

The endings -cious or -tious

Handy hint: If the root word ends in 'ce', the sound is usually spelt as -cious.

-cious

vicious
precious
conscious
delicious
malicious
suspicious

-tious

ambitious
cautious
fictitious
infectious
nutritious

Exception to the rule: anxious



The endings -cial or -tial

Handy hint: -cial is usually used after a vowel letter and
-tial is usually used after a consonant letter.

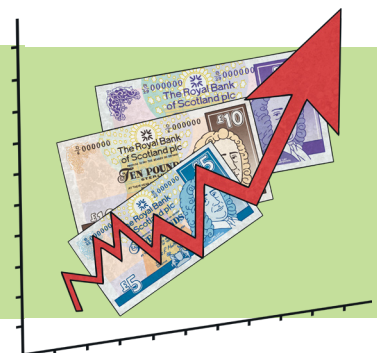
-cial

official
special
artificial

-tial

partial
confidential
essential

Exceptions to the rule: initial, financial,
commercial and provincial



The endings -ant and -ance/-ancy

Handy hint: -ant and -ance/-ancy are normally used if there is a related word ending in -ation.

-ant

observant
expectant
hesitant
tolerant

-ance/-ancy

observance
expectance
hesitance
tolerance

-ation

observation
expectation
hesitation
toleration

Exceptions to the rule: You can have assistant, assistance but not assistation.



The endings -ent and -ence/-ency

Handy hint: -ent and -ence/-ency are usually used if there is a soft /c/, soft /g/ or /qu/ sound before it in the word.

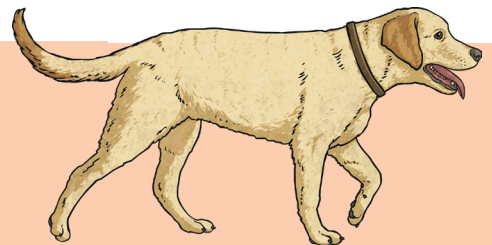
-ent

innocent
decent
frequent
confident
independent

-ence/-ency

innocence
decency
frequency
confidence
independence

Exceptions to the rule: obedient
turns into obedience



The endings -able/-ably and -ible/-ibly

Handy hints: -able/-ably are usually used if there is a related word ending in -ation. -ible/-ibly is usually used if a complete root word can't be heard before it.

-able/-ably

adorable/adorably
applicable/applicably
considerable/considerably
tolerable/tolerably

-ible/-ibly

possible/possibly
horrible/horribly
terrible/terribly
visible/visibly
incredible/incredibly

Exceptions to the rule: Changeable and noticeable don't have related words which end in -ation. In the case of sensible, the complete root word can be heard before the -ible ending.

Adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words ending in -fer

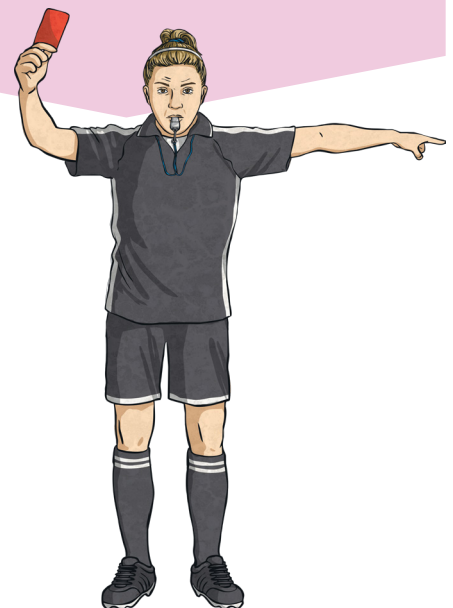
Handy hints: The 'r' is doubled if the -fer is still stressed when the ending is added. The 'r' is not doubled if the -fer is no longer stressed.

r is doubled

referring/referred/referral
preferring/preferred
transferring/transferred

r is not doubled

reference/referee
preference
transference



Using a hyphen (-)

Handy hint: 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.

