

# 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.

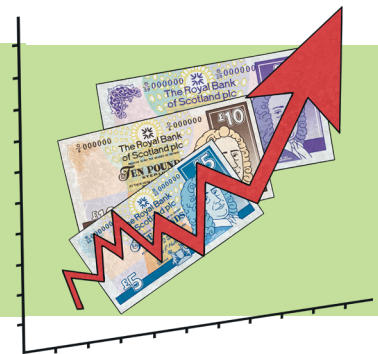
## -cial

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.

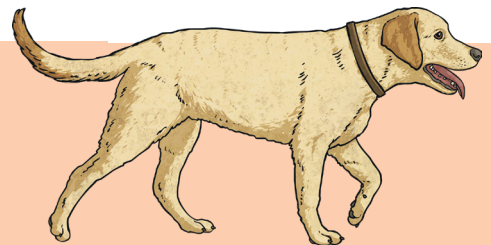
## -ent

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

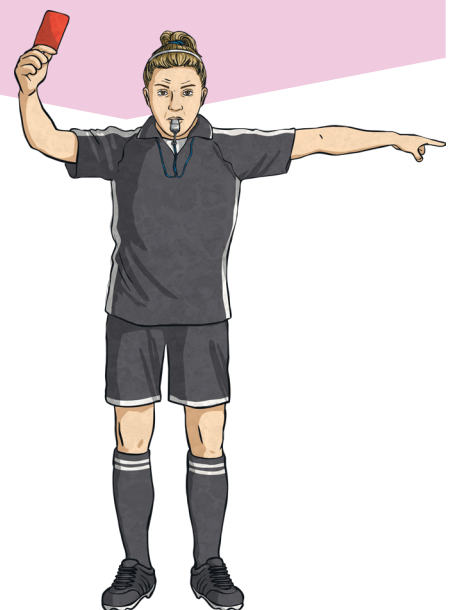
**Handy hints:** The 'r' is doubled if the -fer is still stressed when the ending is added. The 'r' is not doubled if the -fer is no longer stressed.

## 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.

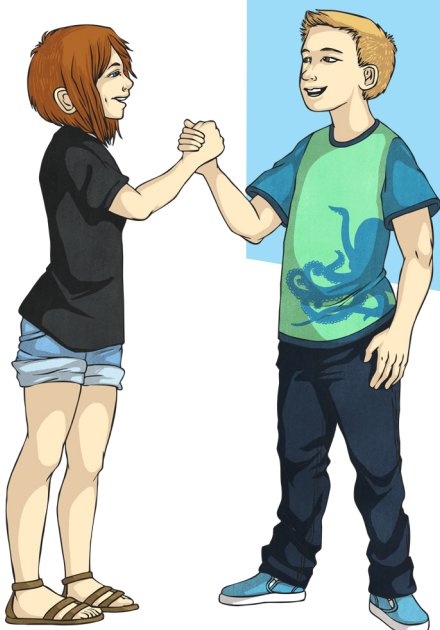
## Example Words

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 /uff/

rough  
tough  
enough

## -ough as /or/

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

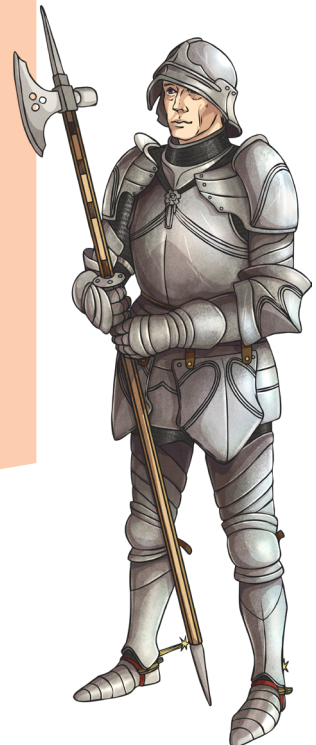
island

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