Preamble

Upon registration in the OzSpell Challenge 2012, students have access to these helpful Spelling Tips. Carefully compiled by education and publishing professionals, it gives valuable insight into the complexities found in spelling English.

Our word authority is Macquarie Dictionary. Smart people there! Sponsors assist with funding, goods and services. We at Team OzSpell like sponsors a lot!

Want to be a part of the OzSpell Challenge? Start studying now! Read these pages online or better still, print them out for future reference.

There is no time to lose ... be alert! Lerts are really cluey people by the way ...

Browse through the following pages. Talk about it with your family and friends. Ask your teachers and parents questions ... be inquisitive and be persistent!

Spelling Tips 1 Double Letters
Spelling Tips 2 Silent Letters
Spelling Tips 3 Spelling Rules
Spelling Tips 4 Homophones
Spelling Tips 5 Ambiguous Vowels
Spelling Tips 6 The Intermediate Vowel Sound
Spelling Tips 7 Borrowings From Other Languages
Spelling Tips 8 Elided Syllables
Spelling Tips 9 Words Ending In -e
Spelling Tips 10 Apostrophes

The next step in the OzSpell Challenge is for you to learn all the 2500 specially chosen words in the WordL. That’s right ... we really mean all the words! So, you should start today ...

The WordL is graded into easy, moderate and hard words, in 19 topics ... oh, and we have a selection of unseen words too which will be included at the District and National Grand Final, so visit www.macquariedictionary.com.au often and go on a journey of discovery. Learning new words is your mission ...

Study well. You may choose to view the Spelling Tips online or print a copy of these 11 pages for future reference.

It’s time to have serious fun!

Team OzSpell

PS Every student who participates is a winner! Good luck everyone. We hope to see you in Sydney at the National Grand Final in August ... winners are grinners!
Spelling Tips 1 Double Letters

The pronunciation of English words is unfortunately no guide to spelling when it comes to single or double consonants. A word like aberration, for example, has a single b and a double r, but, from the sound alone, either would have been possible. The truth of the matter lies in the origin of the word – aberration comes from the Latin ab meaning ‘away from’ and errare meaning ‘to wander’. Something that is aberrant has wandered away from the right course.

A word like fulfil can be particularly irritating because on their own, both full and fill have the double letter but in the compound fulfil, neither does. While it is true that in Old English the form of full was ful, fill has always been fill. And indeed in American English fulfill is the only standard spelling.

The single/double letter variation is probably one of the hardest things to learn in English spelling because there is often no rhyme or reason to it – just established practice. This is a category where little memory-joggers can be of great assistance.

Try these memory tips

- **accident** There is a double c in accident but each c makes a different sound – the first has a ‘k’ sound and the second an ‘s’ sound. If you remember this, you won’t make a spelling error **accidentally**.
- **atoll** A single t and a double l. Think of having to pay a toll to land on the atoll.
- **dessert** Two s’s. You could try thinking that they stand for ‘second serving’ and that is why they turn up in dessert which is something sweet to eat, but not in desert which is a dry, sandy place.
- **embarrass** Remember that when you are embarrassed you feel doubly uncomfortable and there are two double letters in embarrass – a double r and a double s.
- **holiday** Only one l. This is because holiday comes from ‘holy day’ (the first holidays were special days in the Christian Church’s calendar). But remember that the y has changed to an i.
- **hurricane** Double r. You will remember this if you think of the double r in hurry – hurricanes are always in a hurry.
- **millibar** Two l’s in the prefix milli- which means ‘thousandth’. In this word, this prefix is joined to the word bar. It can also be joined to other measurement words to make a word meaning a thousandth part of that measurement, as you can see in milligram, millilitre and millimetre.
- **parallel** Only one r, then a double l, then a single l at the end. Remember single – double – single.
- **serrated** Double r. Think of the ‘rough ridges’ of a serrated edge to remind you.
- **suffocate** Double f. Also notice that the following vowel sound is spelt o. Think what a ‘fearful and frightening ordeal’ it would be to suffocate.
- **tariff** Only one r, but double f (which you could think of as standing for ‘final fee’ to remind you).
English has acquired words from many different source languages, such as Latin and French, and even more remote languages like Chinese and Japanese. Some of these words settle rather uncomfortably into English with the result that some of the letters don’t match the pronunciation. In the list below you will find aisle and corps from French, and asthma from Greek. Others have had letters added to them to make a link with Latin, like the b in doubt.

