

## Which Way to Spell a Sound?

(for older students)

A particular sound can often be spelled in more than one way. How do you choose the right one?

- What looks right?
- Is there a rule?
- Learn words with the same spelling pattern together. (E.g. money, monkey, valley, trolley.)
- How are related words spelled? (E.g. pray, prayer; know, knowledge; sign, signal, design.)
- Make up a memory trick. (E.g. I see the chemist at Christmas.)
- If a vowel sound is not stressed it usually gives an indistinct, almost grunting, sound – “schwa” or /ə/. E.g. again, circus, <sup>⊛</sup>numer, <sup>⊛</sup>doctor ... Emphasise and pronounce these vowel sounds clearly when you are learning to spell a word. (⊛ US You can hear /r/.)

/ / means “sounds like”. /A/, /E/, /I/, /O/, /U/ means “sounds like the name of the letter”.

Some of the more common ways of spelling sounds:

|     |  |                                     |   |
|-----|--|-------------------------------------|---|
| /e/ | e (red, end, best)   | ea (head, bread)                    |   |
| /i/ | i (in, his)  | y (myth, happy)                     | Some people say /EE/ for “y” on the end of happy. |
|     | i (mini, muesli, spaghetti) On the end of a word.  |                                     |   |
| /o/ | o (on, hot, top),  | [/off/ <b>ough</b> (cough, trough)] |   |
|     | (w)a (want, what, squash). Beware of “w”! “Ant” becomes “want”. “Wh” and “qu” do the same. |                                     |   |
| /u/ | u (cut, run, under)  | ou (double, trouble)                | o (come, other, money, done)                      |
|     | *oo (blood, flood)   | *oe (does)                          | /uff/ <b>ough</b> (tough, enough)                 |

|     |   |  |                                 |
|-----|---|--|---------------------------------|
| /A/ | a_e (cake, gate)  | ai (wait, rain)  | (* Uncommon spelling of sound.) |
|     | ay (say, play) “Ay” on the end of a word or a syllable, “ai” in the middle. |  |                                 |
|     | ei (rein, reign) Not /E/ sound,   | <b>igh</b> (weigh, weight)   |                                 |
|     | a (a, paper) On the end of a syllable.                                      |  |                                 |
|     | ey (they, obey)   | *ea (break, steak, great)  | * <b>igh</b> (straight)         |
| /E/ | e_e (these, scene)  | ee (flee, been, speech)  | ea (eat, meat, speak)           |
|     | e (he, be, me, karate, react) On the end of a word or a syllable.           |  |                                 |
|     | ey (key, valley)  |  |                                 |
|     | ie (grief, belief) Not after “c”.   | } “i” before “e” except after “c” if the sound is /E/.<br>(In a word.) |                                 |
|     | ei (ceiling, receive) After “c”.  |  |                                 |
| /I/ | ie (pie, cry/cries)   | } “i” before “e” except after “c” if the sound is /E/.<br>(In a word.) |                                 |
|     | On the end of a word.   |  |                                 |
|     | ei (eiderdown, seismic) Not /E/ sound.                                      |  |                                 |
|     | i_e (kite, mine)  | <b>igh</b> (high, sight)   | * <b>igh</b> (height)           |
|     | i (I, hi, alkali, idea, lion) On the end of a word or a syllable.           |  |                                 |
|     | y (my, by)  | y_e (type, style)  | <b>ye</b> (dye, goodbye)        |
|     | i (kind, pint, Christ) Sometimes when followed by two consonants.           |  |                                 |
| /O/ | o_e (hope, stone)   | oa (boat, float)   | ow (tow, crow)                  |
|     | o (go, piano, photograph) On the end of word or syllable.                   |  |                                 |
|     | o (most, sold) Sometimes when followed by two consonants.                   |  |                                 |
|     | ou(I) (soul, shoulder)  | <b>ough</b> (though)   |                                 |
| /U/ | u_e (tune, dune)  | ew (new, few)  | <b>ue</b> (overdue, rescue)     |
|     | ui (nuisance, pursuit)  | <b>eu</b> (eucalyptus, Europe)   |                                 |
|     | u (music, uniform, argument) On the end of a syllable.                      |  |                                 |

|      |   |                                     |                          |
|------|---|-------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| /er/ | er (her, nerve)                           | ir (bird, skirt)                    | ur (purse, hurt)         |
|      | (w)or (word, work, world). Beware of “w”! |                                     |                          |
|      | ear (early, learn)                        | our (journey)                       | re (centre, ogre, fibre) |
| /ar/ | ar (car, part)                            | a (last, path, father, ask)         | al (half, calm)          |
|      | ear (heart, hearth)                       | /arf/ <b>ough</b> (laugh, draughty) |                          |

