Spelling Rules for Reference

Year Group	Spelling Rules Statutory Requirements	Rules and Guidance Non-Statutory
1 (excluding rules covered by phonics provision – RWI)	-tch	The /tʃ/ sound is usually spelt as **tch** if it comes straight after a single vowel letter. **Exceptions**: rich, which, much, such.
	The /v/ sound at the end of words	English words hardly ever end with the letter **v**, so if a word ends with a /v/ sound, the letter **e** usually needs to be added after the 'v'.
	Adding s and es to words (plural of nouns and the third person singular of verbs)	If the ending sounds like /s/ or /z/, it is spelt as **–s**. If the ending sounds like /ɪz/ and forms an extra syllable or 'beat' in the word, it is spelt as **–es**.
	Adding the endings –ing, –ed and –er to verbs where no change is needed to the root word	**–ing** and **–er** always add an extra syllable to the word and **–ed** sometimes does.
	Adding –er and –est to adjectives where no change is needed to the root word	As with verbs (see above), if the adjective ends in two consonant letters (the same or different), the ending is simply added on.
	Words ending –y very, happy, funny, party, family (/iː/ or /ɪ/)	
	New consonant spellings ph and wh	The /f/ sound is not usually spelt as **ph** in short everyday words (e.g. fat, fill, fun).
	Using k for the /k/ sound	The /k/ sound is spelt as **k** rather than as **c** before **e**, **i** and **y**.
	Adding the prefix –un	The prefix **un–** is added to the beginning of a word without any change to the spelling of the root word.
	Compound words	Compound words are two words joined together. Each part of the longer word is spelt as it would be if it were on its own.
	Common exception words	Pupils' attention should be drawn to the grapheme-phoneme correspondences that do and do not fit in with what has been taught so far.

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2	The /dʒ/ sound spelt as ge and dge at the end of words, and sometimes spelt as g elsewhere in words before e, i and y	The letter j is never used for the /dʒ/ sound at the end of English words. At the end of a word, the /dʒ/ sound is spelt –**dge** straight after the /æ/, /ɛ/, /ɪ/, /ɒ/, /ʌ/ and /ʊ/ sounds (sometimes called 'short' vowels). After all other sounds, whether vowels or consonants, the /dʒ/ sound is spelt as –**ge** at the end of a word. In other positions in words, the /dʒ/ sound is often (but not always) spelt as g before e, i, and y. The /dʒ/ sound is always spelt as j before a, o and u.
	The /s/ sound spelt c before e, i and y	
	The /n/ sound spelt kn and (less often) gn at the beginning of words	The 'k' and 'g' at the beginning of these words was sounded hundreds of years ago.
	The /r/ sound spelt wr at the beginning of words	This spelling probably also reflects an old pronunciation.
	The /l/ or /əl/ sound spelt –le at the end of words	The –**le** spelling is the most common spelling for this sound at the end of words.
	The /l/ or /əl/ sound spelt –el at the end of words	The –**el** spelling is much less common than –**le**. The –**el** spelling is used after **m**, **n**, **r**, **s**, **v**, **w** and more often than not after **s**.
	The /l/ or /əl/ sound spelt –al at the end of words	Not many nouns end in –**al**, but many adjectives do.
	Words ending –il	pencil, fossil, nostril
	The /aɪ/ sound spelt –y at the end of words	cry, fly, dry, try, reply, July
	Adding –es to nouns and verbs ending in –y	The **y** is changed to **i** before –**es** is added.
	Adding –ed, –ing, –er and –est to a root word ending in –y with a consonant before it	The **y** is changed to **i** before –**ed**, –**er** and –**est** are added, but not before –**ing** as this would result in **ii**. The only ordinary words with **ii** are *skiing* and *taxiing*.
	Adding the endings –ing, –ed, –er, –est and –y to words ending in –e with a consonant before it	The –**e** at the end of the root word is dropped before –**ing**, –**ed**, –**er**, –**est**, –**y** or any other suffix beginning with a vowel letter is added. **Exception**: *being.*

