

# SPELLING RULES

1. A word is made up of its root, the base to which prefixes (beginnings) and suffixes (endings) are added. Usually, when adding a prefix or suffix to a word, spell the word as it is and then add the prefix or suffix.

**dis** + satisfy =dissatisfy (keep the double s)  
**mis** + spell = misspell  
mean + **ness** = meanness (keep the double n)  
reason + **able** = reasonable  
star + **s** = stars

2. Words ending in **-ch, -sh, -ss, -z, or -x**, usually add **-es** to form the plural of the noun or third person singular of the verb.

**dress** becomes **dresses**  
**wish** becomes **wishes**  
**church** becomes **churches**

- a. When there is a consonant in front of **y**, change **y** to **i** before adding **es**.  
**berry** becomes **berries**      **bury** becomes **buries**  
**empty** becomes **emptiness**      **try** becomes **tries**

**EXCEPTION:** Do not change **y** to **i** when the ending begins with **i** or when a proper name ends in **y**.

**study** becomes **studying**      **try** becomes **trying**      **Kelly** becomes **Kellys**

- b. When a one-syllable word ends in a single consonant with a single short vowel sound in front of it, double the final consonant before adding an ending that begins with a vowel (-ed, -ing, -age, -ish, -er, -ar and -y).  
**win** becomes **winning, winner**  
**man** becomes **mannish**  
**swim** becomes **swimmer, swimming**

- c. In words of more than one syllable, only double the consonant if the accent is on the final syllable.

**begin** becomes **beginning**      **occur** becomes **occurring**  
**prefer** becomes **preferred**      **omit** becomes **omitted**

**EXCEPTION:** benefit becomes benefited

- d. When a word ends with a silent **e**, drop the **e** before adding an ending which starts with a vowel.  
**come** becomes **coming**      **lose** becomes **losing**

**Note:** The final **e** usually indicates that the preceding vowel is a long vowel. Note the differences in pronunciation in the list below:

**hop/hopping** but      **hope/hoping**  
**rat/ratting** but      **rate/rating**

- e. When making a plural out of a noun ending in **fe**, change the **f** to **v** before adding **s**:  
**life** becomes **lives**    **half** becomes **halves**    **thief** becomes **thieves**

**EXCEPTION:** The plural of **belief** is **beliefs**.

3. Deciding on **ei** or **ie**:

a. **i** before **e**

believe	view
friend	field
chief	siege

b. Except after **c**:

deceive	freight
receipt	deceit

c. Or when sounded like “**a**” as in **neighbor** and **weigh**:

eight	freight
reign	veil

d. Other exceptions to watch for:

either	neither
leisure	seize

**ADDITIONAL SPELLING HINTS**

1. No word in the English language ends in “full” except full: **thankful, grateful, spoonful**
2. The word **separate** has a rat in it.
3. A villain can be found in a villa.
4. Keys can be found in donkeys and monkeys.
5. **Government** comes from the word **govern**, so remember the **n**.
6. Don’t forget the extra **r** in the middle of February.
7. **Under-**and **over-** compounds are written as one word: **overestimate, overrate, underestimate**
8. The tendency today is to spell most compounds as one word: **lunchroom, textbook**
9. Possessive pronouns never take an apostrophe because they are already in the possessive case: **its, theirs, yours, hers**
10. **It’s** (with an apostrophe) is always a contraction for **it is**.
11. **All right** is always written as two words.
12. But note the difference between **already** and **all ready**.
  - a. The boys are **already** in school
  - b. They were **all ready** (meaning everybody) when the bus came.
13. **A lot** is always written as two words, also.

14. Adverbs are usually formed by taking the word as it is and adding **ly** to it: occasional—occasionally, accident—accidentally
15. Only three verbs end in **–eed**: exceed, proceed, succeed
16. Only six words end in **–ery**: cemetery, monastery, millinery, confectionery, distillery, stationery
17. Only four words end in **–efy**: stupefy, putrefy, liquefy, rarefy
18. **Prize** ends in **–ze**, but when it is part of another word, the ending is spelled with an **–se**: surprise, comprise, enterprise
19. Generally, the suffix **–able** is added to words that could stand alone or to word stems ending in **i**: agreeable, dependable, breakable, reliable, sociable, appreciable
20. The ending **–ible** is usually added to word parts that cannot stand alone without a suffix: audible, visible, credible
21. When a verb ends in **–nd**, sometimes the noun derived from it will substitute **se** for **d**: defend—defense, pretend—pretense, offend—offense, suspend—suspense
22. The prefix **ante-** means before and **anti-** means against.
  - a. *Antebellum* means before the Civil War.
  - b. An **antidote** is a remedy to counteract a poison.

