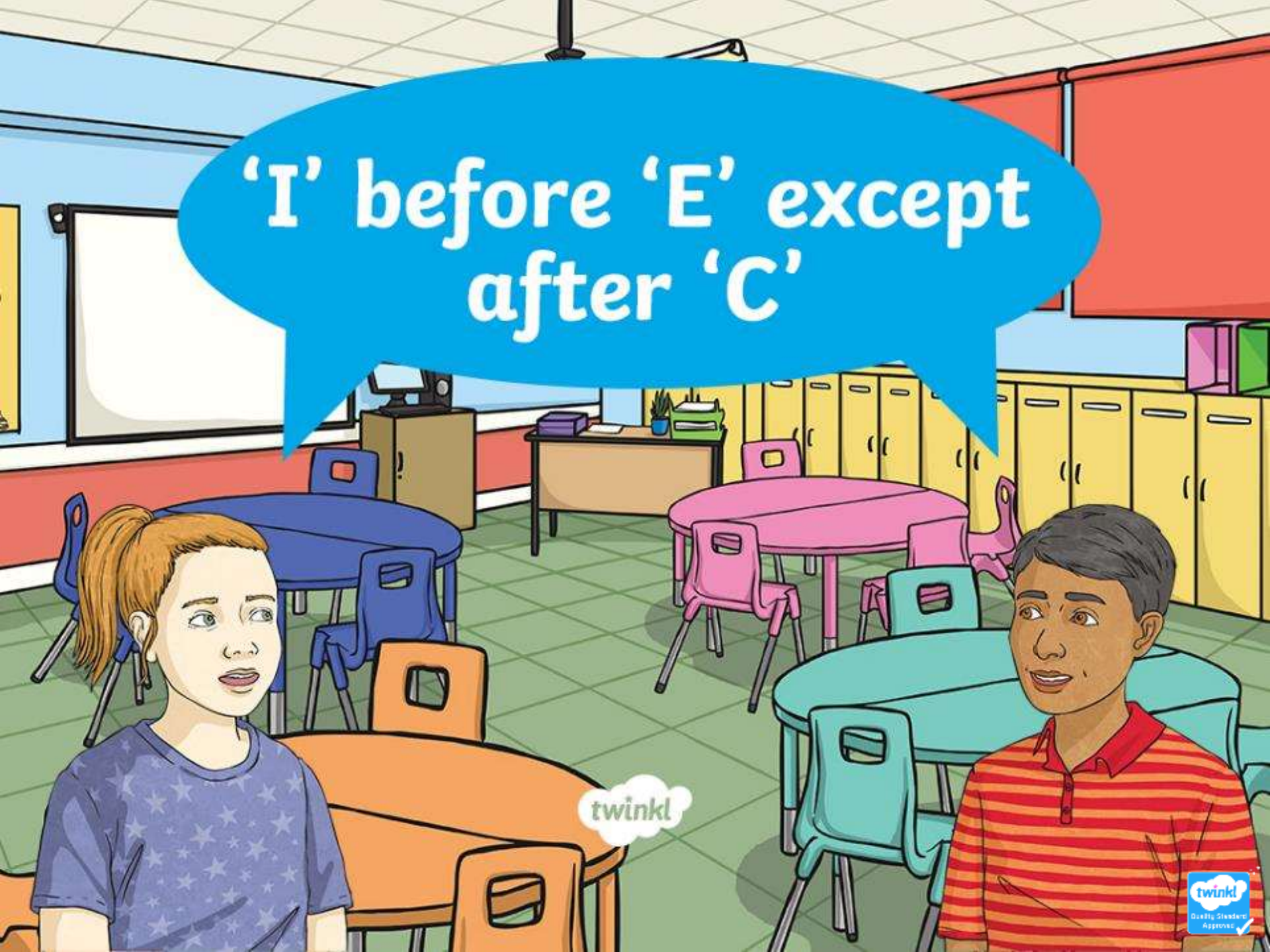
'I' before 'E' except after 'C'
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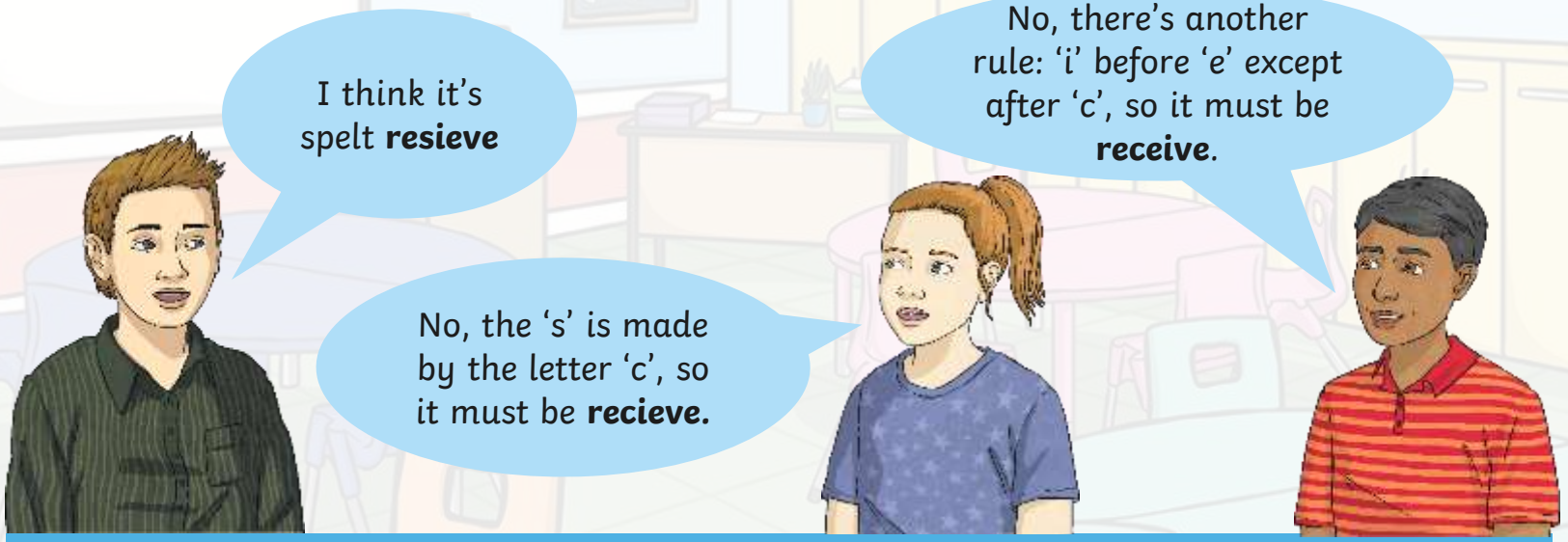
Mischievous Spellings

