root word	prefix re- + root word
heat	reheat
connect	reconnect
cycle	recycle

Adding the prefix **anti-**

The prefix is **a-n-t-i-**, **anti**. It means 'against' or 'opposite to'.

We can just add the prefix **anti-** to root words – no need to **swap**, **double** or **drop** any letters.

root word	prefix anti- + root word
freeze	antifreeze
clockwise	anticlockwise
social	antisocial

Adding the prefix **super-**

We can just add the prefix **super-** to root words. No need to swap, double or drop any letters.

root word	prefix super- + root word
woman	superwoman
human	superhuman
size	supersize
star	superstar

Adding the prefix **sub-**

Sub- can be added to the front of other words to show that something is 'below' or 'underneath'.

root word	prefix sub- + root word
zero	subzero
way	subway
marine	submarine

Adding the prefix **mis-** and revising **un-**, **in-**, **dis-**

The prefix **mis-** can mean 'not' or the opposite of something or 'wrong'.

behave **mis**behave

understand **mis**understand

treat **mis**treat

match **mis**match

Words ending in zhuh spelt -

sure

Words that end in zhuh| always have more than one syllable. The ending that sounds like zhuh can be spelt -sure at the end of words.

measure

treasure

pleasure

Adding the prefix **auto-**

We can just add the prefix **auto-** to these root words. There is no need to swap, double or drop any letters.

autobiography

autograph

autopilot

Adding the suffix **-ly**

If the root word has more than one syllable and ends in **y**, we have to swap the **y** for an **i** before adding **-ly**.

Sleep**y** sleep**ily**

Cos**y** cos**ily**

If a word ends in **-ic**, we have to add the suffix **-ally**, **ully**, not just **-ly**.

magic**ic** magic**ally**

frantic**ic** frantic**ally**

Adding the prefix **inter-**

inter- is a really useful prefix that means
'between' or 'among'

There is no need to swap, double or drop any
letters before adding the prefix **inter-**

national **inter**national

related **inter**related

Words with the **ay** sound spelt

eigh, ei, ey

The best way to remember which spelling to use for the **ay** sound for words spelt **eigh, ei,** or **ey** is to read and practise writing the words lots of times. **eigh, ei, and ey** are not very common spellings of **ay**

Eight **sleigh** **vein** **reign** **grey** **prey**

Words ending in **-ous**

Nothing to change in these words! We keep the root word and just add – ous

mountain mountain**ous** danger danger**ous** courage courage**ous**

But we do have to **swap** the **our** for **or** before adding the suffix **-ous** – like this:

humour hum**or**ous glamour glam**or**ous vigour vig**or**ous

Words with the **s** sound spelt **sc**

Remember our Roman friend Augustus pronounced words with the letters **sc** in them in a peculiar way.

scent

science

scene

scissors

ascend

descend

Words ending in *zhun* spelt **-sion**

Words that end in *zhun* always have more than one syllable.

verb	noun
explode	explosion
divide	division
collide	collision

We have to **drop** the final consonant and **e** before adding **-sion** to make the noun.

Adding **il-**

If a root word begins with the letter **l**, we change the prefix **in-**, to **il-** to turn them into their opposites.

root word	root word + prefix il-
logical	il logical
legal	il legal
legible	il legible

The **c** sound spelt **-que** and the **g** sound spelt **-gue**

Some words we use that have borrowed the French spelling of the **c** sound.

unique

antique

grotesque

Some words we use that have borrowed the French spelling of the **g** sound.

Fatigue

league

dialogue

Beware!

'**Tongue**' is a hard word to spell. It rhymes with **lung** but the letter **o** in the word '**tongue**' makes the **u** sound.