Looking on the bright side, silent letters can make all the difference between words which have the same pronunciation. A llama (from a South American language via Spanish) should not be confused with a lama (from Tibetan), for example. Our visual memory should help us to distinguish between the two words.

Try these memory tips

- aghast: Don’t forget the silent h after the g. Try thinking that you would be aghast if you saw a ghost. Join these words together, change to the o to an a, and you have aghast.

- aisle: Don’t forget the unusual spelling of ais (with a silent s) to give an ‘uy’ sound. Aisle is spelt and pronounced in this way because it comes from French.

- asthma: Don’t forget the silent th. Think about how you get a thick feeling in your chest when you have asthma and remember to add in the th when you spell it.

- corps: Don’t forget the ps at the end. Corps has this spelling and sound because it comes from French where it means ‘body’. But remember that a corps is a group or body of people. Don’t confuse it with corpse, which is a dead body.

- doubt: Don’t forget the silent b. The b is left behind from the Latin word it originally came from – dubitare.

- island: Don’t forget the s after the i. You might remember that you can swim all the way around an island to remind you of the silent s.

- llama: Don’t forget the two l’s at the start. The second l is silent. Don’t confuse this with lama (with a single l) which is a Buddhist monk or priest.

- science: Don’t forget the silent c following the s at the start. Also notice that the ie after the c does not appear to follow the normal rule of i before e except after c. This is because the i and the e are part of two separate syllables in this word, rather than going together to make an ‘ee’ sound. Science comes from scientia, the Latin word for ‘knowledge’.

- thumb: Don’t forget the silent b at the end. Other words with a similar spelling are dumb and crumb.
There are some rules that we can hang on to in the complexities of spelling. The only difficulty is that they all seem to have important exceptions. So, for example, the well-known ‘i before e except after c’ should really go on to say ‘when the sound is ee’. The rule works perfectly well on words like achieve and receive, the first having ie and the second having ei, but breaks down on words which, at some stage, have been borrowed into English and don’t conform to English sound/spelling patterns.

So, for example, beige comes from French and still has something like a French pronunciation with ei pronounced ‘ay’. But protein is tricky because it comes from Greek and has ended up with an ei spelling and an ‘ee’ sound in English. It becomes an exception to the rule. In earlier times seize was written sayse and had a pronunciation much closer to the French saisir from which it came. Despite its current pronunciation it remains an exception because it is a French borrowing.

Similarly there is a simple rule that words of two or more syllables, where the final syllable is unstressed, do NOT double the consonant when they add -ed or -ing. So billet becomes billeted and billeting, and, strictly speaking, focus becomes focused and focusing. The exception to the rule is the set of words ending in l, such as travel, which becomes travelled and travelling.

The other side of this rule is that a word of two or more syllables, where the final syllable is stressed, DOES double the consonant, so that admit becomes admitted and admitting. But then the exception is the set of words which have a vowel represented by two letters, such as repeat, which do NOT double the final consonant. Repeat becomes repeated and repeating.

