

Step by Step Free Spelling Lesson

Doubling the final consonant when adding suffixes

In this free spelling lesson, you'll learn when to double and when not to double the final consonant in a word when adding a suffix that begins with a vowel.

Take this short pretest first. Circle the misspelled words.

Mary listened carefully before entering the room. Once she decided it was safe, she quietly opened the door and crept inside. Suddenly, an ear-splitting sound sent her running outside. She spotted the thieves jogging to their car. Preferring not to get involved in a chase, she dialled 9-1-1.

Check your answers at the back of this lesson before continuing.

Step One

Begin to memorize this rule:

- A. If a word with the accent on the last (or only) syllable
- B. has a single final consonant
- C. that is preceded by a single vowel,
- D. then when adding a suffix that begins with a vowel,
- E. you double the final consonant.

It's not as hard as it looks, when you examine it Step by Step!

Step Two

Let's start with *clap* and go through each portion of the rule as we add the suffix *-ed*.

- A. Is the accent on the last or only syllable? Yes, it's a one syllable word.
- B. Does it have a final consonant? Yes, *p*
- C. Is the consonant preceded by a short vowel? Yes, short *a*.
- D. Does the suffix *-ed* begin with a vowel. Yes, *e*
- E. Should you double the final consonant? Yes, *clapped*.

Follow this same exercise with one-syllable words. Write each new word that you form.

win + ing = _____ bat + er = _____ play + ed = _____

sit + ing = _____ slow + est = _____ nod + ing = _____

Check your answers at the end of this lesson.

Step Three

Now we'll look at some two-syllable words. Here the accent is important. Let's begin with *differ* plus the suffix *-ent* and go through the five steps again.

A. Is the accent on the last syllable? No. It's pronounced DIF – fer.
We do not need to go through the rest of the steps. Although the word has a final consonant, and we're adding a suffix that begins with a vowel, we do not double the *r* because the accent is on the first syllable. The new word is correctly spelled *different*.

Now consider *forgot* + *-en*.

A. Is the accent on the last syllable? Yes. We say for – GOT.

B. Does it have a final consonant? Yes, *t*.

C. Is the final consonant preceded by a short vowel? Yes, short *o*.

D. Does the suffix begin with a vowel? Yes, *e*.

E. Should we double the final consonant? Yes, *forgotten*.

Complete the steps above as you form these new words.

control + able _____ submit + ing _____ begin + ing _____

regret + able _____ transmit + er _____ forbid + en _____

shovel + ing _____ enter + ing _____ equip + ed _____

Now practice what you've learned in the first three steps.

1. My puppy gave me the (big + est) _____, (wet + est) _____ kiss ever!

2. The back tire is even (flat + er) _____ than the front one. We'll need to get it (repair + ed) _____.

3. The boss (refer + ed) _____ to problems in the (propel + er) _____.

4. It (occur + ed) _____ to the struggling player that he didn't want to be known as a (quit + er) _____.

5. We'll be (get + ing) _____ dinner after we finish our (shop + ing) _____

6. I (conceal + ed) _____ the sound of the (drip + ing) _____ faucet.

Check your answers at the end of the lesson.

Step Four

Not every English spelling word fits neatly into our 5-part rule. Here are some special cases which you will need to study and memorize.

1) The word *transfer* is usually pronounced with an accent on the first syllable, *TRANS-fer*. However, the word is treated as if the accent is on the last syllable. We double the *r* when adding suffixes beginning with vowels: *transferred*, *transferring*.

2) The word *prefer* has an accent on the second syllable, *preFER*. When we add *-ing* or *-ed*, we spell *preferring* and *preferred*.

But when we add *-ence*, we do not double the final R. Why? The accent moves. In *preference*, the accent is on the first syllable.

3) The word *excel* has an accent on the second syllable. We double the *l* when adding *-ing*, *-ence*, and *-ent*. Remember the words *prefer* and *preference*? In *excellence* (as in *preference*) the accent moves back to the first syllable. Unlike *prefer* + *-ence*, however, we double the final consonant with *excel* + *-ence*.

The best way to master these rather weird words is to memorize them.

Write the words you form in the blanks.

transfer + ed _____	transfer + ing _____
excel + ent _____	prefer + ed _____
prefer + ence _____	excel + ing _____
excel + ence _____	prefer + ing _____

Check your answers at the end of this lesson.

Step Five

Another unusual set of words contains words that end in a vowel followed by a *c*, *such as picnic*. If we follow the rule in Step One, we see that since picnic has an accent on the first syllable, we would not expect to double the final *c*.

Instead, these words often add a *k* before the suffix:

picnic/picnicking
frolic/frolicking

panic/panicky
colic/colicky

traffic/trafficking

Again, the best way to learn these words is to memorize them. Just *looking* at these words will help fix them in your mind because they are, indeed, a bit strange.

Step Six

Alternate spellings

When adding suffixes to certain words, American spellings differ from British spellings.

Examples include:

American

channeled, channeling
penciled, penciling
caroled, caroling
traveler, traveling
chiseled, chiseling
modeled, modeling

British

channelled, channelling
pencilled, pencilling
carolled, carolling
traveller, travelling
chiselled, chiselling
modelled, modelling

American dictionaries will often show that both spellings of these words are acceptable.

There are also other words with two acceptable spellings:

EITHER canceled, canceling, cancelation OR cancelled, cancelling, cancellation
benefited, benefiting benefitted, benefitting

Write your preferred spelling of these words:

pencil + ed _____ carol + er _____ travel + ing _____

cancel + ing _____ benefit + ed _____ model + ing _____

Step Seven

Review the entire lesson.

Circle the correct spelling in each word pair. If both words are acceptable, circle both of them.

1. modeling - modelling
2. panicky - panicy
3. forgotten – forgoten
4. trafficking - trafficking
5. benefitted - benefited
6. traveller - traveler
7. referred – refered
8. dropping – droppng
9. siter – sitter

Circle the misspelled words in this story. Write them correctly in the blanks below.

It just so happened that while we were picnicing, we noticed a small skunk traped under a log. He was clearly in pain, sufferring from a broken leg. It was, indeed, an unusual occurrence.

We enterred into a discussion. Were we really equiped to help the animal? In all deferrence to him, we did not want to receive any propelant the little guy might spray.

Finally, we felt compeled to assist the poor creature. Just as we were begining to release his leg, his “gift” was transmitted. It was, sadly, for us a regretable rescue.

Check your answers at the end of this lesson.

Step Eight

Make a list of any words you missed in Step Seven to study. Review this lesson occasionally to remind yourself of the correct way to add endings to these words.

Congratulations on completing this Step-By-Step lesson!

Answers

Pretest

Mary listened carefully before **entering** the room. Once she decided it was safe, she quietly **opened** the door and crept inside. Suddenly, an ear-**splitting** sound sent her **running** outside. She spotted the thieves **jogging** to their car. **Preferring** not to get involved in a chase, she **dialed** 9-1-1.

Step Two

winning, batter, played, sitting, slowest, nodding

Step Three

controllable, submitting, beginning, regrettable, transmitter, forbidden, shoveling, entering, equipped

1. biggest, wettest
2. flatter, repaired
3. referred, propeller
3. occurred, quitter
4. getting, shopping
5. concealed, dripping

Step Four

transferred, transferring, excellent, preferred, preference, excelling, excellence, preferring

Step Six

Answers will vary.

Step Seven

1. both
2. panicky
3. forgotten
4. trafficking
5. both
6. both
7. referred
8. dropping
9. sitter

These corrections are needed: picnicking, trapped, suffering, entered, equipped, deference, propellant, compelled, beginning, regrettable