

Spelling Bee: Basic Rules of Spelling

Just like traffic rules are followed while driving the car, these basic spelling rules are followed while spelling are written or spelled. These are great pointers to be a great speller and also makes a good reference for future.

Rule 1: “I” before “E”:

The “I” before “E” except after “C” rule is vital to remember. The letter “I” should always be before the letter “E”, even when they are side-by-side in a word. However, if either of these letters appears after the letter “C”, then “E” should come before “I”. For instance, “receive”.

- There are exceptions to this rule—there are always exceptions! The exceptions to this rule include: “either”, “leisure”, “their”, “weird”, and “protein”. There is no better way to learn these exceptions than to simply memorize them.
- Other exceptions with the “I” and “e” after the “c” include words such as: “ancient”, “efficient”, and “science”. There are also words that contain the letters “eig”, which include “height” and “foreign”.

Rule 2: Double Vowels:

English has words that contain two vowels and its hard to determine which one comes first. However, there are some helpful tricks that can help one remember which one to put first:

- Remember this rhyme: “When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking.” This just means that the vowel that comes first should be the vowel who’s sound one can clearly hear, followed by the vowel who’s sound one cannot make out.
- One can also attempt to listen for the long vowel sound. Usually when there are two vowels side by side, the first one is a long vowel sound, and the second vowel is generally silent. For instance, in the word “coat”, the “o” is pronounced, but the “a” is not.
- One can apply the rule of sounding out the word to other letters, such as “e” and “a”.
- There are exceptions to this rule, such as “u” and “o”. In the word “phoenix”, for instance, one can hear the “e” sound if one sound out the word, but it is tough to make out the “o” sound at all.

Rule 3: Piggybacks:

Piggybacks are known as pairs of consonants that are pronounced where one is silent. This can make spelling difficult, so it is important to know these words.

- **Gn, pn and kn:** With these pairs, in these piggyback pairs one can only hear the “n” sound. One example is the word “gnome”.
- **Rh and wr:** For these pairs, only the “r” sound is apparent. For example, the word: “rhyme”.
- **Ps and sc:** For these two one can only hear the “s” sound, and the letters “p” and “c” are silent. For example: “psychic”.
- **Wh:** For this single piggyback pair one can only hear the “h” sound. An example of this would be the word “whole”.

Rule 4: Pluralizing Nouns:

In pluralizing the nouns, the last letters of the nouns change the spellings of the words. Following are the common rules:

- Singular nouns that end in a vowel and the letter “y” can be made plural by adding the letter “s” at the end.
- Singular nouns ending in “f” or “fe” can be changed to plural by dropping the “fe” or “f” and adding the letters “ves” to the end.
- Singular nouns ending in a consonant followed by the letter “y” can be changed to plural by dropping the “y” and adding “ies” to the end.
- And simply, singular nouns ending in “o” can be turned plural by adding an “s” to the end.
- Singular nouns that end in the letters “ch”, “sh”, “s”, “x”, or “z” can be turned plural by adding the letters “es” to the end.