**SPELLING PATTERNS AND RULES**

This document should be read in conjunction with the tracker. It is designed to provide background information for teachers on the rules and patterns that make up each of the 5 stages of spelling progression referred to in the Phonology section of the tracker.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Apart from the Semi-Phonetic stage where the phonemes are introduced in a set order to allow learners to quickly blend to produce and read simple words, the rules and patterns which make up the Phonetic, Transitional and Independent stages are not designed to be followed as a set progression in a linear fashion.

Contextual assessment of learners’ writing should be made in order to determine the general stage they are working at and the rules and patterns thereafter to focus on – which may involve at times working between stages. The ‘First Steps Overview of Spelling Developmental Continuum’ can be used to assist this process.[[2]](#footnote-2)

**PRELIMINARY SPELLING STAGE**

Mark making and awareness that print carries a message.

**SEMI-PHONETIC SPELLING STAGE**

**PHONEMES**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Phonemes** | **Background Notes** |
| Group 1 | s a t i p n | Note how the phonemes are not introduced in alphabetical order. The first group (s,a,t,i,p,n) has been chosen because they make more simple three letter words than any other six letters. |
| Group 2 | c k h e r m d | ‘c’ phoneme introduced here is the hard ‘c’ as in ‘cat’ / ‘can’ – soft ‘c’ as in ‘circus’ falls into Phonetic Stage.  Although not explicitly taught here it is worth being aware of the general rule:  Initial ‘k’ phoneme before ‘a’, ‘o’, ‘u’ or a consonant is usually spelled with ‘c’ as in cat / cot / cup / clap / crisp.  Initial ‘k’ phoneme before ‘e’, ‘i’ is usually spelled with a ‘k’ as in key / kit. |
| Group 3 | g o u l f b | ‘g’ phoneme introduced here is hard ‘g’ as in got / gap / gun – soft ‘g’ as in ‘gem’ falls into Phonetic Stage. |
| Group 4 | ai j oa ie ee or | Core vowel digraphs are introduced for the first time – combination of two graphemes representing one phoneme.  ‘ai’ as in pain, ‘oa’ as in goat, ‘ie’ as in tie, ‘ee’ ‘or’ as in ‘eeyore’.  See Phonetic stage for ‘ie’ being used for long E as in field. |
| Group 5 | z w ng v oo oo | Two ‘oo’ sounds refer to a longer ‘o͞͝o’ sound as in boot / food / soon and a shorter ‘o͝o’ sound as in good / look / foot. |
| Group 6 | y x ch sh th th | Two ‘th’ sounds refer to ‘th’ as in that and ‘th’ as in three. |
| Group 7 | qu ou oi ue er ar wh | ‘ou’ as in ouch, ‘ue’ as in blue, ‘er’ as in mixer, ‘ar’ as in arm, ‘wh’ as in whistle.  ‘oi’ as in oil / boil used as an initial or medial sound.  Phonetic Stage introduces ‘oy’ as in boy / toy as a final sound. |

**FIRST 100 HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS[[3]](#footnote-3)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| High Frequency Words 1- 25 | the of and a to in is you that it he was for on are as with his they I at be this have from |
| High Frequency Words 26 - 50 | or one had by words but not what all were we when your can said there use an each which she do how their if |
| High Frequency Words 51- 75 | will up other about out many then them these so some her would make like him into time has look two more write go see |
| High Frequency Words 76- 100 | number no way could people my than first water been called who am its now find long down day did get come made may part |

**PHONETIC STAGE**

**BLENDS**

Focus at the Phonetic Stage is on the general skill of blending with consonant blends. A number of consonant blends can be focused on at a time. Note that learners often find ‘r’ consonant blends tricky.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **INITIAL CONSONANT BLENDS** | sl sw tw br cr dr fr gr pr tr thr sc sk sm sn sp st scr spl spr str | Note distinction between a blend (such as ‘sl’) and a digraph (such as ‘sh’). In a blend the two sounds, ‘s’ and ‘l’ can each be heard. In a digraph this is not so. |
| **FINAL CONSONANT BLENDS** | -sp -nt -nd -sk -sk -lt - lk -nk  -ng -ld -ft |  |

**LONG AND SHORT VOWELS**

Learners should begin to distinguish between short and long vowel sounds. A vowel is considered long when it is read as the letter name e.g. A, E, I, O, U. Many spelling rules depend on understanding the difference between short and long vowels.

**LONG VOWEL SOUNDS – MOST COMMON PATTERNS**

The following table looks at different grapheme patterns which make up each of the long vowel sounds. The patterns are listed in order of how frequently they occur. The most common patterns should be focused on first. Reference is made to where a grapheme pattern has been introduced at an earlier stage. Less common examples of the pattern fall into the Transitional Stage but are listed in the table for reference as they may come up during teaching.

