Spelling rules

Some spelling rules are worth learning; others are too complicated or have too many exceptions. Instead of learning ALL the rules, focus on learning rules which address your particular spelling problems. Following is some helpful information on the rules for building new words:

1. Words for discussing spelling
2. Ten common spelling rules
3. Rules for Australian and American spelling

SPELLING CHECKERS will be quite helpful when you need to apply rules to word building. However, the rules for American spelling differ from Australian spelling. You can set your computer to English (Australia) OR be prepared to use a good Australian dictionary to check for words that use American spelling. Try to choose Australian standards and be consistent.

1. Words for discussing spelling
   • VOWELS—a, e, i, o and u are vowels. CONSONANTS—the other 21 letters of the alphabet.
   • PREFIX—element added to the front of a word (e.g. un/in=not, pre=before, anti=against)
   • SUFFIX—element added to the end of a word (e.g. -ing, -able, -ed, -ly, -ful, -ment, -tion)
   • SYLLABLE—a word or section of a word with a single sound (e.g. read, fa_mous, dif_fi_cult)
   • STRESS—the emphasis given to a syllable (see underlined syllables: famous, focus, occur, infer)

2. Ten common spelling rules

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<th>Rule</th>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Memorise</th>
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<td>1. ‘ie’ or ‘ei’</td>
<td>1. achieve, believe, friend receive, receipt, perceive</td>
<td>Exceptions: Words like counterfeit, either, neither, height, leisure, forfeit, foreign, science, species, seize, weird</td>
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<td>2. ‘s’ or ‘es’</td>
<td>1. arch &gt; arches, clash &gt; clashes, class &gt; classes, box &gt; boxes, quiz &gt; quizzes</td>
<td>Exceptions: Words like altos, duos, pianos, radios, solos sopranos, studios, videos, typos</td>
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<td>3. ‘y’ to ‘i’ or not</td>
<td>1. convey &gt; conveys, employ &gt; employer</td>
<td>2. try &gt; trying, justify &gt; justifying, certify &gt; certifying, study &gt; studying</td>
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<td>4. drop the final ‘e’</td>
<td>1. save &gt; savable, use &gt; usable</td>
<td>Exceptions: DO NOT DROP the e if the word ends in ce or ge (e.g. manage &gt; manageable, trace &gt; traceable)</td>
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Teaching and Learning Support (TaLS) – Fact Sheets
http://www.une.edu.au/current-students/resources/academic-skills/fact-sheets
### 3. Rules for Australian and American spelling

There are often considerable differences between Australian and American spelling. You should use Australian spelling in preference to American spelling, but if American spelling is acceptable, then make sure you use it CONSISTENTLY in your essay.

**Examples**

- **-rel-er** (use -re for spelling words e.g. *theatre, litre, centre, calibre, sombre, fibre*—NOT theater, liter, center)
- **-our- or** (use -our for spelling words e.g. *colour, honour, neighbour*—NOT color, honor, neighbor)
- **-isel-ize** (both are acceptable; but the Australian preference is for -ise e.g. *criticise* rather than criticize)
- **practice/practise** (American spelling is practice, but Australian spelling requires practice [noun] practise [verb])
- **other common words** (e.g. *aeroplane*—NOT airplane; traveller—NOT traveler; defence—NOT defense)