

In the SATs, children will be tested on spelling rules for Year 3, Year 4, Year 5 and Year 6. This document outlines each of the spelling rules below as well as words that meet the criteria of the rule. Some rules have exceptions to the rule and where possible these exceptions have been included.

Of course, nothing improves spelling more than reading daily as it helps children to see the words regularly and become more familiar with spelling rules. Some words may be repeated as they fit more than one spelling rule.

Content domain reference	Relevant coverage in the programme of study and statutory appendices	
S37	common exception words	
S38	adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words of more than one syllable	
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S55	words ending in -ant, -ance, -ancy, -ent, -ence, -ency	
S56	words ending in -able and -ible words ending in -ably and -ibly	
S57	adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words ending in -fer	
S58	words with the /i:/ sound spelt ei after c	
S59	words containing the letter string ough	
S60	words with 'silent' letters (i.e. letters whose presence cannot be predicted from the pronunciation of the word)	
S61	homophones and near homophones (Years 3 and 4) homophones and other words that are often confused (Years 5 and 6)	

Spelling Pattern	Rules for this pattern	Examples
Adding suffixes that start with a vowel letter to words with 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.	nicest, happiest, adoring, funniest, copier, improving, sunnier, required, beginning, beginner, gardener, gardening forgetting, forgotten, committing, multiplying, preferred, limiting, limited, limitation, absorbent, admired, allowance, assistant, controlled, controller, controlling, coverage, creative,

		criticism, decorative, deferred deferring, disturbance, heroism, inquired, inquiring, investigator, journalism, narrative, narrator, observant, occurred, occurring, occurrence, producer, provider, relative, thunderous, traveller, vandalism, visitor, polishing
The /i/ sound spelt y elsewhere other than at the end of words		myth, gym, Egypt, pyramid, mystery, dynasty, mystic, symbol, synagogue, synonym, antonym, mysterious, mythical, syrup, cymbal, typical, cycle, symptom, tyre, rhythm, python, hymn, system, crystal, gymnast, gymnastics, rhyme, idyllic, cyclone, physical
The short sound /u/ spelt with the letters ou		touch, young, double, trouble, couple, country, cousin, courage, encourage, flourish, nourish, rough, tough, enough, mysterious, disastrous, famous, tremendous, fabulous, hazardous, ridiculous, southern, dangerous, enormous, generous, nervous, jealous
Prefixes (group of letters before a word)	UN, DIS and MIS all have negative meanings	<p>UN - unsuitably, unable, unnecessary, unwell, unusual, unhappy, unofficial, untidy, unfriendly, undo, unpleasant, untie, unbelievable, unzip, unorganised, unsure, unqualified, unwrap, unlimited, unfair, unknown, unwelcome, unlikely, unnoticed, unlocked, unseen, unpick, unlucky, untrained, unlock</p> <p>DIS - disappear, disappoint, disobey, distrust, disqualify, disagree, dishonest, discontinue, disapprove, disorder, dishearten, dislike, displease, disconnect, disable, disadvantage, disbelieve, disbelief, disown, disinfect, disgrace, discourage, disallow</p> <p>MIS - misbehave, mistake, misunderstand, misunderstood, misfire, misbelieve, mishear, misconception, misread, misfortune, misuse, misinterpret, miscopy, misaddress, mispronounce, misadventure, misquote, miscalculate, miscount, misdirect, misinform, misjudge, misplace, misconduct, mislead, misspell, mischarge</p>

	<p>RE means 'again' or 'back'</p> <p>IN, IL, IM and IR can mean 'not' and 'in/into'</p> <p>SUB means under</p> <p>INTER means 'between' or 'among'</p> <p>SUPER means above</p> <p>ANTI means against</p> <p>AUTO means 'self' or 'own'</p>	<p>recycle, refill, rebuild, replay, repay, reconsider, replace, rearrange, reassure, return, recapture, reuse, rebound, redo, reconstruct, rewire, reinforcement, rewind, repossess, renew, revisit, reheat, rewrite, reclaim, recount, reform, re-join, reunion, refresh, readjust, redecorate, reappear</p> <p>IN - inactive, incorrect, inedible, insufficient, inconsiderate, independent</p> <p>IL - illegal, illegible, illness, illogical, illiterate, illustrate</p> <p>IM - immature, immortal, impossible, impatient, imperfect</p> <p>IR - irregular, irrelevant, irresponsible</p> <p>SUB - subdivide, subheading, submarine, submerge</p> <p>INTER - interact, intercity, international, interrelated</p> <p>SUPER - supermarket, superman, superstar</p> <p>ANTI - antiseptic, anticlockwise, antisocial</p> <p>AUTO - autobiography, autograph, automatic</p>
<p>The suffix -ation</p>	<p>The suffix –ation is added to verbs to form nouns.</p>	<p>information, adoration, sensation, sensational, preparation, admiration, inspiration, inspirational, variation, frustration, deprivation, improvisation, innovation, determination, accommodation, anticipation, alliteration, collaboration, complication, confrontation, desperation, exclamation, recommendation, revelation, exaggeration, temptation, manipulation, appreciation, dedication, fascination, hesitation,</p>