At the Phonetic stage the expectancy is that learners can spell the most common patterns for vowel sounds, with the less common patterns being expected at the Transitional Stage.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Vowel Sound** | **Most Common Patterns** | **Spelling Rules and Examples** |
| Long A | a….e  ai\*[[4]](#footnote-4)  ay | ‘a…e’ - as in game / tape which follows vowel-consonant-e pattern at end of word.[[5]](#footnote-5)  ‘ai’ - initial or medial ‘ai’ is usually spelled ‘ai’ as in aim / paint.  ‘ay’ – ‘ay’ is often used at the end of a word as in play / say.  Note  In open syllables (see below) Long A sound is made by the grapheme ‘a’ alone e.g. b**a**sic / **a**gent / d**a**ta.  Less Common Patterns - Transitional Stage  ‘ey’ as in they / prey ‘ei’ as in eight / weigh  ‘ea’ as in break / steak / great ‘aigh’ as in straight |
| Long E | ee\*  ea  ie\*  y  e…..e | ‘ee’ as in see / been  ‘ea’ as in cream / team  ‘ie’ as in field / thief  ‘y’ as in happy / lucky – ‘y’ used as a final sound.  ‘e…e’ as in scene / extreme (there are few examples).  Note  In open syllables (see below) Long E sound is made by the grapheme ‘e’ alone e.g. b**e**gin / f**e**male / b**e** / h**e** / sh**e** / m**e.**  Less Common Pattern - Transitional Stage  ‘ey’ as in key / monkey |
| Long I | i…..e  y  ie | ‘i…e’ as in site / white.  ‘y’ – normally used for final sounds as in sky / supply and sometimes as a medial sound as in rhyme / cycle. In these situations the grapheme ‘y’ is being used as a vowel.  ‘ie’ – used in a small number of words such as pie / tie / die / lie.  Note  In open syllables (see below) long I sound is made by the grapheme ‘i’ alone e.g. cr**i**sis / s**i**lent.  Less Common Patterns - Transitional Stage  ‘igh’ as in high / might |
| Long O | o….e  oa\*  ow | ‘o…e’ as in home / stone / code.  Exceptions to Long O ‘o…e’ Pattern  glove / love / above / some / come / none  ‘oa’ – normally used as the medial sound in a word as in boat / coat / throat.  ‘ow’ – normally used as the final sound in a word as in tow / row / throw. Exception – bowl.  Note  In open syllables (see below) long O sound is made by the grapheme ‘o’ alone e.g. pr**o**gram / hell**o** / her**o.** Be aware of a few exceptions such as toe / foe / woe where long O in open syllable is made by ‘oe’ digraph. |
| Long U | ue\*  u…e | ‘ue’ – due / cue  ‘u…e’ – cute / pure / huge  Note  In open syllables (see below) long U sound is made by the grapheme ‘u’ alone e.g. h**u**man / m**u**sic / **u**nit.  Less Common Pattern - Transitional Stage  ‘ew’ as in few / new / threw |

**OTHER COMMON VOWEL DIGRAPHS**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Sound** | **Most Common Patterns** | **Spelling Rules and Examples** |
| Long oo | oo\*[[6]](#footnote-6)  u…e  ue | ‘oo’ as in boot / shoot  ‘u…e’ as in rule / sure  ‘ue’ as in blue / true / cruel  Less Common Patterns - Transitional Stage  ‘ui’ as in suit / bruise / cruise  ‘ou’ as in you / soup / wound |
| o | wa  al | These are unusual spellings for the ‘o’ phoneme.  ‘wa’ as in was / want / water  ‘al’ as in ball / tall / call  Less Common Patterns - Transitional Stage  ‘au’ – haunt / cause ‘aw’ – saw / thaw  ‘augh’ – caught / taught |
| oi | oi\*  oy | ‘oi’ as in oil / foil / boil  ‘oy’ as in toy / destroy / enjoy  Initial and medial ‘oi’ sound is usually spelled ‘oi’.  Final ‘oi’ sound is usually spelled ‘oy’. |
| ou | ou  ow | ‘ou’ as in house  ‘ow’ as in how  Initial and medial ‘ou’ sound is usually spelled ‘ou’ e.g. out / cloud. Exceptions when the ‘ou’ sound is followed by an ‘n’ or ‘l’ e.g. town, brown, howl.  Final ‘ou’ sound is usually spelled ‘ow’ e.g. how / cow.  Less Common Pattern - Transitional Stage  ‘ough’ – plough |