### COMMONLY CONFUSED WORDS

1. **Advise** is a verb while **advice** is a noun.
  - a. He **advised** the student to take English.
  - b. Take my **advice** and go home.
2. **Affect** is always a verb meaning to influence or attack or to touch the emotions. The noun **effect** means the result of a cause.
  - a. Smoking **affects** the heart. Drugs have side **effects**.
3. **Altogether** means wholly or thoroughly. **All together** means in a group.
  - a. This test is **altogether** unnecessary.
  - b. They were **all together** at the restaurant.
4. **Cite** means to quote or refer to an example. **Sight** means to have the power of vision. **Site** means a place where something is or was situated.
  - a. John will **cite** a portion of Poe’s most famous poem.
  - b. One’s **sight** enables one to see many things
  - c. The Smiths are going to build a home on that **site**.

5. **Except** means to exclude or to make an exception. **Accept** means to approve or to receive.
  - a. Everyone **except** John is attending the party.
  - b. Linda was **accepted** at Georgia Tech.
6. **Fewer** is used with plural nouns and refers to number. **Less** is used with singular nouns and refers to amount.
  - a. **Fewer** students were in class today, so the discussion took **less** time than usual.
7. **Hear** is a verb meaning to listen. **Here** is an adverb meaning time or place, and it is the opposite of there.
  - a. You **hear** with your ear.
  - b. If you want to have a rave party, have it **here**.
8. **Lay** (laid, laying) means to put or to place. **Lie** means to rest or recline.
  - a. Please **lay** the book on the table.
  - b. Jim is going to **lie** down and rest.
9. **Lose** is a verb, but **loose** is usually an adjective.
  - a. Did you **lose** your book?
  - b. The dress is too **loose**.
10. **Past** means gone by, over, or having existed in a previous time. **Passed** is the past tense of the verb to pass, meaning to go by.
  - a. This **past** weekend, a car **passed** me going 80 mph.
11. **Right** means correct. **Write** means to trace or inscribe with a pencil, pen, or similar device. **Rite** is a custom or ceremony. The author of a play is a **playwright**.
  - a. Mary gave the **right** answer to the question.
  - b. Please **write** your answer in the blanks.
  - c. A Bar Mitzvah is a **rite** of passage.
12. **Then** refers to time or order, and **than** is used in comparisons.
  - a. We are going shopping and **then** to the movies.
  - b. Sam would rather watch TV **than** read a book.
13. **There** is an adverb referring to a place or point in time or an expletive. **Their** is a possessive pronoun. **They're** is a contraction for they are.
  - a. **There** is nothing to do in Duluth.
  - b. Put the book over **there**.
  - c. **Their** car is in the shop.
  - d. **They're** not going with us.

14. **To** means toward or in the direction of. **Too** means also, in addition to, or besides. **Two** is a number
15. **Weather** refers to climate, but **whether** is used to introduce an alternative.
16. **Won** is the past tense of the verb to win, and **one** is a number.
17. **Whole** means entire or complete, and a **hole** is an opening or cavity.
18. **Whose** is a possessive pronoun, and **who's** is a contraction for who is.
  - a. **Who's** going to find out **whose** book this is?
19. **Your** is a possessive pronoun, and **you're** is a contraction for you are.
  - a. **You're** not going to like what they did to **your** car.

**SPELLING MADE EASIER**

You are not alone if you misspell one of a large number of confusing words. The only way to learn many of these words is by going over the words again and again. Write them. Say them. Look at them in sentences. Below are commonly misspelled words divided into ten groups to make them easier for you to study. Try learning one group a week and watch your spelling improve.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
a lot	achievement	acclaim	accommodate	arguing	apparent	afraid	argument	acceptance	analyze
all right	among	acquire	analysis	beneficial	article	already	bargain	across	arise
believe	belief	coming	become	description	beginning	beautiful	cigarette	curriculum	certainly
benefited	conceivable	definitely	before	interest	exaggerate	entrance	escape	during	excellence
describe	conscious	discipline	disgusted	mere	experience	excitable	except	fulfill	interest
forty	existence	dropped	enough	particular	height	hungry	exercise	grammar	oppose
guarantee	occasion	embarrass	occurrence	receive	losing	opinion	fourth	possession	quiet
license	possible	existent	prisoners	recognize	practical	personnel	genius	prejudice	referring
lonely	professor	familiar	significance	separate	precede	playwright	hopeless	recommend	remember
occurred	pursue	fascinate	source	sincerely	privilege	sacrifice	hoping	relieve	surprise
personal	sense	marriage	strength	studying	repetition	sociology	huge	seize	swimmer
rhythm	similar	medicine	swimming	therefore	transferred	stubborn	ignorant	sentence	useful
shining	technique	necessary	thought	thorough	vacuum	suspense	imagine	speech	yield
than	villain	preferred	useless	tragedy	weird	unnecessary	jealous	suppose	
together	writing	prepare	various	occurring	whole	view	likely	together	