

20 Silent letters

Activity A

Which letter don't we pronounce?

There are a number of words in English that contain a letter in their spelling that we do not pronounce. The activities that follow look at the spelling and the pronunciation of these words, so you need to say the vocabulary aloud. If you have the opportunity to work with another person, you will be able to help each other with this. In the first activity, say the words in the table and circle the silent letter in each. Check your answers in the dictionary, looking carefully at the phonetic transcription or listening to the recording on the digital version.

Circle the silent letter in each word in this table. Check your answer in the dictionary.

climb	scene	design	calm	column	listen	build	know	hour	answer

Now look at the words in the box below. Write them in the correct column according to their silent letter. Check your answer in the dictionary.

thistle	bomb	muscle	foreign	half	autumn	fasten
knuckle	wrap	hymn	two	mortgage	honour	biscuit
doubt	balmy	scissors	campaign	guilty	yolk	align
heir	wrong	disguise	debt	ascent	condemn	

Think about and/or discuss: what patterns in spelling do you notice from studying the words in Activity A?

Activity B

Read the clues and complete the crossword using words from the box in A.

Across

- 2 To cover something completely in paper or other material.
Example: *I need to _____ her birthday present.*
- 3 A noun or verb that is about changing your appearance so that you can't be recognized. Example: *The spy was wearing a _____.*
- 4 Finger joints. Example: *The boxer had bruised _____ after the fight.*
- 6 The number after one. Example: *One plus one makes _____.*
- 8 This noun means that you have great respect for someone.
Example: *She was the guest of _____ at the celebration.*
- 9 A verb that means construct. Example: *They are going to _____ a new shopping centre.*
- 10 To respond. Example: *I couldn't _____ her question.*

Down

- 1 An adjective describing someone or something from a different country. Example: *Everyone learns a _____ language at school.*
- 5 The action of using your ears. Example: *_____! I can hear a strange noise.*
- 7 An adjective that means incorrect. Example: *I'm sorry but you've got that spelling _____.*
- 8 A person who has the legal right to receive something when another person dies. Example: *He was the sole _____ to a large estate.*

