

# Spelling

## Verbs

**A** For the third person singular of most verbs, but not modals, add -s:

*Drink* – He drinks a lot.  
*Want* – She wants to see you now.  
*Like* – The dog likes water.  
*Break* – Glass breaks easily.

For verbs ending in -sh, -ch, -ss, -x, -z and -o, add -es:

*Finish* – It finishes at 8.  
*Watch* – He watches everything.  
*Pass* – The train passes here, but it doesn't stop.  
*Mix* – This colour mixes well.  
*buzz* – The bell buzzes.  
*Go* – She goes every Friday.

For verbs ending in consonant + y, add -ies:

*Try* – He tries very hard.  
*Worry* – He worries too much.  
*Study* – She studies in France.  
*Cry* – It cries a lot.

For verbs ending in vowel + y just add -s:

*Play* – She plays with us sometimes.  
*Say* – Who says so?

**B** For the past simple and past participle of most regular verbs, add -ed:

*Finish* – We finished early.  
*Clean* – Who cleaned this?

For verbs ending in -e, the past is -ed, not eed:

*Dance* – We danced all night.  
*Move* – They moved in last week.

For verbs ending in consonant + -y, change the -y to -ied:

*Try* – They tried to help.  
*Study* – We've studied hard.

For verbs of one syllable ending in a single vowel + single consonant (e.g. -ip, -op, -an), double the final consonant and add -ed:

*Drop* – He dropped the ball.  
*Drip* – The tap dripped all night.  
*Plan* – They planned it well.  
*Stop* – We stopped at Dover.

For verbs ending in one vowel and the consonants y, w or x, just add -ed:

*Play* – We haven't played with the children.  
*Mix* – She mixed the ingredients for the meal.

For verbs of more than one syllable ending in a single vowel and a consonant, double the final consonant when the stress is on the last syllable:

*Refer* – I referred to it.  
*Prefer* – She preferred my cake.

When the last syllable is not stressed, just add -ed:

*Offer* – They offered to pay.  
*Develop* – It developed fast.

An exception: In British English verbs ending in -l double the l even if the last syllable is not stressed:

*Travel* – He's travelled a lot.

Many common verbs are irregular and do not add -ed in the past tense or the past participle. Here is a list of some of them:

Base form	Past simple	Past participle
be	was/were	been
become	became	become
begin	began	begun
break	broke	broken
bring	brought	brought
build	built	built
buy	bought	bought
catch	caught	caught
choose	chose	chosen
come	came	come
cost	cost	cost
cut	cut	cut
drink	drank	drunk
drive	drove	driven
eat	ate	eaten
fall	fell	fallen
feel	felt	felt
find	found	found
fly	flew	flown
forget	forgot	forgotten
get	got	got
go	went	gone
have	had	had
hear	heard	heard
hide	hid	hidden
hold	held	held
keep	kept	kept
know	knew	known
leave	left	left

# Spelling

let	let	let
lose	lost	lost
make	made	made
mean	meant	meant
meet	met	met
pay	paid	paid
put	put	put
read	read	read
ride	rode	ridden
rise	rose	risen
run	ran	run
see	saw	seen
sell	sold	sold
send	sent	sent
shut	shut	shut
sing	sang	sung
sit	sat	sat
sleep	slept	slept
speak	spoke	spoken
stand	stood	stood
steal	stole	stolen
swim	swam	swum
take	took	taken
teach	taught	taught
think	thought	thought
understand	understood	understood
wear	wore	worn
write	wrote	written

## C For the -ing form or present participle, just add -ing for most verbs:

*Do* – What are you doing?

*Sleep* – He's sleeping.

*Sing* – Who's singing?

*Finish* – We're finishing soon.

*Cry* – Someone's crying.

*Play* – They're playing now.

For verbs ending in *e*, leave off the *e* and add -ing:

*Dance* – He's dancing now.

*Hope* – We're hoping for the best.

For verbs in *ee* just add -ing. *See, agree* and *disagree* become *seeing, agreeing* and *disagreeing*.

