

# HARD WORDS

## Other Clues

**1.** There are **other spelling rules** and tips that we can learn to help us predict sounds from spelling. In general, they do not work 100% of the time, but are worth knowing, nevertheless [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#). For example:

- A vowel at the end of a short word says its name: ago, menu, be, she, we, so, go, also, etc.

**2.** Some words contain **hidden sounds** – sounds which are not visible in the spelling in any way, for example: y in **new**; ch in **stupid**, **Tuesday**; j in **produce**; ng in **bank**, **uncle**; f in **phrase**; kw in **quick**, **squash** [\[LINK\]](#).

**3.** Some words contain **silent letters** – letters which are visible in the spelling, but not pronounced, for example: autumn, debt, knee, guess, muscle, often, wrong, etc. [\[LINK\]](#). We can learn the patterns.

**4.** Learn lists of common **homophones** – word pairs that sound the same but have different spellings and meanings, for example: aunt, aren't; break, brake; eight, ate; hear, here; it's, its; meet, meat, etc. [\[LINK\]](#).

**5.** Learn lists of one-syllable **minimal pairs**. Minimal pairs are word pairs that sound exactly the same apart from one sound, e.g. ball, wall. They demonstrate the importance of using the correct stressed vowel sound, because when you use a different vowel sound between the same consonant sounds you may get a different word. For example: (1<sup>st</sup> sound different) cat, hat, mat, that; (middle sound different) leak, like, lake, look; (final sound different) cheap, cheat, cheek, cheese [\[LINK\]](#).

**6.** Some words do not conform to any of our rules because they are **loan words**, borrowed from another language. When other languages do this they may adapt the spelling to fit the language. In English we typically borrow the word, keep the spelling, but force the stress and sounds to conform to English patterns. For example: 'restaurant' from the French 'restaurant'. In Polish: 'restauracja'; in Italian: 'ristorante'; in Spanish: 'restaurante'. Their spellings match their languages, without causing pronunciation doubts and confusion. [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#).

**7.** The -ed endings of **regular verbs** conform to one of three patterns – d, t, or uhd – depending on the spelling of the ending. We pronounce the '-ed' ending in verbs ending with 't' or 'd'. We do not pronounce '-ed' with the rest of the regular verbs. This is a useful spelling rule because English has thousands of regular verbs (although the much smaller number of **irregular verbs** are far more common) [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#).

**8.** Sometimes we can tell the stress and stressed vowel sound of a longer word from the **root word** element – the part without any prefixes or suffixes. The root word may reveal a second suffix and the stress may be the same too – as in sual / sually. This information helps us identify and therefore discount further weak syllables.

**9.** While syllable breaks are usually either **vc** (vowel to consonant) or **F** (friendly, with n, m, ng, or l) we can sometimes find a syllable break which contains a **glottal stop**. For example: this happens when 't' appears at the end of a syllable and the next sound is a consonant, e.g. 'get bread' = Ge\_ Bred. It is worth learning words that end with 't' and anticipating glottal stops [\[LINK\]](#) [\[LINK\]](#).

*Further resources:*

- [PhotocopiaBRILL! \(Volume 1\)](#) (PDF)
- [Clear Alphabet Dictionary](#) (PDF)