

# HANDY SPELLING RULES AND TIPS

## —WORD BEGINNINGS—

### SPELLING WITH C AND K

When the vowels *a*, *o*, or *u* follow the sound /k/, it is spelled with a *c*.

When the vowels *i* or *e* follow the sound /k/, it is spelled with a *k*.

c - *a, o, u*

*c a t*

*c o t*

*c u t*

k - *i, e*

*k i n*

*K e n*

### “CRAZY W”

When it directly precedes the vowel *a*, the letter *w* affects the *a*. Subsequently, *w* affects the “murmur diphthongs” *ar* and *or*.

*w* before *a* = /o/

*w a n t*

*w a s p*

*w* before *ar* = /or/

*w a r t*

*w a r d*

*w* before *or* = /er/

*w o r d*

*w o r m*

When the sound /w/, spelled *qu*, precedes an *a*, the sound of the *a* changes to the sound of an *o*, such as in the words *squat*, *quad*, and *quarter*.

## —WORD MIDDLES—

### SHORT-VOWEL RULE

When one-syllable words have a vowel in the middle, the vowel usually has a short sound.

**Examples:** *cat, dog, man, hat, mom, dad, got*

When they appear after a vowel, the letters *f*, *l*, and *s* are often doubled.

**Examples:** *staff, ball, pass*

## TWO VOWELS TOGETHER

When two vowels are next to each other, the first vowel is usually long (the sound is the same as the sound of the letter) and the second vowel is silent.

**Examples:** *meat, seat, plain, rain, goat, road, lie, pie*

## VOWEL-CONSONANT- *e* PATTERN

When a short word, or the last syllable of a longer word, ends in the vowel-consonant-*e* pattern, the first vowel is usually long and the *e* is silent.

**Examples:** *place, cake, mice, vote, mute*

## *i* BEFORE *e*

For the long *e* sound, spell *i* before *e*, except after the letter *c*.

**Examples:** *relieve, relief, reprieve*

**Letter *c* exception:** *receipt, receive, ceiling, deceive, conceive*

## *e* BEFORE *i*

For the long *a* sound, spell *e* before *i*.

**Examples:** *weight, freight, reign*

## *oi* OR *oy*

Use *oi* in the middle of a word and *oy* at the end of a word.

**Examples:** *boil, soil, toil, boy, toy*

## *ou* OR *ow*

Use *ou* in the middle of a word and *ow* at the end of a word, except words that end in *n* or *d*.

**Examples:** *mouse, house, found, mount, borrow, row, throw, crow*

## *ai* OR *ay*

Use *ai* in the middle of a word and *ay* at the end of a word.

**Examples:** *main, train, way, Monday*

# —WORD ENDINGS—

## SPELLING WITH CH AT THE END OF A WORD

In one-syllable words, when a short vowel sound precedes the /ch/ sound, it is usually spelled *tch*. The *t* is silent and is used in the spelling of all but five words.

**Examples:** *catch, hatch, itch, twitch*

**Five exceptions:** *rich, much, such, which, touch*

## Y AS LONG I

At the end of a short word that has no other vowel, the letter *y* makes the long *i* sound.

**Examples:** *cry, try, my, fly, by*

## Y AS LONG E

At the end of a word in an unaccented syllable, *y* or *ey* makes the long *e* sound.

**Examples:** *money, honey, many, key, funny*

## DOUBLE S, F, AND Z

In single-syllable, short-vowel words that end in the letters *s*, *f*, or *z*, the ending consonant is usually doubled.

**Examples:** *kiss, staff, mess, fluff, jazz*

**Exceptions:** There are 21 exceptions to this rule. Many of these words are sight words.

*S:* *is, as, his, has, was, gas, bus, yes, us, plus, pus, this, goes, does, says*

*F:* *if, of, clef, chef*

*Z:* *whiz, quiz*

## SPELLING WORDS THAT END IN THE SOUND /J/

English words never end in the letter *j*. When the sound /j/ is at the end of a word, it is always spelled *ge*.

**Examples:** *age, huge, strange*

Most one-syllable, short vowel words ending in *ge* are preceded by a silent *d*.

**Examples:** *fudge, bridge, wedge*

## SPELLING WORDS THAT END IN THE SOUND /V/

The consonant *v* never stands alone at the end of an English word. The letter *e* always follows *v* at the end of a word, unless the word is an abbreviation, an acronym, or a name.

**Examples:** *gave, stove, have*

## SPELLING WORDS WITH SUFFIXES

1) In a short vowel word ending in a single consonant, that consonant must be doubled before adding the suffixes *-ing*, *-ed*, *-er*, or *-est*.

run—runner

hop—hopping

2) If a short vowel word already has two consonants at the end, simply add the suffix.

jump—jumping

hunt—hunted

3) To add suffixes to words that end in a vowel, just add the suffix.

go—going

be—being

4) When adding the suffixes *-ing*, *-ed*, *-er*, or *-est* to silent-*e* words, drop the silent *e* and add the suffix.

smile—smiling

pile—piled

5) When adding the suffixes *-ing*, *-ed*, *-er*, or *-est* to adjacent vowel words, simply add the suffix.

boat—boating

mail—mailing

## WORDS ENDING IN THE /K/ SOUND

Long-vowel silent-*e* words end in *ke*.

**Examples:** *bake, hike, spoke*

If the vowel is short and no other sound is before the /k/ sound in a single-syllable word, the spelling is *ck*.

**Examples:** *back, sock, trick*

Words end in the sound /k/ spelled *k* when it is preceded by a murmur diphthong (*ai, oi, ei, ir, ur*), adjacent vowel, special vowel sound, or the letter *l* or *n*.

**Examples:** *park, seek, hawk, hunk, milk*

In the middle of a word, the sound /k/ is spelled *c*.

**Examples:** *deduct, locate, subtraction, correct*

Only multisyllabic words end in the sound /k/ spelled *c*.

**Examples:** *panic, traffic, picnic*

**Exception:** *attack*

When adding *ing* to words ending in *c*, first change the ending to *ck*.

**Examples:** *picknicking, trafficking*

## PLURALS

To form a plural, add *s* to the ends of words ending in a consonant and add *es* to words ending in *ss, zz, x, sh,* or *ch*. Try underlining the ending to draw attention to it as you teach the correct pronunciation.

*kits    jobs    classes    buzzes    boxes    wishes    peaches*

**Note:** The pronunciation of *s* is determined by whether it follows a voiced consonant. If the ending consonant is voiceless, the sound of the plural *s* is /s/ (e.g., *hats*). If the ending consonant is voiced, the sound of the plural *s* is /z/ (e.g., *pens*).

**Adapted from:** [www.esltrail.com/p/ten-consistent-spelling-rules-to-boost.html](http://www.esltrail.com/p/ten-consistent-spelling-rules-to-boost.html);

[http://homepage.smc.edu/reading\\_lab/basic\\_spelling\\_rules.htm](http://homepage.smc.edu/reading_lab/basic_spelling_rules.htm)