Spelling Tips

Key terms:
- **Syllable** = one sound/one syllable, for example, **got**
  - two sounds/two syllables, for example, **forgot (for/got)**
- **Singular** = one thing, for example, **toy; computer**
- **Plural** = two or more things, for example, **toys; computers**
- **Vowels** = **a, e, i, o, u**
- **Consonants** = the remaining 21 letters of the alphabet
  - (b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z)

1. **Words ending in silent ‘e’**

   Drop the ‘e’ when adding these endings: **-er** **–** **-ed** **–** **-ing** **–** **-en** **-ous**
   
   taste + ed = tasted
   wipe + ing = wiping
   fame + ous = famous

2. **‘i’ before ‘e’ except after ‘c’ when the sound is ‘ee’**

   - **i before e**, for example, **field, believe** (the sound is ‘ee’)
   - **except after ‘c’**, for example, **receive** (the sound is still ‘ee’). Note the **‘ei’**
   - **Exceptions**: weird, seize, Feilding

3. **Double the final consonant**

   When using one-syllable, short vowel words ending in a consonant, e.g. big,
   double the final consonant when adding the endings **-er** **–** **-ed** **–** **-est** **–** **-ing**
   
   rob + er = robber
   nab + ed = nabbed
   big + est = biggest
   swim + ing = swimming

4. **Words ending in -ful**

   When ‘full’ is added to a word, change ‘full’ to **‘ful’**
   
   use + full = useful
   hope + full = hopeful
   care + full = carefull

5. **Silent letters – watch out for them**

   - **g – sign**
   - **w – wrist**
   - **k – knee**
   - **b – climb**
   - **p – psychology**
   - **h – hour**
   - **t – glisten**
   - **u – guide**
   - **n – autumn**
   - **c – scientist**
6. Ending with –able or -ible

- If the base word is a complete word, use –able
  
  comfort + able = comfortable
  
  fashion + able = fashionable

- If the base word is not a complete word, use -ible
  
  impossible; invisible; eligible; terrible

7. Making the plural for words ending in ‘y’

When a word ends in consonant ‘y’, for example, baby, make the plural by changing the ‘y’ to ‘ies’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>baby</td>
<td>babies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>library</td>
<td>libraries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fly</td>
<td>flies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Odd plurals – watch out for them

- mouse
- child
- plateau
- focus
- curriculum
- phenomenon

- Singular                  | Plural                  |
- mouse                     | mice                    |
- child                     | children                |
- plateau                   | plateaux                |
- focus                     | foci                    |
- curriculum                | curricula               |
- phenomenon                | phenomena               |

Remember, some do not change at all:

- sheep
- deer
- salmon
- Māori

9. Compound words – two words put together to make another word

- wheel + chair = wheelchair
- any + thing = anything
- out + look = outlook

10. Homonyms – SAME sound - DIFFERENT spelling - DIFFERENT meaning

- bear/bare
- weather/whether/wether
- where/wear
- piece/peace
- your/you’re
- to/too/two
- by/buy
- their/there

Spelling tips last updated 22 August 2008