

Doubling Up

Reading and Discussion

- travelled or traveled;
- focussed or focused;
- woollen or woolen.

Which word in each set is correct? Actually, all of them are correct. British English prefers the double consonant, but accepts the single, and American English prefers the single consonant, but accepts the double. So are there any rules when doubling consonants is concerned? Yes, there are. Although there are many exceptions in English spelling, here are the basic rules for doubling the final consonant of a word:

1. First, remember two things:

- a) These consonants are often doubled: **b d f g l m n p r s t z**
- b) These consonants are never doubled: **h j k q v w x y**

2. If 'c' is 'doubled', the second sound is represented by a 'k', for example:

- a) panic = panicked.

3. We usually double the final consonant of words when we add **ed, er, est, or ing**

- a) if the word ends with a consonant/vowel/consonant (CVC), **and**
- b) has only one syllable, **or**
- c) the last syllable of a word with two or more syllables is stressed.

Let's look at some examples:

- **sad – sadder**: ends in **d**, CVC pattern, only one syllable.
- **begin – beginning**: ends in **n**, CVC pattern, more than one syllable with stress on last syllable.
- **fix – fixing**: CVC pattern, only one syllable but ends in **x**.
- **open – opening**: ends in **n**, CVC pattern, more than one syllable but stress is on the first syllable.
- **read – reading**: ends in **d**, only one syllable but no CVC pattern.

Look again at **travel**, **focus** and **wool**. Although we saw that they could be spelt either way, in fact in the first two words the stress is on the first syllable and the last word does not follow the CVC pattern. So according to the rules, the American spelling would be correct.

Name _____

Date _____

Activities

Activity A: Complete the following words using the suffix in brackets.

fast	(-er)
sit	(-ing)
run	(-ing)
repeat	(-ed)
plan	(-ing)
visit	(-ed)
get	(-ing)
edit	(-ing)
swim	(-ing)
smart	(-est)
forgot	(-en)
low	(-er)
rob	(-ed)
prefer	(-ed)
beg	(-ing)

Activity B: Now write down the words which you did NOT spell with a double consonant. Explain why a double consonant is not needed by referring to the rules.

Name _____

Date _____

Answer Key

Activity A

faster
sitting
running
repeated
planning
visited
getting
editing
swimming
smartest
forgotten
lower
robbed
preferred
begging

Activity B

faster – lacks CVC pattern
repeated – lacks CVC pattern
visited – stress on first syllable
editing – stress on first syllable
smartest – lacks CVC pattern
lower – last consonant is a 'w'