

Spelling Rules

The endings	Handy hint	Examples	Exception to the rule
-cious or -tious	If the root word ends in 'ce', the sound is usually spelt as -cious.	vicious, precious, cautious, fictitious	anxious
-cial or -tial	-cial is usually used after a vowel letter and -tial is usually used after a consonant letter.	official, special, confidential, essential	initial, financial, commercial and provincial
-ance/-ancy	-ant and -ance/-ancy are normally used if there is a related word ending in -ation.	observant, expectant, observance, hesitance, observation, expectation	You can have assistant, assistance but not assistation.
-ent and -ence/-ency	-ent and -ence/-ency are usually used if there is a soft /c/, soft /g/ or /qu/ sound before it in the word.	innocent, decent, frequent, confident decency, frequency confidence, independence, innocence	obedient turns into obedience
-able/ -ably and -ible/-ibly	-able/-ably are usually used if there is a related word ending in -ation. -ible/-ibly is usually used if a complete root word can't be heard before it.	adorable/adorably, applicable/applicably, considerable/considerably horrible/horribly, terrible/terribly, visible/visibly, incredible/incredibly	Changeable and noticeable don't have related words which end in -ation. In the case of sensible, the complete root word can be heard before the -ible ending.

	Handy hint	Examples	Exception to the rule
Adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words ending in -fer	The 'r' is doubled if the -fer is still stressed when the ending is added. The 'r' is not doubled if the -fer is no longer stressed.	referring/referred/referral, preferring/preferred, transferring/transferred reference/referee, preference, transference	
Using a hyphen (-)	Hyphens can be used to join a prefix to a root word, especially if the prefix ends in a vowel letter and the root word also begins with one.	co-ordinate, re-enter, co-operate, co-own	
Words with the long /e/ sound spelled 'ei' after the letter 'c'	the 'i before e except after c' rule applies to words where the sound is spelt by 'ei'.	rough, tough, enough	Protein, caffeine, seize all have the 'ei' spelling pattern but not after the letter 'c'.
Words containing the letter string 'ough' as: /uff/, /or/, /off/, /oo/, /oa/, /uh/ and /ow/	'ough' is one of the trickiest spellings in English. It can be used to spell a number of different sounds.	rough, tough ought, bought cough through though, although thorough plough	obedient turns into obedience
Words containing 'silent' letters	Some letters which are no longer sounded used to be sounded hundreds of years ago. 'Knight' used to be pronounced with a 'k' sound before the 'n'!	doubt, island, lamb, solemn, thistle, knight	
Homophones and other words that are often confused	Homophones are words which have the same or similar pronunciation but different meanings.	aisle/isle, aloud/allowed, affect/effect desert/dessert, guessed/guest, heard/herd led/lead, principal/principle, steal/steel	

Words

Handy hint: try to memorise five of these words per week and you will know them all by the end of the year.

accommodate	committee	disastrous	identity	parliament	shoulder
accompany	communicate	embarrass	immediate(ly)	persuade	signature
according	community	environment	individual	physical	sincere(ly)
achieve	competition	equip (-ped, -ment)	interfere	prejudice	soldier
aggressive	conscience*	especially	interrupt	privilege	stomach
amateur	conscious*	exaggerate	language	profession	sufficient
ancient	controversy	excellent	leisure	programme	suggest
apparent	convenience	existence	lightning	pronunciation	symbol
appreciate	correspond	explanation	marvellous	queue	system
attached	criticise	familiar	mischievous	recognise	temperature
available	(critic + ise)	foreign	muscle	recommend	thorough
average	curiosity	forty	necessary	relevant	twelfth
awkward	definite	frequently	neighbour	restaurant	variety
bargain	desperate	government	nuisance	rhyme	vegetable
bruise	determined	guarantee	occupy	rhythm	vehicle
category	develop	harass	occur	sacrifice	yacht
cemetery	dictionary	hindrance	opportunity	secretary	