

Spelling Tips 1. **Double Letters**

The pronunciation of English words is unfortunately no guide to spelling when it comes to single or double consonants. A word like *aberration*, for example, has a single *b* and a double *r*, but, from the sound alone, either would have been possible. The truth of the matter lies in the origin of the word – *aberration* comes from the Latin *ab* meaning 'away from' and *errare* meaning 'to wander'. Something that is aberrant has wandered away from the right course.

A word like *fulfil* can be particularly irritating because on their own, both *full* and *fill* have the double letter but in the compound *fulfil*, neither does. While it is true that in Old English the form of *full* was *ful*, *fill* has always been *fill*. And indeed in American English *fulfill* is the only standard spelling.

The single/double letter variation is probably one of the hardest things to learn in English spelling because there is often no rhyme or reason to it -- just established practice. This is a category where little memory-joggers can be of great assistance. *Accommodate* can be tackled by remembering that a place can accommodate two children and two men, for example.

Try these memory tips:

accident There is a double *c* in **accident** but each *c* makes a different sound -- the first has a 'k' sound and the second an 's' sound. If you remember this, you won't make a spelling error **accidentally**.

atoll A single *t* and a double *l*. Think of having to pay *a toll* to land on the **atoll**.

dessert Two *s*'s. You could try thinking that they stand for 'second serving' and that is why they turn up in **dessert** which is something sweet to eat, but not in **desert** which is a dry, sandy place.

embarrass Remember that when you are embarrassed you feel doubly uncomfortable and there are two double letters in **embarrass** -- a double *r* and a double *s*.

holiday Only one *l*. This is because **holiday** comes from 'holy day' (the first holidays were special days in the Christian Church's calendar). But remember that the *y* has changed to an *i*.

hurricane Double *r*. You will remember this if you think of the double *r* in *hurry* -- **hurricanes** are always in a hurry.

millibar Two *l*'s in the prefix *milli-* which means 'thousandth'. In this word, this prefix is joined to the word *bar*. It can also be joined to other measurement words to make a word meaning a thousandth part of that measurement, as you can see in *milligram*, *millilitre* and *millimetre*.

parallel Only one *r*, then a double *l*, then a single *l* at the end. Remember single -- double -- single.

serrated Double *r*. Think of the 'rough ridges' of a serrated edge to remind you.

suffocate Double *f*. Also notice that the following vowel sound is spelt *o*. Think what a 'fearful and frightening ordeal' it would be to **suffocate**.

tariff Only one *r*, but double *f* (which you could think of as standing for 'final fee' to remind you).