### Try these memory tips

- **believe**: Remember that believe has ie (to spell the ‘ee’ sound) following the l. This follows the rule that i comes before e except after c.
- **brief**: Remember that brief is spelt with ie (to spell the ‘ee’ sound). This follows the rule that i comes before e except after c. Think of similar words such as thief and chief.
- **budget**: Remember that the t remains single when you add -ed or -ing, following the rule that the consonant remains single if the final syllable is not stressed.
- **ceiling**: Remember that ceiling is spelt with ei (to spell the ‘ee’ sound). This follows the rule that i comes before e except after c.
- **plummet**: Notice that you do not double the t when you add -ed or -ing, following the rule that the consonant remains single if the final syllable is not stressed.
- **poltergeist**: This word breaks the rule that i comes before e except after c because it comes from German – from poltern (meaning ‘to make a disturbance’) and geist (meaning ‘ghost’).
- **protein**: Remember that protein is spelt with ei for the ‘ee’ sound in the last syllable. This does not fit in with the rule that i comes before e, except after c. That is because protein has come from the Greek word proteios, meaning ‘primary’.
- **science**: The ie after the c does not appear to follow the normal rule of i before e except after c. This is because the i and the e are part of two separate syllables in this word, rather than going together to make an ‘ee’ sound. Science comes from scientia, the Latin word for ‘knowledge’.
- **seize**: Remember that seize is spelt with ei, breaking the rule that i comes before e, except after c.
- **weird**: Remember that weird is spelt with ei, breaking the rule that i comes before e, except after c. This is because the vowel sound is ‘ear’, not ‘ee’, and so the rule does not apply.
Homophones are words which sound the same but which have different origins and different spellings. *Arms* and *alms*, for example. *Altar* and *alter*. *Arms* are weapons from the verb meaning to arm oneself. *Alms* are gifts of charity. The word *alms* isn’t a plural word but from the Old English *almysse*, which in turn is from the Greek word for ‘charity’. *Altar* is from the Latin *altaria* meaning ‘a high place’, whereas *alter* is from the Latin *alter* meaning ‘other’.

Sometimes the difficulty arises when a word is borrowed from another language. The word *buoy* is from Dutch and should have had the spelling *boy* but because it was pronounced *bwoy* in Dutch it was given the *u* to indicate the different pronunciation. Now it has dropped that pronunciation but retained the strange spelling!

Again, when two words are pronounced in exactly the same way, you sometimes need a memory-jogger to help you sort out which one you want. *Stationary* and *stationery*. Remember there is an envelope (an *e*) in *stationery*. *Currant* and *current*. Remember that you can eat a *currant* – the one with the *a*.

Here are some more homophones that are often confused

**bare / bear**
Don’t confuse the spelling of *bare*, to be uncovered, with *bear* which sounds the same. A *bear* is a large animal with short fur. To *bare* something is to hold or carry it.

**bizarre / bazaar**
Don’t confuse the spelling of *bizarre* with *bazaar* (a kind of market) which sounds the same. The word *bizarre* means ‘unusual’ and its spelling certainly is! Remember especially the arre ending. It comes from Basque, a language spoken in parts of Spain and France.

**boar / boor / bore**
Don’t confuse the spelling of *boar*, a male pig, with *boor* or *bore* which sound the same. A *boor* is a rude person, and a *bore* is a hole made by drilling, or a dull person.

**feat / feet**
An action requiring great skill, courage or strength is a *feat*. Don’t confuse the spelling of *feat* with *feet* which sounds the same but is spelt with a double *e*. Your *feet* are at the end of your legs.

**foul / fowl**
Don’t confuse *foul* with *fowl* which sounds the same. If something is *foul*, it is extremely unpleasant. A *fowl* is a bird kept for eating or for its eggs, such as a hen, duck or turkey.

**jeans / genes**
Don’t confuse the spelling of *jeans* with *genes* which has the same sound. *Jeans* are something you wear, while *genes* are the units in the body responsible for passing on physical characteristics, like blue eyes, from parents to their children.

**prey / pray**
*Prey* is an animal hunted for food by another. Don’t confuse the spelling of *prey* with *pray* which has the same sound. When someone *prays*, they talk to the god they believe in.

**principal / principle**
Don’t confuse *principal*, the head of a school, with *principle* which has the same sound. A *principle* is a general truth or rule.

**there / their / they’re**
*There* means in or at a particular place: *The book is there*, on the top *shelf*. Don’t confuse the spelling of *there* with *their* or *they’re*, both of which have the same sound. *Their* is a form of *they* that shows something belongs to them: *The boys are with their mother*. *They’re* is a short form of they are.

**strait / straight**
Don’t confuse *strait*, which is a narrow channel connecting two large bodies of water, with *straight* which describes something with no bends.
Spelling Tips 5 Ambiguous Vowels

English is such a disorderly language. If only we had adopted a phonetic spelling where each sound had its own formalised representation, where, for example, the sound ‘ee’ as in feet was always written as a double e. Instead we have the same sound in these (written as a single e), machine (written as an i), and carry (written as a y).

