

The sounds /f/, /l/, /s/, /z/ and /k/ are usually spelt as **ff** (cliff), **ll** (shell), **ss** (hiss), **zz** (jazz) and **ck** (duck) if they follow a **single vowel letter** (**a, e, i, o, u**) as code for a *short vowel sound* in short words. **Common exception words include:**

if

pal

us bus

gas

yes

/z/ is his

as has

Multi-syllable words (words with more than one 'beat') ending with the sounds /i+k/ commonly end with the letters **ic** :

magic picnic comic

logic fantastic basic

fabric elastic plastic

drastic photographic

terrific horrific epic

mimic panic music

topic toxic cosmic

clinic arctic critic

metric hectic heroic

italic mosaic iconic

phonic public rustic

scenic static tragic

topic exotic tactic

mechanic tunic sonic

relic aquatic fanatic

traffic citric cosmic

chaotic ceramic stoic

attic bionic allergic

There are many more words spelt with **ic** !

Thinking about the sound /ch/...

The grapheme **tch** follows **single vowel letters** (a, e, i, o, u) as code for **short vowel sounds** such as:

patch **fe**tch **di**tch **no**tch **hu**tch

and note: **wa**tch

But note these very common words which are 'exceptions':

rich **which**

such **much**

and note: **to**uch

The grapheme **ch** follows **digraph long vowel sounds** such as:

reach **re**aches **scree**ch **po**och **po**rch

poach **app**roach **co**ach **co**aches

The grapheme **ch** follows **single consonant letters** as code for **consonant sounds** such as:

squelch **lau**nch **pin**ch **ran**ch **crun**ch

Spoken words with more than one syllable (beat) often have an **unstressed syllable** in which the **vowel** letter/s-sound correspondence is unclear.

We have to **note carefully** which way the **unstressed** part is spelt in many words:

pocket

jacket

carrot

about

sailor

collar

mixer

sofa

banana

painter

village

cabbage

National or regional **accents** may influence how people **pronounce words differently** – the stress and the sounds.

Say the words above aloud and think carefully to identify how **you** pronounce the *graphemes* (letters and letter groups) in **red**!

The grapheme **-ve** is nearly always the code for the sound /v/ at the **end of the spoken word**:

have

serve

gave

swerve

cave

nerve

brave

carve

give

starve

live

halve

alive

groove

weave

move

sleeve

dove

delve

above

twelve

wove

When to add **-S** and **-ES** to words...

(plural of nouns and the third person singular of verbs)

If the end of the spoken word sounds like /s/ or /z/, it is likely to be spelt with **-s**:

pie, pies **hat, hats** **bike, bikes**

rabbit, rabbits **spoon, spoons**

he likes **it hops** **it squeaks**

she swims **he plays** **she smiles**

If the end of the word sounds like /i+z/ or /u+z/ which forms an extra syllable or 'beat' in the word, it is spelt with **-es**.

Typically, note these words ending with **x**, **ch**, **-tch** and **sh**:

fox, foxes **six, sixes**

mix, mixes **box, boxes**

church, churches **rich, riches**

fetch, fetches **hutch, hutches**

push, pushes **dash, dashes**

Adding the endings **-ing**, **-ed** and **-er**
to **verbs** when *no change is needed*
to the root word...

Adding **-ing** and **-er** adds an extra syllable to the word:

clean **cleaning** **cleaner**

jump **jumping** **jumper**

Adding **-ed** for the **past tense** of some verbs sometimes
adds an extra syllable dependent on the pronunciation of
the specific word:

rain **rained** /d/ - still one syllable

cook **cooked** /t/ - still one syllable

paint **painted** /i+d/ - extra syllable

If the verb ends in **two consonant letters** (the same or
different), the ending is simply added on.

Adding the endings **-er** and **-est**

to **adjectives** when *no change is needed to the root word...*

Adding **-er** and **-est** adds an extra syllable to the word:

strong stronger strongest

fresh fresher freshest

quick quicker quickest

If the adjective ends in **two consonant letters** (the same or different), simply **add on the suffix** – but a *single vowel letter as a short vowel sound* followed by *one consonant letter* requires the final consonant letter to be doubled (e.g. **w**ea**k** = *long vowel sound*, **b**i**g** and **t**h**i**n = *short vowel sounds*):

weak weaker weakest

big bigger biggest

thin thinner thinnest

Adding **-es** to **nouns** and **verbs**

ending in **-y**:

The **y** is changed to **i** before **-es** is added:

try **tries** **cry** **cries**

fly **flies** **reply** **replies**

carry **carries** **copy** **copies**

baby **babies** **lady** **ladies**

lorry **lorries**

berry **berries**

strawberry **strawberries**

How are these words above **pronounced differently** at the *end* of the words?