For verbs of one syllable ending in a single vowel and a consonant, double the final consonant and add -ing:

*Begin* – It's beginning now.

*Get* – He's getting the car.

For longer verbs with the stress on the final syllable, double the consonant and add -ing:

*Refer* – I'm not referring to you.

## Nouns and adjectives and adverbs

**A** Most count nouns form the plural by adding -s, which is pronounced either /s/ or /z/:

*A cat* – two cats

*One table* – two tables

*A tree* – many trees

*A day* – several days

Nouns ending in -se, -ze, -ce or -ge add an -s, but are pronounced /ɪz/ and so sound one syllable longer than in the singular:

*A rose* – A bunch of roses.

*The prize* – We all won prizes.

*A service* – The services.

*A cage* – Animals hate cages.

Nouns ending in -sh, -ch, -ss, -x or -s, add -es and are pronounced /ɪz/ as well:

*Bush* – They cut the bushes.

*Watch* – He bought us all watches.

*Pass* – The mountain passes are blocked with snow.

*Box* – Where are those boxes?

*Bus* – Take one of the buses.

With nouns ending in a consonant + y, change the y to ies:

*Lady* – Good evening, ladies.

*City* – The cities of Europe.

Nouns ending in -f or -fe change to -ves:

*Knife* – Careful with those knives!

*Shelf* – Paco is putting up shelves.

*Wife* – The officers and their wives had a special party.

Many nouns ending in -o add -s:

*A photo* – Here are your photos, sir.

*My radio* – Those radios look expensive.

But these nouns have the plural form -oes: *echo, hero, potato, tomato*.

# Spelling

## **B** To form comparative and superlative forms of most adjectives, you add **-er** and **-est**:

soon – sooner – soonest  
cheap – cheaper – cheapest

### With words ending in **-e**, you just add **-r** and **-st**:

late – later – latest  
wide – wider – widest

### With adjectives ending in **-y**, you change **-y** to **-ier** and **-iest**:

dry – drier – driest  
dirty – dirtier – dirtiest  
happy – happier – happiest  
silly – sillier – silliest

### Warning; with *shy*, you keep the *y*: *shyer/shyest*.

### With adjectives ending in one vowel and one consonant, you double the final consonant, except with **w**:

fat – fatter – fattest  
big – bigger – biggest  
BUT: slow – slower – slowest

## **C** To make adverbs, you generally add **-ly** to the adjective:

slow – slowly  
late – lately  
cheap – cheaply

### With adjectives ending in **-l**, you change them to **-lly**:

real – really  
hopeful – hopefully

### With adjectives ending in **-y**, the **-y** changes to **ily**:

happy – happily  
easy – easily

### Adjectives ending in **-le** change to **-ly**:

simple – simply  
idle – idly

### With adjectives ending in **-ic**, you add *ally*, not *ly*, but the ending is pronounced like *ly*:

artistic – artistically  
automatic – automatically  
specific – specifically

## **D** Capital letters:

You must use a capital letter for:

- 1 the first letter of the first word in every sentence.
- 2 names of people and places:

*This is Arlene. She works in the Education Department.*

*Have you met Rajan? He's from Malaysia, I think.*

- 3 the days of the week and the months of the year:

*See you on Monday or Tuesday. I love September.*

- 4 adjectives and nouns of nationality, and languages:

*He's not French or Belgian. He's Swiss.*

*Can you speak Russian? I met an American last night.*

*Most people seem to drive Japanese cars nowadays.*

- 5 titles used in front of someone's name:

*Do you know Professor Blum? This was Queen Victoria's home.*

- 6 the pronoun *I*:

*I know I told you that I was busy.*

## **E** Common spelling problems

Here is a list of words that many students find difficult to spell:

accommodation	government	responsible
across	holiday	science
address	language	secretary
argument	library	separate
beautiful	medicine	succeed
beginning	necessary	surprise
blue	occasion	though
businessman	occurred	through
calendar	parliament	tomorrow
embarrassing	professor	vegetable
February	recommend	Wednesday
foreign	referred	