

# 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*.

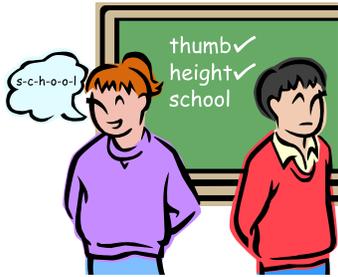
Examples: party + es = parties, try + es = tries, try + ing = trying, copy + ing = copying

- 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!

