SPELLING RULES:
43 CONSISTENT GENERALIZATIONS ABOUT THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

I   Introduced
M   Mastered
I   M

_ _ _ 1. Silent “e” on the end of a word usually makes the preceding vowel long (e.g., name, Pete, time, home, mule, compose, imitate [Silent e syllable]). (See Strategies: Six Syllable Types in English.)
_ _ _ 2. Use “-ck” for /k/ at the end of one-syllable words after one short vowel (e.g., back, deck, sick, clock, chuck).
_ _ _ 3. Use “-tch” for /ch/ at the end of a one-syllable word after one short vowel (e.g., patch, etch, ditch, blotch, clutch). Common exceptions: such, much, which, rich.
_ _ _ 4. Use “-dge” on the end of a one-syllable word for /j/ after one short vowel (e.g., badge, edge, bridge, fudge, dodge).
_ _ _ 5. In one-syllable words, double the final “l, f, s, z” after one short vowel (e.g., tell, mill, fluff, bluff, pass, muss, fizz, fuzz).
_ _ _ 6. A single vowel in the middle of a syllable is usually short (e.g., picnic, not, cabin [Closed syllable]).
_ _ _ 7. A vowel at the end of a syllable is usually long (e.g., vacation, pretend, between, pilot, locate [Open syllable]).
_ _ _ 8. When a vowel comes before a double consonant, it is almost always short (e.g., stripper, striper; supper, super).
_ _ _ 9. When two consonants stand between two vowels, the syllable division usually occurs between the two consonants (e.g., nap/kin, ten/nis, but/ter).
_ _ _ 10. When one consonant stands between two vowels, the consonant may belong in the first syllable or it may belong in the second syllable (e.g., trav/el, be/long, re/bel, reb/el).
_ _ _ 11. When three consonants stand between two vowels, the division occurs between a blend and the other consonants (e.g., mon/ster, pump/kin).
_ _ _ 12. Separate prefixes and suffixes as syllables (e.g., trans/port/a/tion).
_ _ _ 13. The letter “e” has the soft sound of /s/ when e, i, or y follows it (e.g., city, center, cyclone).
_ _ _ 14. The letter “g” has the soft sound of /j/ when e, i, or y follows it (e.g., gentle, ginger, gym).
_ _ _ 15. In a one-syllable word, with one short vowel, ending in one consonant, double the final consonant before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel (-ing, -y, or-ed) (e.g., drop, dropping, dropped; sad, sadder, saddest; man, mannish; sin, sinner, sinning). Keep the final consonant when adding a suffix beginning with a consonant (e.g., sadly, manly, sinful [1+1+1 generalization]).

16. Generalization 15 also applies to the final syllable in two- or three-syllable words, if the final syllable is accented (e.g., confer, conferring; omit, omitted; begin, beginning [2+1+1 generalization]).

17. Usually drop the final “-e” on words when you add a suffix beginning with a vowel (e.g., late, later; shine, shiner; fame, famous). Keep the final “-e” when adding suffixes beginning with a consonant (e.g., homeless, movement [Silent e generalization]).

18. If a word ends in a consonant followed by a “y,” change the final “-y” to “-i” whenever adding suffixes unless the suffix begins with an “i” or the “y” has a vowel in front of it (e.g., try, tried, trying; rely, relied, reliable, relying; play, playing, played, player [y to i generalization]).

19. Use “i” before “e” except after “c,” or when it says /a/ as in neighbor or weigh (e.g., priest, chief, receive, ceiling, vein, freight).

20. Use “c” for the final /k/ sound when the word has two or more syllables (e.g., magic, terrific, Atlantic).

21. Use double “s” after one short vowel in one-syllable words [see generalization 5] (e.g., glass). Use “-se” so words aren’t confused as plurals (e.g., grease, grouse, house).

22. Never end a word with a single “z.” Double the final “z” when it follows one short vowel in a one-syllable word [see generalization 5]. Use “ze” after a long vowel sound or a double vowel (e.g., buzz, freeze).

