

ENGLISH · GRADES 2–6

Spelling Rules That Actually Help

Patterns to make English make sense

English looks random — but it isn't

English spelling looks chaotic, but most of it follows patterns. Once you know the patterns, hundreds of words become predictable. This poster covers the most useful rules — the ones that work most of the time. (Yes, there are exceptions. Welcome to English.)

Six rules that work most of the time

<p>1. 'I' before 'E' except after 'C'</p> <p>BELIEVE, FRIEND, PIECE, NIECE — i before e. RECEIVE, CEILING, DECEIVE — after c, e before i. EXCEPTIONS: WEIRD, EITHER, SCIENCE. There are always exceptions in English!</p>	<p>2. The 'silent E' magic trick</p> <p>Adding 'e' at the end makes the previous vowel say its NAME, not its sound: • HAT → HATE • KIT → KITE • HOP → HOPE • TUB → TUBE The 'e' is silent but powerful.</p>
<p>3. Double the consonant when adding -ing</p> <p>If a word is short, with one vowel, end in one consonant — DOUBLE IT before adding -ing: • HOP → HOPPING • RUN → RUNNING • SHOP → SHOPPING If there are two vowels (LOOK, RAIN), don't double.</p>	<p>4. Drop the 'e' before adding -ing</p> <p>If a word ends in silent 'e', drop the 'e' before adding -ing or -ed: • MAKE → MAKING • HOPE → HOPING • DANCE → DANCING Not HOPPING (that's 'hop'). HOPING (that's 'hope').</p>
<p>5. -TION says 'shun'</p> <p>Most words ending in 'shun' sound are spelled -TION: • ACTION, NATION, STATION • MENTION, ATTENTION, EDUCATION Not SHUN — TION. (A few use -SION: vision, decision.)</p>	<p>6. Plurals — ies, es, or just s?</p> <p>Most plurals: just add S. CAT → CATS. Word ends in S, X, CH, SH: add ES. BUS → BUSES, BOX → BOXES. Word ends in consonant + Y: change Y to IES. BABY → BABIES, FLY → FLIES. Word ends in vowel + Y: just add S. MONKEY → MONKEYS, DAY → DAYS.</p>



When in doubt, look it up

Even adults look up spellings. There is no shame in checking. The goal isn't to never make a mistake — it's to NOTICE when something looks wrong, and to know where to find the right answer. A child who checks is a child who's becoming a writer.

Five word pairs that catch everyone out

Word	Other word	How to remember
their (belonging)	there (place)	THERE has 'here' inside it — both about place
your (belonging)	you're (you are)	YOU'RE has the apostrophe of contraction
its (belonging)	it's (it is)	IT'S only when you mean 'it is' or 'it has'
accept (receive)	except (not including)	aCCEPT (cosy and confirmed). EXCEPT (excluded)
affect (verb)	effect (noun)	Affect is an Action. Effect is the End result.