		<p>illustration, imagination, multiplication, vibration, organisation, separation, decoration, celebration, combination, education, examination, expectation, exploration, generation, identification, observation, obligation, occupation, operation, situation, transportation, conversation, population, preparation, punctuation, relation, reputation, creation, nation, location, station, vacation, national, nationality</p>
The suffix –ly	<p>The suffix –ly is added to an adjective to form an adverb. The rules already learnt still apply.</p> <p>The suffix –ly starts with a consonant letter, so it is added straight on to most root words.</p>	<p>finally, comically, suddenly, importantly, crazily, dimly, ghastly, secondly, firstly, thoroughly, extraordinarily, ferociously, anxiously, creepily, gratefully, desirably, instantly, quickly, friendly, deadly, elderly, likely, lovely, unfriendly, ghostly, heavenly, kindly, leisurely, wobbly, lonely, atrociously, actually, carefully, generally, originally, gradually, slowly, physically, frequently, gingerly, highly, particularly, perfectly, smoothly, approximately, extremely, angrily, cautiously, cheerfully, courageously, crossly, cruelly, defiantly, doubtfully, elegantly, enthusiastically, foolishly, frantically, gently, gladly, gracefully, happily, hungrily, merrily, nervously, sadly, safely, shyly, solemnly, weakly, wildly, punctually, recently, annually, constantly, daily, hourly, monthly, occasionally, regularly, repeatedly, usually, yearly, completely, entirely, totally, mostly, easily, hopefully, shortly, sharply, carelessly, seriously, scarcely, carefully, wonderfully, swiftly, softly, currently, considerately, competently, effortlessly, competently, confidently, confidentially, comfortably, angrily, humbly, nobly, basically, dramatically</p>
The suffixes sure and ture	<p>The ending sounding like /zure/ is always spelt –sure.</p>	<p>measure, treasure, pleasure, enclosure, leisure, assure, reassure, pressure, unsure, sure,</p>

	<p>The ending sounding like /chure/ 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</p>	<p>creature, furniture, picture, nature, adventure, feature, lecture, structure, capture, moisture, fracture, mixture, future, texture, puncture, sculpture, culture, fixture, posture, torture, vulture, mature, departure, venture</p>
Endings spelt sion	<p>If the ending sounds like /zion/, it is spelt as –sion.</p>	<p>division, invasion, confusion, decision, collision, television, vision, excursion, exclusion, delusion, conversion, omission, possession, extension, admission, passion, occasion, confession, conclusion, impression, expression, permission, provision, session, supervision, mansion, discussion, expansion, explosion</p>
The suffix ous	<p>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.</p> <p>–our is changed to –or before –ous is added.</p> <p>A final ‘e’ of the root word must be kept if the /dz/ sound of ‘g’ is to be kept. If there is an /i:/ sound before the –ous ending, it is usually spelt as i, but a few words have e.</p>	<p>poisonous, dangerous, mountainous, famous, various tremendous, enormous, jealous humorous, glamorous, vigorous courageous, outrageous, serious, obvious, curious, hideous, spontaneous, courteous, infamous, vicious, ridiculous, ludicrous, raucous, boisterous, hazardous, mischievous, marvellous, miraculous, hideous, perilous, monotonous, generous, momentous, gorgeous, tremendous</p>
Endings spelt –tion, -sion, -ssion and –cian	<p>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.</p> <p>–tion is the most common spelling. It is used if the root word ends in t or te.</p>	<p>invention, injection, action, hesitation, completion, attention, intention, creation, location, nation, question, station, subtraction, vacation, addition, condition, emotion, foundation, competition, registration, destination, examination, expectation, exploration, obligation, proportion, satisfaction, convention, transportation, solution, graduation, reception, recreation, resolution, portion, proportion, selection, suggestion, collection, direction, humiliation, situation, conversation, completion, decoration</p>