**SYLLABLES**

Breaking words into syllables is an important step in reading and writing. In English there are six different types of syllable. Children should begin practising breaking words into syllables early and during the Phonetic stage be introduced to rules for syllabification through developing understanding of four of the different syllable types. The remaining two types fall into the Transitional Stage. Developing understanding of these types of syllables helps with spelling.[[7]](#footnote-7)

| **Syllable Type** | **Explanation and Examples** |
| --- | --- |
| Closed | Most common syllable type accounting for just under 50% of syllables. In a closed syllable the vowel is spelt by one letter and is ‘closed in’ by one or more consonants e.g. men. Therefore closed syllables have a short vowel sound ending with a consonant e.g. s**u**b/m**i**t. |
| Open | Open syllables end with a long vowel sound that is spelled with a single vowel letter e.g. pro/gram (gram is an example of a closed syllable).  Note: See Transitional Stage for information on Vowel Team Syllables where the vowel is spelt by more than one letter e.g. friend/ly |
| Vowel – Consonant – e  (VCe) | Also known as ‘silent e’ syllable patterns, VCe syllables contain long vowels spelled with a single letter, followed by a single consonant, and a silent ‘e’ e.g. bake / scene / site / home / cute. Every long vowel can be spelled with a VCe pattern, although spelling ‘long e’ with VCe is unusual. |
| Consonant-le | C-le combinations are only found at the end of words that contain a consonant before ‘l’ followed by a silent ‘e’. If a C-le syllable is combined with an open syllable – as in cable / bugle / title – there is no doubled consonant. If one is combined with a closed syllable – as in dabble / topple / little – a double consonant results. |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Spelling Rule and Examples** | | |
| Final ‘k’ sound | Final ‘k’ sound after a short vowel in a one-syllable word is spelled ‘ck’ as in back / sick / duck.  Final ‘k’ sound after a consonant or 2 vowels is spelled ‘k’ as in milk / desk / book / seek  Final ‘k’ sound after a long vowel sound in a one-syllable word is spelled ‘k’ followed by ‘e’ as in like / bike / make.  Final ‘k’ sound after a short vowel sound in a word with more than one syllable is spelled ‘c’ as in terrific / fantastic / magic. | | |
| Final -ll –ff –ss -zz | When one-syllable words have a vowel in the middle, the vowel usually has a short sound as in cat / got.  If the letter after the vowel is ‘f’,’ l’, ‘s’ or ‘z’, this letter is often doubled as in stiff / pill / fuss / buzz. | | Common Exceptions  ‘f’ – made by ‘ough’ – tough / rough  ‘s’ - is, this, us, bus, yes, his |
| -le endings | When an open syllable is combined with –le syllable as in ca/ble, ti/tle, ta/ble there is no double consonant (relates to Consonant-le syllable explanation above).  When a closed syllable is combined with the -le syllable e.g. little, struggle, bubble, there is a double consonant.  Where there are two different consonants after the closed vowel there is no double consonant e.g. in can/dle, mus/cle, jun/gle. | | |
| Final –ch sound | Final ‘ch’ sound after a short vowel in a one-syllable word is spelled ‘tch’ as in catch / match / pitch.  Final ‘ch’ sound after a consonant or 2 vowels is spelled ‘ch’ as in bench / pouch. | Common Exceptions  which / rich / much / such | |
| Final ‘j’ sound | Final ‘j’ sound after a short vowel in a one-syllable word is spelled ‘dge’ as in judge / badge.  Final ‘j’ sound after a long vowel, two vowels or a consonant is spelled ‘ge’ as in age / scrooge / hinge. | | |

**FINAL CONSONANT SOUNDS**

**MISCELLANEOUS**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
|  | **Spelling Rule and Examples** |
| Soft ‘c’ | A hard ‘c’ is usually followed by a consonant or an ‘a’, ‘o’ or ‘u’ e.g. class / cram / cap / cot / cup. A hard ‘c’ is more common than a soft ‘c’.  A soft ‘c’ is usually followed by an ‘e’ ‘i’ or ‘y’ e.g. centre / city / cycle. |
| Soft ‘g’ | A hard ‘g’ is usually followed by a consonant or an ‘a’ ‘o’ or ‘u’ e.g. grab / glad / gap / got / gun. A hard ‘g’ is more common than a soft ‘g’.  A soft ‘g’ is usually followed by an ‘e’, ‘i’ or ‘y’ e.g. gem / gist / gym / giraffe (there are few examples). |
| Double consonants | When ‘b’, ‘d’, ‘g’, ‘m’, ‘n’, or ‘p’ appear after a short vowel in a word with two syllables, double the consonant e.g. rabbit / sudden / dagger / summer / dinner / happy. |
| Common  silent letters  k and w | Silent ‘k’ – Found before ‘n’ at the start of some words as in know / knight / knit.  Silent ‘w’- Found before ‘r’ at the start of some words as in wrap / wrong / write.  These words have Anglo-Saxon roots - historically the silent letter would have been pronounced, however, pronunciation has changed but spelling has not.  Note – see Transitional Stage for more examples of silent letters. |
| ‘e’ spelt ‘ea’ | The short ‘e’ sound is sometimes spelt ‘ea’ as in head / dead / sweat / deaf. |

