

## Summary of W Spelling Patterns

The letter W is either the last or first letter paired with a vowel or the second letter after a consonant. Usually used in words of Old English origin.

Pattern	Example (Modern)	Note
<b>initial w + consonant</b>		
dw-	dwarf	Found in only a few words of Old English origin and their derivatives.
qu-	queen	Originally cw- in Old English
sw-	swam, sword	The W is silent only in <i>sword</i> .
tw-	twitch, two	The W is silent only in <i>two</i> .
wh-	what	Originally hw- in Old English. The H has since fallen silent for most Modern English speakers.
wr-	wrong	The W has become silent.
<b>initial w + vowel</b>		
wa- or wai-	water, wait	common
wau-	waul	Rare except for some Scots English variant words such as <i>waul</i> , <i>wauk</i> and <i>waulk</i> . (wail, wake and walk)
we-, wee-, wea-	wet, week, weak	wei- as in <i>weight</i> and <i>weird</i> is less common.
wi-	with	wie- as in <i>wield</i> is less common.
wo- or woo-	work, wood	woa- and woe- as in <i>woad</i> and <i>woe</i> are less common.
wou	would	Uncommon, except for <i>would</i> , <i>wound</i> (hurt) and <i>wound</i> (coil)
wu-	liverwurst	Uncommon except for words borrowed from German

<b>final w + vowel</b>		
-aw	straw	Pronunciation is not standard and varies from an uncommon short O (in parts of the US) to the more common AW diphthong /ɔ or ɔ:/ (in the UK).
-ew	few	Pronounced as a long O as in <i>sew</i> , a long OO as <i>screw</i> or a long U as in <i>few</i> .
-ow	cow	Pronounced as long O as in <i>snow</i> or the OW /aʊ/ diphthong as in <i>cow</i> .