

Spelling Tips 9 – Words ending in -e

The pattern with single-syllable words ending in -e is that the final *e* lengthens the vowel sound. So *ban* becomes *bane*, *can* becomes *cane*, etc. But then what happens to that final *e* when we start to add other endings?

The general rule is that if the added bit starts with a consonant then there is no problem. So *safe* gives rise to *safety*, *stale* gives rise to *staleness*, *advertise* gives rise to *advertisement*. But there is a difficulty with *judge*, which in British English gives rise to *judgement*, and in American English to *judgment*. Australian English, sandwiched between the other two, can do both, although we prefer *judgement*.

When the added part starts with a vowel, things understandably become more difficult. Mostly the rule is that the -e is dropped before the other ending goes on. So *race* becomes *raced* and *racing*, not *raced* and *raceing*. But with endings like -able we like to be able to see the base word, so *slice* becomes *sliceable*, and *manage* becomes *manageable*. Words that end in -ie change the *ie* to *y* before adding -ing. So *die* gives rise to *dying*, *lie* to *lying*.

Consider these examples:

advertisement: This word comes from the word **advertise**, although there is a change in the sound. This should remind you not to leave out the *e* before the final *ment*. The spelling rule is that words ending in *e* keep their *e* when followed by a suffix that begins with a consonant. Rap it out as *ad + ver + tise + ment*.

argument: This word is formed from the verb **argue**. Words formed from **argue** do not follow the rule which says that words that end with *e* keep the *e* before a suffix starting with a consonant. So in **argument** and **arguable** the *e* from **argue** has been left out. There's no **argument** about that!

indicator: When the -or ending is added to **indicate**, the -e is dropped, following the rule that when a suffix starting with a vowel is added, you lose the -e.

senate: A member of a senate is called a **senator**, following the rule that the final *e* is dropped when adding something to a word.

storage: You will have no trouble with the spelling of this word if you see that it is made up of *store* (with the *e* dropped) and the suffix -age (used in nouns referring to a state or condition).

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