Spelling Rules for Reference

	Adding –ing, –ed, –er, –est and –y to words of one syllable ending in a single consonant letter after a single vowel letter	The last consonant letter of the root word is doubled to keep the /æ/, /ɛ/, /ɪ/, /ɒ/ and /ʌ/ sound (i.e. to keep the vowel 'short'). **Exception**: The letter 'x' is never doubled: *mixing, mixed, boxer, sixes.*
	The /ɔ:/ sound spelt a before l and ll	The **/ɔ:/** sound ('or') is usually spelt as **a** before **l** and **ll**.
	The /ʌ/ sound spelt o	other, mother, brother, nothing, Monday
	The /i:/ sound spelt –ey	The plural of these words is formed by the addition of **–s** (*donkeys, monkeys,* etc.).
	The /ɒ/ sound spelt a after w and qu	**a** is the most common spelling for the **/ɒ/** ('hot') sound after **w** and **qu**.
	The /ɜ:/ sound spelt or after w	word, work, worm, world, worth
	The /ɔ:/ sound spelt ar after w	war, warm, towards
	The /ʒ/ sound spelt s	
	The suffixes –ment, –ness, –ful , –less and –ly	If a suffix starts with a consonant letter, it is added straight on to most root words without any change to the last letter of those words. **Exceptions**: (1) *argument* (2) root words ending in **–y** with a consonant before it but only if the root word has more than one syllable.
	Contractions	In contractions, the apostrophe shows where a letter or letters would be if the words were written in full (e.g. *can't – cannot*). *It's* means *it is* (e.g. *It's* raining) or sometimes *it has* (e.g. *It's* been raining), but *it's* is never used for the possessive.
	The possessive apostrophe (singular nouns)	
	Words ending in –tion	station, fiction, motion, national, section
	Homophones and near-homophones	
	Common exception words	Pupils' attention should be drawn to the grapheme-phoneme correspondences that do and do not fit in with what has been taught so far.

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3 4	Revision of Year 1 and 2 Spelling Rules Pay special attention to the rules for adding suffixes.	
	Adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words of more than one syllable	If the last syllable of a word is stressed and ends with one consonant letter which has just one vowel letter before it, the final consonant letter is doubled before any ending beginning with a vowel letter is added. The consonant letter is not doubled if the syllable is unstressed.
	The /ɪ/ sound spelt y elsewhere than at the end of words	myth, gym, Egypt, pyramid, mystery
	The /ʌ/ sound spelt These words should be learnt as ou	young, touch, double, trouble, country
	Un- dis- mis-	Most prefixes are added to the beginning of root words without any changes in spelling, but see **in-** below. Like **un-**, the prefixes **dis-** and **mis-** have negative meanings.
	In-	The prefix **in-** can mean both 'not' and 'in'/'into'. In the words given here it means 'not'.
	Il-	Before a root word starting with **l**, **in-** becomes **il**.
	Im-	Before a root word starting with **m** or **p**, **in-** becomes **im-**
	Ir-	Before a root word starting with **r**, **in-** becomes **ir-**.
	Re-	**re-** means 'again' or 'back'.
	Sub-	**sub-** means 'under'.
	Inter-	**inter-** means 'between' or 'among'.
	Super-	**super-** means 'above'.
	Anti-	**anti-** means 'against'.
	Auto-	**auto-** means 'self' or 'own'.
	The suffix –ation	The suffix **–ation** is added to verbs to form nouns. The rules already learnt still apply.
	The suffix –ly	The suffix **–ly** is added to an adjective to form an adverb. The rules already learnt still apply. The suffix **–ly** starts with a consonant letter, so it is added straight on to most root words.
	Words with endings sounding like /ʒə/ or /tʃə/	The ending sounding like /ʒə/ is always spelt –**sure**. The ending sounding like /tʃə/ is often spelt –**ture**, but check that the word is not a root word ending in **(t)ch** with an **er** ending – e.g. *teacher, catcher, richer, stretcher*.
	Endings which sound like /ʒən/	If the ending sounds like /ʒən/, it is spelt as –**sion**.
	The suffix –ous	Sometimes the root word is obvious and the usual rules apply for adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters. Sometimes there is no obvious root word. **–our** is changed to **–or** before **–ous** is added.

