

29 Rules of Spelling

1. The letter *q* is always followed by *u* and together they say /kw/. The *u* is not considered a vowel here.
2. The letter *c* before *e*, *i*, or *y* says /s/ (cent, city, cycle), but followed by any other letter says /k/ (cat, cot, cut).
3. The letter *g* before *e*, *i*, or *y* may say /j/ (page, giant, gym), but followed by any other letters says /g/ (gate, go, gust). The letters *e* and *i* following *g* do not always make the *g* say /j/ (get, girl, give).
4. Vowels *a*, *e*, *o*, and *u* usually say their names [long sounds (*a*, *e*, *o*, *u*)] at the end of a syllable (navy, me, open, music). (These are referred to as open syllables.) This rule helps students know how to divide unfamiliar vowel-consonant-vowel words and then pronounce the word correctly. (re port... rather than rep ort)
5. The letters *i* and *y* usually say /ɪ/ (big, gym), but may say /i/ (silent, my, type).
6. The letter *y*, not *i* is used at the end of English word (my, try).

7. There are five kinds of ***Silent Final e's***. (In short words such as me, she, and he, the *e* says /ɛ/, but in longer words where a single *e* appears at the end, the *e* is silent.)

Silent Final e's should be thought of as "having a job."

Silent e #1: bake, gene, time, type, code, cute

(The job of the first silent *e* is to make the vowel preceding it say its name.)

Silent e #2: love, give, blue, true

(The job of the second final *e* is to prevent us from ending an English word with a *v* or a *u*.)

Silent e #3: chance, bodice, charge, allege

(The job of the third final *e* is to soften a *c* or *g*.)

Silent e #4: lit-tle, cas-tle, bot-tle, dab-ble, fid-dle

(The job of the fourth final *e* is to prevent us from having a syllable with no vowel.)

Silent e #5: are, nurse, raise, bye, ewe, owe, cause

(The fifth final *e* is the "Odd Job E". Any reason for a silent *e* that is not covered by the first four is lumped into this final category.)

- The *e* keeps a word that is not plural from ending in an *s*. (dense, purse, false)
- The *e* adds length to a short main-idea word. (awe, ewe, rye)
- The *e* gives a distinction in meaning between homonyms. (or/ore, for/fore)
- The *e* is left over from Middle English or a foreign language where the final *e* was once pronounced. (treatise, giraffe)

8. There are five spellings for the sound /er/. Keep this sentence in mind:

Her nurse first works early.

In that, the spellings are in the descending order of usage in English. The phonogram *or* may say /er/ when it follows *w* (work, worm, worthy). Also keep in mind that *ar* and *or* say /er/ at the end of some words (dollar, doctor).

9. The 1-1-1 Rule: Words of one syllable (hop), having one vowel followed by one consonant, need another final consonant (hop + ped) before adding endings that begin with a vowel. This rule does not apply to words with *x* since *x* has two sounds /ks/.

10. The 2-1-1 Rule: Words of two syllables (be-gin) in which the second syllable (gin) is accented and has one vowel followed by one consonant, need another final consonant (be gin + ning) before adding an ending that begins with a vowel. If the last syllable is not accented (en-ter, prof-it, bud-get) do not double the final consonant before adding the ending.

11. Words ending with a silent final *e* (come) are written without the *e* when adding an ending that begins with a vowel.

12. After *c*, we use *ei* (receive). If we say *a*, we use *ei* (vein).

In the list of exceptions, we use *ei*.

Exceptions: Neither, foreign, sovereign, seized, counterfeit, forfeited, leisure. Plus: either, weird, protein, heifer

In all other words, the phonogram *ie* is used. (In school, we were taught, "I before E, except after C, unless it says A as in neighbor and weigh.")

13. The phonogram *sh* is used at the beginning or end of a base word (*she*, *dish*), at the end of a syllable (*fin ish*), but never at the beginning of a syllable after the first one except for the ending *ship* (*wor ship*, *friend ship*).

14. The phonograms *ti*, *si*, and *ci* are the spellings most frequently used to say *sh* at the beginning of a second or subsequent syllable in a base word (*na tion*, *ses sion*, *fa cial*).

15. The phonogram *si* is used to say *sh* when the syllable before it ends in an *s* (*ses sion*) or when the base word has an *s* where the base word changes (*tense*, *ten sion*).

16. The phonogram *si* may also say *zh* as in *vi sion*.

17. We often double *l*, *f*, and *s* following a single vowel at the end of a one-syllable word (*will*, *off*, *miss*). Rule 17 sometimes applies to two-syllable words like *recess*. While reading the word (e.g., *will*) for spelling, students say the extra consonant sound (e.g., *w i l l*).

18. We often use *ay* to say \square at the end of a base word, never *a* alone.

19. Vowels *i* and *o* may say \square and \square if followed by two consonants (*find*, *old*).

20. The letter *s* never follows *x*. The phonogram *x* includes an *s* sound (*ks*).

21. *All*, written alone, has two *l*'s, but when written with another syllable, only one *l* is written (*al so*, *al most*).

22. *Till* and *full*, written alone, have two *l*'s, but when written with another syllable, only one *l* is written (*un til*, *beau ti ful*).

23. The phonogram *dge* may be used only after a single vowel that says *ā*, *ā*, *ā*, *ā*, or *ā* (*badge, edge, bridge, lodge, budge*).

24. When adding an ending to a word that ends with a consonant and *y*, use *i* instead of *y* unless the ending is *ing*.

*The addition of these endings changes word meanings and usage (plurals of nouns: *baby/babies*; verb tense: *try/tried*).

25. The phonogram *ck* may be used only after a single vowel that says *ā*, *ā*, *ā*, *ā*, or *ā* (*back, neck, lick, rock, duck*).

26. Words that are the names or titles of people, places, books, days, or months are capitalized (*Mary, Honolulu, Amazon River, Bible, Monday, July*).

27. Words beginning with the sound *z* are always spelled with *z*, never *s* (*zoo*).

28. The phonogram *ed* has three sounds and is used to form the past tense of verbs. If the verb ends in the sound *d* or *t*, adding *ed* makes another syllable that says *ed* (*hand ed, land ed, paint ed, plant ed*). If the verb ends in an unvoiced consonant, the ending *ed* says *t* (*looked, liked, jumped, washed*). In all other verbs, the ending *ed* says *d* (*lived, killed, played*).

29. Words are usually divided between double consonants within a base word. For speaking and reading, only the consonant in the accented syllable is pronounced; the consonant in the unaccented syllable is silent (*lit' tle*).