



Why Isn't 'Phonetic' Spelled the Way It Sounds??

Or, as it is more commonly known, our
"Spelling Rules Book"

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Notes:

The dictionaries used for researching this book don't always agree, and I have not chosen any particular dictionary as an authority instead of another. Rather, in many cases, where two sources spelled words differently, I have included both spellings. Primarily, I have used *The American Heritage Dictionary* and *Webster's Third International Dictionary* as my guide.

In most cases, I have omitted words which the dictionaries call slang, obsolete, or archaic.

I have also, at points, used part of a pronunciation scheme that I've used for my spelling bee study materials for years, because I find it simpler than the diacritical marks used by most dictionaries. A summary of that scheme is as follows:

ii=sign eh=care uh=ago ay=wade ah=calm aw=paw a=cap
i=hit e=pet ee=heat oh=home oo=too ow=how u=put

I have included a bibliography at the end of the book which lists most of the materials I used as reference.

Another notation I have used which may not be entirely clear at first, is the indication that a word may also be capitalized. I have indicated this as follows:

caddo, C meaning the lowercase version is more common, but uppercase is acceptable, or both are used, or

Ndorobo (n) meaning that the uppercase version is more common, but lowercase is acceptable, or both are used.

The rest of the book should be self-explanatory.

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Dear Reader:

We've all been taught, since early elementary school, that there are certain "rules" for spelling English words, and so have assumed that if we knew all these rules, we'd presumably never misspell anything. So why, then, aren't any of us able to recall more than a handful of rules, and why do we misspell words all the time? The problem is not that we don't *know* the rules, but that there really are none that always work. We have some conventions for spelling words that hold true sometimes, but for every convention, there is a seemingly infinite number of exceptions.

In this book, I've attempted to give you as many of the conventions as I've seen, and explain how they work, but in addition, tell you when they **don't** work. I've given, in almost every case, a list or lists of words which don't follow the "rule," and in some cases, explained to the best of my abilities, *why* the words don't follow the rules.

In some other cases, where I don't know of a convention one can use to determine a particular spelling, I've just given lists of words that are spelled a particular way. For example, when determining whether a word ends in -er, -or, or -ar, I don't have any guidelines, but instead have listed all the -ar and -or words for you to look through for visual recognition, and you can assume that pretty much anything else will be an -er word.

For those spellers interested in the more esoteric words in the English language, I've also included a couple of lists. The first is a list of words with funny double letters. These are words such as markkaa, bhikku, egueiite, and sayyid, as well as a host of others. The second list includes words with funny first letter combinations, like bdelloid, ctenodus, tjaele, and again, a host of others.

This brings us to the second half of the book: the Foreign Language Conventions. We all know that English is composed of words from as many origins as there are languages. I've included some guidelines for spelling some of the more common languages from which English words are derived, such as French, Spanish, German, and a few more, as well as lists of words derived from them. Following these, I've included some lists of words from more unusual languages, like Yiddish, Welsh, Dutch, and Turkish. These lists, though they don't have any guidelines for spelling the words, should give you a picture of what words of these derivations look like in general, and may help you spell one of them later.

I've started with the only spelling rule we all think we know: "I before e except after c... etc. etc." and given some examples of words where the rule works. Following this, there is a tremendous number of categories of exceptions. I hope this will be helpful. I don't expect anyone to study and memorize all the exceptions or even all the types of exceptions, but if you'll read over them, they'll at least be familiar.

Good luck and good spelling!

Valerie

P.S. If you've got rules you use that I haven't included, PLEASE send them to me. You can mail these to me, call Hexco with the new rules, or email me at hexco@hexco.com. Thanks!

WHY SO WEIRD??

A Brief Synopsis of the Historical Development of English Spelling

You've probably often wondered why so many English words are spelled with seemingly illogical letter combinations. For example, why isn't knight spelled nite? We've got both an extra k at the beginning and an extra g in the middle of this one. Believe it or not, there actually was some logic behind some of these spellings at one point. Whether it makes sense to keep these spellings is under some debate, however.

First, keep in mind that English is spoken differently in different parts of the world. As a native Texas speaker, I'm critically aware that my English pronunciation and choice of words is entirely different than that of my peers in New York. Even more extreme is British versus American pronunciation. There are also other countries all over the world which speak English, and all of them differently.

