

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

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

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

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

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

### Rule 3: Double the final consonant or not?

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

## Rule 4: Change the final y or not?

### Rule

When adding an ending to a word that ends in y, **change the y to i** when a consonant comes before the y.

### Example

lonely + est= loneliest  
happy + er= happier  
likely + hood= likelihood

**Do not change the y** when a vowel comes before the y.

boy + ish= boyish  
buy + er= buyer  
pay + ment = payment

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*, *said*, and *paid*.

## Rule 5: Add –s or –es for the plural?

### Rule

Add –s to most words.

### Examples

Book + s= Books  
College + s= Colleges  
Jump + s= Jumps

Add –s to words that end in a vowel + o.

Video + s= Videos  
Stereo + s= Stereos  
Radio + s= Radios

Add –es to words that end in a consonant + o.

Potato + es= Potatoes  
Hero + es= Heroes  
Go + es= Goes

Add –es to words that end in s, sh, ch, or x.

Class + es= Classes  
Push + es= Pushes  
Fax + es= Faxes

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

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