**SIMPLE RULES FOR INFLECTIONAL ENDINGS – S / ED / ING**

**PLURALS – BASIC RULES**

Most plurals are made by adding ‘s’ to the noun e.g. table-tables unless the rules below apply.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Word Ending** | **Spelling Rules and Examples** |
| Words ending in ‘ch’ ‘sh’ ‘s’ ‘ss’ or ‘x’ | Add ‘es’ to make them plural e.g. bench – benches, bush – bushes, bus – buses, glass – glasses, box – boxes.  The ‘es’ forms an extra syllable at the end of the word and sounds like ‘is’. |
| Words ending with ‘y’ | When the letter before the ‘y’ is a consonant, change the ‘y’ to ‘i’ before adding ‘es’ e.g. city-cities, raspberry – raspberries, party – parties.  When the letter before the ‘y’ is a vowel, don’t change the ‘y’ just add ‘s’ e.g. boy-boys, day – days, abbey – abbeys. |

See Transitional Stage for further rules relating to plurals regarding words ending in ‘f’ / ‘fe’ and ‘o’.

**ED / ING ENDINGS**

Learners begin to apply these rules for simple inflectional endings ‘ed’ and ‘ing’ recognising the impact these endings have when applied to a verb. See the Transitional Stage for how these rules are built on in relation to a wider range of suffixes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rule** | **Explanation and Examples** |
| **General** | If the rules below don’t apply just add ‘ing’ or ‘ed’ e.g. play – played, say – saying. |
| **Drop ‘e’** | When a suffix beginning with a vowel is added to a word ending in ‘e’ the final ‘e’ is dropped before adding ‘ing’ or ‘ed’ e.g. make-making dive – dived. |
| **‘y’ to ‘i’** | When a suffix, beginning with a vowel, is added to a word ending in ‘y’, change the ‘y’ to an ‘i’ before adding the suffix e.g. happy-happier-happiest , hurry-hurried.  Note: this doesn’t apply to ‘ing’ e.g. carry-carrying. |
| **Short Vowel Double[[8]](#footnote-8)** | When ‘ing’ or ‘ed’ is added to a word ending consonant – short vowel - consonant, the final consonant is doubled e.g. shop – shopping, swim – swimming, chat – chatted. |

**SECOND 100 HIGH FREQUENCY WORDS:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| High Frequency Words 101- 125 | over new sound take only little work know place years live me back give most very after thing our just name good sentence man think |
| High Frequency Words 126- 150 | say great where help through much before line right too means old any same tell boy following came want show also around farm three small |
| High Frequency Words 151- 175 | set put end does another well large must big even such because turn here why asked went men read need land different home us move |
| High Frequency Words 176- 200 | try kind hand picture again change off play spell air away animals house point page letters mother answer found study still learn should America world |

**TRANSITIONAL STAGE**

**PLURALS – FURTHER RULES**

See ‘Plurals’ section in Phonetic Stage above for basic rules relating to plurals which learners should be secure in. In addition learners should become secure with the following rules for plurals.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Word Ending** | **Spelling Rules and Examples** |
| Words ending in ‘f’ or ‘fe’ | For nouns with an ‘f’ before the ‘s’, change the ‘f’ to a ‘v’ before adding ‘es’ e.g. knife-knives, wife – wives, half – halves.  Note: Exceptions : roof-roofs, chief-chiefs, cliff-cliffs |
| Words ending with ‘o’ | When a word ends in ‘o’ and comes after a consonant, add ‘es’ to make them plural e.g. potato-potatoes  Note: Exceptions e.g. solo-solos / piano-pianos / photo-photos. For some words ending in ‘o’ can add ‘s’ or ‘es’ e.g. volcano-volcanos/volcanoes / tornado-tornados/tornadoes. |
| Irregular plurals | Some nouns have irregular plurals e.g. person – people, child – children, sheep – sheep. |

**VOWEL DIGRAPHS / TEAMS**

Learners should consistently use the full range of spellings for all vowels at the Transitional Stage. See the tables in the Phonetic Stage which detail all the patterns for each vowel digraph / team, including patterns which fall into the Transitional Stage.

**SUFFIXES**

Opportunities are needed to break down words with suffixes by taking off the ending and finding the root / base word. This can help with identification of the relevant spelling rules e.g. playing = play + ing hope = hope – e + ing.

Learners also need to develop an understanding of how whether a suffix begins with a vowel or a consonant affects the spelling rules which are applied. Rules relating to vowel and consonant suffixes are explored below.