/or/ **or** (corn, fork, sport),  
**aw** (awful, draw, crawl) “Aw” can be used on the end of a word.  
**au** (haul, launch) “Au” is used in the middle of a word or syllable.  
**war** (war, warm, wharf, quarter). Beware of “w”! “Art” becomes “wart”. Wh” and “qu” do the same.  
**al** (walk, talk, all)      **oar** (oar, roar, soar)      **oor** (door, floor)  
**our** (your, course)      **ough** (ought, bought, thought)      **augh** (caught, daughter, naughty)

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|            |  |                            |                                    |
|------------|--|----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| short /oo/ | <b>oo</b> (look, good)                             | <b>u</b> (push, pull, put) | <b>*oul</b> (could, would, should) |
| long /oo/  | <b>oo</b> (hoop, soon, food)                       | <b>u_e</b> (rude, flute)   | <b>ou</b> (you, soup)              |
|            | <b>ew</b> (blew, drew)                             | <b>ue</b> (blue, clue)     | <b>ui</b> (fruit, juice)           |
|            | <b>u</b> (truly, unruly) On the end of a syllable. |                            | <b>eu</b> (leukaemia, rheumatism)  |

/oy/ **oi** (coil, join, spoil) (\* Uncommon spelling of sound.)  
**oy** (boy, royal) “Oy” is used on the end of a word or a syllable, “oi” in the middle.

/ow/ **ou** (out, found) “Ou” is used in the middle of a word or a syllable.  
**ow** (how, brown) “Ow” can be used on the end of a word. **ough** (bough, drought)

/air/ **air** (fair, pair)      **ear** (wear)      **ere** (there, where)  
**are** (care, stare)      **eir** (their, heir)

/ere/ **ere** (here, sphere)      **ear** (hear, spear)      **eer** (deer, steer)  
**ier** (pier, tier)      **eir** (weir, weird)

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/k/ **c** (can, cot)      **k** (kite, soak, think, poke)  
**ck** (lack, lick, lock, luck)      **ch** (Christmas, ache)      **que** (antique, technique)

- “k” not “c” if it is followed by “e”, “i” or “y”.
- “k” on the end of a word if it follows two vowels, another consonant or has a silent “e”.
- “ck” on the end of a short word with a single vowel.
- /ik/ “ic” on the end of longer words – picnic, atomic

/f/ **f** (fish, beef, wife)  
**ff** (off, cuff) On the end of a short word with one vowel.  
**ph** (dolphin, phone)      **gh** (laugh, cough, tough, enough)

/h/ **h** (hat, him, hop)      **wh** (whole, who, whose)

/g/ **g** (game, get, girl, wag)      **gh** (ghost, dinghy)  
**gu** (guide, guard, guess)      **gue** (vague, fatigue)

/j/ **j** (jump, joke)      **dge** (badge, hedge, ridge, dodge, budge) Short word, one vowel.  
**ge/gi/gy** (often /j/ – gentle, giraffe, gypsy)

/s/ **s** (see, saw)      **ss** (mass, mess, miss, moss, fuss)  
**se** (horse, house)      **ce/ci/cy** (usually /s/ – cent, city, cylinder)

/l/ **l** (let, lamp)      **ll** (fill, well, ball)      **le** (apple, table) Syllable = consonant-le

/m/ **m** (man, ram)      **mb** (lamb, comb)      **mn** (autumn, condemn)

/n/ **n** (not, run)      **kn** (knot, know)      **gn** (sign, gnaw)

/r/ **r** (run, truck)      **wr** (write, wrong)      **rh** (rhythm, rhyme)

/t/ **t** (tent, got)      **pt** (pterodactyl, receipt)

/v/ **v** (van, vet, ever)      **ve** (give, have, love, gave) English words cannot end in “v”.      \***f** (of)

/y/ **y** (yes, yam, yellow)      **i** (onion, million, bilious)

/z/ **z** (zip, zoo)      **zz** (buzz, jazz)      **s** (as, his, was, matches)  
**se** (please, because)      **x** (xylophone) “X” is always /z/ at the beginning of a word.

/ng/ **ng** (sing, strong)      **n** (sink, zinc) Before a /k/ sound.

/th/ **th** (unvoiced – thin, thank, teeth)      **th** (voiced – them, then, these)

/wh/ **wh** (when, where, why)

/ch/ **ch** (chop, teach)  
**tch** (catch, watch) On the end of a short word with one vowel, except for rich, which, such, much.

/sh/ **sh** (wish, ship)      **ch** (machine, chef)  
**ci** (special, gracious)      **ti** (action, reflection)      **si** (discussion, tension)

/zh/ **s** (usual, measure, vision)      **ge** (beige, garage) Garage can be pronounced with /zh/ or /j/.

Almost all of these sound/spelling correspondences have been taught in *Gilead Success with Phonics*. Write in any others that you find.