	<p>–ssion is used if the root word ends in ss or –mit.</p> <p>–sion is used if the root word ends in d or se.</p> <p>Exceptions: attend – attention, intend – intention. –cian is used if the root word ends in c or cs.</p>	<p>expression, discussion, confession, permission, admission expansion, extension, comprehension, tension</p> <p>musician, electrician, magician, politician, mathematician</p>
Words with the k sound spelt ch		<p>scheme, chorus, chemist, echo, character, ache, anchor, chaos, monarch, orchid, stomach, architect, chemistry, orchestra, mechanic, technical, technology, school</p>
Words with the sh sound spelt ch		<p>chef, chalet, machine, brochure, chute, parachute, chandelier, charade, penchant</p>
Words ending with gue and que		<p>fatigue, league, intrigue, plague, rogue, tongue, vague, vogue, catalogue, dialogue, monologue, colleague</p> <p>antique, unique, boutique, picturesque, grotesque, plaque, cheque, queue</p>
Words with the /s/ sound spelt sc		<p>science, scene, discipline, fascinate, crescent, ascent, descent, scent, scenery, scented, scissors, ascend, descend, fascinate, muscle, obscene, adolescent</p>
Words with the /eɪ/ sound spelt ei, eigh, or ey		<p>vein, weigh, eight, neighbour, they, obey, prey, convey, survey, reins, veil, reign, neigh, weight, sleigh, freight, eighteen, reindeer, beige</p>
Words that sound like shus ending in cious or tious ending	<p>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.</p> <p>Exception: anxious.</p>	<p>conscious, precious, suspicious, delicious, vicious, spacious, gracious, ferocious, malicious, tenacious, ambitious, cautious, infectious, nutritious, pretentious, fictitious, superstitious, fractious, vexatious, anxious</p>
Endings which sound like /ʃəl/	<p>–cial is common after a vowel letter and –tial after a consonant letter, but there are some exceptions.</p> <p>Exceptions: initial, financial, commercial, provincial (the spelling</p>	<p>social, special, official, financial, commercial, crucial, artificial, beneficial, superficial, facial, potential, essential, initial, substantial, partial, confidential, impartial, torrential, palatial, martial</p>

	of the last three is clearly related to finance, commerce and province).	
rds ending in –ant, –ance/–ancy, –ent, –ence/–ency	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>There are many words, however, where the above guidance does not help. These words just have to be learnt.</p>	<p>observant, observance, (observation), expectant (expectation), hesitant, hesitancy (hesitation), tolerant, tolerance (toleration), substance (substantial)</p> <p>innocent, innocence, decent, decency, frequent, frequency, confident, confidence (confidential), violent, violence</p> <p>assistant, assistance, obedient, obedience, independent, independence</p>
Words ending in –able and –ible Words ending in –ably and –ibly	<p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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).</p>	<p>adorable/adorably (adoration), applicable/applicably (application), considerable/considerably (consideration), tolerable/tolerably (toleration), probable/probably</p> <p>changeable, noticeable, forcible, legible</p> <p>dependable, comfortable, understandable, reasonable, enjoyable, reliable</p> <p>possible/possibly, horrible/horribly, terrible/terribly, visible/visibly, incredible/incredibly, sensible/sensibly</p>
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.	referring, referred, referral, preferring, preferred, transferring, transferred