**VOWEL SUFFIXES - ED / ER / EST / EN / ING**

**GENERAL RULES FOR ADDING MOST COMMON SUFFIXES BEGINNING WITH A VOWEL**

These general rules build on from understanding developed at the Phonetic Stage. They should be read in conjunction with the information in the table titled ‘Suffixes’ showing information specific to each suffix.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Rule** | **Explanation and Examples** |
| **General Rule** | If the rules below don’t apply just add the suffix e.g. play – played, quick – quicker, fast – fastest, deep – deepen, say – saying. |
| **Drop ‘e’ Rule** | When a suffix beginning with a vowel is added to a word ending in ‘e’ the final ‘e’ is dropped before adding the suffix e.g. make-making, dive-dived. |
| **‘y’ to ‘i’ Rule** | When a suffix, beginning with a vowel, is added to a word ending in ‘y’, change the ‘y’ to an ‘i’ before adding the suffix e.g. happy-happier-happiest , hurry-hurried.  Note: this doesn’t apply to ‘ing’ e.g. carry-carrying. |
| **Short Vowel Double Rule[[9]](#footnote-9)** | When a suffix, beginning with a vowel, is added to a word ending in a short vowel and a consonant, the final consonant is doubled e.g. hop-hopping, run-runner, wet-wettest, stop-stopped, fat-fatten.  Note: this doesn’t apply to words ending in ‘x’ e.g. fix – fixing, box – boxed. |
| **Unstressed Final Syllable** | For verbs made up of two syllables do not double the final consonant when the final syllable is unstressed e.g. in words such as enter / happen / offer / suffer / target the final syllable is unstressed so the final consonant is not doubled when adding a vowel suffix. |
| **Consonant – Vowel – l Rule** | In British English if the verb ends consonant – vowel – l, we double the final ‘l’ before adding the vowel suffix e.g. travel – travelling, cancel – cancelled, marvel – marvellous. In American English the ‘l’ is not doubled in this way. |

**SPECIFIC INFORMATION RELATING TO VOWEL SUFFIXES – ED / ER / EST / EN / ING**

Note: Read in conjunction with general rules for adding vowel suffixes above.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Vowel Suffix** | **Meaning** | **Examples and Rules**  **(In Addition to General Rules)** | **Non Examples and Exceptions** |
| ed | Used for regular verbs to create the simple past tense | play – played  Identify three different sounds for ‘ed’ endings:  /id/ - comes when ‘ed’ is added to a root word ending in ‘t’ or ‘d’ e.g. want-wanted, need-needed.  /d/ - where ‘e’ in the ‘ed’ is silent e.g. played, allowed  /t/ - where ‘ed’ makes a ‘t’ sound e.g. liked / laughed | Investigate irregular past tenses e.g. build-built. |
| er / est | Used to create comparative and superlative versions of one syllable adjectives and adjectives ending in ‘y’[[10]](#footnote-10) | rich–richer–richest  happy–happier-happiest | good-better-best  bad-worse-worst  See footnote. |
| ing | Used to form present participle of a verb (sometimes called the gerund) | play-playing  give-giving  shop-shopping  Change ‘ie’ to ‘y’ before adding ‘ing’ e.g. die-dying, tie-tying, lie-lying. | Don’t change ‘y’ to ‘i’ when adding 'ing' e.g. buying.  Exception to drop ‘e’ rule if word ends ‘ee’: seeing, agreeing. Also note eyeing, ageing. |
| en | To become or cause to be | fat – fatten  length – lengthen | No root word  kitchen  sudden |

**LESS COMMON VOWEL SUFFIXES – IST / OUT / ANCE / ANT / ENT / IVE / AL / IBLE / ABLE**

Note: The table below should be read in conjunction with the general rules above for adding vowel suffixes.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Vowel Suffix** | **Meaning** | **Examples and Rules** | **Non Examples and Exceptions** |
| ist | People who do something  Things that do something | science – scientist (drop ‘e’ rule)  art - artist |  |
| ous | Related to  Used to change a root word into an adjective | study – studious (‘y’ to ‘i’ rule)  nerve – nervous (drop ‘e’ rule)  If root word ends ‘ge’ don’t drop the ‘e’ e.g. advantageous, courageous, outrageous.[[11]](#footnote-11) | No root word curious  delicious  gorgeous |
| ance | State of / act of | accept – acceptance  ignore – ignorance (drop ‘e’ rule) | No root word balance  romance |
| ant / ent | Related to | ignore – ignorant (drop ‘e’ rule)  confide – confident |  |
| ive | Related to | addict - addictive  create – creative (drop ‘e’ rule) | No root word  motive  adjective |
| al | Related to | comic – comical  memory – memorial (‘y’ to ‘i’ rule) |  |
| ible/able | Be able to e.g. available - able to be used, visible – able to be seen | rely – reliable (‘y’ to ‘i’ rule)  forget – forgettable (double rule)  ‘ible’ or ‘able’ – ‘able’ is more common.  As a general rule if you remove ‘able you are left with a complete word e.g. affordable – afford, comfort – comfortable. If you remove ‘ible’ you are not left with a complete word e.g. incredible, invisible, flexible. Most ‘ible’ words are of Latin origin.  If root word ends in ‘e’ usually drop ‘e’ before adding ‘able’ e.g. believable, excitable. However if ends if root word ends in ‘ce’ or ‘ge’, ‘e’ is kept e.g. manageable, noticeable, changeable, traceable. | Exceptions to general rule  accessible  contemptible  flexible  contemptible  suggestible  Note  Some words can be spelt correctly with and without the ‘e’ e.g. lovable / loveable, likeable / likable, usable / useable sizable / sizeable. |

**GENERAL RULE FOR ADDING A SUFFIX BEGINNING WITH A CONSONANT – ‘Y’ TO ‘I’**

Whilst there are a number of rules for adding vowel suffixes there is only one general rule for adding suffixes beginning with a consonant – the ‘y’ to ‘i’ rule. Hence learners must be directed to recognise whether a vowel or consonant suffix is being added.

