

Orthographic Convention—Student Scenario 1

A student reads the word **house** as /housē/. You tell her that the **e** at the end of **house** is silent and have her reread the word correctly. The student asks you why there's an **e** on this word. What's its job?

How do you respond to this question?

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

How do you respond to this question?

We need the *e* on the end of *house* to keep it from looking plural. If we didn't have the *e*, it would look like there's more than one *hou*.

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

Other words that fit this pattern include *mouse*, *louse*, *blouse*, *horse*, *hoarse*, *course*, *tense*, *sense*, *dense*, *moose*, *goose*, *loose*, *purse*, *curse*, and *verse*.

Orthographic Convention—Student Scenario 2

A student writes the word **have** without the **e** on the end. You show him the correct way to spell **have**. The student asks you why there's an **e** on this word. What's its job?

How do you respond to this question?

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

How do you respond to this question?

We need the *e* on the end of *have* because, in English, words don't end with *v*. One of the first dictionary makers decided to create this English orthographic convention.

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

Other words that fit this pattern include *love*, *dove*, *above*, *live*, *give*, *leave*, *sleeve*, *grieve*, *twelve*, *believe*, *conceive*, *relieve*, *deceive*, and *protective* (and any word ending with the suffix *-ive*).

Orthographic Convention—Student Scenario 3

A student spells the word **edge** incorrectly as **ej**. You show her the correct way to spell **edge**. The student asks you why you use **dge** instead of **j**. And why is there a **d** in there?

How do you respond to these questions?

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

How do you respond to these questions?

In English, words don't end with *j*, so we use the *ge* instead. The *e* marks the *g* to say the soft sound /j/. If we don't put the *d* in there, the *e* will also reach over and make the other *e* long, as in *ege* (pronounced /ēj/). We put the *d* in there to protect the other vowel and keep it short.

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

Other words that fit this pattern include *ledge*, *hedge*, *ridge*, *bridge*, *badge*, *judge*, *fudge*, *grudge*, *budget*, *gadget*, and *midget*.

Orthographic Convention—Student Scenario 4

A student reads the word **breathe** as **breath**. You show him the correct way to read **breathe**. The **e** at the end of this word helps you to know how to pronounce it. What's its job?

What do you tell the student the **e** does at the end of **breathe**?

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

What do you tell the student the **e** does at the end of **breathe**?

We need the *e* on the end of *breathe* to mark the *th* to be voiced. This kind of marking happens in verbs sometimes.

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

Other words that fit this pattern include *seethe*, *teethe*, *clothe*, *bathe*, *loathe*, and *sheathe*.

Orthographic Convention—Student Scenario 5

A student spells the word **two** incorrectly as **to**. You show her the correct way to spell **two** and tell her **to** and **two** are homophones. The student asks you why the number **two** has a **w** in the middle of it. What's its purpose?

How do you respond to this question?

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

How do you respond to this question?

The *w* in *two* used to be pronounced, but over time, it became silent. We keep the *w* because the letters *tw* in *two* actually have meaning. They show that the word relates to the concept of one more than one.

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

Other words that fit this pattern include *twice*, *twelve*, *twenty*, *twin*, *between*, *tweezers*, *twilight*, and *twist*.

Orthographic Convention—Student Scenario 6

A student reads the word **ever** as /ēver/. You tell him that the first **e** is pronounced /ĕ/ and have him reread the word correctly. The student asks you why there's only one **v** if the first syllable is closed, making the **e** represent the /ē/ sound. Aren't we supposed to double consonants to keep the vowels before them short? Shouldn't **ever** be pronounced /ēver/?

How do you respond to these questions?

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

How do you respond to these questions?

It is true that most of the time (70 percent to 75 percent of the time) a short vowel in a multisyllabic word is followed by two consonants. However, a group of words (about 25 percent to 30 percent) don't follow this rule. Also, we can't double the *v* because that is not done in English.

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

Other words that fit this pattern include *river*, *liver*, *sliver*, *never*, *lever*, *sever*, *cover*, *hover*, *level*, *travel*, *gravel*, and *trivia*.

Orthographic Convention—Student Scenario 7

A student spells the word **business** incorrectly as **bizness**. You show her the correct way to spell **business**. The student asks you why this word is spelled this way.

How do you respond to this question?

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

How do you respond to this question?

The word *business* derives from the word *busy*. The /i/ used to be spelled with an *i*, but it changed to a *u* for some reason 500 years ago. When we add a suffix that starts with a letter other than *i* (like *-ness*) onto a word that ends with a *y* (like *busy*), we change the *y* to *i* (*business*).

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

Other words that fit this pattern include *prettier*, *funnier*, *grumpiest*, *readily*, *laziness*, *happiness*, *silliness*, *beautiful*, *penniless*, and *reliable* (examples of keeping the *y*: *flying*, *spying*, and *trying*).

Orthographic Convention—Student Scenario 8

A student notices that many words—both single-syllable and multisyllabic—have an **o** to represent the /ŭ/. Examples he shows you include **some**, **come**, and **love**. Why is this?

How do you respond to this question?

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

How do you respond to this question?

Some linguists call this the scribal-*o*. Hundreds of years ago, scribes did all of the writing in cursive. Some scribes noticed that in their script, the *u* in words like *mother*, *come*, and *cover* was difficult to differentiate from the *m*, *n*, *v*, etc. next to it (e.g., *sume*, *cume*, *luve*). Thus, they decided to change the *u* to an *o*. This was not done consistently, however, so many words do not follow this pattern.

What other words could you use to show the student this pattern?

Words that fit this pattern include *some*, *come*, *love*, *become*, *son*, *shove*, *monk*, *ton*, *wonder*, and *tongue*. (In some multisyllabic words, the *o* represents /ə/ [the unaccented /ŭ/] because it's in the unaccented syllable, not because of the scribal-*o* rule. Examples include *compare*, *community*, and *contain*.)