	The r is not doubled if the –fer is no longer stressed.	reference, referee, preference, transference
Use of the hyphen	<p>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.</p> <p>Re-enter</p> <p>Co- to show it is done with someone else (Co-operate, co-ordinate)</p> <p>Re- to show it is done again (re-examine, re-evaluate, re-employ)</p>	co-ordinate, re-enter, co-operate, co-own, re-examine, re-evaluate, re-employ
Words with the /i:/ sound spelt ei after c	<p>The ‘i before e except after c’ rule applies to words where the sound spelt by ei is /i:/.</p> <p>Exceptions: protein, caffeine, seize (and either and neither if pronounced with an initial /i:/ sound).</p> <p>Also good to know:</p> <p><i>ie</i> after c</p> <p><i>ei</i> not preceded by c</p>	<p>deceive, conceive, receive, perceive, ceiling, receipt, deceit, conceit,</p> <p>species, science, sufficient</p> <p>seize, vein, weird, their, feisty, foreign</p>
Words containing the letter-string ough	<p>ough is one of the trickiest spellings in English – it can be used to spell a number of different sounds.</p> <p>They have been split into groups based on how the ough sounds.</p>	<p>ought, bought, thought, thoughtful, nought, brought, fought</p> <p>rough, roughest, tough, toughest, enough</p> <p>cough</p> <p>though, although, dough, doughy</p> <p>through</p> <p>thorough, borough</p> <p>plough, bough</p>
Words with ‘silent’ letters (i.e. letters whose presence cannot be predicted from the pronunciation of the word)		<p>knight, doorknob, knowledge, knee, knit, knobbly, knuckle, answer, bomb, comb, climb, crumb, debt, doubt, lamb, limb, numb, plumber, tomb, subtle, thumb, fasten, glisten, listen, nestle, whistle, island, solemn, thistle, knife, gnome, whale, sword, honest, kneel, rhyme, when,</p>

	Unstressed letter sounds but not necessarily silent letters	<p>what, which, witch, wheat, gnaw, gnarl, gnash, knead, knock, ascend, ascent, conscience, conscious, crescent, descend, descent, muscle, scene, scent, scissors, sandwich, Christmas, design, foreign, reign, ache, chaos, character, anchor, chemist, chemical, choir, psychic, stomach, scheme, school, chorus, autumn, column, condemn, hymn, receipt, bristle, castle, hustle, jostle, moisten, often, rustle, soften, straight, Wednesday, whistle, wrap, wreck, wrestle, wriggle, wrinkle, wrist, write, wrong, bustle, biscuit, build, built, circuit, disguise, guess, guest, guide, guilt, guilty, guitar, silhouette, know, wrapper, mortgage, swordfish, resign</p> <p>Family, boundar<u>y</u>, rasp<u>b</u>erry, list<u>e</u>ner, differ<u>e</u>nt, separ<u>e</u>, desper<u>a</u>te, factor<u>y</u>, gener<u>a</u>lly, gener<u>e</u>rous, govern<u>m</u>ent, inter<u>e</u>sting, explanat<u>o</u>ry, environ<u>m</u>ent, secretar<u>y</u>, jewell<u>e</u>ry, poison<u>o</u>us, compan<u>y</u>, desper<u>a</u>te, definit<u>e</u>ly, difference, voluntar<u>y</u>, refer<u>e</u>nce, temperature</p>
Homophones and near-homophones (Years 3 and 4)		<p>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</p>
Homophones and other words that are often confused (Years 5 and 6)	In the pairs of words opposite, nouns end –ce and verbs end –se.	<p>advice/advise aisle/isle</p>

	<p>Advice and advise provide a useful clue as the word advise (verb) is pronounced with a /z/ sound – which could not be spelt c.</p>	<p>aloud/allowed affect/effect/ alter/altar ascent/assent bridal/bridle cereal/serial compliment/complement desert/dessert draft/draught device/devise descent/dissent licence/license practice/practise prophecy/prophesy farther/father guessed/guest heard/herd led/lead morning/mourning past/passed precede/proceed principal/principle profit/prophet stationary/stationery steal/steel wary/weary who's/whose</p>
Year 5 and 6 word list	<p>This is a bank of words that children should know in Year 5 and 6. They are often provided as a wordbank during writing sessions and children should be confident in them.</p>	<p>accommodate accompany according achieve aggressive amateur ancient apparent appreciate attached available average awkward bargain bruise category cemetery committee communicate community competition conscience conscious controversy convenience correspond criticise curiosity definite desperate determined develop dictionary disastrous embarrass environment equip, equipped, equipment, especially exaggerate excellent existence explanation familiar foreign forty frequently government guarantee harass hindrance identity immediate individual interfere interrupt language leisure lightning marvellous mischievous muscle necessary neighbour nuisance occupy occur opportunity parliament persuade physical prejudice privilege profession programme pronunciation queue recognise recommend relevant restaurant rhyme rhythm sacrifice secretary shoulder signature sincere, sincerely soldier stomach sufficient</p>

		suggest symbol system temperature thorough twelfth variety vegetable vehicle yacht
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