

# 7 Help yourself

## English spelling reference

### Useful rules

#### Doubling consonants

In some cases, we double a final consonant before endings beginning with vowels such as *-ing*, *-er*, and *-ed*. We often double the letters *b*, *d*, *g*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *p*, *r*, and *t*.

#### Doubling in single syllable words:

We double a single final consonant after one vowel letter: *thinner*, *hugged*.

We don't double the final consonant in words with long vowels (*ee*, *ou*, etc.): *feeling*, *poured*.

We don't double the final consonant if it is preceded by another consonant: *blasted*, *faster*.

#### Doubling in multi-syllable words:

If a word normally has stress on the final syllable before the ending is added, we double a final consonant after a single vowel: *occurred*, *forgotten*.

If a word does not have stress on the final syllable before the ending is added, we don't double the final consonant: *opening*, *developing*.

In British English, but not American English, we double the final letter after a single vowel wherever the stress is: *travelled*, *propelling*.

We don't double the final consonant in words with long vowels (*ee*, *ou*, etc.): *revealing*, *defeated*.

We don't double the final consonant if it is preceded by another consonant: *contradicting*, *reformer*.

#### Final -e

In most cases, delete a final *-e* before endings beginning with vowels such as *-ing*, *-er*, *-ed*: *saving*, *later*, *lived*.

We don't delete a final *-e* in words that already end in *-ee*, *-ye*, or *-oe*: *seeing*, *dyeing*, *canoelist*, except before *-ed*: *dyed*, *canoed*, *refereed*.

#### ie and ei

The sound *ee*, as in *feel*, is often written as *ie*: *achieve*, *niece*, *relieve*.

After the letter *c*, it is normally written as *ei*: *receive*, *conceit*, *receipt*.

There are, however, exceptions: *weird*, *seize*.

#### Final -y

In most cases, we change *-y* at the end of a word to *-i* before an ending: *happily*, *tastier*, *easiest*, *beautiful*.

We don't change *-y* to *-i* before endings beginning with *-i*, such as *-ing* and *-ish*: *trying*, *babyish*.

We don't change *-y* to *-i* if it is preceded by a vowel: *played*, *keyed*, *enjoyment*.

#### -ise and -ize

Some words, due to their historical origins, are always spelt with *-ise* in all varieties of English. Here is a common list:

advertise	advise	arise
compromise	despise	devise
disguise	enterprise	exercise
practise (verb)	revise	supervise
surprise	televise	

Some words can be spelt with *-ise* or *-ize* in British English: *specialise* / *specialize*, *organise* / *organize*, *recognise* / *recognize*, etc. However, these words must be spelt with *-ize* in American English.

#### Commonly misspelt words

Some words which occur regularly in English cause problems for native speakers and students alike. It is worth memorizing these spellings to help you in your writing.

accommodation	ageing	analyse
attendance	beneficial	category
commitment	controlled	controversial
embarrass	exaggerate	excellent
fulfil	independent	knowledgeable
maintenance	necessary	opportunity
recommend	significance	successful