Spelling some words can be tricky. It's not always obvious what order to put some of the letters in, especially when they don't make the sound we are expecting them to. Let's take this word as an example:



The correct spelling is **receive**. Hassan used a simple rhyme to help him to remember what to do when a word contains the letters 'i' and 'e' next to each other.

I Believe You've Heard of Me...

Who has heard of this common spelling rule before?

'i' before 'e' except after 'c'

In words which have an 'i' and an 'e' next to each other, the 'i' always comes first unless they come after the letter 'c'. If they do, then the 'e' comes first, followed by the 'i'.

The 'i' comes before the 'e' in the word

believe

because there is no letter 'c' before the pair.

But the 'e' comes before the 'i' in the word

receive

because there is a letter 'c' before them.

‘ie’ or ‘ei’? You Decide!

You have one minute to decide on the correct spelling of these words and write them on a whiteboard.

Remember: ‘i’ before ‘e’ except after ‘c’.

rec__pt

n__ce

c__ling

dec__ve

ach__ve

sh__ld

Timer

Let's Review the Rules

Most words you encounter in day-to-day writing will use the 'ie' spelling pattern; however, it can make many different sounds. How many different sounds can you hear?

lie

thief

review

weigh

friend

Don't Let the Sound Deceive You

If you are writing a word and you are unsure if it is 'ie' or 'ei', stop and think:

Check for the letter '**c**' first. If the letters come after one, you use the '**ei**' spelling rule, regardless of sound.

The '**ie**' spelling pattern is used *most* of the time if those letters make the sound '**igh**' or '**ee**' in a word. Here are some examples:

lie **thief** **fiery** **niece**

The '**ei**' spelling pattern is used *most* of the time if those letters make the sound '**ay**' in the word. Here are some examples:

vein **weight** **neighbour** **veil**

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Let's Review the Rules

If a word **ends** the with letters 'i' and 'e', it will always be the '**ie**' spelling pattern. Here are some examples:

lie

pie

tie

But if a word **begins** the with letters 'i' and 'e', it will always be the '**ei**' spelling pattern. Here are some examples:

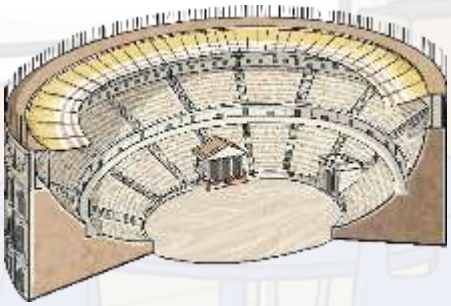
either

eight

Sorry to Deceive You...

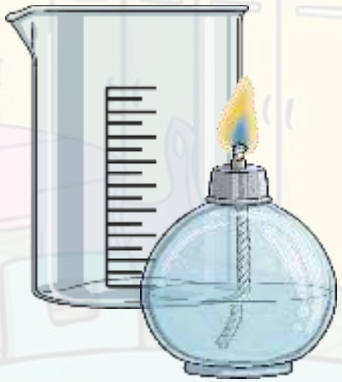
The letter ‘c’ is usually followed by the ‘ei’ spelling pattern but, as with every spelling rule, there are some sneaky exceptions...

ancient



glacier

science



These exceptions just need to be learnt.

Sorry to Deceive You...

Sometimes, the 'ei' spelling pattern is used even when the word doesn't contain a letter 'c'...

weird

height

protein

caffeine

seize

Again, these exceptions just need to be learnt.

Review

With all of the exceptions to the rule, it can be tricky to know when to use the mnemonic 'i' before 'e' except after 'c'. To give yourself the best chance of spelling a word correctly, remember this:

Use the 'i' before 'e' if it makes the sound 'ee',
and keep the 'e' after 'i' if the makes the sound 'igh'.
But if it makes the sound 'ay', 'e' goes first.

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