

# The endings -cious or -tious

Handy hint: If the root word ends in 'ce',  
the sound is usually spelt as -cious.

## -cious

vicious  
precious  
conscious  
delicious  
malicious  
suspicious

## -tious

ambitious  
cautious  
fictitious  
infectious  
nutritious

Exception to the rule: *anxious*



# The endings -cial or -tial

Handy hint: -cial is usually used after a vowel letter and  
-tial is usually used after a consonant letter.

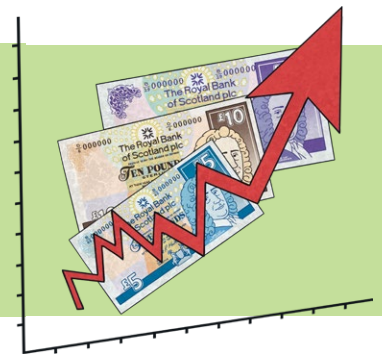
## -cial

official  
special  
artificial

## -tial

partial  
confidential  
essential

Exceptions to the rule: initial,  
financial, commercial and  
provincial.



# The endings -ant and -ance/-ancy

Handy hint: -ant and -ance/-ancy are normally used if there is a related word ending in -ation.

## -ant

observant  
expectant  
hesitant  
tolerant

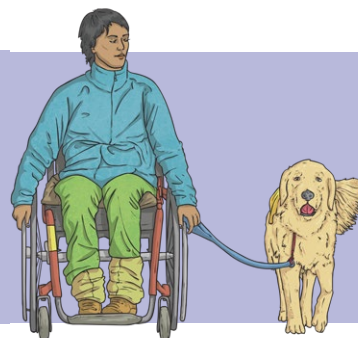
## -ance/-ancy

observance  
expectance  
hesitance  
tolerance

## -ation

observation  
expectation  
hesitation  
toleration

Exceptions to the rule: You can have assistant, assistance but not assistation.



# The endings *-ent* and *-ence/-ency*

Handy hint: *-ent* and *-ence/-ency* are usually used if there is a soft */c/*, soft */g/* or */qu/* sound before it in the word.

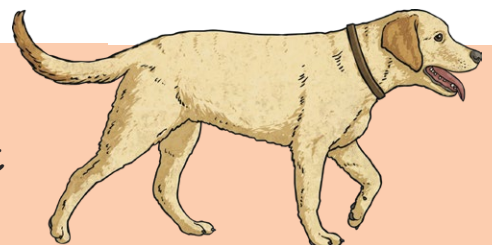
## *-ent*

*innocent*  
*decent*  
*frequent*  
*confident*  
*independent*

## *-ence/-ency*

*innocence*  
*decency*  
*frequency*  
*confidence*  
*independence*

Exceptions to the rule: *obedient*  
turns into *obedience*



# The endings -able/-ably and -ible/-ibly

Handy hints: -able/-ably are usually used if there is a related word ending in -ation. -ible/-ibly is usually used if a complete root word can't be heard before it.

## -able/-ably

adorable/adorably  
applicable/applicably  
considerable/  
considerably  
tolerable/tolerably

## -ible/-ibly

possible/possibly  
horrible/horribly  
terrible/terribly  
visible/visibly  
incredible/incredibly

Exceptions to the rule: Changeable and noticeable don't have related words which end in -ation. In the case of sensible, the complete root word can be heard before the -ible ending.

# Adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters to words ending in -fer

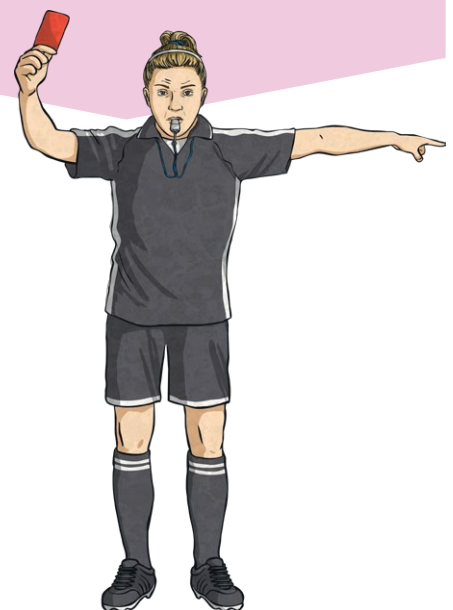
Handy hints: The 'r' is doubled if the -fer is still stressed when the ending is added. The 'r' is not doubled if the -fer is no longer stressed.