		A final 'e' of the root word must be kept if the /dʒ/ sound of 'g' is to be kept. If there is an /iː/ sound before the –**ous** ending, it is usually spelt as **i**, but a few words have **e**.
	Endings which sound like /ʃən/, spelt –tion, –sion, –ssion, –cian	Strictly speaking, the suffixes are – **ion** and –**ian**. Clues about whether to put **t**, **s**, **ss** or **c** before these suffixes often come from the last letter or letters of the root word. –**tion** is the most common spelling. It is used if the root word ends in **t** or **te**. –**ssion** is used if the root word ends in **ss** or –**mit**. –**sion** is used if the root word ends in **d** or **se**. **Exceptions**: *attend – attention, intend – intention.* –**cian** is used if the root word ends in **c** or **cs**.
	Words with the /k/ sound spelt ch (Greek in origin)	Scheme, chorus,
	Words with the /ʃ/ sound spelt ch (mostly French in origin)	Chalet, machine
	Words ending with the /g/ sound spelt – gue and the /k/ sound spelt –que (French in origin)	League, tongue
	Words with the /s/ sound spelt sc (Latin in origin)	In the Latin words from which these words come, the Romans probably pronounced the **c** and the **k** as two sounds rather than one – /s/ /k/. science, scene
	Words with the /eɪ/ sound spelt ei, eigh, or ey	Neighbour, weight
	Possessive apostrophe with plural words	The apostrophe is placed after the plural form of the word; –**s** is not added if the plural already ends in –**s**, but *is* added if the plural does not end in –**s** (i.e. is an irregular plural – e.g. *children's*).
	Homophones and near-homophones	accept/except, affect/effect, ball/bawl, berry/bury, brake/break, fair/fare, grate/great, groan/grown, here/hear, heel/heal/he'll, knot/not, mail/male, main/mane, meat/meet, medal/meddle, missed/mist, peace/piece, plain/plane, rain/rein/reign, scene/seen, weather/whether, whose/who's
	Common Exception Words	Year 3/4 Word List

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5 6	Endings which sound like /ʃəs/ spelt –cious or –tichous	Not many common words end like this. If the root word ends in **–ce**, the /ʃ/ sound is usually spelt as **c** – e.g. *vice – vicious, grace – gracious, space – spacious, malice – malicious*. **Exception**: *anxious*.
	Endings which sound like /ʃəl/	**–cial** is common after a vowel letter and **–tial** after a consonant letter, but there are some exceptions. **Exceptions**: initial, financial, commercial, provincial (the spelling of the last three is clearly related to *finance, commerce* and *province*).
	Words ending in –ant, –ance/–ancy, –ent, –ence/–ency	Use **–ant** and **–ance/–ancy** if there is a related word with a /æ/ or /eɪ/ sound in the right position; **–ation** endings are often a clue. Use **–ent** and **–ence/–ency** after soft **c** (/s/ sound), soft **g** (/dʒ/ sound) and **qu**, or if there is a related word with a clear /ɛ/ sound in the right position.
	Words ending in –able and –ible Words ending in –ably and –ibly	The **–able/–ably** endings are far more common than the **–ible/–ibly** endings. As with **–ant** and **–ance/–ancy**, the **–able** ending is used if there is a related word ending in **–ation**. If the **–able** ending is added to a word ending in **–ce** or **–ge**, the **e** after the **c** or **g** must be kept as those letters would otherwise have their 'hard' sounds (as in *cap* and *gap*) before the **a** of the **–able** ending. The **–able** ending is usually but not always used if a complete root word can be heard before it, even if there is no related word ending in **–ation**. The first five examples opposite are obvious; in *reliable*, the complete word *rely* is heard, but the **y** changes to **i** in accordance with the rule. The **–ible** ending is common if a complete root word can't be heard before it but it also sometimes occurs when a complete word *can* be heard (e.g. *sensible*).
	Adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words ending in –fer	The **r** is doubled if the **–fer** is still stressed when the ending is added. The **r** is not doubled if the **–fer** is no longer stressed.
	Use of the hyphen	Hyphens can be used to join a prefix to a root word, especially if the prefix ends in a vowel letter and the root word also begins with one.
	Words with the /i:/ sound spelt ei after c	The '**i** before **e** except after **c**' rule applies to words where the sound spelt by **ei** is /i:/. **Exceptions**: *protein, caffeine, seize* (and *either* and *neither* if pronounced with an initial /i:/ sound).
	Words containing the letter-string ough	**ough** is one of the trickiest spellings in English – it can be used to spell a number of different sounds.

