How to Write Suffixes (-able and -ible)

**General:** Two of the most common and useful suffixes are -able and -ible; both have the same meaning as able to, liable to, and so on. According to Webster’s New World Dictionary (Third College Edition), the meanings of -able and -ible are given below:

- **-able:** suffix forming adjective; 1 that can or will [perishable]; 2 capable of being ___ ed [manageable]; 3 worthy of being ___ ed [lovable]; 4 having qualities of [comfortable]; 5 tending or inclined to [peaceable].

- **-ible:** suffix used to form adjectives derived directly from Latin verbs ending in -ire or -ere [divisible, legible].

The problems most authors face is when to use -able, and when to use -ible, since they have the same meaning and almost the same sound. Here are some guidelines:

**When to use -able:** The suffix -able is by far the more common form and that it should be used also in coining occasional words like: handicapable, computerizable, jumpable, etc. which are not found in any dictionaries. There is no hard and fast rule on how to add -able to the word to be suffixed. However, based on the accepted words in which the suffix -able has been added, one could invent one’s own system of coining a new word. Below are the many ways to form a new word with suffix -able:

1. Just add -able to the end of the word, e.g. comfort – comfortable, unbar – unbearable.
2. For words ending with letter e, delete it, then add -able, e.g. advise - advisable, desire – desirable, love – lovable. However, there are some words ending with e but is not to be deleted, e.g. change – changeable, service – serviceable, manage – manageable.
3. For words ending with letter y, change it to i first, then add -able, e.g. identify – identifiable.
4. For words ending with er, delete both letters, then add -able, e.g. improper – improbable.
5. For words ending with ue, delete both letters, then add -able, e.g. indefatigue – indefatigable.
6. For words ending with ate, delete all three letters, then add -able, e.g. inseparate – inseparable.

The list of a few of the many words with suffix -able is presented below:

| abominable | indefatigable | profitable |
| admirable | dispensable | receivable |
| advisable | inevitable | serviceable |
| applicable | insepensible | sizable |
| changeable | intolerable | suitable |
| comfortable | justifiable | teachable |
| comparable | knowable | tolerable |
| desireable | laughable | unbearable |
| detestable | lovable | unbelievable |
| eatable | movable | undefendable |
| excusable | noticeable | unmistakable |
| hospitable | peaceable | unpronounceable |
| imaginable | perishable | unspeakable |
| improbable | preferable | usable |
| incurable | presentable | |

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When to use -ible: As stated earlier, suffix -ible is not as common as -able. Yet there are some words in which suffix -ible is used. These are:

- accessible      feasible     perfectible
- admissible      flexible     permissible
- audible         forcible     plausible
- combustible     gullible     possible
- compatible      horrible     reducible
- comprehensible  impassible   repressible
- contemptible    impossible   reversible
- convertible     incredible   seducible
- credible        indefensible sensible
- destructible    indelible    submersible
- digestible      inexhaustible suggestible
- compatible      improbable   suppressible
- comparable      impossible   susceptible
- desirable       impossible   tangible
- convertible     irrepressible terrible
- convertible     legible      visible
- eligible        negligible
- fallible        perceptible

When to use either -able or -ible: There are several words in which either -able or -ible is used. Preference is for the former, i.e. the one which is put first:

- collectable – collectible
- preventable – preventable

Adding suffix -ity:

Suffix -ity is a shortened form of ability which means: 1 a being able; power to do (something physical or mental); 2 skills, expertness, or talent. It can be added to the words having -able or -ible suffixes to make a noun form of the word having the meaning of a specified ability, capability, or tendency. Examples of words with suffix -ity are given below for words with suffixes -able and -ible.

- able                      - ible
  applicable – applicability accessibility
  advisable – advisability   audible – audibility
  changeable – changeability combustible – combustibility
  comparable – comparability compatible – compatibility
  desirable – desirability   convertible – convertibility
  detestable – detestability credible – creditability
  hospitable – hospitality   digestible – digestibility
  improbable – improbability divisible – divisibility
  incurable – incurability   eligible – eligibility
  indispensable – indispensability impossible – impossibility
  inseparable – inseparability invisible – invisibility
  intolerable – intolerability irresistible – irresistibility
  justifiable – justifiability perceptible - perceptibility
  profitable – profitability possible – possibility
  suitable – suitability     sensible – sensibility