*r is doubled*

referring/referred/  
referral  
preferring/preferred  
transferring/  
transferred

*r is not doubled*

reference/referee  
preference  
transference



# Using a hyphen (-)

Handy hint: Hyphens can be used to join a prefix to a root word, especially if the prefix ends in a vowel letter and the root word also begins with one.

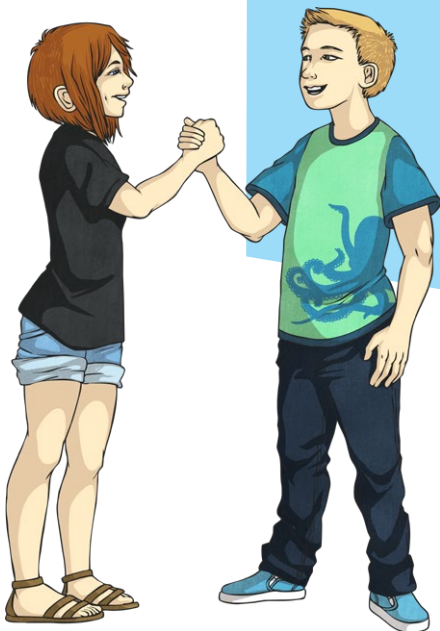
## Example Words

co-ordinate

re-enter

co-operate

co-own



Words with the long /e/  
sound spelled 'ei' after  
the letter 'c'

Handy hint: the 'i before e except after c' rule  
applies to words where the sound is spelt by 'ei'.

### Example Words

deceive  
conceive  
receive  
perceive  
ceiling

Exceptions to the rule: Protein, caffeine,  
seize all have the 'ei' spelling pattern  
but not after the letter 'c'.



# Words containing the letter string 'ough'

Handy hint: 'ough' is one of the trickiest spellings in English. It can be used to spell a number of different sounds.

-ough as /ʌff/

rough  
tough  
enough

-ough as /ɔr/

ought  
bought  
thought  
nought  
brought  
fought

-ough as /off/

cough

-ough as /oo/

through

-ough as /oa/

though  
although  
dough

-ough as /uh/

thorough  
borough

-ough as /ow/

plough  
bough

# Words containing 'silent' letters

Fantastic fact: Some letters which are no longer sounded used to be sounded hundreds of years ago. 'Knight' used to be pronounced with a 'k' sound before the 'n'!

## Example Words

doubt  
island  
lamb  
solemn  
thistle  
knight



# Homophones and other words that are often confused

Handy hint: Homophones are words which have the same or similar pronunciation but different meanings.

## Example words:

aisle/isle

aloud/allowed

affect/effect

altar/alter

ascent/assent

bridal/bridle

cereal/serial

compliment/  
complement

descent/dissent

desert/dessert

draft/draught

father/farther

guessed/guest

heard/herd

led/lead

morning/  
mourning

past /passed

precede/proceed

principal/  
principle

prophet/profit

stationary/  
stationery

steal/steel

wary/weary

who's/whose

# Words

Handy hint: try to memorise five of these words per week and you will know them all by the end of the year.

accommodate	committee	disastrous	hindrance	opportunity	secretary
accompany	communicate	embarrass	identity	parliament	shoulder
according	community	environment	immediately	persuade	signature
achieve	competition	equip (-ped, -ment)	individual	physical	sincerely
aggressive	conscience*		interfere	prejudice	soldier
amateur	conscious*	especially	interrupt	privilege	stomach
ancient	controversy	exaggerate	language	profession	sufficient
apparent	convenience	excellent	leisure	programme	suggest
appreciate	correspond	existence	lightning	pronunciation	symbol
attached	criticise	explanation	marvellous	queue	system
available	(critic + ise)	familiar	mischierous	recognise	temperature
average	curiosity	foreign	muscle	recommend	thorough
awkward	definite	forty	necessary	relevant	twelfth
bargain	desperate	frequently	neighbour	restaurant	variety
bruise	determined	government	nuisance	rhyme	vegetable
category	develop	guarantee	occupy	rhythm	vehicle
cemetery	dictionary	harass	occur	sacrifice	yacht