

## Chapter

# 5

# Spelling Rules

## Introduction

English spelling is an intriguing part of learning English. Max Muller went one step further and summed up the dilemma of those learning English. "English spelling is a national misfortune to England and international misfortune to the rest of the world.

Various scholars and linguists have suggested a number of ways to learn spellings such as Dictionary method, Dictation method, Playway method, Old drill method and so on.

Without going into the merits and demerits of any methods we may agree to the sound advice of Tomkinson that 'Caught rather than taught' is the best way to learn spellings. In other words a student can solve the problem just by reading constantly and preparing a list of words that spell a danger for a student.

There are many reasons for poor spellings. A five among them are poor memory, weak retention power and less of reading activity, therefore, correct spellings need constant writing practice, usage and power of recollection. The more a student recollects a word, the more capability he acquires to avoid errors in spelling words.

## Some Important Rules on Spellings

1. The end consonant is usually doubled when there is one vowel letter before it

(a) While adding 'ed, ing' e.g.,

Stop + ed + ing	—	Stopped	Stopping
Spot + ed + ing	—	Spotted	Spotting
Admit + ed + ing	—	Admitted	Admitting
Regret + ed + ing	—	Regretted	Regretting
Recur + ed + ing	—	Recurred	Recurring
Plan + ed + ing	—	Planned	Planning

### Exceptions :

Suffered	Suffering
Benefited	Benefitting
Offered	Offering
Differed	Differing
Focus	Focused

(b) While adding 'er', 'est' to make comparative and superlative degree e.g.

Thin	Thinner	Thinnest
Big	Bigger	Biggest
Sad	Sadder	Saddest
Fat	Fatter	Fattest
Mad	Madder	Maddest

- (c) While making a noun of a verb by adding 'er'

Cut	Cutter
Swim	Simmer
Run	Runner
Sin	Sinner
Rub	Rubber

- (d) While adding Y to make an adjective of a noun.

Mud	Muddy
Fun	Funny

- (e) If the stress is on the first syllable of a word that ends in "at, el, il, op, ip."

Equal + ed + ing	Equalled, Equalling
Travel + ed, ing	Travelled, Travelling
Level + ed + ing	Levelled, Levelling
Worship + ed + ing	Worshipped, Worshipping
Slap + ed + ing	Slapped, Slapping
Equip + ed, ing	Equipped, Equipping
Handicap + ed + ing	Handicapped, Handicapping
Signal + ed + ing	Signalled, Signalling
Model + ed + ing	Modelled, Modelling

## 2. The end consonant is not doubled :

- (a) When there is dipthong before it.

Reap + ed + ing	Reaped, Reaping
Heap + ed + ing	Heaped, Heaping
Team + ed + ing	Teamed, Teaming
Shout + ed + ing	Shouted, Shouting
Cool + ed + ing	Cooled, Cooling

- (b) When there is a suffix with a consonant.

Sin + ful	Sinful
Woman + hood	Womanhood
Sad + ness	Sadness
Equip + ment	Equipment

- (c) When the stress is on the second syllable.

Listen + ed + ing	Listened, Listening
Offer + ed + ing	Offered, Offering
Answer + ed + ing	Answered, Answering
Murmur + ed + ing	Murmured, Murmuring

## 3. Words Ending in 'y' :

- (a) Verbs ending in 'y' change into 'i' while they are conjugated (Making form of verbs) but 'y' remains unchanged when suffix 'ing' is added.

Rely	Relied	Relying
Marry	Married	Marrying
Try	Tried	Trying
Carry	Carried	Carrying

(b) Words ending in 'y' with a vowel before it do not change.

Obey	Obed	Obedying
Pray	Prayed	Praying
Enjoy	Enjoyed	Enjoying

**Exceptions :**

Say	Said	Saying
Pay	Paid	Paying
Lay	Laid	Laying

(c) When suffix 'ing' is added to verbs ending in 'ie', then change in to 'y'.

lie	lying
die	dying
tie	tying

(d) Nouns and adjectives ending in 'y' with a vowel before them, change into 'i' when suffixes er, est, ly, full, ness are added.

Happy	Happier	Happily
Fly	Flier	
Plenty	Plentiful	
Tidy	Tidier	Tidiest
Pity	Pitiful	
Sunny	Sunnier	Sunniest

**4. When words ending in 'll' are compounded with double 'll', both words become single 'l' :**

Will + full	Wilful
Full + fill	Fulfil

**Exceptions :**

Wellbeing  
Farewell

**5. Use of suffix 'ly' with adjectives to make adverbs:**

(a) Adjectives ending in 'l' are written with 'll' while adding suffix 'ly'.