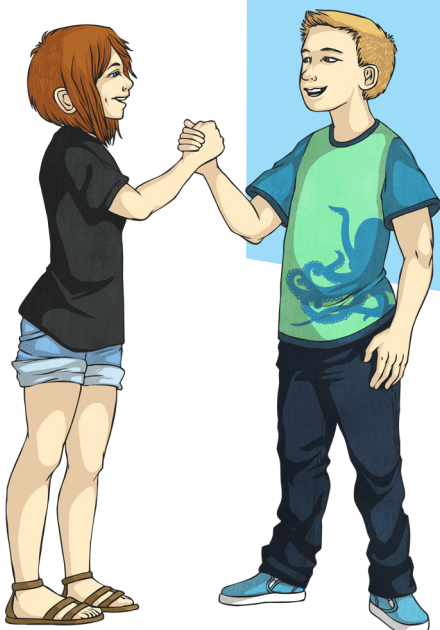
Example Words

co-ordinate

re-enter

co-operate

co-own



Words with the long /e/ sound spelled 'ei' after the letter 'c'

Handy hint: the 'i before e except after c' rule applies to words where the sound is spelt by 'ei'.

Example Words

deceive
conceive
receive
perceive
ceiling

Exceptions to the rule: Protein, caffeine, seize all have the 'ei' spelling pattern but not after the letter 'c'.

Words containing the letter string 'ough'

Handy hint: 'ough' is one of the trickiest spellings in English. It can be used to spell a number of different sounds.

-ough as /uff/

rough
tough
enough

-ough as /or/

ought
bought
thought
nought
brought
fought

-ough as /off/

cough

-ough as /oo/

through

-ough as /oa/

though
although
dough

-ough as /uh/

thorough
borough

-ough as /ow/

plough
bough

Words containing 'silent' letters

Fantastic fact: Some letters which are no longer sounded used to be sounded hundreds of years ago.
'Knight' used to be pronounced with a 'k' sound before the 'n'!

Example Words

doubt

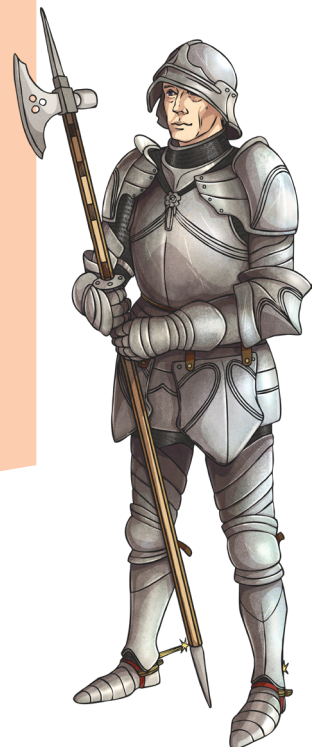
island

lamb

solemn

thistle

knight



Homophones and other words that are often confused

Handy hint: Homophones are words which have the same or similar pronunciation but different meanings.

Example words:

aisle/isle
aloud/allowed
affect/effect
altar/alter
ascent/assent
bridal/bridle
cereal/serial
compliment/
complement

descent/dissent
desert/dessert
draft/draught
father/farther
guessed/guest
heard/herd
led/lead
morning/
mourning

past /passed
precede/proceed
principal/
principle
prophet/profit
stationary/
stationery
steal/steel
wary/weary
who's/whose

Words

Handy hint: try to memorise five of these words per week and you will know them all by the end of the year.

accommodate	committee	disastrous	identity	parliament	shoulder
accompany	communicate	embarrass	immediate(ly)	persuade	signature
according	community	environment	individual	physical	sincere(ly)
achieve	competition	equip (-ped, -ment)	interfere	prejudice	soldier
aggressive	conscience*	especially	interrupt	privilege	stomach
amateur	conscious*	exaggerate	language	profession	sufficient
ancient	controversy	excellent	leisure	programme	suggest
apparent	convenience	existence	lightning	pronunciation	symbol
appreciate	correspond	explanation	marvellous	queue	system
attached	criticise	familiar	mischievous	recognise	temperature
available	(critic + ise)	foreign	muscle	recommend	thorough
average	curiosity	forty	necessary	relevant	twelfth
awkward	definite	frequently	neighbour	restaurant	variety
bargain	desperate	government	nuisance	rhyme	vegetable
bruise	determined	guarantee	occupy	rhythm	vehicle
category	develop	harass	occur	sacrifice	yacht
cemetery	dictionary	hindrance	opportunity	secretary	