

Do you know the rules for silent letters?

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English is a language which seems easy to learn, but at times you may find it difficult and confusing. Especially, when it comes to pronunciation, many of us face difficulty. Because we often don't spell a word the same way as we pronounce it. This generally happens with silent letters. The letters in words that are not pronounced but make a huge difference to the meaning, are called the silent letters. It is important to know these silent letters as 60% of the words in English contain these letters. For example – the word knife has a silent letter k in it. We pronounce it as 'k'nife.

There are rules for the silent letters which will help to you understand when to use these silent letters.

Silent H	Silent T	Silent K	Silent B
what	witch	knife	lamb
when	fasten	knee	thumb
why	castle	knot	numb
which	watch	knitting	crumb
whether	butcher	know	climbing
ghost	scratch	knob	bomb
honest	listen	knock	comb
hour	match	knickers	doubt
while	Christmas	knuckle	plumber
white	mortgage	knight	limb
where	soften	knack	debt
rhythm	often	knew	tomb

Rules For Silent Letters

1. Silent letter B

Letter B is silent after M at the end of a word.

Examples:

- Climb, dumb, tomb, limb, bomb, thumb

Letter B is also generally silent before T at the end of a root word.

Examples:

- Subtle, doubt, debt

2. Silent letter C

Letter C is silent in the SC word combination and C is useless in front of K or Q.

Examples:

- Muscle, scissors, ascent, miscellaneous
- Acquaintance, acknowledge, acquiesce, acquit

3. Silent letter D

Letter D is not pronounced in the DG combination.

Examples:

- Grudge, hedge, pledge, dodge

It is also not pronounced in the following words-

Sandwich, handkerchief, handsome, Wednesday

4. Silent letter E

Letter E is silent when it is at the end of the words.

Examples:

- Site, hide, grave, drive, bite

5. Silent letter G

Letter G is not pronounced when it comes before n.

Examples:

- Design, align, champagne, foreign, sign

But there are some exceptions to it.

Examples:

- Cognitive, signature, magnet, igneous

6. Silent letter GH

Letter GH is silent when it comes after a vowel.

Examples:

- Through, drought, daughter, light, weight, right

Whereas exceptions are when the words are compound words, i.e., they are a combined words.

Examples:

- Doghouse, foghorn, bighead

Sometimes gh is also pronounced like F.

Examples:

- Dough, rough, cough

7. Silent letter H

Letter H is silent when it comes after W.

Examples:

- What, why, when, where

H is also silent when it comes after C, G and R.

Examples:

- Choir, chorus, rhythm, echo

Sometimes H is not pronounced at the beginning of many words.

Examples:

- Hour, honest, heir

These are the rules for silent letters. We shall bring you the remaining list of rules for silent letters in our next blog. Hope the above explanation and examples helped to understand the rule for silent letters and improve your pronunciation skills. You can also join an Online Spoken English course and [learn English](#) pronunciation lessons.

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- By Shailja Varma

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