Final + ly	Finally
Real + ly	Really
Useful + ly	Usefully
Playful + ly	Playfully

(b) Adjectives ending in 'le' are written without 'le' while adding suffix 'ly'.

Sensible + ly	Sensibly
Forcible + ly	Forcibly
Gentle + ly	Gently
Subtle + ly	Subtly

**6. In words ending in 'n' retain 'n' when 'ness' is added :**

Keen	Keenness
Clean	Cleanness
Mean	Meanness

**7. The letter 'c' is followed by letter (ei) and other letters by (ie) :**

Receive	niece
Perceive	Siege
Deceive	Belief
Conceive	Achieve
Ceiling	berief

**Exceptions :**

Leisure, Counterfeit, freight, feign, their, height, heir, reign.

**8. Words ending in 'll' are used with single 'l' when compounded with full, all, well, un, in dis :**

All + together	Altogether
All + most	Almost
Well + come	Welcome
All + ready	Already
Un + till	Until
In + still	Instil
Dis + till	Distil

**9. The silent 'e' is not dropped when :**

(a) Suffix 'ly' is added

False + ly	Falsely
Safe + ly	Safely
Sure + ly	Surely

**Exceptions :**

Whole + ly	Wholly
True + ly	Truly
Due + ly	Duly

(b) 'e' is not dropped after 'c' or 'g' while adding suffixes 'able', 'ous' beginning with vowel.

Peace + able	Peaceable
Trace + able	Traceable
Service + able	Serviceable
Courage + ous	Courageous
Advantage + ous	Advantageous
Manage + able	Manageable
Marriage + able	Marriageable
Charge + able	Chargeable

(c) 'e' is not dropped when suffixes beginning with consonant are added such as **ful**, **less**, **hood**, **ly**, **ment**, **ness**.

hate + ful = hateful	use + less = useless
care + ful = careful	improve + ment = improvement
like + ness = likeness	state + hood = statehood
Extreme + ly = extremely	achieve + ment = achievement

Argue + ment = argument Awe + ful = awful

**Exception (2) :**  
Final 'e' in the following words can be retained or removed.

like	—	likeable, likable
mile	—	mileage, milage
judge	—	judgement, judgment
abridge	—	abridgement, abridgment
acknowledge	—	acknowledgement, acknowledgment

(a) suffixes such as 'ing, able, ary, ous'.

rove + ing = roving  
care + ing = caring  
age + ing = aging  
value + able = valuable  
note + able = notable  
stare + ing = staring  
advise + able = advisable  
imagine + ary = imaginary  
desire + ous = desirous  
pore + ous = porous  
fame + ous = famous  
imagine + able = imaginable  
love + able = lovable  
move + able = movable

**Exceptions :** like + able = likeable

(b) silent 'e' is dropped while adding 'y' to a noun –

Stone + y = stony  
Noise + y = noisy  
Taste + y = tasty  
Ice + y = icy

(c) The silent 'e' after consonant 't' is dropped when suffix 'tion' is added.

Pollute + tion = pollution  
Frustrate + tion = frustration  
Delete + tion = deletion  
Deplete + tion = depletion

(d) 'e' is changed to 'i' in words 'CE' when 'ous' as suffix is added.

Vice + ous = vicious  
Malice + ous = malicious  
Space + ous = spacious  
Grace + ous = gracious

(e) ee or oo are not dropped with suffixes 'able, ing, full'

agree	agreeable	agreeing
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foresee  
woo  
glee

foreseeable  
gleeful

foreseeing  
wooing  
—

(f) Final 'c' is changed to 'ck' before ed, ing, er

Panic  
Picnic

panicked  
picnickers

## 11. Making plurals – Some pitfalls :

(a) The plural of a noun is usually made by adding 's' to it  
homes, arms, boys, flames

### Exceptions :

(b) Nouns ending in, o, kch, ch, ss end in 'es' when changed in plural forms:

wishes, switches, axes, asses, potatoes, tomatoes.

But add 's' only in abbreviated words ending in 'o' photos, Pianos, dynamos.

(c) When singular Nouns ending in 'f' or 'fe' are changed into plural add 'ves' in place 'of', 'f' or 'fe'.

Wife

Wives

Wolf

Wolves

Loaf

loaves

Thief

Thieves

### Exception :

Handkerchief

handkerchiefs

chief

chiefs

cliff

cliffs

belief

beliefs

(d) When singular nouns ending in 'y' with a consonant before them are changed into plural 'y' changes into 'ies'.

Country

Countries

Lady

Ladies.

(e) Nouns ending in 'y' with a vowel word before them retain 'y' when 's' is added.

