Common Spelling Rules

Spelling in American English is not always easy! There are many rules that can help a student to improve their spelling. Here are a few tips and vocabulary words.

Definition of common terms:

**Suffix:** groups of letters attached to the end of a word to change the word’s meaning

**Prefix:** groups of letters attached to the beginning of a word to change the word’s meaning

**Long and Short vowel sounds:** When a vowel sounds like its name in a word, that is called a long vowel sound (example: The “o” in “go” makes an “oh” sound). When the vowel does not sound like its name, it is a short vowel sound.

Some Spelling Rules:

1) **Use i before e**, except after c, or when sounding like "a" as in "neighbor" and "weigh."
   
   Examples: piece, chief, perceive, ceiling
   
   Some exceptions: neighbor, weird, height, neither, weigh, foreign

2) **Drop the final e** in a word before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) but not before a suffix beginning with a consonant.
   
   Examples: ride + ing = riding, guide + ance = guidance, like + ness = likeness, arrange + ment = arrangement

3) **Change a final y to i** before a suffix, unless the suffix begins with i.
   
   Examples: party + es = parties, try + es = tries, try + ing = trying, copy + ing = copying

4) **Double a final single consonant** before adding a suffix when the word ends with a single vowel followed by a single consonant AND the consonant ends an accented syllable or a one-syllable word.
   
   Examples: stop + ing = stopping, occur + ence = occurrence, swim + ing = swimming

5) The letter **q is usually followed by u**.
   
   Example: queen, quick, quality
6) The letter s never follows x.

7) The consonants v, j, k, w and x are never doubled.

8) Adding a prefix to a word does not usually change the spelling.
   Examples: bi + cycle = bicycle, re + act = react

9) To make a word plural, if the word ends with a consonant and y, change the y to an i and add es.
   Example: “baby” plural is “babies”

10) To make a long vowel sound, you need to add a second vowel.
    Examples: boat, cheap, paid

11) When y is at the end of a 2 syllable word, it usually stands for the long e sound.
    Example: baby, penny, candy

12) If a one syllable word has 2 vowels, the first vowel is usually long and the second is usually silent.
    Example: wheel, leaf, team

13) Words ending in a vowel and y can add the suffix -ed or -ing without making any other change.
    Examples: buying, delaying, employed

14) When the letters ey are at the end of a 2 syllable word, they usually stand for the long e sound.
    Examples: donkey, valley, money

These are not all of the spelling rules in the English language, but these rules should help with many common mistakes. Learning English is a long process, but with lots of practice, you will improve!