Common spelling rules

Ten common spelling rules to help improve your spelling

Rule One:

\(i\) before \(e\),

except after \(c\) or when it sounds like "ay" as in neighbour and weigh

Explanation of rule

Generally \(i\) comes before \(e\) as in the words believe, field, relief except after \(c\): ceiling, deceit, receive or when they sound like ‘ay’ as in freight, reign, sleigh

Some exceptions: foreign, height, leisure, protein, weird and ‘cien’ words such as ancient, efficient, and science.

Rule Two:

Silent \(e\) helps a vowel say its name.

Explanation of rule

When a word ends with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u) followed by a consonant (all other letters of the alphabet) and then silent \(e\), the vowel has a long sound e.g. rate, cube,

Rule Three

When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking.

Explanation of rule

When there are two vowels in a row, the first usually has a long sound and the second is silent. For example in the word team we hear the \(e\), but not the \(a\), therefore we spell the sound we hear first and the silent vowel comes second.

Rule Four

The letter \(q\) is almost always followed by a \(u\)

queue, quick conquer

Rule Five

Remember these rules for words ending in \(e\)

1. When adding the prefix \(ing\) \(er\) \(able\) \(ious\) \(en\) \(ous\) \(y\) to words ending in \(e\), leave off the \(e\):

   take/taking fame/famous write/writing believe/believable

2. Keep the \(e\) when adding endings that begin with a consonant e.g. ment worthy

   less ful

   advancement trustworthy tasteless grateful
Rule Six
When adding full to a word, drop the final l
careful beautiful

Rule Seven
For words ending in ge, keep the e when adding able or ous
manage/manageable

Rule Eight
For words ending in ie, change the ie to y and add ing
die/dying

Rule Nine
Remember these rules for words ending in y

1. For words of one or more syllables ending in y, change y to i before adding es er eth ly ness ed
   forty/fortieth busy/busily busy/business occupy/occupied early/earlier
   lay/layer say/saying play/played

Rule Ten
Remember these rules when doubling final consonants

1. When a word of one syllable ends in a single consonant, following a single vowel, double the consonant before adding ed er est ing
   bat/batted fun/funnier big/biggest run/running

Exceptions: Words ending in r x w or y
   answer/answered box/boxer

2. When another consonant or a pair of vowels come before the final consonant just add the ended
   belt/belting bail/bailed

3. When a vowel is followed by l at the end of a word double the l before adding er ed ing
   travel/traveller cancel/cancelled

Exception: parallel/paralleled