Joy

Joys

Day

days

Play

Plays

Monkey

Monkeys

## 12. As a part of spellings a student is supposed to be aware of the mute (silent) consonants e.g. :

(i) 'b' is silent in

subtle, debt, debtor, doubt.

(ii) 'd' is silent in

grudge, hedge, sledge, adjourn.

(iii) 'g' is silent in

malign, benign, assign, sign.

(iv) 'h' is silent in

honour, hour, honest, honorary, exhaust.

- (v) 'k' is silent in  
knife, know, knee, knight.
- (vi) 'l' is silent in  
balm, talk, folk, alms, palm, calm, chalk.
- (vii) 'n' is silent in  
Solemn, autumn, hymn, column.
- (viii) 'p' is silent in  
pseudonym, Psychology, Corps, receipt.
- (ix) 't' is silent in  
often, whistle, hustle, debut, depot, hasten, fasten.
- (x) 'w' is silent in  
write, wrath, wring, wrong, wrap.
- (xi) 'h' is silent in  
daughter, draught, sight, right.

## Some Most Likely Pitfalls for Spelling Learners

### [A]

Aggregate  
Adjacent  
Autumn  
Accumulate  
Accrue  
Absence  
Ascetic  
Agree, Agreeable, Agreement  
Address  
Achieve  
Already  
Assassin  
Annihilate  
Acquire  
Apparatus  
Admissible  
Acreage  
Abridgeable, Abridgement,  
Allot, Allotment, Allotted, Allotting  
Accessible  
Adversary  
Assist, Assistant  
Acquitted, Acquitting  
Accommodate, Accommodation  
Assess, Assessment

Awful  
Aggravate  
Athlete, Athletic  
Accede  
Accomplish, Accomplishment  
Adolescent  
Acquaint  
Abstinence, Abstinent  
Appearance  
Assassin, Assassination  
Advantageous  
Arguable, Arguing, Argument  
Acceptable  
Accelerate, Accelerator  
Annual  
Admitting  
Abbreviate  
Allegiance  
Allure  
Aggrieved  
Arrangement.  
Advisable, Advise, Adviser, Advising  
Appall  
Acquise  
Apostle  
Amateur

[B]

Bouquet  
 Beggar  
 Balloon  
 Banquet  
 Bequeath  
 Battalion  
 Bidding  
 Business  
 Biscuit  
 Bureaucracy  
 Besiege  
 Beginner, Beginning  
 Busying  
 Beseech  
 Breakable  
 Book keeper  
 Believable, Believe  
 Blamable, Blameworthy  
 Betrayed,  
 Besiege  
 Benefit, Beneficial, Benefited  
 Bony  
 Bureau  
 Beneficent

[C]

Ceiling  
 Coolly  
 Coercible  
 Caffeine  
 Colloquial  
 Commemorate  
 Challenge  
 Conscience, Conscientious  
 Cigarette  
 Credible  
 Collapsible  
 Celebrate  
 Canvass, Canvassing  
 Coming  
 Corroborate  
 Compatible  
 Contemptible  
 Commitment, Committed  
 Cancelled, Cancelling, Cancellation  
 Chagrined, Chagrining  
 Controlled

Conceit, Conceited  
 Conferred  
 Colossal  
 Cagey  
 Confectionery  
 Corruptible  
 Conscious  
 Convertible  
 Counterfeit  
 Counsel, Counselling  
 Collaborate  
 Conqueror  
 Changeable  
 Chauffer  
 Concede  
 Commendable  
 Connoisseur  
 Collectible  
 Courageous  
 Contractible  
 Concurred, Concurrence, Concurrent  
 Colonel  
 Committe

[D]

Discernible  
 Dispelling  
 Dissimilar  
 Dysentery  
 Deficient  
 Defendant  
 Deterred, Deterrence, Deterrent  
 Dependable, Dependence, Dependent  
 Despicable  
 Desperate  
 Descendant  
 Dissipate, Dissipation  
 Distil  
 Dictionary  
 Diffidence, Diffident  
 Drunkenness  
 Dispensable  
 Dungeon (Subterranean cell of Prisoners)  
 Demagogue (Political Agitator)  
 Deference, Deferment  
 Deceit, Deceitful, Deceive, Deceiver,  
 Deceiving



Difference, Different  
Digestible  
Discernible  
Disheveled (Unkempt, Untidy)  
Dismissible

**[E]**

Enmity  
Etiquette  
Expungeable  
Erosion  
Extravagance  
Ecclesiastic  
Embarrass  
Exceed  
Equilibrium  
Exchangeable  
Exhaustible  
Enforceable  
Erroneous  
Elementary  
Exaggerate  
Echoes  
Eligible  
Existence, Existent  
Efficient  
Exhilarate, Exhilarating  
Excusable  
Ecstasy  
Eighth