The ‘y’ to ‘i’ rule determines that when adding a suffix beginning with a consonant to root words ending in ‘y’, change the ‘y’ to an ‘i’ before adding the suffix e.g. happy – happily, lonely – loneliness, beauty – beautiful.

**SPECIFIC INFORMATION RELATING TO MOST COMMON CONSONANT SUFFIXES**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Consonant Suffix** | **Meaning** | **Rules and Examples** | **Non Examples and Exceptions** |
| ly | In that manner  Changes an adjective to an adverb | Most words just add ‘ly’ e.g. brief – briefly  happy – happily (‘y’ to ‘i’ rule)  Don’t drop ‘e’ for words ending in ‘e’ unless end consonant + ‘le’ e.g. love – lovely but terrible – terribly  Words ending in ‘ic’ add ‘al’ before the ‘ly’ e.g. automatic – automatically. | Not adverbs  assembly  family  ugly  Lose the ‘e’  true – truly  subtle – subtly  due – duly |
| ful | To be full of something  Changes a noun into an adjective | colour – colourful  care – careful  beauty – beautiful (‘y’ to ‘i’ rule)  Note how the suffix ‘ful’ has only one ‘l’. |  |
| ment | Indicating a state, condition or quality  Changes a verb to a noun | achieve – achievement  agree – agreement  Note how as ‘ment’ begins with a consonant the ‘e’ isn’t dropped when added to a root word. | argument – ‘e’ is dropped |
| ness | State of / act of  Changes an adjective to a noun | lazy – laziness (‘y’ to ‘i‘ rule)  blind – blindness | No root word  witness  harness |
| less | To be without  Changes a verb to an adjective | love – loveless  use – useless  Note how as ‘less’ begins with a consonant the ‘e’ isn’t dropped when added to a root word. |  |
| tion  sion | Changes a verb to a noun  ‘shin’ sound spelled ‘tion’  ‘zhin’ sound spelled ‘sion’ | inform – information (shin)  confuse – confusion (zhin)  ‘tion’ is most common spelling.  To know if it is ‘tion’ or ‘sion’ listen for subtle difference in sound.  If root word ends in ‘e’ drop the final ‘e’ e.g. confuse – confusion.  If root word ends in double ‘ss’ just add ‘ion’ e.g. discuss – discussion. | No root word  nation |
| cian | Relate to an occupation | music – musician  electric - electrician |  |

**COMMON PREFIXES**

Prefixes are added to the start of root words. Learners must develop the ability to add prefixes appropriately to root words and understand the impact this has on meaning. Non examples are listed which show where the letter pattern is not being used as a prefix, in that it is not being added to a root word.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Prefix** | **Meaning** | **Spelling Rules and Examples** | **Non Examples** |
| un | not; opposite of | unusual / unsuspecting | united |
| dis | not; opposite of | disappear / discover | distant |
| mis | wrongly | misread / misspell  Note how prefix ‘mis’ has only one ‘s’ | misery |
| pre | before | preview / prehistoric | present |
| re | again | rewrite / recreate | recent |
| sub | under; below  smaller part of whole | subway / subordinate  subcommittee / sub-team | subject |
| anti | against; opposite to | anti-climax / antisocial  Note how ‘anti’ can be used as an adjective or preposition e.g. he is anti the war. Also potential confusion with ‘ante’ and ‘auntie’. | anticipate |
| de | removal of; reversal of something | devalue / decode | deter |
| em / en | cause to | empower / enact | empathy |
| fore | before; front of | foreshadow / forearm  Note how ‘fore’ has a silent ‘e’ | forest |
| in / im / il / ir | not | indiscrete / indirect  immoral / impatient  illiterate / illegal  irrelevant / irresponsible | ink  imagine  ill  irritate |
| inter | between; among | international / intermediate | intern |
| mid | middle | midfield / midterm |  |
| not | not | nonviolent / non-payment | none |
| over | over; too much | overeat / overpay | overt |
| semi | half; partly; not fully | semi-final / semicircle |  |
| super | above; beyond | superhuman / supersonic | superb |
| trans | across; change | transcontinental / transform |  |
| under | under; too little | underestimate / underperform |  |

