/shus/ endings spelt –cious or –tious

Use –tious if it can also have a –tion /shun/ ending:

ambitious (ambition)

cautious (caution)

infectious (infection)

nutritious (nutrition)

pretentious (pretention)

fictitious (fiction)

superstitious (superstition)

repetitious (repetition)

Use –cious if the root word ends in –ce:

conscious (science)

precious (price)

vicious (vice)

gracious (grace)

ferocious (fierce)

malicious (malice)

delicious

suspicious

Compete rule breaker: anxious

/shul/ endings spelt –cial or –tial

Use –cial after a vowel:

Use –tial after a consonant:

official

special

artificial

crucial

social

beneficial

superficial

financial

partial

confidential

essential

potential

substantial

influential

torrential

initial

Exceptions

Complete rule breaker: controversial

Endings spelt –ant**/**–ance**/**–ancy or –ent**/**–ence**/**–ency 1

These words follow no specific rules and you can’t hear which ending to use; you just need to learn them. Nonetheless, here are some tips that will help:

TIP: use ‘a’ if there is a related word with an /a/ or /ai/ sound in the right position:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| observant (observation)  elegant  restaurant  relevant  significant  pleasant  triumphant  reluctant | tolerance (toleration)  elegance  nuisance  hindrance  distance  ignorance  appearance  performance | hesitancy (hesitation)  infancy  pregnancy  vacancy  truancy  discrepancy  buoyancy  redundancy |

Endings spelt –ant**/**–ance**/**–ancy or –ent**/**–ence**/**–ency 2

These words follow no specific rules and you can’t hear which ending to use; you just need to learn them. Nonetheless, here are some tips that will help:

TIP: use ‘e’ if there is a related word with an /e/ sound in the right position:

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| environment (environmental)  ancient  apparent  parliament  government  excellent  sufficient  equipment | influence (influential)  confidence (confidential)  convenience  existence  conscience  innocence  experience  patience | frequency  emergency  urgency  currency  tendency  decency  consistency  fluency |

Endings spelt –able**/**–ably or –ible**/**–ibly 1

TIP: use ‘a’ if a complete root word can be heard:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| reasonable  enjoyable  adorable  desirable  available  reliable | reasonably  remarkably  understandably  noticeably  uncomfortably  undeniably |

(keeps e to keep soft c sound)

‘y’ changes to ‘i’

Some words still use ‘a’ when you cannot hear a root word:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| capable  vegetable | miserably  probably |

If the tip confuses you, just learn the words. If ever in doubt, look it up.

Endings spelt –able**/**–ably or –ible**/**–ibly 2

TIP: use ‘i’ if a complete root word cannot be heard:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| horrible  terrible  invisible  incredible  possible  invincible | horribly  terribly  visibly  incredibly  possibly  impossibly |

Some words still use ‘i’ when you can hear a root word:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| sensible  responsible | forcibly  irresistibly |

If the tip confuses you, just learn the words. If ever in doubt, look it up.

Adding suffixes that begin with vowels to words ending in –fer

Double r if the –fer is still stressed when the suffix is added:

preferring transferring referring inferring

preferred transferred referred inferred

Single r if the –fer is no longer stressed:

preference reference inference

preferable referee

Single r if the –fer was never stressed to begin with:

differing differed difference

offering offered

Use of the hyphen -

Hyphens join some prefixes to root words. Here’s why:

To avoid doubling a vowel:

co-ordinate co-own co-operate

re-enter re-examine

To avoid confusion with another word:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| re-cover  re-sent  re-sign  With the hyphen, the re acts as a prefix (to do something again). | recover  resent  resign  Without the hyphen, these words have their own unique meanings. |

Words like redo & reheat don’t need a hyphen: there’s no double vowel and there’s no other words to confuse them with.

Words with the /ee/ sound spelt ei after c

The ‘i before e except after c’ rule works when the sound made by the ei is /ee/:

deceive /ee/ receipt /ee/ ceiling /ee/ conceive /ee/

deceit /ee/ receive /ee/ perceive /ee/

Exceptions – these words contain ei /ee/ but not after c:

caffeine /ee/ protein /ee/ seize /ee/

If the rule confuses you, just learn the words.

If ever in doubt, look it up.

Words containing ough

ough is used to spell a number of different sounds:

ought /or/

bought /or/

brought /or/

thought /or/

fought /or/

nought /or/

though /o-e/

although /o-e/

dough /o-e/

thorough /u/

rough /u f/

tough /u f/

enough /u f/

cough /o f/

plough /ow/

drought /ow/

through /oo/