Even worse is the ay sound as in bay. Look at the following: bake, ballet, maid, straight, gauge, great, veil, grey and weigh. Going by the sound alone there is no way of telling if you should write way or weigh.

Sometimes the difficulty arises because the word comes into English from another language which has its own, different sound-to-letter relationships. So, for example, we have plateau and bureau with the ‘oh’ sound represented by eau, because these words are from French. But words like muesli and bonsai are so far from English sound/spelling equivalents that we know we have to learn them. It is always going to be words like brooch and broach that cause us a problem.

aquatic Remember the a spelling for the ‘o’ sound in the middle. This will be easier to remember if you see that aquatic comes from aqua, the Latin word for ‘water’.
dwarf Remember the ar spelling for the ‘aw’ sound. Another word with this sound and spelling pattern is wharf.
foreign The ending is spelt eign (not in or en). The g is silent.
gangrene The end is spelt ene (not een). Remember that gangrene has nothing to do with the colour green.
grevillea Remember that the vowel before the final a is e (not i). This word comes from the name of a Scottish botanist, C.F. Greville (died 1809). The a has been added to make it a scientific name.
heifer Remember that heifers ‘eat in fields’ to help you remember there is an i between the e and single f in this word.
hierarchy Don’t let the meaning and sound of this word trick you into thinking that it contains the word high. The letters hie spell the ‘huy-uh’ sounds at the beginning.
hydraulic The ‘o’ sound in the middle is spelt au. Also remember the y spelling in the first syllable. This is part of the prefix hydr- (a form of hydro- meaning ‘water’).
jewel Notice the unusual group of letters ewe making the ‘ooh’ sound.
lenient There is only a single e spelling the ‘ee’ sound in the first syllable.
leopard The ‘e’ sound in the first syllable is spelt eo. This is because the word comes from leo, the Latin word for ‘lion’. Also remember there is an r in the last syllable.
manoeuvre This is a very difficult word to spell because of the group of three vowels oeu which give the ‘ooh’ sound. This is the beginning of the word part oeuvre which is the French word for ‘work’. Manoeuvre has come into English from French. Its origins are the Latin words manu operare meaning ‘to work by hand’.
mongrel The first vowel is an o (although it sounds like it would be a u).
nuisance Remember the ui to spell the ‘yooh’ sound. You could remind yourself that someone who is a nuisance is utterly irritating.
plait Remember the ai spelling for the ‘a’ sound. The i is there because this word was once pronounced ‘playt’. The pronunciation has changed but the spelling has not!
pleasant Remember the ea spelling for the ‘e’ sound in the first syllable. This will be easy if you remember that pleasant things are things that please you.
quay The ‘ee’ sound is spelt ay. Don’t confuse quay with key which has the same sound.
queue The unusual letter combination eue makes the ‘yooh’ sound. Also notice that qu makes a ‘k’ (not ‘kw’) sound at the start of the word. This is because queue comes from French. (It was based on the Latin word for ‘tail’ – because a queue is often shaped like a tail.)
theory Remember the eo spelling for the ‘ear’ sound. This comes from the Greek word theoria, meaning ‘thinking’ or ‘idea’.
Spelling Tips 6 The Intermediate Vowel Sound

There is a sound in English for which there is no letter and this causes enormous confusion. It is the indeterminate sound, pronounced ‘uh’ and known to linguists as the schwa. It has no letter equivalent because it is a reduction in speech that happens to many vowels. When they occur in an unstressed position they often become ‘uh’.

So, for example, lots of endings of words with more than one syllable are reduced in this way. The final -er in butter; the final -or in doctor, and -our in colour; the final -ous in famous; the final -al in rival. But it is not just final syllables that are reduced. It can happen to any unstressed syllable anywhere.

The solution in learning to spell has often been to give the word an artificial kind of pronunciation that gives every vowel its full quality. So instead of saying reg-yuh-late we tuck away a memory of reg-yooh-late to remind us that there is a u in the middle. But strategies vary. Some are based on spelling rather than pronunciation. It may help you to remember that adequate has the word equate in it. If your offering has been equated with someone else’s, then it is adequate.