In the Anglo-Saxon period, the first version of our alphabet was created from the 23-letter Latin alphabet, along with four additional symbols. These 27 letters had to represent nearly 40 phonemes, or individual sounds. This in itself causes some problems, as a single letter has to be used in different combinations to represent different sounds.

After the Norman conquest in England, much of our language was transcribed by French scribes who introduced such conventions as qu for cw (queen), gh for h (right), soft c (cell, or circle), and ie for ee (thief).

The printing process itself caused even more spelling changes. One of the main problems was that the first English printer was English, but had lived in Holland for nearly thirty years, so had adopted many of their spelling conventions, such as ghost instead of gost. These early printers also, in an effort to make all the lines on one page the same length, shortened and abbreviated certain words, instead of adding extra spaces. Thus we were first introduced to our good friend, "silent e."

In the 15th century, many, if not most, of the vowels in our language changed their pronunciations. This is the primary reason for the diversity of vowel spellings in words like mouse, ray, road, and hide. Similarly, letters that had been pronounced during the Anglo-Saxon period, like the k in knife, became silent letters, but were not dropped from the spellings.

Still later, in the 16th century, it was fashionable to make words look more like their Greek and Latin roots. For example, the g was added to reign (from Latin regno) and the b added to debt (from Latin debitum.) Unfortunately, many mistakes were made here. For example, the s was added to island, as it was thought to derive from Latin insula, when, in actuality, it derives from an Anglo-Saxon word which doesn't contain an s.

In the late 16th and early 17th centuries, English borrowed a host of new words from other languages, like Latin, Greek, French, Spanish, Portuguese, and Italian. Thus new spelling patterns were introduced from each of these sources.

The result is a language with essentially no spelling system of its own, but one with spellings adopted from every imaginable source, and then changed for the last four or five hundred years. With this in mind, I leave you with this compilation of spelling "rules" for English and wish you luck.

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CONVENTIONAL SPELLING RULES

The *most* common of the spelling rules is perhaps the “,” which is generally remembered in a children’s rhyme:

Use i before e except after c or when sounded like <ay> as in neighbor or weigh.

This rhyme has served many of us well for many years, but it only works up to a certain point. The following will outline some other guidelines for spelling words with *ie* or *ei* combinations, as well as list some of the exceptions and categories of exceptions.

- If the *ie* or *ei* combination is preceded by *r* or *l*, the *i* usually comes before the *e*.
- The following words follow the conventional *ie* rule, and though they are by no means all the words which follow the rule, they should give you an idea of how the rule works:

achieve	feign	relieve
believe	field	retrieve
brief	grief	shield
cavalier	neighbor	siege
chief	receipt	vein
clothier	receive	weigh
cockatiel	rein	wield
diesel	relief	

- The rest of this section will be devoted to the numerous exceptions and categories of exceptions to the *i-before-e* rule.

- When *c* is pronounced <sh> or <ch>, it is followed by *-ie*

abortifacient	febrifacient	proficient
absorbefacient	glacier	putrefacient
ancient	inconscious	rubefacient
cafacient	liquefacient	somnifacient
coefficient	mutafacient	sorbefacient
conscience	nescient	stupefacient
conscient	objicient	sufficient
conscientious	omniscient	tubifacient
deficient	parturifacient	tumefacient
efficient	perficient	unconscious
facient	prescient	

- Note that a vast majority of the above listed words come from only two root words:

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sheila (Australian proper name)

weigela

13. The following words are also exceptions to the ie rule, but are from various origins and languages:

apartheid	Afrikaans (-heid, -hood)
hacienda	Spanish
issei	Japanese
landsleit	Yiddish
lei	Hawaiian
leister	Scandinavian
lwei	Bantu
pichiciego, pichiciago	Spanish
reis	Portuguese
sei	Norwegian
sensei	Japanese
sheik	Arabic
steinbok, var. of steenbok	Afrikaans
teiid	Portuguese

Summary of i-before-e rules

Please remember that the above lists are not intended to be comprehensive, covering every appearance of an e and i combination, but rather should give you many guidelines from which to work when approaching one of these words. In summary:

1. Conventional: i-before-e except after c, etc. etc.
2. R and l precede -ie-
3. C precedes -ie- when it is pronounced <ch> or <sh>
4. Latin:
 - a. plurals from -eus words
 - b. -eus or -ea words plus suffix beginning with i-
5. Greek roots which contain combinations of i and e
6. Latin roots which contain combinations of i and e
7. French derivations
8. German derivations (Long i sound is spelled *ei* and long e sound is spelled *ie*)
9. International Scientific Vocabulary (ISV) endings -eine, -ein, and -eid
10. Prefix re- plus any word beginning with i-
11. A couple other minor lists of exceptions are included as well

ADDING SUFFIXES

Some of the following rules should also be familiar to you, as they are generally part of the elementary school curriculum, and are necessary to spell different forms of verbs and nouns that are commonly used.