	Words with 'silent' letters (i.e. letters whose presence cannot be predicted from the pronunciation of the word)	Some letters which are no longer sounded used to be sounded hundreds of years ago: e.g. in *knight*, there was a /k/ sound before the /n/, and the **gh** used to represent the sound that 'ch' now represents in the Scottish word *loch*.
	Homophones and other words that are often confused	In the pairs of words opposite, nouns end **–ce** and verbs end **–se**. *Advice* and *advise* provide a useful clue as the word *advise* (verb) is pronounced with a /z/ sound – which could not be spelt **c**.
		aisle: a gangway between seats (in a church, train, plane). isle: an island.
		aloud: out loud. allowed: permitted.
		affect: usually a verb (e.g. *The weather may affect our plans*).
		effect: usually a noun (e.g. *It may have an effect on our plans*). If a verb, it means 'bring about' (e.g. *He will effect changes in the running of the business*).
		altar: a table-like piece of furniture in a church.
		alter: to change.
		ascent: the act of ascending (going up). assent: to agree/agreement (verb and noun).
		bridal: to do with a bride at a wedding. bridle: reins etc. for controlling a horse.
		cereal: made from grain (e.g. breakfast cereal).
		serial: adjective from the noun *series* – a succession of things one after the other.
		compliment: to make nice remarks about someone (verb) or the remark that is made (noun).
		complement: related to the word *complete* – to make something complete or more complete (e.g. *her scarf complemented her outfit*).
		descent: the act of descending (going down).
		dissent: to disagree/disagreement (verb and noun).
		desert: as a noun – a barren place (stress on first syllable); as a verb – to abandon (stress on second syllable) dessert: (stress on second syllable) a sweet course after the main course of a meal.
		draft: noun – a first attempt at writing something; verb – to make the first attempt; also, to draw in someone (e.g. *to draft in extra help*)
		draught: a current of air.
		advice/advise device/devise licence/license practice/practise prophecy/prophesy
		farther: further father: a male parent
		guessed: past tense of the verb *guess*
		guest: visitor heard: past tense of the verb *hear* herd: a group of animals
		led: past tense of the verb

		lead lead: present tense of that verb, or else the metal which is very heavy (*as heavy as lead*)
		morning: before noon mourning: grieving for someone who has died
		past: noun or adjective referring to a previous time (e.g. *In the past*) or preposition or adverb showing place (e.g. *he walked past me*)
		passed: past tense of the verb 'pass' (e.g. *I passed him in the road*)
		precede: go in front of or before
		proceed: go on
		principal: adjective – most important (e.g. *principal ballerina*) noun – important person (e.g. *principal of a college*)
		principle: basic truth or belief
		profit: money that is made in selling things
		prophet: someone who foretells the future
		stationary: not moving stationery: paper, envelopes etc.
		steal: take something that does not belong to you steel: metal
		wary: cautious weary: tired
		who's: contraction of *who is* or *who has*
		whose: belonging to someone (e.g. *Whose jacket is that?*)
	Curriculum Words	Year 5 and 6 List