

Units 1 to 5 Spelling Rules

Syllables and words ending in a consonant will have their short sound:

at in on up, en (as in en-ter); man met lip hop tug

Short (1-syllable) words ending in a K sound are usually spelled with a ck:

lack peck sick rock truck

Short (1-syllable) words ending in a L, F, or S sound usually have doubled letters:

fall well mill doll pull; gaff tiff doff muff; mass hiss less toss fuss

Words usually divide between two consonants (ck & doubled letters count as 1 consonant):
(remember the rule that syllables ending in a vowel are short)

nap-kin rab-bit ad-mit well-ness son-net bob-cat

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Units 6 to 13 Spelling Rules

Words usually divide between consonant blends:

hand-craft lip-stick dust-pan

The letter groups sh, th, wh, ng, and nk count as one letter for syllable division, and will stay together when dividing words.

Words ending in a CH sound are usually spelled –tch:

watch etch itch much thatch

Words beginning with wa usually have an “ah” sound as in water instead of the expected short a sound:

want water watch

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Units 14 to 20 Spelling Rules

Words with a vowel followed by a consonant followed by a letter e will have their long sound (silent e rule.)

late Pete nine home cube

Some short words with o and i will have a long sound, they used to have a silent e at the end of the word. This often happens when these o and i words have the letters l, t, or d in them.

wild child old told both post host kind find mind roll colt

Words and syllables ending in a vowel will have their long sound:

be hi go mu my; ma-ker me-ter si-ding mo-tor cu-pid

(Words ending in an a are exceptions, they will say “ah,” ma, pa. Syllables ending in a will have their long a sound, as in “ma-ker” and “pa-per.”)

or will usually say “er” after a w and at the end of a word (or normally says “or” as in for):

word world work; doctor actor janitor

Short words with another consonant sound before the k sound will be spelled with a k:

dark pink perk thank

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Units 21 to 27 Spelling Rules

Long a sound is spelled with an ai within the word and an ay at the end: **mail, paid; say stay**

Words with ea normally have a long e sound (67% of the time.) However, they sometimes (32% of the time) have a short e sound, and occasionally (1% of the time) will have a long a sound.

Long e (67%): **seat meal bean seat**; Short e (32%): **bread breath**; long a (1%) **steak**

Short words with ie have a long i sound, longer words with ie have a long e sound

Long i: **pie cried tie dries**; long e: **grief field thief yield**

When y is a vowel, it normally has the same sound as i. However, at the end of long words, it is normally a long e sound:

Short i: **gym**; Long i: **try my type**; end of word, long e: **happy puppy army**

Long o is spelled oa within the word and oe at the end: **boat goat loaf; toe Joe**

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Units 28 to 36 Spelling Rules

The sound of ou as in out or how is spelled with a ou within the word and ow within the word or at the end of the word. It will not end spelled with a ou.

out south; howl; now plow

Usually, ou says ou as in out, however, it can also have a long o sound (11% of the time), a long oo sound (8% of the time), or a short oo sound (1% of the time, but common words)

ou (81%): **out found** Long o (11%): **soul**
Long oo (8%): **you soup** Short oo (1%): **could should would**

The sound of oi is spelled with oi within the word and oy at the end: **oil, coin; boy, troy**

The sound of au is spelled with au within the word, aw at the end (aw can also be used within the word):
faun, autumn; lawn, hawk; raw, claw

Unaccented syllables are often mushed to the schwa sound of uh (shown in the dictionary as an upside-down e.) This happens especially often with words beginning with an a: **apart, alike.**

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Unit 37 Spelling Rules

The letter c is pronounced as an s before e, i, and y, but with a k sound before all other letters. (Before the vowels a, o, and u and before all consonants.) The letter c is often followed by a silent e whose purpose is to keep the sound of the c “soft,” as its s sound is called. When it is before an e or an i at the end of a word, it will sometimes say “sh.”

c as s before e, i, or y: **cell, city, cyber, ace, dice, mice**
c as s with a silent e to keep the “soft” sound: **prince, fleece**
c as k before a, o, u and all consonants: **cap, cot, cube, club, crash**
c as sh before i or e: **special, ocean**

The c syllables:

ca, ce, ci, co, cu, cy; sca, sce, sci, sco, scu, scy

(pronounced kay, see, sigh, ko, cue, sigh; ska, see, sigh, sko, sku, sigh)

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Unit 38 Spelling Rules

The letter g is pronounced as a j before e, i, and y, but with a g sound before all other letters. (Before the vowels a, o, and u and before all consonants.) English words will not end with a j. The letter g is often followed by a silent e whose purpose is to keep the sound of the g “soft,” as its j sound is called. A letter d is added before the ge to keep the vowel short (2 consonants, short vowel: 1 consonant, long vowel.) A few common words such as girl and get have a hard g where a soft g “j” sound would be expected.

g as j before e, i, or y: **gem, ginger, gypsy**

g as j with a silent e to keep the “soft” sound: **age huge**

g as j with a silent e to keep the “soft” sound and a d to keep the vowel short

(2 consonants, short vowel): **badge, ridge, edge, dodge, grudge**

g as g before e, i, or y as an exception--a few common words: **get, girl**

The g syllables: **ga, ge, gi, go, gu, gy** (pronounced gay, gee, gigh, go, goo, guy)

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Units 39 to 40 Spelling Rules

The letter team igh says long i. The letters gh are not truly silent, it is part of a team of letters making the i long: **high bright**