Adding **ir-** to words beginning with **r**

Before a root word beginning with the letter **r**, the prefix **i-n-**, **in**, changes to **i-r-**, **ir**:

root word	root word + prefix ir-
responsible	ir responsible
resistible	ir resistible
relevant	ir relevant

Adding the suffix **-ion** (1)

If the verb ends in the letters **ss** we can just add **-ion** to make the ending **-ssion**.

discu**ss** + **ion** = discu**ssion**

If the verb ends in **mit** we must **swap** the **t** for **ss** before adding **ion** to make the ending **-ssion**:

permi**t** + **ssion** = permi**ssion**

verb	noun
confes ss	confes ssion
expres ss	expres ssion
permi t	permi ssion
submi t	submi ssion

Adding the suffix **-ion** (2)

If the verb ends in **d** we must **swap** the **d** for **s** before adding **-ion** to make the ending **-sion**.

extend**d** + **sion** = extension

If the verb ends in **se** we must **drop** the **e** before adding **-ion** to make the ending **-sion**:

tense**se** + **ion** = tens**ion**

verb	noun
expand d	expans ion
comprehend d	comprehens ion
revis se	revis ion
confus se	confus ion

Beware! The verbs 'attend' and 'intend' do not follow the rule. They each end in **d** but the **d** is

swapped for a **t** before adding **-ion**:

attend**d** attent**ion**

intend**d** intent**ion**

Words with silent letter b

It's quite hard to remember to put the silent letters in when spelling these words.

crumb

debt

doubt

limb

Words ending in -ible

Drop the **e** before adding **-ible**.

sense + **ible** = sensible

response + **ible** = responsible

Most words ending in **-ible** don't have an obvious root word.

horr + **ible** = horrible

terr + **ible** = terrible

Words ending in -able

We can add **-able** to some root words without making any changes to them.

consider + **able** = consider**able**

understand + **able** = understand**able**

Sometimes we drop the final **e** before adding **-able**.

adore + **able** = ador**able**

Sometimes, if a word ends in a consonant + **y**, we swap the **y** for an **i** before adding **-able**.

envy + **able** = envi**able**

Words with silent letter t

There are no clear rules for spelling words with silent letters - the best way to learn them is to read and write them lots of times.

glisten

soften

castle

rustle

Words ending in **-ibly** and **-ably**

Swap the **-le** for **-ly**.

comfortable

comfortably

reasonable

reasonably

suitable

suitably

Words ending in -ent

Tip 1: It is always safe to write **-ent** after
soft c or **soft g**.

magnificent intelligent

Tip 2: It is almost always safe to write **-ent**
after **qu, ti** or **ci**.

frequent patient ancient

Words ending in **-ence**

To change adjectives into nouns, we can just change **-ent** to **-ence**. Very straightforward – like this:

patient**ent** patience silent**ent** silence depend**ent** dependence

Weird Word Warning

In some words the noun ends in **-cy** instead of **-ce**:

frequent**ent** frequ**ency** decent**ent** dec**ency**

The **ee** sound spelt **ei**

Most words with the **ee** sound spelt **-ei** have soft **c** before the letters **-ei**, for instance, '**c**eiling', 're**c**eive' and 'de**c**eive'.

However, here are some that don't:

seize **protein** **caffeine**

Words ending in **-ant**, **-ance** and **-ancy**

Tip: It is always safe to write **-ant** if you know the word family contains a word ending in **-ation**.

observ**ation** observ**ant**

hesit**ation** hesit**ant**

We can create new words, too, by changing adjectives ending in **-ant** to nouns ending in **-ance**

distant	distance
toler ant	toler ance
relev ant	relev ance

Weird Word Warning

In some words the noun ends in **-cy** instead of **-ce**.

hesit**ant**

hesit**ancy**

vacant

vac**ancy**

Words ending in *shus* spelt **-cious**

If a noun ends in **-ce**, we usually use the ending **-cious** for the adjective.

noun	adjective
malice	malicious
space	spacious
grace	gracious

Words ending in *shus* spelt **-tious**

If a noun contains the letters **-ti** which make the sound **sh**, we usually use the ending **-tious** for the adjective.

noun	adjective
infection	infectious
nutrition	nutritious
caution	cautious

Weird Word Warning

The word '**anxious**' has an ending that sounds like *shus* spelt **-xious**. The **-xi** makes the **sh** sound.

Words ending in *shul* spelt **-cial** or **-tial**

Tip: **-tial** often comes after a consonant (e.g. 'essential') and **-cial** often comes after a vowel (e.g. 'official').

But beware! The words 'initial' and 'financial' don't follow that pattern!

