

Suffixes · Free resource

Suffix: **-ly**

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling* (2013) — Years 3–4 statutory suffix

Origin: Old English *-lice*, meaning "in the manner of"

What it means

-ly turns an adjective into an adverb meaning "in a [adjective] way."

slow → **slowly** (in a slow way)

careful → **carefully** (in a careful way)

brave → **bravely** (in a brave way)

Four spelling cases

Case 1 — Add *-ly* directly (most adjectives): *quickly, loudly, kindly, safely*

Case 2 — Base ends in *-le* preceded by a consonant → change *-le* to *-ly*.
gentle → **gently** · *simple* → **simply** · *possible* → **possibly** · *terrible* → **terribly**

Case 3 — Base ends in *-ic* → add *-ally*.
basic → **basically** · *automatic* → **automatically** · *dramatic* → **dramatically**

Case 4 — Base ends in consonant + *y* → change *y* to *i* then add *-ly*.
happy → **happily** · *angry* → **angrily** · *easy* → **easily**

Statutory examples (Appendix 1, Y3/4)

Adjective	Adverb	Case
<i>certain</i>	certainly	Case 1
<i>recent</i>	recently	Case 1
<i>particular</i>	particularly	Case 1
<i>probable</i>	probably	Case 2 (-ble → -bly)
<i>possible</i>	possibly	Case 2
<i>gentle</i>	gently	Case 2
<i>simple</i>	simply	Case 2
<i>basic</i>	basically	Case 3
<i>dramatic</i>	dramatically	Case 3
<i>happy</i>	happily	Case 4
<i>angry</i>	angrily	Case 4
<i>easy</i>	easily	Case 4

Morpheme matrix

	-ly	-ally	(nothing)
quick-	quickly	–	quick
careful-	carefully	–	careful
gentle	gently	–	gentle
possible	possibly	–	possible
basic	–	basically	basic
dramatic	–	dramatically	dramatic
happy	happily	–	happy

Tricky cases to teach explicitly

Adjective	Adverb	Why
<i>true</i>	truly	drop <i>e</i> before <i>-ly</i>
<i>full</i>	fully	one <i>l</i> dropped
<i>whole</i>	wholly	keep <i>e</i> (exception)
<i>due</i>	duly	drop <i>e</i>
<i>public</i>	publicly	<i>-ic</i> but NOT <i>-ally</i> (exception)

Dictation sentences

She walked **gently** and **carefully** through the **basically** empty building.

Happily, the task was **probably simply** done.

He spoke **certainly** and **directly, particularly** when asked a **difficult** question.

The decision was **dramatically** different — **possibly** the **most** important one yet.

Angrily but **quietly**, she closed the door and left.

Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Etymology: Old English -lice, from Proto-Germanic.