ENGLISH SPELLING RULES

Short and Long Vowels

1. To spell a short vowel sound, only one letter is needed:

   at    red    it    hot    up

2. To spell a long sound you must add a second vowel. The second may be
   next to the first, in the VVC pattern (boat, maid, cue, etc.) or it may be
   separated from the first one by a consonant in the VCV pattern (made, ride,
   tide, etc.). If the second vowel is separated from the first by two spaces, it
   does not affect the first one. This is the VCCV pattern in which the first
   vowel remains short. Thus, doubling a consonant can be called "protecting" a
   short vowel because it prevents an incoming vowel from getting close
   enough to the first one to change its sound from short to long:

   maid, made, but madder; dine, diner, but dinner.

Spelling the Sound /k/

This sound can be spelled in any one of four ways:

   1. c    2. cc    3. k    4. ck

1. The single letter, c , is the most common spelling. It may be used
   anywhere in a word:
   cat, corn, actor, victim, direct, mica
   scat, bacon, public, cactus, inflict, pecan

2. Sometimes the letter c must be doubled to cc to protect the sound of a
   short vowel:
   stucco, baccalaureate, hiccups
   Mecca, tobacco, buccaneer
   occupy, raccoon, succulent
3. The letter k is substituted for c if /k/ is followed by an e, i, or y.
kin  make  sketch  poker  kind  risky
skin  token  skill  keep  liking  flaky

(Boring examples? How about kyphosis, kylix, keratosis, and dyskinesia?)

4. Similarly, the spelling ck, is substituted for cc if the following letter is an e, i, or y:
lucky  picking  rocking  finicky
blackest  mackintosh  frolicked  ducking
Kentucky  picnicking  stocking  Quebecker

5. The letters, k and ck are more than substitutes for c and cc. They are used to spell /k/ at the end of a monosyllable. The digraph, ck, ALWAYS follows a short vowel:
sack  duck  lick  stick  wreck  clock

(Forget about yak. Your student will never need it.)

The letter, k, follows any other sound:
milk  soak  make  bark
tank  peek  bike  cork
tusk  hawk  duke  perk

The Sound, /j/
The sound, /j/ is spelled in three ways: j ge and dge.

1. The letter j is usually used if the sound if followed by an a, o, or u.
just  jam  jungle  injure  major  adjacent
jog  jar  Japan  jury  job  Benjamin
adjust  jacket  jolly  jaguar  jump  jalousie

2. Since the letter g has the soft sound of /j/ when it is followed by an e, i, or y, it is usually used in this situation:
gentle  ginger  aging  algebra
Egyptologist  gem  origin  gym
3. If /i/ follows a short vowel sound, it is usually spelled with dge. This is because the letter j, is never doubled in English.

badge    ridge    dodge    partridge    gadget
judge    edge    smudge    judgement    budget

The Sound, /ch/

The sound /ch/ has two spellings: tch after a short vowel, ch anywhere else:

witch    sketch    botch    satchel
catch    hatchet    kitchen    escutcheon

Exceptions:
Which, rich, much, such, touch, bachelor, attach, sandwich, and ostrich.

The Sound, /kw/
This sound is ALWAYS spelled with the letters, qu, never anything else.

Using -le

Words ending in -le, such as little, require care. If the vowel sound is short, there must be two consonants between the vowel and the -le. Otherwise, one consonant is enough.

li tt le  ha nd le  ti ck le  a mp le
bo tt le  pu zz le  cru mb le  a ng le

bugle    able    poodle    dawdle    needle    idle    people

Odds and Ends

1. The consonants, v, j, k, w, and x are never doubled.
2. No normal English words ends with the letter v. A final /v/ is always spelled with ve, no matter what the preceding vowel sound may be:

have    give    sleeve    cove
receive    love    connive    brave
# Adding Endings

There are two kinds of suffixes, those that begin with a vowel and those that begin with a consonant. As usual, the spelling problems occur with the vowels:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vowel Suffixes</th>
<th>Consonant Suffixes</th>
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1. Words that end in the letter y must have the y changed to i before adding any suffix:
   - body - bodily
   - marry - marriage
   - many - manifold
   - family - familiar
   - happy - happiness
   - puppy - puppies
   - beauty - beautiful
   - vary - various
   - company - companion
   - fury - furious
   - plenty - plentiful
   - merry - merriment