Suffixes (1)

If the suffix begins with a vowel (like **-est**) and the root word ends in a long vowel sound and a consonant (like '**loud**'), we do not change the spelling of the root word.

yawn yawn**ed**

neat neat**er**

loud loud**est**

Suffixes (2)

When we add suffixes beginning with a vowel to words ending in a consonant + *e*, we drop the final *e* from the root word.

sense*e* sensible

taste*e* taster

Suffixes (3)

Suffixes that begin with a consonant.

There were no letters to swap, double or drop from the root words because the suffixes began with a consonant.

achieve achievement

replace replacement

Suffixes (4)

Adding suffixes beginning with a vowel to words.

When we add suffixes beginning with a vowel to these words with one syllable, we double the final consonant. This keeps the vowel in the root word short. Like this:

run runner

bat batting

When we add suffixes beginning with a vowel (like -ed) to these words, we double the final consonant. This keeps the vowel in the root word short. Like this:

forget forgetting

begin beginner

Suffixes (5)

Swap the **y** for an **i** in the root words before adding a suffix beginning with a consonant.

busy business

happy happily

Swap the **y** for an **i** in the root words before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel.

hurry hurried

mystery mysterious

The sh sound spelt **ti** or **ci**

The **sh** sound spelt **ti or ci** occurs at the beginning of a second, third or fourth syllable in all of these words. It is never used in the first syllable of a word.

frac**ti**on

direc**ti**on

music**ian**

polit**ician**

The **sh** sound spelt **si** or **ssi**

Root words ending in **se** or **d** use **si**.

tense tension expand expansion comprehend comprehension

In some words, **si** makes the **zh** sound.

vision revision precision Asia

Root words ending in **de** also use **si** in the suffix **-sion** but it makes the **zh** sound.

collide collision decide decision

Root words ending in **mit** or **ss** use **ssi**.

permit permission admit admission impress impression possess possession

Silent letters

letter + information or spelling tip	words
k used to be sounded before the letter n in these words.	k new k nowledge k not k night k nife k nee k neel k nock
g used to be sounded before the letter n in these words.	g nat g naw g narl g nome
Pronounce the silent letter t quietly to yourself when you spell these words.	fasten listen soften castle rustle bustle wrestle whistle

letter + information or spelling tip	words
b is silent when it follows m or comes before t at the end of a word.	crumb climb comb lamb thumb debt doubt subtle
u is silent when it follows g and comes before a vowel.	guess guest guide guilt guitar
Silent letter l follows the vowel letters a and o .	salmon calm half calf talk yolk folk
n is silent when it follows m at the end of a word.	hymn autumn column solemn

The spellings **ei** and **ie**

i before **e** **except after c**.

We are just looking at words where **ei** makes the **ee** sound

piece niece shriek relief| believe achieve

ceiling conce**it** rece**ive** dece**ive** perce**ive**

There are some exceptions to this part of the rule.

For example, the words prote**in**, caff**e**ine, se**i**ze, ne**i**ther, **e**ither, are all spelt **ei**, even though they do not come after the letter **c**.

Words ending in **-ible** and **-able**

1. Most words ending in **-ible** don't have an obvious root word:

vis + **ible** = visible

terr + **ible** = terrible

2. Most words ending in **-able** *do* have an obvious root word:

consider + **able** = considerable

reason + **able** = reasonable

There are some words that don't follow the pattern.

resist**ible**

access**ible**

respons**ible**

Plural nouns

The rule is that if a noun ends in **s**, **ss**, **x**, **sh**, **ch** (when pronounced *ch*) or **tch** we add **-es** to make it plural.

bus**s** bus**es** address**es** address**ses** box**x** box**es**

We must swap the **y** for an **i** before adding **-es** to make it plural.

activity**y** activiti**ies** story**y** stori**ies** body**y** bodi**ies**

Plural nouns (2)

Nouns ending in the letter **o** usually become plural just by adding **s**. However, if there is a consonant before the **o**, it is almost always **-es** that we add.

tomato**o** tomato**es** echo**o** echo**es** hero**o** hero**es**

If a noun ends in **f** or **fe**, we usually swap **f** or **fe** for **v** and then add **-es**.

wolf**f** wolf**ves** leaf**f** leaf**ves** calf**f** calf**ves**

Exceptions to the rule

singular noun	plural noun
woman	women
child	children
mouse	mice
person	people
goose	geese
tooth	teeth