Here are some more words with tricky ‘uh’ sounds and some ways to remember the correct spelling

- **allergy** The middle vowel sound is spelt er. This will be easier to remember if you think about the pronunciation of the adjective allergic where you can hear the ‘er’ sound.
- **aqueduct** There is an e spelling for the middle vowel sound. The spelling of aqueduct will be easier if you see that it is made up of aqua (the Latin word for ‘water’), with its final a changed to an e, and duct (something for carrying a liquid). You have ducts in your eyes which do just that – carry water in the form of tears.
- **artichoke** The middle vowel sound is spelt i. You can think of this as joining together two familiar words, art and choke, even though these are not related to the meaning of artichoke.
- **castanets** The middle vowel sound is spelt with an a. Remember that it has a complete word either side of it – cast and nets – though these don’t have anything to do with the meaning of castanets.
- **contradict** The middle vowel sound is spelt as an a. It might help if you see that contradict is made up of contra (the Latin word for ‘against’ which is used in English as a prefix) and dict (which is a form of the Latin word for ‘speak’ or ‘say’).
- **cosmopolitan** The second vowel sound is spelt as an o. This will be easier to remember if you think of the word cosmos (meaning ‘the world’ or ‘the universe’) and can see that cosmopolitan begins with a shortened form of this word. Also remember that the last part is spelt an (not en).
- **discipline** Remember that the end is spelt ine. You might think of the word line – after all, discipline is meant to keep you in line!
- **exasperate** The vowel sound between the p and the r is spelt with an e. Remembering this is the most exasperating thing about this word. Rap it out as ex + as + per + ate.
- **kilogram** The middle vowel sound is spelt o. Learn the prefix kilo- (which means ‘thousand’) and you will be able to spell not only kilogram but other words which include it, such as kilometre.
- **kindergarten** The middle vowel sound is spelt er. This is because this part of the word is kinder, the German word for ‘children’. Added to it is garten, the German word for ‘garden’. Don’t get confused and put a d in place of the t.
- **marzipan** The middle vowel sound is spelt i (you will notice it makes the word zip inside the word marzipan).
- **microscope** The middle vowel sound is spelt o. It will help if you see that this is part of the prefix micro-. This prefix has two meanings – ‘very small’ or ‘magnifying or increasing’ – but it is the second meaning that is used here. The stem of the word, scope, is used in the names of instruments used for viewing, like this word and others like telescope. Both of the word parts come from Greek.
- **vinegar** The middle vowel sound is spelt e. You can remember this by thinking of a vine – after all, vinegar comes from grapes which grow on a vine.
It is precisely because some words are un-English that they cause difficulties in English spelling. The English language has gathered words from far and wide, displaying a striking ability to expand its vocabulary by absorbing foreign words. In the process, these words are often changed to some extent to suit an English pronunciation, but we seem to favour leaving at least some trace of their foreign origin in the spelling.

Thus we have words from Chinese, like kowtow and lychee; from Japanese, like judo and origami; from French, like chic and cul-de-sac; from German, like glockenspiel and pretzel; and from Italian, like espresso and spaghetti. Each of these has a feature of the original borrowing in the spelling.

These are probably the most entertaining words to learn to spell because they take us on a trip around the world in the process of becoming familiar with them. But there is one other important set of words for us as Australians and that is the words we have taken from Aboriginal languages. These are largely flora and fauna – barramundi, budgerigar and koala; coolibah, jarrah and mallee. But there are other items as well – billabong, corroboree, dillybag, humpy and gibber, for example. The first words were borrowed from the Dharug language spoken around Sydney Cove, but after that settlers in many different parts of the country added words from a great range of Aboriginal languages.

Here are some more words that we have borrowed from around the world

**berserk**  
The first syllable of berserk is spelt ber though you do not hear the r. It is spelt like this because ber comes from an Icelandic word meaning ‘bear-like’. A berserker was a Norse warrior of great courage and strength who fought with frenzied fury in battle.

**dachshund**  
It will be easier to spell dachshund if you think about the two German words of which it is made up – dachs meaning ‘a badger’ and hund meaning ‘a dog’. So a dachshund was originally a dog (or hound – remember the h) used for hunting badgers.