At the end of words, gh occasionally says f: **rough laugh**

The letter team kn is pronounced with the k silent: **knight, knee**

The letter team wr is pronounced with the w silent: **write, wrong**

The letter team mb is pronounced with the b silent: **lamb climb comb**

The letters b and t are sometimes silent: **debt, often**

The letter L is not exactly silent, it changes the sound of the vowel: **calf, half**

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Units 41 to 44 Spelling Rules

The letters s and z are consonant pairs. They are pronounced with the mouth in the same position. The letter s often has its z sound, especially at the end of a word: **has, is; nose wise**

Words ending in le divide 1 letter before le: **ta-ble, ket-tle**

Words ending in el divide directly before el: **lev-el, reb-el**

The letters ed at the end will be pronounced like the name “Ed” after a d or a t: **added acted**

Otherwise, ed will be pronounced “d” or “t” with no vowel sound for the e: **saved baked**

(d and t are also consonant pairs)

Extra rules 1:

Vowel teams that don't make a sound on their own divide between vowels: **ra-di-o, me-ow, cas-u-al**

(exception: some Latin words divide between 2 vowels that normally make another sound: **di-et, con-gru-ent**)

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Extra rules 2:

The letters wh normally are a letter team that makes the sound of w (or, in some regions, its unvoiced consonant pair sound of wh) However, before o, it often makes the sound of h:

when where which; who whose whole

The letter team gh usually says g, and the letter team gn usually says n: **ghost, spaghetti; gnat sign**

The letter h is often silent at the beginning of words: **honor, herb**

Longer words ending in a k sound are usually spelled with a single c: **music, celiac, republic**

(review: short words ending in a k sound are usually spelled with a ck: **duck, pick, lack** and with another consonant sound before the k sound, spelled with a k: **dark, think, perk**)

Divide before prefixes and after suffixes: **pre-fix, be-fore; na-tion, use-ful; pre-ven-tion**

Common prefixes: re- dis- over- un- mis- out- be- co- de- pre- fore- inter- sub- trans-

Common suffixes: -tion -ize -ate -en -ity -er -ness -ism -ment -ant -ship -ive -ful -less

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Extra rules 3:

The letters ei normally say long a as in rein. After a c, they say long e as in receipt. They also sometimes just say long e as in neither. It sometimes says short i as in forfeit or long i as in feisty.

long a (66%) **rein** After c: long e **receipt** long e (9%) **neither**
short i (13%) **forfeit** long i (12%) **feisty**

ear followed by a consonant usually (61% of the time) says “er” as in earl but sometimes says “ar” as in heart (39% of the time): er (61%) **earth earn** ar (39%) **heart hearth**

ear at the end of a word or syllable usually says “eer” as in fear (79% of the time) but sometimes says “air” as in bear (21% of the time): eer (79%) **fear appear** air (21%) **bear swear**

ere usually (93% of the time) says eer as in here, but sometimes (7% of the time) says air as in there:
eer (93%) **here mere** air (7%) **there where**

Words in English will not end in v, so words with ve at the end may be either short or long:
give, live, have (Live can be pronounced either long or short depending on its usage.)

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A few important exceptions

A few words with a u after the s are pronounced with s as sh: **sugar, sure**

Words with one vowel mushed to the schwa sound of uh (occurs especially often in words that begin with a or with the letter o followed by m, n, or v):

again, about, around, away, what, from, come, some, done, love

Words with consonant pair substitutions (z sound for s, v sound for f).

as, has, is, his, was, use, does, of (does and was also have the vowel sound mushed to uh)

These words have one vowel sound off from their expected sound, oo as in moo instead of long o:

to, do, who More words vowel one sound off:

because, been, could, pretty, said, shall, you; never, seven, upon, only

The or in wor is normally pronounced er as in her, the a in words starting with wa is pronounced ah as in saw, and the ar sound in words like warm is pronounced like or in for.

word, work, worth; want, wash; warm, ward, war

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Webster's Speller Rules

Unaccented syllables are often mushed to the schwa sound of uh. This is especially common at the end of words. However, e's often mush to short i: **rur-al fill-et** (pronounced rurul and fillit)

When the last syllable is accented, the sounds will not schwa: **com-pel, la-ment**
(accented syllables underlined)

The letter u is already a relaxed sound, so it is already mushed! The letter i usually holds its sound, or at least some of its sound. The letters o and a are most likely to "mush" to a schwa uh sound.

(as noted above, e's will generally mush to a short i if they schwa, especially at the end)

At the end of a word, the letter y will have its normal long i sound when it is accented, but will have a long e sound in an unaccented syllable (accented syllables underlined):

de-ny, mis-ap-ply; cru-el-ty

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Rules important for ESL students and students with speech/language difficulties:

u, eu, ue, and ew can be pronounced either "yoo" or "oo" depending on the letter that comes before the vowel. Words that start with a ch, d, j, l, r, or s will say "oo." All others will say "yoo."

oo: **due, chew, june, lute, rue, Sue, blue, brew** yoo: **butane, cube, feud, mew**

Adding ed: Words that end in a d or a t will say "ed." **ended, added; fasted, listed**

Words ending in the sound of a vowel, b, g, l, n, m, r, s as a z sound, v or z will end with the sound of d:

mobbed, logged, hauled, claimed, barred, closed, loved

Words ending in the sounds of ch, sh, f, k, p, s, or x will end with the sound of t:

laughed, kicked, hopped, bossed, boxed

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