Adding **-ed**, **-er**, **-est** and **-ing**

to a *root word* ending in **-y** with a *consonant letter* before it:

The **y** is changed to **i** before **-ed**, **-er** and **-est** are added ...but *not* before **-ing** as this would result in **-ing**

(**exception words**: **skiing** and **taxiing**)

copy copied copier copying

happy happier happiest

cry cried crier crying

funny funnier funniest

reply replied replying

Adding **-ed**, **-er**, **-est**, **-ing** and **-y**

to words ending in **-e** with a *consonant letter* before the letter **-e**:

The **-e** at the end of the root word is dropped before **-ed**, **-er**, **-est**, **-ing** and **-y** (or any other *suffix* beginning with a *vowel letter*) are added (**except** 'being'):

hike **hiked** **hiker**

shine **shiny** **shining**

fine **fined** **finer** **finest**

race **raced** **racer** **racing**

phone **phoned** **phoning**

rule **ruled** **ruler** **ruling**

Adding **-ed**, **-er**, **-est**, **-ing** and **-y**

to words of *one syllable* ending in a *single consonant letter* following a *single letter short vowel sound*:

The *last consonant letter* of the root word is doubled before adding **-ed**, **-er**, **-est**,

-ing and **-y** (**except** the letter **-x** is *never doubled*: fixing fixed, mixing mixer, taxed):

pot potted potter potting

run runner running runny

sad sadder saddest

drop dropped dropping

red redder reddest

fit fitted fitter fitting

The prefix **un-** is added to the beginning of a word without any change to the spelling of the root word:

unrealistic

undo **un**done

unkind **un**usual

unfair **un**clear

untidy **un**lock

unhappy **un**lucky

undecided **un**load

unimaginable

A **compound word** is 'one word' that is created from two words **joined together**:

sunset sunrise sunburn

handbag shoelace hairbrush

football goalpost goalkeeper

playground farmyard

lampshade lamppost

bedroom ballroom

windmill windshield

windscreen headlamp

blackboard whiteboard

screwdriver handsaw

rainbow raincoat

If a **suffix** starts with a *consonant letter* such as **-ment**, **-ness**, **-ful**, **-less**, **-ly** and **-fully**, it is added straight on to most root words without any change to the last letter of those words:

glad glad**ness** gladly

care care**ful** care**less**

play play**ful** play**fully**

plain plain**ness** plain**ly**

Exceptions: argue**e** argument (drop the **-e**)

If the *root word* has more than one syllable ending with a *consonant letter* followed by **-y** then replace the **-y** with **-i**:

penny penn**i**less

merry merr**i**ment

happy happ**i**ly happ**i**ness

In **contractions**, the **apostrophe** shows where a letter or letters would be if the words were written in full:

can't = can**not** he's = he **is**, he **has**

didn't = did **not**

hasn't = has **not**

couldn't = could **not**

I'll = I **shall** you'll = you **will**

I've = I **have** we've = we **have**

Take care with it's which means 'it is' or 'it has' because for the **possessive** when *something belongs to 'it'* (e.g. **its** paws, **its** lock) an apostrophe is **never** used.

Take care with: they're = they **are**
may be confused with: over **there**
or: **their** things

The possessive apostrophe with singular nouns:

the child's toy

the boy's toys

the man's briefcase

the man's papers

It does not matter if **what belongs** to the child, boy or man **is plural** – what matters for **placing the apostrophe** is that **who the things belong to** is **singular** or **plural**.

The possessive apostrophe with plural nouns:

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** (e.g. an irregular plural such as: **the children's party**)

the girls' artwork

the boys' bikes

the babies' cries

the men's cars

It may help to rearrange the sentences in your mind to 'check' what belongs to whom and where to put the apostrophes in the examples above. The following rearranged phrases, however, don't need apostrophes: the **artwork** of the **girls**; the **bikes** of the **boys**; the **cries** of the **babies**; the **cars** of the **men**; the **toy** of the **child**; the **toys** of the **boy**; the **briefcase** of the **man**; the **papers** of the **man**. The singular or plural status of the whole words in **red** must not be changed by the position of the apostrophes (for example, **babie's** would be wrong). **Nothing belongs to** the words in **green** so they don't need any apostrophes in the examples above the box.