



43 Basic Rules for Spelling

1. **Sneaky e, magic e, cvce, or silent e** at the end of the word usually makes the preceding vowel sound long.
ate, Pete, dime, rose, cute
2. At the end of one-syllable words and after one short vowel sound, use **-ck** for /k/.
black, peck, pick, dock, pluck
3. At the end of one-syllable words and after one short vowel sound, use **-tch** for /ch/.
match, sketch, witch, blotch, crutches
(Exceptions include *such, much, which, rich*)
4. Use **-dge** at the end of one-syllable words for /j/ after one short vowel sound.
badge, ledge, bridge, lodge, budge
5. With a one-syllable word, double the **final consonant l, f, s, or z** after one short vowel sound.
mall, pass, staff, jazz, smell, mess, pill, stiff, kiss, fizz, doll, toss, off, fluff, fuss, puff, fuzz
6. **A single vowel in the middle of the word is usually short.** *cvc* (A closed syllable)
cab, met, picnic, hot, cut
7. **A vowel at the end of a syllable is usually long.** *cv*
va/ca/tion, be/cause, pilot, location, elocution
8. **A vowel is almost always short if it comes before a double consonant.**
dinner, diner super, supper latter, later
9. When **two consonants are between two vowels**, divide between the two consonants.
nap/kin, ten/nis, spin/ner, blot/ter, flut/ter
10. When **one consonant is between two vowels**, it may belong to the first or second syllable.
grav/el, be/long, lem/on, re/bel, reb/el
11. If there are **three consonants between two vowels**, divide the syllables between a blend and the other consonant.
mon/ster, pump/kin
12. **Prefixes and suffixes are separated as syllables.**
ex/pect/a/tion
13. **The letter c has the sound of /s/ if followed by e, i, or y.**
century, city, policy
14. **The letter c has the sound of /k/ if followed by a, o, or u.**
cake, comb, cubicle
15. **The letter g has the sound of /j/ if followed by e, i, or y.**
gingerly, age, apology

- 16. The letter g has the sound of /g/ if followed by a, o, or u.**
game, ago, guilty
- 17. When adding a suffix beginning with a vowel (-ing, -y, or -ed) in a one-syllable word with one short vowel and ending in one consonant, double the final consonant.**
drip: dripping, dripped, drippy
wet: wetter, wettest
win: winner, winning
- 18. When adding a suffix beginning with a vowel (-ing, -y, or -ed) to the final syllable in two or three-syllable words with one short vowel, if the final syllable is accented, and ending in one consonant, double the final consonant.**
infer: inferring
omit: omitted
begin: beginning
happen: happening
- 19. Before adding a suffix beginning with a vowel, drop the final e.**
dine: diner
late: later
fame: famous
invite: inviting
- 20. Before adding a suffix beginning with a consonant, keep the final e.**
home: homeless, homely
move: movement
shame: shameful, shameless
- 21. If a word ends in a consonant followed by a y, change the y to i when adding suffixes; unless, the suffix begins with i or the y has a vowel in front of it.**
dry: dried
delay: delaying, delayed
imply: implied, implying
rely: reliable
play: player
- 22. Use i before e except after c, or when it says /a/ as in sleigh or neighbor.**
thief, relief, believe, receive, ceiling, weight
- 23. When a word has two or more syllables, use c for the final /k/ sound.**
horrific, terrific, traffic, magic
- 24. Use double s after one short vowel sound in one-syllable words.**
brass, mess, dress
- 25. Never end a word with a single z. Use double z after one short vowel sound in one-syllable words.**
fizz, jazz, buzz
- 26. Use double -ze after a long vowel sound or a double vowel.**
craze, breeze
- 27. “ai” is often followed by n, l, or d.**
brain, tail, raid
- 28. “oa” is usually found in one-syllable words.**
roar, boast, coat

29. **“q” is always followed by u and at least one other vowel.**
quick, quiet, queen, quail
30. **“v” and x are never doubled.**
31. **“x” is never followed by an s.**
32. **No words in English end in v. (They end in –ve and it does not matter if the vowel is long or short.)**
gave, have, love, give, home, drive
33. **To keep the /g/ sound in a word, follow the “g” with a “u” when it is used before an i or an e.**
guest, guidelines, guess
34. **“igh,” “ough,” and “augh” are usually followed by a “t”.**
light, bought, caught
35. **Most words add an ‘s’ to make the plural.**
cat: cats girl: girls light: lights
36. **Add –es to nouns ending in s, x, z, ch, tch, and sh to make them plural.**
dresses, boxes, churches, watches, dishes
37. **Nouns ending in a vowel + -y combination (-ay, -oy, -ey) are made plural by adding s.**
birthday: birthdays
boy: boys
monkey: monkeys
38. **Nouns ending in a consonant + -y combination (-dy, -ny) are made plural by changing the y to i and adding -es.**
lady: ladies
candy: candies
pony: ponies
39. **Most nouns ending in f or fle form the plural by adding s.**
roof: roofs snuffle: snuffles ruffle: ruffles
40. **Nouns ending in a vowel + -o combination are made plural by adding s.**
patio: patios radio: radios studio: studios
41. **Nouns ending in a consonant + -o combination are riddled with exceptions and should be looked up in the dictionary.**
tomato: tomatoes tornado: tornadoes piano: pianos
42. **Many common nouns in English have irregular plural forms.**
woman: women
leaf: leaves
mouse: mice
tooth: teeth
ox: oxen
fish: fish
mother-in-law
mothers-in-law
43. **When in doubt, look it up.**

