

## 2nd ed Essentials of English Grammar Passport Books, 1993

### Word Division

Like spelling rules, the rules for word division may seem arbitrary. Actually, they follow specific guidelines. The following rules explain the basics of properly dividing words. A good dictionary is the best guide for dividing words correctly.

#### General Rules

Following are two general rules for word division.

##### 1. Avoid dividing words at the end of more than three successive lines.

**Avoid:** We came into the conference hall late but managed to find our seating arrangements before the first speaker began.

**Better:** We came into the conference hall late but managed to find our seating arrangements before the first speaker began.

##### 2. Avoid dividing a word at the end of a page or at the end of a paragraph.

#### Syllables and Word Division

Words are divided only between syllables. As a result, one-syllable words such as *trough*, *while*, and *their* are never divided.

Each syllable in word division must contain a vowel; therefore, most contractions cannot be divided.

con-trol (not *con-tr-ol*)  
hy-draulic (not *hy-dr-au-lic*)

couldn't (not *could-n't*)  
isn't (not *is-n't*)

When a word is divided, there must be more than one letter on the first line and more than two letters on the second line.

**Incorrect:** He apologized to Ethel most sincerely.

**Correct:** He apologized to Ethel most sincerely.

**Incorrect:** She told reporters that all her jewelry had been stolen from its case.

**Correct:** She told reporters that all her jewelry had been stolen from its case.

**Incorrect:** "Look at this letter; it's full of erasures."

**Correct:** "Look at this letter; it's full of erasures."

**Incorrect:** He's not sick. He's suffering from a pathy.

**Correct:** He's not sick. He's suffering from apathy.

## (3rd ed. on Kindle)

### Single-Letter Syllables

A single-letter syllable will always be a vowel. Generally, a single-letter syllable within a word should be left with the first part of the word and not carried over to the second line.

bus-i-ness = busi-ness (not *bus-iness*)

ox-y-gen = oxy-gen (not *ox-ygen*)

sep-a-rate = sepa-rate (not *sep-arate*)

When two single-letter syllables occur together in a word, divide the word between the single-letter syllables.

grad-u-a-tion = gradu-ation (not *grad-uation*)

in-sin-u-a-tion = insinu-ation (not *insin-uation*)

When the single-letter syllable *a*, *i*, or *u* is followed by the final syllable *ble*, *bly*, or *cal*, join the two end syllables and carry them over to the next line.

cler-i-cal = cleri-cal (not *cleri-cal*)

de-pend-a-ble = depend-able (not *dependa-ble*)

in-vinc-i-ble = invinc-ible (not *invinci-ble*)

### Final and Double Consonants

If a final consonant preceded by a vowel is doubled before adding a suffix, divide the word between the two consonants.

plan + ing = planning = plan-ning

set + ing = setting = set-ting

win + ing = winning = win-ning

If the root word ends in a double consonant before the suffix is added, divide the word between the *root word* and the *suffix*.

assess + ing = assessing = assess-ing

tell + ing = telling = tell-ing

A word should never be divided between two or three consonants pronounced as one.

catch-ing (not *cat-ching*)

cush-ion (not *cus-hion*)

leath-ery (not *leat-hery*)