

# Beginner Spelling Rules



At its best, English spelling can be perplexing, especially for non-native speakers and writers. The following rules and suggestions are offered as aids. You will always be able to find exceptions to these rules, but most writers find them helpful.

## **i before e, except after c**

achieve, believe, bier, brief, hygiene, grief, thief, friend, grieve, chief,  
fiend, patience, piere, priest  
ceiling, conceive, deceive, perceive, receipt, receive, deceit, conceit

## **in words that rhyme with hay**

neighbor, freight, beige, sleigh, weight, vein, weigh

## **and some other exceptions**

either, neither, feint, foreign, forfeit, height, leisure, weird, seize

## ***A final y changes to i when an ending is added***

supply becomes supplies  
worry becomes worried  
merry becomes merrier

***except when that ending is -ing and when the y is preceded by a vowel***  
crying, studying

When adding an ending to a word that ends in a consonant, we double that consonant when the ending begins with a vowel and the last syllable of the word is accented and that syllable ends in a single vowel followed by a single consonant.

ADMIT + -ed = ADMITTED

FLAP + -ed = FLAPPED

BEGIN + -ing = BEGINNING

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**A silent e is dropped when adding an ending that begins with a vowel**

advance + *-ing* = advancing

surprise + *-ing* = surprising

**but kept when the ending begins with a consonant**

Advancement, likeness

**unless the e is preceded by a vowel**

arge + *-ment* = argument

true + *-ly* = truly

**Adding a prefix seldom changes the spelling of a word.**

misspelled

dissatisfied

misinform

unnecessary

disinterested

**We form plurals in English by adding -s or -es.**

shoes

porches

boxes

bushes

blitzes

**For words ending in a consonant plus -y, change the -y to -i and add -es.**

**For proper nouns, keep the -y.**

toys

companies

Kennedys