

Year 2 · Free resource

Adding suffixes: the three core spelling change rules

Year group: 2

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

Curriculum requirement: Statutory

Introduction

Year 2 establishes three rules that children will use for the rest of their lives. Every suffix-adding decision in KS2 and beyond builds on these three foundations.

Rule 1: The doubling rule (CVC + vowel suffix)

When to double: a word ends in a **single consonant** after a **single short vowel**, AND the suffix begins with a vowel.

*run + -ing = **running** (short /ʌ/, single n → double)*

*hop + -ed = **hopped** (short /ɒ/, single p → double)*

*big + -er = **bigger** (short /ɪ/, single g → double)*

When NOT to double:

Two vowels before the consonant: *read + -ing = **reading** (not *readding*)*

Two consonants at end: *jump + -ed = **jumped** (not *jumppped*)*

Consonant suffix: *help + -ful = **helpful** (no doubling — *-ful* starts with a consonant)*

The CVC check:

Word	Consonant	Vowel	Consonant	Double?
<i>run</i>	–	u	n	YES
<i>read</i>	–	ea (two)	d	NO
<i>jump</i>	–	u	mp (two)	NO
<i>plan</i>	–	a	n	YES
<i>rain</i>	–	ai (two)	n	NO

CVC + vowel suffix examples

Base	+ <i>-ing</i>	+ <i>-ed</i>	+ <i>-er</i>	+ <i>-est</i>
<i>run</i>	running	ran (irregular)	runner	–
<i>hop</i>	hopping	hopped	hopper	–
<i>big</i>	–	–	bigger	biggest
<i>swim</i>	swimming	–	swimmer	–
<i>plan</i>	planning	planned	planner	–
<i>flat</i>	flattest	–	flatter	flattest
<i>sit</i>	sitting	–	sitter	–
<i>step</i>	stepping	stepped	–	–
<i>nap</i>	napping	napped	–	–
<i>red</i>	–	–	redder	reddest
<i>thin</i>	thinning	thinned	thinner	thinnest

Rule 2: The drop-the-e rule (silent final e + vowel suffix)

When to drop the e: a word ends in a **silent e**, AND the suffix begins with a vowel.

*make + -ing = **making** (drop the e)*

*nice + -er = **nicer** (drop the e)*

*brave + -est = **bravest** (drop the e)*

Why: The silent e is doing a job — making the vowel before it long (*mAke, nIce, brAve*). When the vowel suffix arrives, *it* takes over that job. The silent e is no longer needed, so we drop it.

When NOT to drop the e: if the suffix begins with a **consonant**, keep the e.

*nice + -ly = **nicely** (keep e — -ly starts with consonant)*

*brave + -ly = **bravely** (keep e)*

*hope + -ful = **hopeful** (keep e)*

*care + -less = **careless** (keep e)*

Drop-the-e examples

Base	+ <i>-ing</i>	+ <i>-ed</i>	+ <i>-er</i>	+ <i>-est</i>	+ <i>-ly</i> (keep e)
<i>make</i>	making	made	–	–	–
<i>like</i>	liking	liked	–	–	–
<i>nice</i>	–	–	nicer	nicest	nicely
<i>safe</i>	–	–	safer	safest	safely
<i>love</i>	loving	loved	–	–	lovely
<i>hope</i>	hoping	hoped	–	–	hopeful
<i>use</i>	using	used	–	–	useful
<i>skate</i>	skating	skated	–	–	–
<i>smile</i>	smiling	smiled	–	–	–
<i>shine</i>	shining	shined/shone	shiner	–	–

Rule 3: The **-y to -i** rule

When to change **y** to **i**: a word ends in **consonant + y**, AND you add any suffix **except -ing**.

*happy + -ness = **happiness** (consonant **p** before **y** → change **y** to **i**)*

*cry + -ed = **cried** (consonant **r** before **y** → change **y** to **i**)*

*cry + -ing = **crying** (keep **y** before **-ing** — always)*

*busy + -ness = **business***

When **NOT** to change:

If the suffix is **-ing**: *try + -ing = **trying** (never *triing*)*

If the word ends in vowel + **y**: *play + -ed = **played** (vowel before **y** — no change)*

-y to -i examples

Base	+ -ed	+ -er	+ -est	+ -ness	+ -ly	+ -ing (keep y)
<i>happy</i>	–	happier	happiest	happiness	happily	– <i>(adjectives don't take -ing)</i>
<i>cry</i>	cried	–	–	–	–	crying
<i>try</i>	tried	–	–	–	–	trying
<i>carry</i>	carried	carrier	–	–	–	carrying
<i>busy</i>	–	busier	busiest	business	busily	busying
<i>heavy</i>	–	heavier	heaviest	–	heavily	heaving <i>(different)</i>
<i>easy</i>	–	easier	easiest	–	easily	easing
<i>tidy</i>	tidied	tidier	tidiest	tidiness	tidily	tidying
<i>angry</i>	–	angrier	angriest	–	angrily	–

The three rules together – a decision tree

Adding a suffix. What type?

Does the suffix begin with a VOWEL (-ing, -ed, -er, -est)?

YES:

Does the base word end in silent -e?

YES → DROP the e (making, nicer, bravest)

NO:

Does the base word end in CVC pattern?

YES → DOUBLE the final consonant (running, hopped, bigger)

NO → Add directly (jumping, reading, helped)

Does the suffix begin with a CONSONANT (-ly, -ful, -less, -ment, -ness)?

YES:

Does the base word end in consonant + y?

YES → CHANGE y to i (happiness, busily, angrily)

NO → Add directly (nicely, hopeful, careless)

Common mistakes

Wrong	Right	Rule broken
<i>runing</i>	running	CVC → double
<i>makeing</i>	making	drop the e
<i>hapyness</i>	happiness	y → i before -ness
<i>cring</i>	crying	keep y before -ing
<i>nicer (from nice)</i>	nicer	correct! ✓
<i>hopeful (from hope)</i>	hopeful	correct – consonant suffix, keep e ✓
<i>jumppping</i>	jumping	don't double after two consonants

Word sort

Apply the correct rule and write the new word.

Base + suffix	New word (write it)	Rule used
<i>swim + -ing</i>		
<i>make + -er</i>		
<i>happy + -est</i>		
<i>jump + -ed</i>		
<i>shine + -ing</i>		
<i>try + -ing</i>		
<i>carry + -ed</i>		
<i>hope + -ful</i>		
<i>plan + -ed</i>		
<i>easy + -ly</i>		

Dictation sentences

She was **running** and **swimming** all morning, and felt **happier** than ever.

Carrying the **heavier** box was **easier** than she had **expected**.

He was **smiling** as he **tried** and **tried** again until he **succeeded**.

The **busiest** part of **planning** was **making** sure everyone was **informed**.

It was **nicely wrapped** and **tidily placed** on the table.

Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). All rules stated as per the statutory document. Examples verified against Year 2 statutory content.