**eisteddfod**  
The word eisteddfod comes from a Welsh word (meaning ‘session’) and the spelling contains combinations of letters that are common in Welsh but unusual in English. The main spelling points to remember are that the sound at the beginning is spelt ei though it is pronounced ‘uh’, there is a double d in the middle, and the last syllable is fod although it sounds like ‘fuhd’.

**entrepreneur**  
Entrepreneur comes from a French word (meaning ‘undertake’) which is why the ’o’ sound at the beginning is spelt e. Then there are another three e’s, spelling the two ‘uh’ sounds in the middle and finally as part of the -eur ending. This ending occurs in several words that have come from French and means ‘someone who does something’, as in amateur and chauffeur.

**genealogy**  
The word genealogy comes from the same Greek word as gene does. If you think of gene this will help you to remember that the vowel sound after the n is spelt e (though it may sound like it should be spelt i). The suffix -logy is used in many words relating to the study of something. Remember that in this word it has an a before it.

**ghetto**  
Note the double t before the o ending in ghetto. This occurs in many words which come from Italian, such as stiletto and risotto. Ghetto comes from the Italian name given to the Jewish quarter of Venice in the 16th century.

**hippopotamus**  
The word hippopotamus comes from the Greek words hippos meaning ‘horse’ and potamos meaning ‘river’, in other words ‘horse of the river’.

**impromptu**  
Remember that the ending of impromptu is spelt with a u which is quite unusual in English. This is because it comes from the Latin phrase in promptu, meaning ‘in readiness’.

**karaoke**  
The word karaoke comes from two Japanese words – kara meaning ‘absent’ and oke meaning ‘orchestra’.

**picturesque**  
The basic meaning of picturesque is ‘like a picture’. You know the spelling of picture, so all you need to remember is the -esque suffix (meaning ‘like’ or ‘in the style of’) in place of the final e. This suffix gives an ‘esk’ sound because it comes from French. Another word with this ending is grotesque.

**cassette**  
Remember that the final syllable of cassette is spelt ette (although it sounds like ‘et’). This suffix comes from French and means ‘small’ or ‘feminine’. Cassette originally meant ‘little box’. Other words with this ending include serviette, flannelette and cigarette.
Spelling Tips 8 Elided Syllables

Ceremony used to present us with a spelling problem when the stress was on the first syllable and all the rest was a blur of indeterminate syllables. Now that we are following the American pattern and giving a secondary stress on -mon-, as in ‘se-ruh-mohn-ee’, perhaps it won’t cause the same problem.

The reason that Wednesday and secretary present a spelling problem to us is that over time we have elided a whole syllable in each word. Wednesday has gone from three syllables to two, secretary from four to three.

The solution has been to fill in the gaps, pronounce the word in an artificial way with every syllable intact, and retain that pronunciation memory as a guide to spelling. We call it rapping the word out, as if you were a rap performer putting the word to a beat. Say advertisement as ‘ad-ver-tize-ment’ and you will have no difficulty with the spelling. Say Wednesday as ‘wed-nes-day’ and your problems are solved.

Here are some more to remember

derogatory The final o is usually not pronounced. Rap it out as de + rog + a + tor + y.

February Many people don’t pronounce the sound of the r, but it should always be there when you spell it. Rap it out as Feb + ru + ar + y.

itinerary Don’t forget the ary ending (although the a is not pronounced). Rap it out as i + tin + er + ary.

miserable This word is usually pronounced without the middle er. Rap it out as mis + er + a + ble.

sanctuary Don’t forget the u before the ary ending, which you often do not hear when the word is pronounced. Rap it out as sanc + tu + ar + y.

sovereign The middle e is not usually pronounced. Rap it out assov + er + eign.

temporary This word has four syllables, although you hear only two when you say it. So concentrate on the orary ending and rap it out as tem + por + a + ry.

vegetable Don’t forget the second e which you usually don’t hear when people say the word. Rap it out as ve + ge + ta + ble.

voluntary Remember that voluntary ends with ary, although the a is usually not pronounced. Rap it out as vol + un + ta + ry.
Spelling Tips 9 Words Ending In -e

The pattern with single-syllable words ending in -e is that the final e lengthens the vowel sound. So ban becomes bane, can becomes cane, etc. But then what happens to that final e when we start to add other endings?

