

Ten Tips for Better Spelling

1. This may be the best-known spelling rule:

i before *e*, except after *c*

or when sounded like "ay"

as in *neighbor* and *weigh*

Here are some words that follow the rule:

IE words: *believe*, *field*, *relief*

CEI words: *ceiling*, *deceit*, *receive*

EI words: *freight*, *reign*, *sleigh*

Some exceptions: *either*, *foreign*, *height*, *leisure*, *protein*, *weird*

"CIEN words" are another exception to the rule. These include *ancient*, *efficient*, and *science*.

2. Here's another familiar spelling rule: "Silent *e* helps a vowel say its name." This means that when a word ends with a vowel followed by a consonant and then silent *e*, the vowel has a long sound. That's the difference between *rate* and *rat*, *hide* and *hid*, and *cube* and *cub*.
3. Have you heard the expression "When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking?" This means that when there are two vowels in a row, the first usually has a long sound and the second is silent. That's why it's *team*, not *taem*; *coat*, not *caot*; and *wait*, not *wiat*. Remembering this rule will help you to put vowels in the right order.
4. Learn the basic rules for spelling with plural nouns so that you know whether to use *s* or *es* and how to make plurals of nouns that end in *y* or *f*.
5. In general, though, memorising rules isn't the most effective way to learn spelling. Most rules have exceptions—and besides, you are best at learning words that you have made an effort to understand. A good way to understand a word is to break it into syllables. Look for prefixes, suffixes, and roots. Practice each short part and then the whole word.
dis-ap-pear-ing tra-di-tion-al
After you break apart a word, ask yourself: How is this word like other words I know? Spelling the word *traditional* may make you think of spelling *functional* and *national*. Finding patterns among words is one of the best ways to learn spelling.
6. It's also helpful to try making up a funny memory aids. For example, do you have trouble remembering which has two *s*'s—*desert* (arid land) or *dessert* (a sweet treat)? Remember that with dessert, you'd like seconds. Similarly, do you have trouble remembering how to spell *separate*? Remember that there's a *rat* in the middle.
7. Another kind of memory aid is to make up a sentence in which the first letter of each word can be used to make the spelling word. The sillier the better—nonsense sentences may be easier to remember.
chili: **c**ats **h**ave **i**nteresting **l**ittle **i**deas
physical: **p**lease **h**ave **y**our **s**trawberry **i**ce **c**ream and **l**ollipops
8. Make sure that you are pronouncing words correctly. This can help you to avoid some common spelling errors, such as *enviroment* instead of *environment*, *jewelery* instead of *jewelry*, and *libary* instead of *library*.
9. Put together a list of words that you find difficult to spell. Once you've got your list in hand, see if some of the tips above will help you.
10. And lastly: Don't rely on electronic spellcheckers! They can miss errors—especially when you have used the wrong word but spelled it correctly. To prove it, we've taken a sentence and messed up all the words. And the spellchecker thinks it's fine.

"I might need some new shoes for gym," Harry told our Aunt Ann.

"Eye mite knead sum knew shoos four Jim," Hairy tolled hour Ant an.