23. “Ai” is most often followed by an “n” or “l” or “d” (e.g., rain, sail, aid).

24. “Oa” is almost always used in one-syllable words (e.g., boar, roast, oat).

25. “O” is always followed by a “u” and at least one other vowel (e.g., quit, quiet). “V” and “x” are never doubled. “X” is never followed by an “s.”

26. No words in English end in “v.” They end with “ve,” no matter whether the vowel is long or short (e.g., have, gave, drove). The “silent e” generalization is not consistent with “v” words.

27. To keep the hard sound for “g,” follow the “g” with a “u” when used before an “i” or “e” (e.g., guess, guide, guest).

28. “Igh,” “ough,” and “augh” are usually followed by a “t” (e.g., night, ought, caught).

29. For most words, add “s” to make them plural (e.g., oats, dogs, cars).

30. When nouns end in “s,” “x,” “z,” “ch,” and “sh,” add “es” to make them plural (e.g., gases, taxes, buzzes, marches, brushes). The /ez/ will be heard as an extra syllable.

31. Nouns ending in a vowel “-y” combination (ay, oy, ey) are made plural by adding “s” (e.g., days, boys, keys). Nouns ending in a consonant “-y” combination (dy, ny) are made plural by changing the “y” to “i” and adding “es” (e.g., lady, ladies; pony, ponies).

32. Most nouns ending in “f” or “fle” form their plurals by adding “s” (e.g., roofs, rifles).

33. Nouns ending in a vowel “-o” combination are made plural by adding “s” (e.g., radios, studios). Nouns ending in a consonant “-o” combination have no generalization, therefore, the dictionary must be used in each case.

34. Some common nouns have irregular plural forms (e.g., man, men; mouse, mice; tooth, teeth; leaf, leaves).

35. Use “-est” for the suffix when comparing three or more things (e.g., tallest, youngest, nicest). Use the “-ist” for people (nouns) who do things (e.g., artist, projectionist, humanist).

36. (1) For the suffix sound /n/ that indicates a person, a nationality, or a religion, use “-an” (e.g., American, Lutheran). (2) Use “-ian” when it sounds /eyun/ (e.g., Indian, Cambodian). (3) For the suffix saying the sound /n/ at the end of a verb, usually use “-en” (e.g., ripen, redder, deaden).

37. Use “-ous” as the suffix when the word is an adjective (e.g., dangerous, marvelous). Use “-us” when the word is a noun (e.g., sinus, ruckus).

38. Use “-ize” as the suffix to add to whole words or to roots (e.g., modernize, authorize, criticize).

39. “Cise” is a common Latin root and not really a suffix at all because the rest of the word cannot stand alone. The root “cise” means “to cut,” but only makes sense when used with a prefix (e.g., incise, excise).

40. Usually use “-er” as a suffix for one-syllable words when you mean a person who “does” (e.g., diner, jumper, hopper, runner). Use “-or” for two or more syllable words when you mean a person or thing that “does” (e.g., professor, editor, incinerator). Tractor, doctor, and actor are common exceptions. Use “-ar” to form an adjective (e.g., singular, regular, popular). All others use “-ure” (e.g., manure).

41. Usually use the suffix “-able” when you are adding to a whole word and it means “able” (e.g., serviceable, workable, manageable) or when the root ends in a hard “c” or “g” (e.g., despicable). Use the suffix “-ible” when adding to a root (e.g., visible, edible) or when the root ends in a soft “c” or “g” (e.g., forcible, legible).

42. These suffixes mean people who do: -ist, -ee, -cian, -eer, -ier, -er (added to one syllable), -or (added to two or more syllables), and -ess (means female) (e.g., pianist, employee, physician, engineer, brigadier, runner, editor, princess).

43. Use “wr” as opposed to “r” for words that imply the meaning “twist” (e.g., wrench, wrestle, wrist, write, wrought, wrap, wrong, wreck, wry).

Developed by:
C. Wilson Anderson, Jr., MAT, Educational Tutorial Consortium, 4400 South 44th Street, Lincoln, Nebraska 68516.