

## 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**

## 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**

## 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.**

## 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)

## 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)

## 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**

## 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**)

### 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

### 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.)

### 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**

## **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**

## **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," t can say either sound except for a few words which can only be pronounced "oo." Words starting with all other letters 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**