**[F]**

Fulfil  
Fahrenheit  
Fascinate  
Fierce  
Feign (Pretend)  
Freight  
Forcible

**[G]**

Glamour  
Grammar  
Goddess  
Grotesque

Guarantee  
Gaiety, Gaily  
Gauge  
Grief, Grieve, Grievous  
Glamorous  
Gorgeous

**[H]**

Hierarchy  
Harass, Harassment  
Hypocrisy  
Hygiene  
Heinous  
Haemorrhage

**[I]**

Inoculate  
Inadmissible  
Inference  
Impeccable  
Illiterate  
Immaculate  
Inventor  
Incurring  
Irrefutable  
Innocuous  
Install  
Impressible  
Interchangeable  
Imposter  
Infallible  
Incorrigible  
Insistence, Insistent  
Impregnable  
Idiosyncrasy  
Irrevocable  
Incredible  
Intermittence, Intermittent  
Innumerable  
Irreparable, Irresistible  
Incompatible  
Irrelevant  
Inadvertence, Inadvertent  
Inedible

**[K]**

Kaleidoscopic

**[L]**

Likable (likeable)

Lodgment

Licentious

Livable

Luscious

Lovable

Lascivious

Legible

Licence

Languor

Leisure

Lieutenant

**[M]**

Miscellaneous

Munificent

Moustache

Martyr

Movable

Mischievous

Manoeuvre

Millionaire

Mosquitoes

Motto, Mottoes

Mimicked, Mimicking.

Millennium

Maintain, Maintenance

Manageable

Magnificent

**[N]**

Noticeable

Niece

Neigh

News-stand

Ninth

Negligible

**[O]**

Omitted

Ostensible

Obsession, Obsessive

Opulence, Opulent,

Omniscience, Omniscient

Oscillate, Oscillation, Oscillating  
Occur, Occurred, Occurrence, Occurring  
Obeisance  
Offence**[P]**

Pronunciation

Perishable

Permissible

Possible

Peaceable

Provable

Panicked, Panicking, Panicky

Profession

Perceivable, Perceive

Privilege

Potatoes

Professor

Prefer, Preference, Preferred

Perseverance, Persistence, Persistent

Prohibited

Procedure

Portable

Precede, Preceding, Predecessor

Producible

Playwright

Possess, Possession

Plebeian

Proficient

Parallel

Phenomena

Pursue, Pursuit

Patrolling

Pretence

Proceed

**[R]**

Renaissance

Reversible

Recede

Repellent

Resuscitate

Regretted, Regretting

Relevance, Relevant

Relief, Relieve

Repentance, Repentant

Replaceable

Refer, Reference, Referred

Receipt, Receive, Receiver  
 Reparable  
 Reconnaissance

## [S]

Sponsor  
 Secretary  
 Sufficient  
 Splendour  
 Spontaneity  
 Succumb  
 Shield  
 Sergeant  
 Stationary  
 Skill, Skilful  
 Satellite  
 Siege (beleaguer)  
 Salable  
 Severity  
 Secede  
 Souvenir  
 Seismic  
 Serviceable  
 Suppress, Suppressible  
 Stationery  
 Supersede  
 Shriek  
 Sustenance  
 Stubborn, Stubborness  
 Sovereign, Sovereignty  
 Secondary  
 Seize, Seizure  
 Succeed  
 Subsistence  
 Sizable  
 Suddenness  
 Superintendence, Superintendent  
 Scintillate, Scintillation, Scintillating  
 Salvageable  
 Susceptible  
 Sacrilege, Sacrilegious  
 Surfeit  
 Sleight  
 Strength

## [T]

Travelled  
 Titillate  
 Tariff  
 Traffic, Trafficked, Trafficker  
 Traceable  
 Tangible  
 Threshold  
 Truly  
 Transmissible  
 Tranquillity  
 Trespass, Trespasser  
 Tyrannical, Tyrannize, Tyranny  
 Twelfth

## [U]

Undiscernibly  
 Utterance  
 Until  
 Unmistakable, Unmistakably  
 Unparalleled  
 Usable, Using

## [V]

Vacuous  
 Vicissitude  
 Vaccination  
 Verandha  
 Vigor, Vigorous  
 Vacuum  
 Value, Valuable  
 Vacillate, Vacillation, Vace  
 Vicious

## [W]

Wintry  
 Wield  
 Weigh, Weight  
 Woollen, woolly  
 Welfare  
 Weird  
 Wholly  
 Welcome