

Spelling – subject knowledge

Code Knowledge

Depending on accent, the English language contains 42 to 45 sounds (phonemes). The table below show 44 sounds: 19 are vowel sounds and 25 are consonant sounds.

Vowel Sounds

Sound	Example	Sound	Example
'a'	fl a t	'oe'	t oe
'ae'	l a d y	'or'	f or
'ar'	s t a r	'oy'	t oy
'air'	p a i r	'ow'	c ow
'e'	p e t	'u'	b u n
'ee'	m e	'ue'	d ue
'er'	h e r	'oo'	m oo n
'i'	p i n	'oul'	c oul d
'ie'	p i e	schwa	th e
'o'	p o t		

Consonant Sounds

Sound	Example	Sound	Example
'b'	b i g	'r'	r e d
'ch'	ch o p	's'	s i t
'd'	d o g	'sh'	sh o p
'f'	f i n	't'	t a p
'g'	g o	'th'	th i n
'h'	h a t	'th'	th a t
'j'	j u g	'v'	v e t
'k'	k i t	'w'	w e t
'l'	l i p	'x'	f i x
'm'	m o p	'y'	y e t
'n'	n u t	'z'	z o o
'ng'	s i n g	'zh'	b e i g e
'p'	p e t		

The alphabet is an invention that represents the sounds of the English language: this is 'the code'. Each sound can be presented by more than one spelling (e.g. rain, day, cake) and many spellings can represent more than one sound (e.g. dream, great, bread). Although there are only 26 letters in the alphabet, there are 175 spellings used frequently and consistently to represent those sounds. As sound-spelling correspondences are introduced systematically, students will be exposed to spellings that are 'exceptions' because they may contain sound-spelling correspondences that have not been taught yet (for example, the 'i' in child is an exception when the child has only learnt the sound-spelling correspondence for 'i' in words like 'sit' and 'big'); teachers should draw students' attention to these exceptions and teach the alternative pronunciations.

Adapted from: https://www.sounds-write.co.uk/sites/soundswrite/uploads/files/49-sounds_write_english_spellings_lexicon.pdf

Morphemes

A 'morpheme' is a short segment of language that is either a word, or a part of a word, that has meaning; it cannot be divided into smaller meaningful segments without changing its meaning. Morphemes can be 'free' or 'bound'.

- 'Free morphemes' can stand alone with a specific meaning (e.g. **eat, date, week**).
- 'Bound morphemes' cannot stand alone with meaning (e.g. **un-, -ing, dis-**).

Morphemes are either bases (or roots) or affixes. An affix is a bound morpheme that occurs before the beginning (prefix) or after the end (suffix) of a base (or root) word. Affixes can be either derivational or inflectional.

Derivational Affix

A derivational affix is a morpheme added to a base word to create a **new word** or a **new form** of an existing word; derivational affixes can be prefixes or suffixes. There are a large number of derivational affixes in English; all prefixes in English are derivational, but suffixes can be derivational or inflectional.

Inflectional Affix

There are only eight 'inflectional affixes' in English, which serve a variety of grammatical functions when added to specific types of words.

-s/-es	noun plural	toys, busses
-'s/-s'	noun possessive	Ben's, bus's, Thomas', babies', children's
-s/-es	verb present tense third person singular	runs, washes
-ing	verb present participle	singing
-ed	verb simple past tense	walked, opened, wanted
-en	verb past perfect participle	forgotten
-er	adjective comparative	bigger
-est	adjective superlative	fastest

Adapted from: <https://www.ntid.rit.edu/sea/processes/wordknowledge/grammatical/whatar>