Dropping Final e before a suffix:

- If a word ends in e, retain the e when adding a suffix that begins with a consonant. Drop the final e when a suffix beginning with a vowel is added.

accommodate	→	accommodating
commence	→	commencing & commencement
fulfill	→	fulfillment
promote	→	promoting

- When a word ends in a silent e preceded by a consonant, the e is usually retained when a suffix is added beginning with a consonant and omitted for a suffix beginning with a vowel. (Modern dictionaries often have dual forms listed as acceptable.)

come	→	coming
race	→	racial
fine	→	fineness, finer
spite	→	spiteful, spiting
remove	→	removable, removing

exceptions:

abridge	→	abridgment or abridgement
acknowledge	→	acknowledgment
awe	→	awful
due	→	duly
judge	→	judgement or judgment
move	→	moveable or movable
true	→	truly

Exceptions to the final e rule:

- Words that don't follow the rule on dropping the e when adding "ing" :

A. words ending in -ee:

(Again, not a comprehensive list, but one to give you a picture of what these words look like)

agree	→	agreeing	fee	→	feeing
congee	→	congeeing	filigree	→	filigreeing
corroboree	→	corroboreeing	flee	→	fleeing
decree	→	decreeing	free	→	freeing
demaree	→	demareeing	fricassee	→	fricasseeing
emcee	→	emceeing	garnishee	→	garnisheeing

horsy	newsy	rosy	teensy-weensy
itsy-bitsy	noisy	sassy	tipsy
lousy	nosy	semiglossy	tricksy
massy	outdoorsy	slimpsy	uneasy
messy	palsy-walsy	slimsy	unfussy
mossy	prissy	startsy	
mousy	prosy	sudsy	
mussy	queasy	teensy	

Summary of Tricky Word Endings:

1. -cious / -tious / -ceous:
 - a. There is no good rule to distinguish between -cious and -tious, but -tious is the more common of the two.
 - b. The -ceous ending is really -aceous, and often refers to a taxonomic group, which differs from the uses of the other two endings.
2. -cion / -sion / -tion
 - a. The <zh> sound indicates -sion, while <sh> sound could be any of the three.
 - b. If another form uses t in the ending, pick -tion; the same applies to -sion.
 - c. If the base word ends in a d or d sound, pick -sion.
3. -ise / -ize / -yze / -yse
 - a. Lyse and paralyse are the only two -yse words (and paralyse can also be paralyze.)
 - b. The list of -yze words is short enough to memorize or at least recognize.
 - c. The letter v usually precedes -ise.
 - d. Most -ize words are verbs.
 - e. The -ise words have a fair number of verbs, but aren't predominantly so like the -ize list.
4. -ine / -yne: The easiest thing to do with these is to learn to recognize the -yne list.
5. -us / -ous
 - a. Most -us words are nouns, and -ous words are adjectives.
 - b. There are a few words which break the rule, but the rule is surprisingly reliable.
6. -ant / -ent / -ance / -ence
 - a. The best rule for these endings is to try to determine whether the word has an alternate form which begins with an a. If it does, the ending is most likely going to be -ant or -ance. Otherwise, choose -ent or -ence.
 - b. The other thing to remember is that -ent and -ence are much more common, so if the first rule doesn't help, the odds are in your favor with this choice.
 - c. Last, the letter m comes almost exclusively before -ent rather than -ant.
7. -er / -or / -ar
 - a. The difference here is in the meaning. Basically, -ar means relating to, as angular; -or means one who does, or state or quality of, as assessor or valor. Third, -er means anything else, primarily one who does, names of professions, one who has, one who is associated with, one who lives somewhere, or the comparative form of an

