

## SPELLING RULES

To be a confident speller a student requires two main skills which are phonological and orthographic knowledge. Students with weak orthographic knowledge will often spell phonetically but be unable to apply correct spelling rules e.g.: 'funny' might be spelt 'fune,' 'Light' might be 'lit' 'hopped' might be 'hopt.' A child with weak phonological skills might omit sounds or syllables and sometimes spellings might be considered bizarre, e.g. 'stop' might be 'sop' 'swimming' might be 'swinnm' 'permanent' might be 'perment'

### Most important Spelling Rules

It is so important, in fact, it is essential that we teach important spelling rules to our students, particularly those with dyslexia. It will make, not only spelling, but also reading much easier for them. We think that there are so many exceptions to the rule but only 4% of words are truly phonically irregular.

If a young student says to us: this word starts with the sound /k/, should I put a c or a k? We could just provide the answer, but then we have missed an amazing opportunity to teach a rule that they can apply to hundreds of words. What answer would you give? The answer is: always choose c as your first choice unless the word is followed by e, i or y because that makes the c say /s/ (century, city, cycle). In that case choose k: ketchup, kitten, murky.

So many teenagers and adults I have worked with say: why didn't tell us those rules when we were at school; it would have made it so much easier for me?

But here is our problem: hardly any of us were ever taught about spelling rules as part of our training and for many teachers 'phonics teaching' was out of fashion in both schools and Teacher Training Institutes for a number of years. I hope this helps; below are some of the most important spelling rules to help you teach your students with more confidence.

1. **a, e, i, o, and u** are vowels:
  - a. they can be soft vowels as found in cat, egg, bin, not, and fun.
  - b. They can be long vowels where they say their name such as cake, even, time, open and tune
2. When you see a curved line above a vowel this means it is soft: - soft vowel **ö**
3. When you see a straight line above a vowel this means it is long: - soft vowel **ā**

Teach this to your students as an additional visual strategy to help them discriminate between vowel sounds

4. **y** not **i** is used at the end of English words.
5. A single **e** at the end of a word after a consonant does not sound therefore, we substitute y.  
E.g. happy
6. **q** is always followed by **u**: queen
7. when **a** follows **w** or **qu** it often sounds **ö**. E.g. watch, want, wandered, quantity, squat
8. **x** has two phonemes **/k/ /w/**