The general rule is that if the added bit starts with a consonant then there is no problem. So safe gives rise to safety, stale gives rise to staleness, advertise gives rise to advertisement. But there is a difficulty with judge, which in British English gives rise to judgement and in American English to judgment. Australian English, sandwiched between the other two, can do both, although we prefer judgement.

When the added part starts with a vowel, things understandably become more difficult. Mostly the rule is that the -e is dropped before the other ending goes on. So race becomes raced and racing, not raceed and raceing. But with endings like -able we like to be able to see the base word, so slice becomes sliceable, and manage becomes manageable. Words that end in -ie change the ie to y before adding -ing. So die gives rise to dying, lie to lying.

Consider these examples

**advertisement** This word comes from the word advertise, although there is a change in the sound. This should remind you not to leave out the e before the final ment. The spelling rule is that words ending in e keep their e when followed by a suffix that begins with a consonant. Rap it out as ad + ver + tise + ment.

**argument** This word is formed from the verb argue. Words formed from argue do not follow the rule which says that words that end with e keep the e before a suffix starting with a consonant. So in argument and arguable the e from argue has been left out. There’s no argument about that!

**indicator** When the -or ending is added to indicate, the -e is dropped, following the rule that when a suffix starting with a vowel is added, you lose the -e.

**senate** A member of a senate is called a senator, following the rule that the final e is dropped when adding something to a word.

**storage** You will have no trouble with the spelling of this word if you see that it is made up of store (with the e dropped) and the suffix -age (used in nouns referring to a state or condition).
Apostrophes inspire terror out of all proportion to their size and frequency of use. Part of the problem seems to be that contracted forms that are so much part of our speech, and so easy to say, are a bit of a worry to us when we come to write them down. We have to work out which bit is missing. This is the basic function of the apostrophe. So I’ve is a contracted from of I have, we’ll is a contracted from of we will. Sometimes the contraction is a more marked departure from the original as in won’t which is short for will not, and sometimes it has two expanded forms, such as we’d which could be we would or we had.

And then there is its and it’s, the former a pronoun, the latter a contraction. Remember that it is only the contraction that can be expanded, so if you attempt to expand its (as in its head) and find that you are not making sense (it is head?) then there is no apostrophe. What you have there is the pronoun – used to indicate who owns the head. It does. This is a very confusing pair of words, especially as possession is usually shown by an apostrophe. It is just something you have to learn.

Funnily enough, the apostrophe used to show possession is also indicating a missing letter. It had essentially the same basic function although we don’t interpret it that way now. In the phrase a dog’s breakfast we have the dog owning its breakfast and therefore in the possessive case. In Old and Middle English this was shown by adding the suffix -es. And the apostrophe stands for the missing vowel -e-. But all this happened long ago. We now stick the ‘s on the end of nouns to indicate ownership.

Whatever you do, do NOT use the apostrophe to make the plural of a noun. The plural of horse is horses, as in The horses are in the paddock. An apostrophe would indicate possession or a missing letter so would make no sense whatsoever.

**This is a list of common contractions using apostrophes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contraction</th>
<th>Expansion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>can’t</td>
<td>a short form of cannot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>couldn’t</td>
<td>a short form of could not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>didn’t</td>
<td>a short form of did not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doesn’t</td>
<td>a short form of does not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>don’t</td>
<td>a short form of do not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>haven’t</td>
<td>a short form of have not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he’d</td>
<td>a short form of he had or he would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he’ll</td>
<td>a short form of he will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he’s</td>
<td>a short form of he is or he has</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’d</td>
<td>a short form of I would or I had</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll</td>
<td>a short form of I will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’m</td>
<td>a short form of I am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>isn’t</td>
<td>a short form of is not</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>it’ll</td>
<td>a short form of it will</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>let’s</td>
<td>a short form of let us</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>she’d</td>
<td>a short form of she would or she had</td>
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<tr>
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