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GREEK ROOT	DEFINITION	EXAMPLES
<i>or(a)-</i>	see	panorama, ephor, diorama, cyclorama
<i>ornis-, ornith-</i>	bird	ornithology, ornithine, ornithopter, notornis, ichthyornis, aepyornis
<i>orth-</i>	straight, right	orthodox, orthography, orthopedics, orthoepy, orthotic
<i>ost(e)-, osteo-</i>	bone	osteopath, osteoclasia, osteosis, osteolysis, osteoporosis
<i>p(a)ed(o)-</i>	child	orthopaedics, orthopedics, pediatrics, pedagogue, pedantic, propaedeutic, pedodontics
<i>pal(a)e-</i>	old	palaeopterygii, paleontology, palaeosaur, paleosaur, Paleolithic, paleoecology, paleethnology, paleoanthropic
<i>pan(t)-</i>	all, every	panorama, pantomime, pandemic, panacea, pandemonium, Pantheon
<i>path-, -pathy, patho-</i>	suffer, feel; disease	pathology, sympathy, telepathy, apathy, homeopath, sociopath
<i>patr(i)-</i>	father, family, clan	patricide, patrician, patriot, patronymic, patriarchy, patrilineal, sympatric
<i>pedia-, paideia-</i>	education	cyclopedia, encyclopedia, hypnopedia
<i>pent(a)-</i>	five	pentagon, pentagram, pentathlon, pentacle, pentadactyl, pentoxide, Pentateuch
<i>pep(t)-, peps-</i>	digest	pepsin, dyspepsia, peptonic, tripeptide, peptic
<i>petr-</i>	rock	petroleum, petrify, petroglyph, petrochemical, petropolitics
<i>pha(n)-</i>	show, appear	phantom, epiphany, phase, emphasis, phantasy
<i>pha-, phe(m)-</i>	speak	aphasia, phatic, dysphasia, apophasis, prophet, blaspheme, euphemism, prophecy, prophesy
<i>phag-</i>	eat	sarcophagous, geophagy, glossophagine, bibliophagous, xylophagous
<i>pher-, phor-</i>	bear, go	periphery, pheromone, telpher, semaphore, phosphorescent, amphora, euphoric, xanthophore
<i>-phil(e)-</i>	love	philosophy, philharmonic, bibliophile, cinephile, philately, xenophile
<i>phleb(o)-</i>	vein	phlebotomist, phlebitis, phlebosclerosis, phlebotomy, phlebology
<i>phon-</i>	voice, sound	phonetic, homophone, symphonic, telephone, aphonic, euphony, cacophony
<i>phot(o)-</i>	light	photograph, photosynthesis, aphotic, telephoto, phototaxis
<i>phra-</i>	speak, show	phrase, phraseology, antiphrasis, paraphrase, metaphrase, holophrastic
<i>phren(o)-</i>	mind, diaphragm	phrenology, hebephrenia, phrenic, schizophrenia
<i>phyll(o)-</i>	leaf	chlorophyll, phyllophagous, aphyllly, phyllotaxis, xanthophyllic
<i>physi(o)-</i>	nature	physical, physics, physiology, geophysical, epiphysis, metaphysics, symphysis
<i>phyt(o)-</i>	grow	neophyte, epiphytic, osteophyte, phytology, phytotoxic, xerophyte
<i>plas(t)-, plasm-</i>	form, mold	plastic, plasma, hyperplasia, plaster, protoplasm, anaplasia
<i>platy-</i>	flat, broad	platypus, platysma, amphiplatyan, platyhelminth, platyrrhiny
<i>pleg-, plex-</i>	paralysis, stroke, to strike	diplegia, hemiplegia, paraplegic, quadriplegia, apoplexy, cataplexy, plexor, pleximeter
<i>pod-</i>	foot	pseudopod, podium, tripod, dipody, podiatrist, gastropod
<i>pol(is)-</i>	city, state	acropolis, metropolis, politician, policy, police, propolis, policlinic
<i>polem-</i>	war	polemic, polemist, polemicize
<i>poly-</i>	many	polyglot, polygamy, monopoly, duopoly, polymorphic
<i>pros-</i>	near, toward, in front of	proselytize, prosthetic, prosody, dysprosium, prosthodontics
<i>prot-</i>	original, first	prototype, protein, protist, proteinaceous, protoplasm, proton, protozoa
<i>pseud(o)-</i>	false	pseudonym, pseudoscientific, pseudopod, pseudocoel
<i>psych(o)-</i>	mind	psychology, psychosomatic, metempsychosis, psychoanalysis, psychedelic
<i>pter(yx)-</i>	wing, fin	archaeopteryx, helicopter, coleopterous, pterosaur, apteral, lepidopteran, pterodactyl
<i>py(o)-</i>	pus	pyogenesis, pyelitis, pyelogram, pyoderma, pyorrhea
<i>pyr(o)-</i>	fire	pyre, pyromaniac, empyreal, pyrotechnic, antipyretic
<i>rhin(o)-</i>	nose	rhinitis, rhinoceros, errhine, rhinoplasty, otorhinolaryngology

