

Definitions and Rules

- The **vowels** are **a, i, u, o, e**, and sometimes **y** (when it has the sound of **long i** or **long e**) and **w** (when it is part of a double vowel, as in **cow**).
- The **consonants** are all the remaining letters of the alphabet and usually **y** and **w**.
- A **consonant blend** consists of two or more consonants sounded together so that each consonant can be heard—**black, train, swim, spring, fast, lamp**.
- A **consonant digraph** consists of two consonants that together represent one sound—**when, thin, this, cheese, sheep, pack, know, white**.
- A **vowel digraph** is an irregular double vowel that does not follow Long-Vowel Rule I—**school, book, bread, auto, yawn, eight**.
- A **diphthong** consists of two vowels blended together to form a compound speech sound—**cloud, boy, oil, cow, new**.
- A **compound word** is made from two or more smaller words—**doghouse (dog house), sandbox (sand box)**.
- A **contraction** is a short way to write two words as one. It is made by writing the two words together, leaving out one or more letters, and replacing the missing letters with an apostrophe (').
- **Synonyms** are words that have the same or almost the same meaning.
- **Antonyms** are words that are opposite or almost opposite in meaning.
- **Homonyms** are words that sound alike but have different meanings and usually different spellings.
- A **base word** is a word to which a prefix or suffix may be added to form a new word—**printer, unpack, likely**.
- **Short-Vowel Rule:** If a word or syllable has only one vowel and it comes at the beginning or between two consonants, the vowel is usually short—**am, is, bag, fox**.
- **Long-Vowel Rule I:** If a syllable has two vowels, the first vowel is usually long and the second vowel is silent—**rain, kite, cane, jeep, ray**.
- **Long-Vowel Rule II:** If a word or syllable has one vowel and it comes at the end of the word or syllable, the vowel is usually long—**we, go, pony**.
- **Soft C and G Rule:** When **c** or **g** is followed by **e, i, or y**, it is usually soft—**ice, city, change, gym**.
- To make a word **plural**:
 - 1) Usually just add **s**—**cats, dogs, kites**.
 - 2) If a word ends in **x, z, ss, sh, or ch**, usually add **es**—**foxes, dresses, peaches**.
 - 3) If a word ends in **y** preceded by a consonant, change the **y** to **i** and add **es**—**flies, parties, babies**.
- To add other suffixes:
 - 1) When a short-vowel word ends in a single consonant, usually double the consonant before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel—**running, hummed, batter**.
 - 2) When a word ends in silent **e**, drop the **e** before adding a suffix that begins with a vowel—**baking, taped, latest**.
 - 3) When a word ends in **y** preceded by a consonant, change the **y** to **i** before adding a suffix other than **ing**—**cried, happily, funnier, ponies, trying**.