

Silent Letters

English spelling is difficult. Many words are not said the same way they are spelled. Also, there are many words which have letters that we do not say.

For example: The word "wrong" is spelled with a "w", but we say "*rong*." The "w" is silent.

With some words it is difficult to know if a letter is silent or not, but there are some rules you can remember to help you.



1. Each of the words below has 1 silent letter. Work with a partner and underline the letter you think is silent.

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| a) like | h) half |
| b) two | i) autumn |
| c) talk | j) should |
| d) walk | k) guest |
| e) dumb | l) write |
| f) know | m) school |
| g) washed | n) muscle |



2. The text below has 13 silent letters. Circle the letters you think are silent.

My friend Tom is 30 years old. Every day he takes the bus to work. He likes the bus, he does not like to drive his car. The bus takes too much time for me, and it is too loud, so I ride my bike or walk if the weather is good. I live close to work. If it is raining, usually I just stay at home.



3. Now listen to the audio to see if you are right.

The Silent "E"

Most of the silent letters in exercise 2 were "silent e's" at the end of words. This is one of the most common silent letters in English. When the letter 'e' is at the end of a word, it often makes the vowel before it sound long.

For example "Bike" is said with a long "i" sound, but if remove the "e" from the end of the word, the "i" sound is shorter. Bike (biiik) vs bik (bik).

There are many words that follow this rule, but there are some exceptions, such as "live", "love", "come", and "have."



4. Practice reading the words below out loud. Do you know what they mean?

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| a) make | h) rate |
| b) take | j) hate |
| c) lose | k) broke |
| d) gave | l) came |
| e) bite | m) lake |
| f) same | n) smoke |
| g) use | o) hope |

Pronouncing "ed"

Many words in English end in "ed," particularly past tense verbs

For example: *He loved chocolate when he was a boy.*

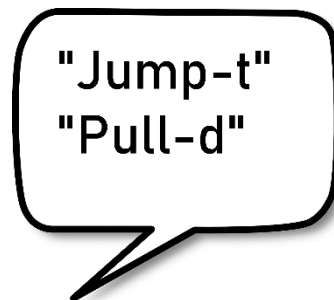
In most words that end in "ed" , the "e" is silent.

For example: "liked" is pronounced "liek-t" not "liekid."



5. Say the sentences out loud

- I washed my car today
- He looked good.
- I talked to my teacher about my homework.
- They laughed at my new haircut.
- He tried to help me
- I loved cartoons when I was a kid.



“ed” after “t” or “d”

Usually the “e” in “ed” is silent, but not after a “t” or a “d” sound.

For example, want ends in a “t” sound, so “wanted” is said “*want-id*”, and “decide” is said “*decied-id*”



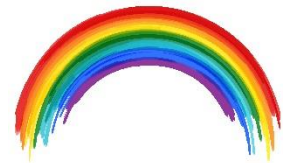
6. Practice saying the sentences below using the rules you have learned.

- a) We should have a picnic next to the lake.
- b) He decided to leave the party.
- c) They wanted to make a cake for my friend Kate.
- d) After the movie ended, we decided we did not like it.
- e) He looked very sick today.
- f) Can I please take this cat home?



7. There are some rules to help with silent letters, but many you just have to learn. Each sentence below contains 2 silent letters. Circle the silent letters.

- a) My name is Jenny, pleased to meet you.
- b) The rainbow has beautiful colours.
- c) We should leave now.
- d) These apples taste amazing.
- e) Four people needed water.
- f) When do you want to go to school?
- g) Do we have enough time?
- h) I have a lot of friends.
- i) I hate that building, it's so ugly!



 **8. Listen to the man reading a story and circle the silent letters as he reads.**

A young boy called Jeff lived in a small town surrounded by a beautiful forest. Jeff loved to walk in the forest near his home, and he loved looking for animals.

One sunny afternoon, Jeff walked through some flowers, and he saw a very small bird. Its wing was hurt, and it could not fly. Jeff picked up the bird and carried it home.




At home, he made a nice nest for the bird in a small box and bandaged its wing. Every day, Jeff gave the bird food and talked to it. He hoped it would get better soon. As the days passed, the bird became stronger, and its wing got better.



One morning, the bird was ready to fly again. Jeff took the bird outside and opened his hands. The bird flew into the sky, singing a beautiful song.

Now, every time Jeff walks through the forest, the bird flies down and sits on his shoulder. The bird is now one of Jeff's best friends.



 **9. Now read the story out loud yourself to practice saying the words.**