

## Cambridge Vocabulary for IELTS by Pauline Cullen

## Spelling rules

Correct spelling is very important in IELTS tests. Here are seven simple rules to help you.

### 1 Capital letters

Always use a capital letter for:

- Days and months: *Monday, Friday, June, December.*
- Names of people (and their titles): *Ana Kyriaki, Dr Bauer.*
- Names of countries, cities, nationalities and languages: *Australia, Seoul, Thai.*
- The first word in a sentence: *We cannot ignore this problem.*

NB: Do **not** write an essay using only capitals! (Not *WE CANNOT IGNORE THIS PROBLEM*)

### 2 “I before E except after C”

This expression can help you spell words like *believe* and *receive* correctly.

Remember, if the **e+i** are pronounced /eɪ/, the rule does **not** apply, (e.g. *eight, neighbour*). Other exceptions: *either, neither, leisure.*

### 3 Words that end in E

When you add *-ing* or *-ed* to a word that ends in **e**, drop the final **e**:

*love* → *loved*  
*write* → *writing*

When you add *-ment* or *-dom* to a word that ends in **e**, keep the final **e**:

*amusement boredom*

If there is a vowel before the **e**, (e.g. *argue*), drop the **e**, before adding a suffix:

*argued, arguing, argument*

If there is a soft **c** or **g** before the **e**, (e.g. *manage, notice*), keep the final **e**:

*manageable, management, noticeable*

### 4 Words that end in Y

When you add a suffix to a word ending in **y**, change **y** to **i**:

*happy* → *happier*  
*study* → *studied*

This rule does **not** apply when you add *-ing*, (e.g. *crying, playing*), or if there is a vowel before the **y**, (e.g. *employment, obeyed*).

### 5 Doubling Consonants

You sometimes need to double the final consonant of a word when you add a suffix. This helps the reader to pronounce the word correctly. It shows that the vowel before it has a short sound.

For example: *slim* (short **i** sound) and *slime* (long **i** sound). To keep the short /ɪ/ sound in *slim*, double the last consonant before you add a suffix: *slimmed, slimmer, slimmest*. (Not *slimed, stimer, slimest*).

If the word ends in two consonants don't double the final consonant:

*talent* → *talented*

If the word contains more than one syllable, only double the final consonant if the last syllable is stressed:

*occur* → *occurred*

This rule does **not** apply if the last syllable is not stressed: *happen* → *happened*

### 6 Adding prefixes

When you add a prefix, the spelling of a word does **not** normally change:

*unnecessary, dissatisfied, prearranged*

### 7 American or British Spelling?

Both American and British spellings are acceptable, however you **must** use the same style consistently:

*My favorite color is blue* **or** *My favourite colour is blue.* (Not *My favourite color is blue.*)

Some differences between American and British spellings:

American spellings	British spellings
When words with more than one syllable end in <b>l</b> , double the <b>l</b> if the last syllable is stressed: <i>travel</i> → <i>travelled</i> Do <b>not</b> double the <b>l</b> if there is no stress on the last syllable: <i>traveled, traveling</i>	When words with more than one syllable end in <b>l</b> , always double the <b>l</b> : <i>travelled, travelling</i>
Words end in <b>or</b> : <i>color, flavor, humor</i>	Words end in <b>our</b> : <i>colour, flavour, humour</i>
Words end in <b>ize</b> or <b>ize</b> : <i>specialize, recognize, analyze</i>	Words end in <b>ise</b> or <b>yse</b> : <i>specialise, recognise, analyse</i>