2. In words that end in a silent e you must drop it before you add a vowel suffix. The silent e is no longer needed to make the preceding vowel long as the incoming vowel will do the trick:
   - ride - riding
   - cure - curable
   - use - usual
   - age - aging
   - fame - famous
   - force - forcing
   - refuse - refusal
   - slice - slicing
   - pure - purity
   - ice - icicle
   - nose - nosy
   - convince - convincing
   - globe - global
   - race - racist
   - pole - polar
   - offense - offensive
3. Words that end in an accented short or modified vowel sound must have the final consonant doubled to protect that sound when you add a vowel suffix:
Quebec - Quebecker remit - remittance confer - conferring refer - referred upset - upsetting shellac - shellacking occur - occurred concur - concurrent

Note that this doubling is not done if the accent is not on the last syllable. If the word ends in a schwa, there is no need to "protect" it.
open - opening organ - organize focus - focused refer - referee

4. Normally you drop a silent e before adding a vowel suffix. However, if the word ends in -ce or -ge and the incoming vowel is an a, o, or u, you cannot cavalierly toss out that silent e. It is not useless: it is keeping its left-hand letter soft, and your a, o, or u will not do that. Thus:
manage - manageable peace - peaceable courage - courageous revenge - vengeance surge - surgeon change - changeable notice - noticeable outrage - outrageous

Gorgeous George bludgeoned a pigeon noticeably! Tsk.

5. Adding consonant suffixes is easy. You just add them. (Of course you must change a final y to i before you add any suffix.)
peace - peaceful harm - harmless age - ageless pity - pitiful child - childhood rifle - riflery

/sh/

When this sound occurs before a vowel suffix, it is spelled ti, si, or ci.
parti - cautious patient vacation special - deficient suspicion succion inertia - delicious ratio pension musician - physician optician quotient electrician - nutrition statistician expulsion
/ee/ before a vowel suffix

When /ee/ precedes a vowel suffix, it is usually spelled with the letter i:
Indian    obvious    medium
ingredient    zodiac    material

Spelling Determined by Word Meaning

1. Mist and missed sound alike, as do band and banned. To determine the spelling, remember that -ed is a past-tense tending.

   1. The mist drifted into the harbor.
   2. I nearly missed my bus.
   3. The movie was banned in Boston.
   4. The band played on.

2. The endings of dentist and finest sound alike. Deciding which one to use can be tricky. One rule helps but doesn't cover all cases:

   1. -ist is a suffix meaning someone who does something:
      artist    -    machinist    -    druggist
   2. -est is the ending used on superlative adjectives:
      finest    -    sweetest    -    longest

3. The sounds at the end of musician and condition sound alike, but....

   1. cian always means a person, where...
   2. tion or sion are never used for people.

4. How do you tell whether to use tion or sion?

   1. If the root word ends in /t/, use -tion: complete, completion
   2. If the root word ends in /s/ or /d/, use sion: extend, extension
      suppress, suppression
   3. If the sound of the last syllable is the "heavy" sound of /zhun/ rather than the light sound, /shun/, use s: confusion, vision, adhesion
Exception: The ending -mit becomes -mission:
permit - permission  omit - omission
submit - submission  commit - commission

The Hiss

1. The letter s between vowels sounds like a z:
nose  result  noise
present  partisan  tease
preside  resound  reserve

2. The light "hissy" sound is spelled with either ss or ce. Predictably, ss, like any proper doubled consonant, follows accented short vowels. Soft c is used anywhere else. (A soft c is one that is followed by e, i, or y).
notice  reticent  massive  bicycle
recent  gossip  russet  rejoice
essence  vessel  discuss  pass

3. The plural ending is always spelled with a single letter s unless you can hear a new syllable on the plural word. In that case, use -es:
loss, losses  bank, banks  twitch, twitches  tree, trees
box, boxes  list, lists  judge, judges

No compendium of spelling rules would be complete with the most important rule of all:
WHEN IN DOUBT, ASK (or look it up)

But ask first - it's quicker.

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http://www.dyslexia.org/spelling_rules.shtml