

Suffixes · Free resource

## Suffixes: **-able** and **-ible**

**Source:** DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling* (2013) — Years 5–6 statutory suffixes

**Origin:** Latin *-abilis* and *-ibilis* via Old French

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### What they mean

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Both mean "capable of being" or "worthy of being."

*comfort* → **comfortable** (*capable of providing comfort*)

*possible* → **possible** (*from poss- + -ible; capable of existing*)

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## The decision rule

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### Use *-able* when:

The base is a complete English word: *comfortable, washable, enjoyable*

The base ends in *-ce* or *-ge* — keep the *e*: *noticeable, manageable*

There is a related *-ation* form: *imagine* → *imagination* → **imaginable**

### Use *-ible* when:

The base is NOT a complete English word: *poss-* → **possible**, *horr-* → **horrible**

The base ends in *-ss*: *access* → **accessible**

There is a related *-ion* (not *-ation*) form: *digest* → *digestion* → **digestible**

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## Morpheme matrix

	<b>-able</b>	<b>-ible</b>	<b>base</b>
<i>comfort-</i>	<b>comfortable</b>	–	<b>comfort</b>
<i>enjoy-</i>	<b>enjoyable</b>	–	<b>enjoy</b>
<i>notice-</i>	<b>noticeable</b>	–	<b>notice</b>
<i>poss-</i>	–	<b>possible</b>	–
<i>horr-</i>	–	<b>horrible</b>	–
<i>vis-</i>	–	<b>visible</b>	–
<i>sens-</i>	–	<b>sensible</b>	–
<i>adore-</i>	<b>adorable</b>	–	<b>adore</b>
<i>terr-</i>	–	<b>terrible</b>	–

## **-able word families**

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*adorable* → **adorably** · *comfortable* → **comfortably** · *noticeable* → **noticeably**

## **-ible word families**

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*possible* → **possibly** · *terrible* → **terribly** · *visible* → **visibly** · *sensible* → **sensibly**

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## Common mistakes

Wrong	Right
<i>posible</i>	<b>possible</b>
<i>noticable</i>	<b>noticeable</b>
<i>adoreable</i>	<b>adorable</b>
<i>terreable</i>	<b>terrible</b>
<i>responsable</i>	<b>responsible</b>

## Dictation sentences

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It was **possible** but not **comfortable** — barely **manageable** in the conditions.

The **noticeable** improvement was **considerable** and **admirable** in equal measure.

She was **responsible** for making the event **enjoyable** and **memorable**.

The **incredible** view was **visible** for miles — an **indescribable** sight.

**Sensible** decisions are not always **desirable**, but they are almost always **advisable**.

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*Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Decision rules derived from statutory guidance.*