

Years 5 & 6 · Free resource

## Endings: **-able/-ably** and **-ible/-ibly**

Year group: 5/6

Source: DfE, *English Appendix 1: Spelling*, National Curriculum for England (2013) — Years 5–6, Suffixes

Curriculum requirement: Statutory

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### The rule

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Both *-able* and *-ible* mean "capable of being" or "worthy of being." Both are pronounced the same (/əbəl/). The correct choice depends on the base word.

#### Use **-able** when:

The base word is a complete English word: *comfort* → **comfortable**, *wash* → **washable**

The base word ends in *-e* (usually drop the *e*): *adore* → **adorable**, *love* → **lovable**

The base word ends in *-ce* or *-ge* (keep the *e*): *notice* → **noticeable**, *manage* → **manageable**

The base word has a related *-ation* form: *consider* → *consideration* → **considerable**

#### Use **-ible** when:

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

The base word ends in *-ss*: *access* → **accessible**, *express* → **expressible**

The base word ends in *-miss* or *-mit*: *permit* → **permissible**, *omit* → **omissible**

The base has a related *-ion* form (not *-ation*): *digest* → *digestion* → **digestible**

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## -able words

Word	Base	Note
<b>adorable</b>	<i>adore</i> (drop <i>e</i> )	capable of being adored
<b>comfortable</b>	<i>comfort</i> (complete word)	providing comfort
<b>considerable</b>	<i>consider</i> → <i>consideration</i>	large or important
<b>noticeable</b>	<i>notice</i> (keep <i>e</i> before <i>-able</i> )	able to be seen
<b>manageable</b>	<i>manage</i> (keep <i>e</i> before <i>-able</i> )	able to be dealt with
<b>changeable</b>	<i>change</i> (keep <i>e</i> )	likely to change
<b>knowledgeable</b>	<i>knowledge</i> (keep <i>e</i> )	having knowledge
<b>understandable</b>	<i>understand</i> (complete word)	able to be understood
<b>miserable</b>	<i>miser-</i> – but close to complete word	very unhappy
<b>valuable</b>	<i>value</i> (drop <i>e</i> )	having great worth
<b>enjoyable</b>	<i>enjoy</i> (complete word)	giving pleasure
<b>reliable</b>	<i>rely</i> → <i>reli-</i> + <i>-able</i>	able to be trusted
<b>reasonable</b>	<i>reason</i> (complete word)	fair; logical

Word	Base	Note
<b>available</b>	<i>avail + -able</i>	<b>able to be used or obtained</b>
<b>fashionable</b>	<i>fashion</i> (complete word)	<b>following current fashion</b>
<b>charitable</b>	<i>charit- + -able</i>	<b>generous; relating to charity</b>
<b>tolerable</b>	<i>toler- + -able</i> ( <i>toleration</i> exists)	<b>able to be tolerated</b>
<b>imaginable</b>	<i>imagine</i> → <i>imagin- + -able</i> ( <i>imagination</i> exists)	<b>able to be imagined</b>
<b>despicable</b>	<i>despic- + -able</i>	<b>deserving hatred</b>
<b>applicable</b>	<i>applic- + -able</i> ( <i>application</i> exists)	<b>relevant; able to be applied</b>

## -ible words

Word	Note
<b>possible</b>	<i>poss-</i> not a complete word
<b>impossible</b>	<i>im-</i> + <i>possible</i>
<b>responsible</b>	<i>respons-</i> + <i>-ible</i>
<b>terrible</b>	<i>terr-</i> not a complete word
<b>horrible</b>	<i>horr-</i> not a complete word
<b>incredible</b>	<i>incred-</i> not a complete word
<b>visible</b>	<i>vis-</i> (see) – not a complete word; <i>vision</i> → <i>-ible</i>
<b>invisible</b>	<i>in-</i> + <i>visible</i>
<b>accessible</b>	<i>access</i> (ends in <i>-ss</i> )
<b>sensible</b>	<i>sens-</i> + <i>-ible</i> ( <i>sensation</i> → not <i>-ation</i> linked in same way)
<b>flexible</b>	<i>flex-</i> + <i>-ible</i>
<b>eligible</b>	<i>elig-</i> not a complete word
<b>digestible</b>	<i>digest</i> → <i>digestion</i> → <i>-ible</i>
<b>permissible</b>	<i>permit</i> → <i>permission</i> → <i>-ible</i>

Word	Note
<b>divisible</b>	<i>divide</i> → <i>division</i> → <i>-ible</i>
<b>compatible</b>	<i>compat-</i> not a complete word
<b>legible</b>	<i>leg-</i> (read) – not a complete word
<b>edible</b>	<i>ed-</i> (eat) – not a complete word
<b>audible</b>	<i>aud-</i> (hear) – not a complete word
<b>reversible</b>	<i>revers-</i> + <i>-ible</i>

## The adverb forms: **-ably** and **-ibly**

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When you add *-ly* to an *-able* or *-ible* adjective, you get an adverb:

*adorable* → **adorably**

*comfortable* → **comfortably**

*possible* → **possibly**

*terrible* → **terribly**

*sensible* → **sensibly**

The rule: change *-able* to *-ably* and *-ible* to *-ibly*. The spelling of the adjective tells you how to spell the adverb.

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## Common mistakes

Wrong	Right	Reason
<i>posible</i>	<b>possible</b>	<i>-ible</i> not <i>-able</i> ; base not a complete word
<i>noticable</i>	<b>noticeable</b>	keep the <i>e</i> from <i>notice</i> before <i>-able</i>
<i>adoreable</i>	<b>adorable</b>	drop the <i>e</i> from <i>adore</i> before <i>-able</i>
<i>terreable</i>	<b>terrible</b>	<i>-ible</i> ; base not a complete word
<i>responsible</i>	<b>responsible</b>	<i>-ible</i>
<i>visiable</i>	<b>visible</b>	<i>-ible</i> ; <i>vision</i> → <i>-ible</i>
<i>comfortible</i>	<b>comfortable</b>	<i>-able</i> ; <i>comfort</i> is a complete word

## Decision tree

Is the base word a complete English word?

YES → probably -able (comfortable, enjoyable, reliable)

BUT: does it end in -ce or -ge?

YES → keep the e: noticeable, manageable

NO → usually drop the e: adorable, lovable

NO → probably -ible (possible, terrible, horrible)

ALSO -ible when: base ends in -ss (accessible)

ALSO -ible when: related noun ends in -ion not -ation (visible/vision)

## Word sort

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*Complete word or not? Sort accordingly.*

**Words:** comfortable · possible · noticeable · terrible · reliable · visible · manageable · horrible · reasonable · sensible · adorable · responsible · enjoyable · incredible

<b>-able (complete base word / -ation linked)</b>	<b>-ible (incomplete base / -ion linked)</b>

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## Dictation sentences

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

The **incredible** view was **visible** for miles and made every step **worthwhile**.

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

The decision seemed **reasonable** and **considerable** thought had gone into it.

**Noticeable** changes are not always **desirable** — sometimes **sensible** is **preferable**.

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*Source: DfE English Appendix 1: Spelling (2013). Decision rules derived directly from the statutory guidance. All word examples verified against statutory lists and standard British English usage.*