

Five spelling tips: Use the right letters

These five tips can help you spell many common English words, even words that are new to you. If you can identify vowels and consonants, you can eliminate many spelling errors in your writing.

First of all, you need to know that English has six vowels, *a, e, i, o, and u*, and twenty consonants: *b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, z*. The letter *y* can be either a vowel or a consonant. In *fly* or *hungry* it is a vowel, but in *you* or *yellow* it's a consonant.

Rule 1: ie or ei?

Rule	Examples
" <i>i</i> before <i>e</i> Except after <i>c</i> Or when sounded like <i>a</i> As in <i>neighbor</i> or <i>weigh</i> ."	<i>piece</i> (<i>i</i> before <i>e</i>) <i>receive</i> (except after <i>c</i>) <i>eight</i> (sounds like <i>a</i>)

Exceptions: *either, neither, foreign, height, seize, society, their, weird*

Rule 2: Drop the final *e* or not?

Rule	Examples
<i>Drop the final e</i> when adding an ending that begins with a vowel.	<i>hope + ing = hoping</i> <i>imagine + ation = imagination</i>
<i>Keep the final e</i> when adding an ending that begins with a consonant.	<i>achieve + ment = achievement</i> <i>definite + ly = definitely</i>

Exceptions: *argument, awful, simply, truly*, and others.

Rule 3: Double the final consonant or not?

Rule	Examples
<i>Double the final consonant</i> if the word ends with a consonant-vowel-consonant <i>and</i> the stress is on the last syllable or the word is a single syllable.	<i>submit + ing = submitting</i> <i>occur + ence = occurrence</i> <i>prefer + ed = preferred</i> <i>trap + ed = trapped</i> <i>fat + er = fatter</i>
<i>Do not double the final consonant</i> when the stress is on a syllable other than the last	<i>problem + atic = problematic</i> <i>offer + ed = offered</i>
<i>Do not double the final consonant</i> if the word ends with vowel-vowel-consonant.	<i>clean + est = cleanest</i> <i>poor + er = poorer</i>
<i>Do not double the final consonant</i> if the word ends with vowel-consonant-consonant.	<i>slick + er = slicker</i> <i>teach + er = teacher</i>

Rule 4: Change the final y or not?

Rule	Example
<i>Change the y to i</i> when adding an ending to a word that ends in y, when a consonant comes before the y.	<i>lonely + est= loneliest</i> <i>happy + er= happier</i> <i>likely + hood= likelihood</i>
<i>Do not change the y</i> when a vowel comes before the y.	<i>boy + ish = boyish</i> <i>buy + er = buyer</i> <i>pay + ment = payment</i>

Exceptions: When adding *-ing* to a word ending in y, always keep the y, even if a consonant comes before it: *study + ing = studying*. Other exceptions: *daily (day)*, *said (say)*, and *paid (pay)*.

Rule 5: Add –s or –es for the plural?

Rule	Examples
<i>Add –s to most words.</i>	<i>book + s = books</i> <i>college + s = colleges</i> <i>jump + s = jumps</i>
<i>Add –s to words that end in a vowel + o.</i>	<i>video + s = videos</i> <i>stereo + s = stereos</i> <i>radio + s = radios</i>
<i>Add –es to words that end in a consonant + o.</i>	<i>potato + es = potatoes</i> <i>hero + es = heroes</i> <i>go + es = goes</i>
<i>Add –es to words that end in s, sh, ch, or x.</i>	<i>class + es = classes</i> <i>push + es = pushes</i> <i>fax + es = faxes</i>

Exceptions: *pianos*, *solos*, and others

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