**MORE COMPLEX SILENT LETTERS**

Anglo-Saxon roots - historically the silent letter would have been pronounced, however, pronunciation has changed but spelling has not.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Silent Letter** | **Common Patterns and Rules** |
| b | ‘mb’ – silent ‘b’ after an ‘m’ often found at the end of a word as in bomb / climb / dumb  ‘bt’– sometimes found before a ‘t’ as in subtle / debt / doubt |
| c | ‘sc’ – silent c sometimes found after an ‘s’ as in scissors / science / muscle |
| d | Uncommon but found in Wednesday |
| e | Sometimes appears in an unstressed syllable as in interest / vegetable / evening.  See also VCe Syllable section in Phonetic Stage for silent ‘e’ at end of words |
| g | Sometimes found before an ‘n’ as in sign / foreign / reign |
| gh | Found in a range of words as in straight / weight / high |
| h | Sometimes at the beginning of a word as in honest / hour / honour  ‘ch’ – sometimes found after a ‘c’ as in school / echo / mechanic  ‘wh’ – sometimes found after an ‘h’ as in which / whisper / when |
| k | ‘kn’ – found at beginning of word before ‘n’ as in know / knee / knight |
| n | Uncommon but found in autumn / column |
| s | Uncommon but found in island / isle |
| t | ‘st’ – silent ‘t’ often comes after an ‘s’ as in whistle / castle / fasten |
| u | ‘gu’ – silent ‘u’ sometimes comes after a ‘g’ as in guest / guitar / guide  ‘ui’ – silent ‘u’ is uncommon before an ‘i’ but appears in build / biscuit |
| w | ‘wr’ – sometimes found at beginning of a word before an ‘r’ as in write / wrong  Other examples are uncommon but ‘w’ is silent in answer and sword |

**FURTHER SYLLABLE TYPES**

See section in Phonetic Stage titled ‘Syllables’ for more information on the six different syllable types. Learners at the Transitional Stage should be able to identify the four syllable types detailed in the Phonetic Stage as well as the following two types.

| **Syllable Type** | **Explanation and Examples** |
| --- | --- |
| Vowel-r | A vowel-r syllable refers to a syllable with a vowel followed by ‘r’ - er, ir, ur, ar, or. The ‘r’ often changes the sound of the vowel before it and learners must recognise that vowel pronunciation alters before an ‘r’. Vowel-r syllables are numerous, variable, and often difficult for students to master, hence require continuous review.  Examples of vowel-r syllables are found in master, injury, mirror, further, worth, and wart. |
| Vowel Team | A vowel team syllable is a syllable with long or short vowel spellings that use two to four letters to spell the vowel. Thus the term vowel digraph is not used (as digraph refers to two letters).  A vowel team can represent a long, short, or diphthong vowel sound (e.g. ou/ow or oi/oy). Vowel teams occur most often in old Anglo-Saxon words whose pronunciations have changed over hundreds of years. Examples of vowel teams are found in thief, boil, hay, suit, boat, and straw. Note the difference with Closed and Open Syllables which are spelled with a single vowel letter.  Sometimes, consonant letters are used in vowel teams. The letter y is found in ey, ay, oy, and uy, and the letter w is found in ew, aw, and ow. Other vowel teams that use consonant letters are -augh, -ough, -igh, and the silent -al spelling for /aw/, as in walk. |
| Leftovers – Odd and Schwa | Some syllables do not fall into the ‘Six Syllable Types’. These usually refer to final unaccented syllables (e.g. syllables which are not stressed) with odd spellings e.g. dam/age, ac/tive, na/tion. |

**INDEPENDENT SPELLING STAGE**

Learners engage in word studies exploring the origins of a wide range of words, recognising how a words origin may explain its spelling and meaning.[[12]](#footnote-12)

Many English words are formed by taking basic words and adding combinations of prefixes and suffixes to them. A basic word to which affixes (prefixes and suffixes) are added is called a root word because it forms the basis of a new word. The root word is also a word in its own right. For example, the word lovely consists of the word love and the suffix -ly.

In contrast, a root (not a root word) is the basis of a new word, but it does not typically form a stand-alone word on its own. For example, the word reject is made up of the prefix re- and the Latin root ject, which is not a stand-alone word.

