

# English Grammar – The ‘CVC’ Rule

## 1. The 99% Rule

If a word ends in the combination *consonant-vowel-consonant* (CVC), then when we conjugate it or add a suffix to it, we must double the last consonant.

Here are some examples with verbs:

to stop:	stop <b>ped</b>	stop <b>ping</b>	stop <b>per</b>
to begin:	begin <b>ning</b>	begin <b>ner</b>	
to plan:	plan <b>ned</b>	plan <b>ning</b>	plan <b>ner</b>

Here are some examples with adjectives:

big:	big <b>ger</b>	big <b>gest</b>
red:	red <b>der</b>	red <b>dest</b>
slim:	slim <b>mer</b>	slim <b>mest</b>

Here are some examples with nouns:

dog:	dog <b>gy</b>
fat:	fatt <b>y</b>
sun:	sunn <b>y</b>

There are 3 exceptions – we never double the consonants **w**, **x** or **y** (except in names and acronyms). Examples:

to flow:	flow <b>ed</b>	flow <b>ing</b>	
to fix:	fix <b>ed</b>	fix <b>ing</b>	
to play:	play <b>ed</b>	play <b>ing</b>	play <b>er</b>

## 2. The 100% Rule

If a word ends in the combination *consonant-vowel-consonant* (CVC), **and the stress is on the last syllable (oxytone)**, then when we conjugate it or add a suffix to it, we must double the last consonant.

In other words, we only double the last consonant if the stress is on the last syllable. The CVC rule always applies to one-syllable words, because the stress can only be on the one syllable.

1) Stress on the last syllable:

to <u>begin</u> :	begin <b>ner</b>	begin <b>ning</b>	(CVC)
to <u>refer</u> :	refer <b>red</b>	refer <b>r</b> ing	(CVC)
to <u>admit</u> :	admit <b>ted</b>	admit <b>t</b> ing	(CVC)

2) Stress **not** on the last syllable:

to <u>visit</u> :	visit <b>ed</b>	visit <b>ing</b>	visit <b>or</b>
to <u>open</u> :	open <b>ed</b>	open <b>ing</b>	open <b>er</b>
to <u>enter</u> :	enter <b>ed</b>	enter <b>ing</b>	
to <u>sweeten</u> :	sweeten <b>ed</b>	sweeten <b>ing</b>	sweeten <b>er</b>

However, there are some international variations. For example:

UK:	<u>tr</u> avel	travelled	travelling	traveller
USA:	<u>tr</u> avel	traveled	traveling	traveler
UK:	<u>can</u> cel	cancelled	cancelling	
USA:	<u>can</u> cel	canceled	canceling	
UK:	<u>pen</u> cil	pencilled	pencilling	
USA:	<u>pen</u> cil	penciled	penciling	

**Question:** Which country follows the CVC rule - the UK or the USA?

## Pronunciation

In English, there is a pronunciation rule saying that a vowel before a double consonant is always a "short vowel sound" ('a' as in 'cat', 'e' as in 'ten', 'i' as in 'fix', 'o' as in 'hot' and 'u' as in 'fun').

Consequently, the CVC rule always uses a short vowel sound. Here are some examples:

<u>Short vowel sound</u>		<u>Long vowel sound</u>	
to tap:	tapping	to tape:	taping
to get:	getting	to cede:	ceding
to fill:	filling	to file:	filing
to hop:	hopping	to hope:	hoping
to club:	clubbing	to cube:	cubing

**Exercise.** Add an appropriate suffix to the words given, applying the CVC rule where appropriate.

1. Miami is \_\_\_\_\_ than New York. (*hot*)
2. You drive \_\_\_\_\_ than your grandmother! (*slow*)
3. Mary is \_\_\_\_\_ than she was last year. (*thin*)
4. During the battle of 1892, they \_\_\_\_\_ the enemy with ease. (*repel*)
5. The teacher \_\_\_\_\_ us to play outside yesterday. (*permit*)
6. He is a great \_\_\_\_\_ – he travels everywhere. (*travel*)
7. Her smile is pretty now, because she has \_\_\_\_\_ her teeth. (*whiten*)
8. She is so \_\_\_\_\_ ! Nobody likes her! (*cat*)
9. OMG! You're bleeding. What \_\_\_\_\_ ? (*happen*)
10. We \_\_\_\_\_ not going to the beach with our friends last weekend. (*regret*)