

Year 2 · Free resource

## The /l/ sound at the end of words: **-le, -el, -al, -il**

Year group: 2

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling*, National Curriculum for England (2013) — Year 2

Curriculum requirement: Statutory

---

### The rule

---

The /əl/ sound (a weak "ul" or "l" sound) at the end of words can be spelled four different ways. Each has a different pattern:

- le — the most common ending: **table, apple, little, simple**
  - el — used after *m, n, r, s, v, w* (consonants that blend with *l*): **camel, tunnel, squirrel, travel**
  - al — usually an adjective or noun suffix: **metal, pedal, hospital, animal**
  - il — only a small number of words: **fossil, nostril, pencil, evil, pupil**
-

## The *-le* ending (most common)

Word	Note
<b>table</b>	<i>tabl- + e</i>
<b>apple</b>	double <i>p</i> preserves short vowel
<b>little</b>	double <i>t</i> preserves short vowel
<b>bottle</b>	double <i>t</i>
<b>middle</b>	double <i>d</i>
<b>simple</b>	consonant <i>p</i> before <i>le</i>
<b>purple</b>	consonant <i>r</i> before <i>le</i>
<b>bundle</b>	consonant <i>n</i> before <i>le</i>
<b>handle</b>	consonant <i>n</i> before <i>le</i>
<b>jungle</b>	consonant <i>n</i> before <i>le</i>
<b>circle</b>	consonant <i>r</i> before <i>le</i>
<b>example</b>	consonant before <i>le</i>
<b>twinkle</b>	consonant before <i>le</i>
<b>sparkle</b>	consonant before <i>le</i>

**Pattern:** *-le* follows a consonant, or doubles a consonant to keep a short vowel.

---

## The *-el* ending

Used after certain consonants: *m, n, r, s, v, w*

Word	Consonant before <i>el</i>
camel	<i>m</i>
channel	<i>n</i> (double <i>n</i> )
tunnel	<i>n</i> (double <i>n</i> )
squirrel	<i>r</i> (double <i>r</i> )
travel	<i>v</i>
novel	<i>v</i>
towel	<i>w</i>
vowel	<i>w</i>
gravel	<i>v</i>
barrel	<i>r</i> (double <i>r</i> )
cancel	– (common exception)
tinsel	<i>s</i>
diesel	<i>s</i>

**Memory pattern:** if the letter before the ending is *m, n, r, s, v, or w*, try *-el* first.

---

## The *-al* ending

---

Usually signals an adjective or noun derived from a longer word.

Word	Type	Root note
<b>metal</b>	noun	Latin <i>metallum</i>
<b>pedal</b>	noun	Latin <i>pedale</i> (of the foot)
<b>hospital</b>	noun	Latin <i>hospitale</i>
<b>animal</b>	noun	Latin <i>animale</i>
<b>capital</b>	noun/adjective	Latin <i>capitalis</i> (of the head)
<b>central</b>	adjective	Latin <i>centralis</i>
<b>natural</b>	adjective	Latin <i>naturalis</i>
<b>magical</b>	adjective	<i>magic + -al</i>
<b>musical</b>	adjective	<i>music + -al</i>
<b>oval</b>	adjective/noun	Latin <i>ovalis</i> (egg-shaped)
<b>petal</b>	noun	Greek <i>petalon</i> (leaf)
<b>signal</b>	noun/verb	Latin <i>signale</i>
<b>total</b>	adjective/noun	Latin <i>totalis</i>
<b>local</b>	adjective	Latin <i>localis</i>

## The *-il* ending (a small set – learn individually)

Word	Meaning
<b>fossil</b>	preserved remains of ancient life
<b>nostril</b>	one of the two openings of the nose
<b>pencil</b>	a writing implement
<b>evil</b>	morally wrong; very bad
<b>pupil</b>	a student; the dark centre of the eye
<b>lentil</b>	a type of legume
<b>April</b>	the fourth month
<b>until</b>	up to the time that
<b>utensil</b>	a tool or implement, especially for cooking
<b>vigil</b>	a period of staying awake to watch or pray

*These must be learned individually — there is no reliable pattern for predicting -il.*

## Common mistakes

Wrong	Right	Reason
<i>tablel</i>	<b>table</b>	<i>-le</i> not an extra <i>l</i>
<i>cammel</i>	<b>camel</b>	<i>-el</i> after <i>m</i> ; only one <i>m</i>
<i>tunnle</i>	<b>tunnel</b>	<i>-el</i> not <i>-le</i> after <i>n</i>
<i>animle</i>	<b>animal</b>	<i>-al</i> ending for this Latin noun
<i>fossal</i>	<b>fossil</b>	<i>-il</i> – must learn individually
<i>pencal</i>	<b>pencil</b>	<i>-il</i> – must learn individually
<i>squrrel</i>	<b>squirrel</b>	<i>-el</i> after <i>r</i> ; double <i>r</i>

## Word sort

---

*Sort by ending.*

**Words:** table · camel · metal · fossil · apple · tunnel · animal · pencil · circle · squirrel · hospital · little · travel · nostril · natural

<b>-le</b>	<b>-el</b>	<b>-al</b>	<b>-il</b>

---

## Dictation sentences

---

The **camel** crossed the **natural** landscape and found **little** shelter.

She packed a **pencil** and a **novel** into the **barrel** for the trip.

The **hospital** had a **central tunnel** that connected the two buildings.

She turned the **pedal** on the **metal** frame with a **simple** flick.

The **squirrel** hid its **total** supply of nuts inside the **circle** of trees.

---

*Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). All examples verified against Year 2 statutory content.*