JAPANESE

- Japanese, as you will find, is actually one of the easiest languages to spell, as it is an entirely phonetic language. The vowels are always pronounced the same way, and the language generally uses only a limited number of consonants.
- All the vowel sounds in the chart below should be consistent (i.e. you won't have any vowel pronounced more than one way depending on the letters around it, like in many other languages)

a → ah, as in ball
 i → ee, as in feet
 u → oo, as in food
 e → eh, as in bed
 o → oh, as in coat

- Diphthongs aren't much harder than the basic vowel sounds. For example, in the words aikido, there are actually four sounds: ah-ee-kee-doh. When these are pronounced a little faster, you get something that sounds like "eye-kee-doh." The same applies to sensei, which is formed from four sounds: seh-n-seh-ee. Again, when this runs together, you get sen-say.
- Note that the letter n is the only consonant which can end a word or syllable. Everything else will be in combinations with the consonant or consonants preceding a vowel sound. The vowel sounds, however, as we've seen, can be used together to form other sounds.

- Katakana, the Japanese alphabet, contains a limited number of possible syllables. The primary ones are indicated in **boldfaced** type. Note the 'n' in the bottom right hand corner of the chart.

a	ka	ga	sa	za	ta	da	na	ha	ba	pa	ma	ra	wa	fa
i	ki	gi	shi	ji	chi	ji	ni	hi	bi	pi	mi	ri		fi
u	ku	gu	su	zu	tsu	zu	nu	fu	bu	pu	mu	ru		
e	ke	ge	se	ze	te	de	ne	he	be	pe	me	re		fe
o	ko	go	so	zo	to	do	no	ho	bo	po	mo	ro		fo
ya	kya	gya	sha	ja	cha	ja	nya	hya	bya	pya	mya	rya		
yu	kyu	gyu	shu	ju	chu	ju	nyu	hyu	byu	pyu	myu	ryu		
yo	kyo	gyo	sho	jo	cho	jo	nyo	hyo	byo	pyo	myo	ryo		n

- Some Japanese words may vary slightly from these syllables when Anglicized, but for the most part, this should be all you need to know. (e.g. the spelling of hokku, and the "ee" sound at the end of kamikaze, where, technically, there should be an "eh" sound.)

Japanese words:

aikido	karatsu ware	seppuku
amanori	katakana	shakuhachi
aucuba	Kawaguchi	shiatsu
banzai	kawi, kavi	shiitake
bonsai	kendo	shikken
Bushido	Kibei	Shingon
chanoyu	kimono	shintai
daikon	kiri	Shinto
daimio, daimyo	kirimon	shogaol
dashi	koan	shogi
dojo	koban, cobang, kobang	shogun
enoki	Kobe	shoji
enoki	koto	sika
enokidake	kudzu	soy
fugu	makimono	sugi
fusuma	matsu	sukiyaki
geisha	matsu	sumo
genro	Matsuoka	surimi
geta	medaka	sushi
ginkgo, ginko	mikado	tanka
gyokuro	miso	tatami
haikai	Nagasaki	tempura
haiku	netsuke	teriyaki
hara-kiri, hari-kari	ninja	tofu
heian	Nipponese	tokonoma
heimin	Nisei	torii
hibachi	Nishinomiya	tsubo
hirado ware	nori	tsuga
hiragana	obi	tsunami
Hiroshima	Okinawan	Tsushima
hokku	origami	tsutsugamushi mite
honcho	pachinko	tycoon
ikebana	rotenone	udo
iroha, irofa	rumaki, ramaki	urushi
issei, Issei	sake , saki, saké	urushiol
jinriksha, jinrikisha	samisen, samsien,	urushiye
judo	shamisen	Wakayama
jujitsu, jujutsu, jiujitsu,	samurai	yakitori
jiujutsu	sanron	Yamamai
kabuki	Sansei	Yamato
kakemono	sashimi	Yamato, Yamato-e
kaki	satori	Yayoi
kamikaze	satsuma	yen
kana	sayonara	zaibatsu
kanji	sen	zaikai
karaoke	senryu	zori
karate	sensei	