

Doubling consonants

You may wonder why *occurred* has two r's and *offered* has only one, or why *regretting* has two t's but *marketing* has only one.

For words which end in consonant + vowel + consonant, we double the final consonant before adding **-ed**, **-ing**, **-er** or **-est** for one of three reasons:

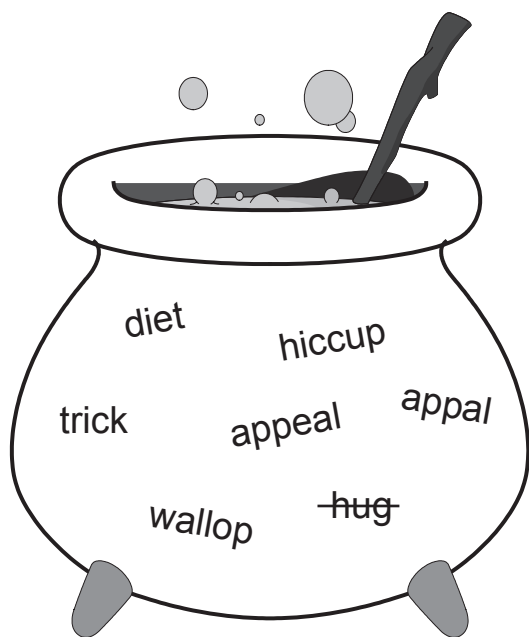
- the vowel is stressed
- the word has only one syllable
- the final consonant is l

Here are some examples:

refer: refers, referred, referring fat: fatter, fattest
bar: bars, barred, barring travel: travels, travelled, travelling

This explains why similar words differ in their inflections. While verbs like *overlap* are stressed on the final syllable and so double the final consonant (*overlapped*), other verbs like *develop* and *benefit* are not stressed on the final syllable, so the final consonant is not doubled (*developed*, *benefited*).

DOUBLE, DOUBLE, TOIL AND TROUBLE



Bubbling away in this witch's cauldron is a potion containing words which might or might not double the final consonant when they are inflected. Can you write out the correct inflections for each one? The first one has been done for you.

hug hugging hugged

If you forget to double the consonant, you may produce a totally different word, such as *pined* instead of *pinned*, or *hoping* instead of *hopping*. Listen to the sound of the word – if it has a short vowel, a double consonant is needed to keep the sound short when **-ed**, **-ing**, **-er** or **-est** is added.

Remember that there are exceptions to this rule, when the consonant is not doubled: for example, words ending in **w**, **x** and **y** do not double the final consonant. And the final consonant in some words ending in **p**, like *kidnap* and *worship*, is doubled regardless of where the stress falls.

Over to you

Would you put a single or double consonant in the inflections of these words?

tap _____ target _____ pedal _____