

tangible: (adjective) - capable of being perceived, especially by the sense of touch. (It comes from the Latin word *tangere*, meaning “to touch.” The same Latin word is the basis for “tangent,” a mathematical term for two objects that touch at a single point.)

palpable: (adjective) - capable of being touched or felt. (It comes from the Latin word *palpare*, which means “to stroke” or “to caress.” The same Latin word is the basis for “palpitate,” which means “to beat rapidly or strongly.”)

There are more words ending in *-able* than *-ible*, but there are still a lot of *-ibles*.

Both endings mean “able to be” or “able to do.” They are usually tacked onto the end of a verb to make a new word that is an **adjective**.

Spelling tips:

Use the “vowel-consonant-vowel” rule of pronunciation (that is, the first vowel is usually long in a v-c-v combination).

- When there is no v-c-v formed, don’t change the spelling of the root word. Examples: breakable, collectible, agreeable, perishable.
- When you need to keep a long vowel sound in a root with a silent *e*, drop the silent *e* from the root. (There will still be a v-c-v.) Examples: drivable, adorable.

Use the “soft *c* / soft *g*” rule for *-able* (that is, keep an existing *e* after soft *c* or soft *g* before a suffix beginning with a vowel), **but not for *-ible***. With *-ible*, the *i* keeps the *c* or *g* soft.

“Soft” examples: changeable, forcible.

If the *c* or *g* is hard, drop the *e* before *-able*.

“Hard” examples: despicable, practicable.

When the suffix comes after a double consonant, it will usually be *-ible*. Examples: permissible, accessible.

When the suffix comes after *-ns*, it will always be *-ible*. Examples: comprehensible, transmissible.

cacophonous: (adjective) - harsh-sounding. (From the Greek *kak-*, meaning “voice,” and *phone*, meaning “sound.”)

gregarious: (adjective) - social, friendly. (From the Latin prefix *greg-*, meaning “flock,” and the Latin word *grex*, meaning “herd.”)

facetious: (adjective) – joking or jesting often inappropriately. (From the Latin *facetiae*, “to jest.”)

obsequious: (adjective) – marked by an attentiveness in a flattering manner; fawning. (From the Latin *ob-* meaning “toward” and *sequi* meaning “to follow.”)

Words ending in *-ous* are **adjectives** that mean “possessing the qualities of,” “having,” or “full of.”

Spelling tips:

Drop the final silent *e* before adding *-ous*. Example: adventurous

Exception: Keep the final silent *e* for words ending in *ce* (soft *c* sound) and *ge* (soft *g* sound). Example: courageous.

Change the final *y* to *i* before adding *-ous* for consonant + *y* endings. Example: mysterious.

In other situations, add the ending without changing the root. Examples: poisonous, dangerous.

However, there are hundreds of words ending in *-ous* that were formed in many other ways.

Sources:

Odell, Lee *et al.* *Elements of Language: Introductory Course*. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2001.

Rozakis, Ph.D. *EveryDay Spelling*. Garden City, NY: Guild America Books, 1998.

Merriam-Webster’s Collegiate Dictionary, Eleventh Edition. Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated, 2003.

frantic: (adjective) - marked by fast and nervous, disordered, or anxiety-driven activity. (From the Greek word *phrenitis*, meaning “inflammation of the brain.”)

frenetic: (adjective) - frenzied, frantic. (From the Greek word *phrenitis*, meaning “inflammation of the brain.”)

stoic: (adjective) - unemotional. (From the Greek *Stoa*, the portico at Athens where Zeno taught. Zeno was a philosopher from around 300 B.C. who taught that the wise man should be free from passion, unmoved by joy or grief, and submissive to natural law.)

chaotic: (adjective) – describing a state of utter confusion, or a state of things in which chance is supreme. (From the Greek word *chaos* meaning “abyss”; an abyss is an immeasurably deep gulf or great space, although the ancient Greeks meant it as the bottomless gulf, pit, or chaos associated with the theory of the creation of the universe.)

quixotic: (adjective) – foolishly impractical, especially in the pursuit of ideals; particularly when marked by rash, lofty, romantic ideas. “Rash” means proceeding from lack of deliberation or caution. “Romantic” does not necessarily mean being associated with love and affection, but more generally means responsive to the appeal of what is idealized, heroic, or adventurous. (“Quixotic” comes from the name Don Quixote, hero of the novel *Don Quixote de la Mancha* (1605, 1615) by Cervantes.)

The suffix *-ic* is usually used to form an **adjective**. It is added to a noun to make an adjective that has some relation to that noun’s properties. (It means “being like,” “having the characteristics of,” “of or relating to,” “associated or dealing with,” “utilizing,” “characterized by,” “exhibiting,” “affected with,” “caused by,” or “tending to produce” something, which is probably more confusing than the first two sentences.) You should also know that *-ic* can be a **noun** ending, too (for example, *chocoholic* is the name for a person who compulsively consumes chocolate), but it is more often used to form an adjective.

Spelling tips:

Do not change a root ending in a consonant. Simply add *-ic* (for example: *acid* + *-ic* = “acidic”).

For a root that ends in *y*, drop the *y* before adding *-ic* (for example, *geology* + *-ic* = “geologic”).

Other than “heroic,” you probably won’t run into too many roots ending in *a*, *e*, *i*, or *o* in everyday speech and writing. Here is one tip, though: All of the geologic time eons and eras that end in *-ic* actually end in *-ozoic* (such as Paleozoic and Mesozoic).

baneful: seriously harmful; poisonous. (From Old High German *bano*, meaning “death.” The word “bane” is a noun in English meaning “poison,” “death,” “woe,” “curse,” or “a source of harm or ruin.”)

The sound *full* at the end of a word is spelled with only one *l*, such as “beautiful,” “wonderful,” and “careful.” (It is only when the suffix is *-ful* plus *-ly* that there are two *l*’s, such as “beautifully,” “wonderfully,” and “carefully.”)

The suffix *-ful* means just what you think: “full of.” But it also means “characterized by,” “having the qualities of,” and “tending, given, or liable to.” Again, think of it as a form that is added to a noun to make an **adjective** that has some relation to that noun’s properties.

Spelling tips:

This is easy. Simply add *-ful* to the root, no matter how the root is spelled.

Sources:

Odell, Lee *et al.* *Elements of Language: Introductory Course*. Austin: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 2001.

Rozakis, Ph.D. *EveryDay Spelling*. Garden City, NY: Guild America Books, 1998.

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