

KS2 SATs Spelling Reference Guide

Category 1: Suffixes & Word Endings

(Morphological Rules)

Domain	Spelling Pattern / Rule	Key Rule / Morphological Context	Past SATs Test Examples (2011–2026)
S38	Vowel Suffixes (>1 Syllable)	Adding -ed, -ing, -er, -est, -ous to multi-syllable root words. Double final consonant if last syllable is stressed.	rewarded, developed, affordable, inspiring, disobeyed, obtained, suffered, offered, ordering, preference, replacing, referring
S42	Suffix -ation	Added to verbs to form nouns. Drop final 'e' on root verb if present before adding suffix.	alteration, examination, sensation, preparation, duration, admiration, information
S43	Suffix -ly	Converts adjectives to adverbs. Change 'y' to 'i' before -ly if root >1 syllable; change '-le' to '-ly'; add '-ally' to '-ic'.	angrily, steadily, reluctantly, accidentally, curiously, usually, frequently, likely, originally
S44	Endings ture	Spelt (adventure, creature).	adventure, texture, puncture, measure, creature, mixture, departure, furniture
S45	Endings sion	Spelt -sion when added to root words ending in 'd', 'se', or 's'.	explosion, persuasion, television, division, collision, confusion, decision

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S46	Suffix -ous	Means 'full of'. Keep final 'e' before -ous if /j/ sound precedes; '-our' changes to '-or' (humour -> humorous).	jealousy, famous, glorious, ridiculous, generous, curious, adventurous, nervous, humorous
S47	Shun Endings	-tion (most common); -ssion (root ends in ss/mit); -sion (root ends in d/se); -cian (occupations/root ends in c).	suggestion, solution, caution, navigation, reception, attention, operation, percussion, optician, musician
S53	Endings (-cious / -tious)	Used for adjectives. Use -cious if root word ends in 'ce'; -tious if root word ends in 'tion' or 't'.	conscious, nutritious, cautious, ambitious, precious, vicious, delicious, infectious
S54	Endings(-cial / -tial)	-cial is common after a vowel (social, special); -tial is common after a consonant (substantial, essential).	residential, social, substantial, official, special, essential, commercial, partial
S55	-ant/-ance/-ancy & -ent/-ence	-ant/-ance/-ancy if related word has /æ/ sound; -ent/-ence/-ency if related word has /e/ or soft c/g sound.	reluctance, preference, currant, excellent, science, violence, substance, innocent, decency
S56	-able/-ably & -ible/-ibly	-able/-ably are far more common (root word usually complete word); -ible/-ibly used when root is incomplete.	affordable, memorable, undrinkable, invisible, portable, sensibly, probable, possible, horrible
S57	Suffixes on Root '-fer'	Double the 'r' if 'fer' is still stressed when suffix is added (referring,	referring, preference, transferred, reference,

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		transferred); single 'r' if unstressed (preference).	inference, referee, preferred

Category 2: Prefix Patterns & Word Structures

Domain	Spelling Pattern / Rule	Key Rule / Morphological Context	Past SATs Test Examples (2011–2026)
S41	Negative & Structural Prefixes	dis-, mis-, un-, re-, in- (becomes il- before l, im- before m/p, ir- before r). Added directly without changing root.	disappointed, increase, replacing, misconduct, undrinkable, disrespect, disagreement, inactive, irregular

Category 3: Specific Phonetic & Etymological Patterns (GPCs)

Domain	Spelling Pattern / Rule	Key Rule / Linguistic Origin	Past SATs Test Examples (2011–2026)
S39	/i/ Sound Spelt 'y'	Short /i/ sound spelt with letter 'y' inside non-final positions of words (Greek origin).	symbol, lyrics, syrup, pyramid, typical, sympathetic, myth, mystery, system
S40	Sound Spelt 'ou'	Short 'uh' sound (/ʌ/) spelt with the vowel digraph 'ou'.	flourish, young, touch, couple, courage, trouble, country, double, rough

Domain	Spelling Pattern / Rule	Key Rule / Linguistic Origin	Past SATs Test Examples (2011–2026)
S48	/k/ Sound Spelt 'ch'	Hard /k/ sound spelt 'ch' in words of Greek origin.	anchor, chaos, mechanic, character, chorus, architect, monarch, scheme, echo
S49	Sound Spelt 'ch'	Soft /ʃ/ ('sh') sound spelt 'ch' in words derived from French.	machine, chef, brochure, chute, chalet, parachute, chauffeur
S50	-gue & -que Endings	Ending /g/ sound spelt '-gue' and ending /k/ sound spelt '-que' (French origin).	plaque, league, unique, queue, tongue, vague, antique, cheque
S51	/s/ Sound Spelt 'sc'	'c' is silent or blended; word stems derived from Latin.	scene, scenario, scenic, muscle, descendant, science, discipline, fascinate, crescent
S52	Sound Spelt ei/eigh/ey	Long 'a' sound (/eɪ/) represented by letter combinations ei, eigh, or ey.	reindeer, veins, obey, survey, weightless, neighbour, freight, sleigh
S58	Sound Spelt 'ei' After 'c'	Rule: "i before e except after c" when the sound is long /i:/. Exceptions: protein, seize.	receiving, protein, receipt, deceive, inconceivable, ceiling, perceive
S59	Letter String 'ough'	Letter string 'ough' producing varying pronunciations	through, ought, cough, thoughtful, enough, dough, thorough, toughest, rough

Category 4: Silent Letters, Homophones & Confused Words

Domain	Spelling Pattern / Rule	Key Rule / Morphological Context	Past SATs Test Examples (2011–2026)
S60	Words with 'Silent' Letters	Letters whose presence cannot be predicted from pronunciation alone (k, g, b, w, l, t, h, p).	knight, island, lamb, scenic, numb, thumb, descendant, bruise, crumb, straight, doubt, whistle
S61	Homophones & Confused Words	Words sharing identical pronunciation but differing in spelling and meaning. Context sentence is critical.	passed/past, scene/seen, queue/cue, currant/current, banned/band, sighed/side, council/counsel, coarse/course, advice/advise

Category 5: Statutory Word List & High-Frequency

Years 3 & 4 Statutory Targets Tested	Years 5 & 6 Statutory Targets Tested
High-frequency items: accident(ally), actual(ly), century, circle, decide, early, earth, famous, fruit, group, heart, history, island, knowledge, material, natural, notice, ordinary, popular, purpose, quarter, regular, sentence, special, straight, strength, surprise, women.	High-frequency items: accommodate, aggressive, apparent, cemetery, committee, definite, embarrass, environment, exaggerate, guarantee, harass, immediate, lightning, mischievous, necessary, neighbour, privilege, profession, programme, recommend, rhythm, shoulder, system, thorough, vehicle.