**LATIN ROOTS**

Many words come from Latin roots and knowledge of the root can assist learners with spelling and guide them to understand the meaning of a wider range of words e.g. recognising words with the root ‘aqua’ helps to understand that the word will be something to do with water.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Common Latin Roots** | **Definition** | **Examples** |
| ambi | both | ambiguous / ambidextrous |
| aqua | water | aquarium / aquamarine |
| aud | to hear | audience / audition |
| bene | good | benefactor / benevolent |
| cent | one hundred | century / percent |
| circum | around | circumference / circumstance |
| contra/counter | against | contradict / encounter |
| dict | to say | dictation / dictator |
| duc/duct | to lead | conduct /induce |
| fac | to do; to make | factory / manufacture |
| form | shape | conform / reform |
| fort | strength | fortitude / fortress |
| fract | break | fracture / fraction |
| ject | throw | projection / rejection |
| jud | judge | judicial / prejudice |
| mal | bad | malevolent / malefactor |
| mater | mother | maternal / maternity |
| min | little/small | minimum / mini / miniature |
| mit/mis | to send | transmit / admit / mission |
| mort | death | mortal / mortician |
| multi | many | multimedia / multiple |
| pater | father | paternal / paternity |
| ped | foot | pedal / pedicure |
| port | to carry | portable / transportation |
| rupt | to break | bankrupt / disruption |
| scribe/script | to write | inscription / prescribe |
| sect/sec | to cut | bisect / section |
| sent | to feel; to send | consent / resent |
| spect | to look | inspection / spectator |
| struct | to build | destruction / restructure |
| vid/vis | to see | televise / video |
| voc | voice; to call | vocalize / advocate |

**GREEK ROOTS**

Students will encounter hundreds of words derived from Greek roots in maths, science and philosophy texts. Greek word parts sometimes work more like compounds than roots as they can often be combined more flexibly e.g. telephone and phonogram, psychobiology and neuropsychology.

Their spellings are very consistent and often use the following correspondences:

* ‘ch’ for /k/ as in psychology / technique / chronic
* ‘y’ for /ĭ/ as psychological / hyper / dynamite and /ī/ as in physical
* ‘ph’ for /f/ as telephone / biography / philosophy

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Common Greek Roots** | **Definition** | **Example** |
| anthropo | man; human; humanity | anthropologist / philanthropy |
| astro | star | astrology / astrophysics |
| auto | self | autobiography / automobile |
| bio | life | biology / biography |
| chron | time | chronological / chronic |
| dyna | power | dynamic / dynamite |
| dys | bad; hard; unlucky | dysfunctional / dyslexic |
| geo | earth | geography / geology |
| gram | thing written | epigram / telegram |
| graph | writing | graphic / phonograph |
| hetero | different | heteronym / heterogeneous |
| homo | same | homonym / homogenous |
| hydr | water | hydration / dehydrate |
| hyper | over; above; beyond | hyperactive / hyperbole |
| hypo | below; beneath | hypothermia / hypothetical |
| logy | study of | biology / psychology |
| meter / metr | measure | thermometer / perimeter |
| micro | small | microbe / microscope |
| mis / miso | hate | misanthrope / misogyny |
| mono | one | monologue / monotonous |
| morph | form; shape | morphology / morphing |
| nym | name | antonym / synonym |
| phil | love | philanthropist / philosophy |
| phobia | fear | claustrophobia / phobic |
| phon | sound | telephone / phonology |
| photo / phos | light | photograph / phosphorous |
| pseudo | false | pseudonym / pseudoscience |
| psycho | soul; spirit | psychology / psychic |
| scope | viewing instrument | microscope / telescope |
| techno | art; science; skill | technique / technological |
| tele | far off | television / telephone |
| therm | heat | thermal / thermometer |

**WORDS FROM OTHER LANGUAGES**

English has adopted words from other languages along with their spellings which explains why their spellings may not fit the more conventional spelling patterns e.g.

Spanish – chocolate / barbeque / plaza / mosquito / fiesta / salsa

Italian – piano / cello / balcony / corridor / grotesque / studio / miniature

French – ballet / levee / biscuit / camouflage / debris / entrepreneur

1. These spelling stages are based on Diana Rees’ work ‘First Steps Developmental Continuum’ (1994). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Downloadable from http://spellingwps.wikispaces.com/Stages+of+Development [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Taken from Fry’s High Frequency Word lists. Note this list is updated regularly. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. \* Denotes was introduced originally at Semi-Phonetic stage. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Vowel-Consonant-e Pattern: When a short word, or the last syllable of a longer word, ends in this pattern vowel-consonant-e, then the first vowel is usually long and the e is silent. Examples: place, scene, mice, vote, mute. See also section on Syllables for further information. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. \* Denotes sound was initially introduced at Semi-Phonetic stage. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Louise Moats (2005), *How Spelling Supports Reading*, American Educator 12 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Sometimes referred to as the consonant – short vowel – consonant rule. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. This is sometimes known as the consonant – short vowel – consonant rule. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. ‘er’ and ‘est’ is used to create comparative and superlative versions of adjectives with one syllable and adjectives ending in ‘y’. For adjectives of more than one syllable (unless ending in y) comparatives and superlatives are created using more and most e.g. beautiful – more beautiful – the most beautiful. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. This is because the ‘e’ softens the ‘ge’ sound. This rule also applies when adding ‘able’ to root words ending in ‘ce’ or ‘ge’ e.g. manageable, noticeable. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. See Louisa Moats (2005) *How Spelling Supports Reading*, American Educator 12 for more information regarding how words language of origin and history of use can explain their spelling. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)