

Based on an analysis of the provided **English Appendix 1: Spelling** and historical data from past KS2 SATs papers (2016–2025), here is an overview of spelling types and the likelihood of specific words or patterns appearing in the 2026 test.

Overview of Spelling Type Distribution

Historically, the 20-word spelling test is weighted heavily toward Year 3 and 4 patterns, even though it is a Key Stage 2 (Year 6) assessment.

Spelling Category	Approx. % of Test	Description
Year 3 & 4 Patterns	50% – 60%	Patterns like <i>-ly</i> , <i>-tion</i> , and <i>ou</i> representing /ʌ/ (e.g., 'touch').
Year 5 & 6 Patterns	30% – 40%	More complex suffixes like <i>-cious/-tious</i> , <i>-cial/-tial</i> , and <i>-able/-ible</i> .
Statutory Word List	10% – 15%	Words directly from the 100-word lists for Y3/4 or Y5/6 (usually 2–3 words per paper).
Homophones	5%	Usually one word per paper (e.g., 'past' vs. 'passed').

Likelihood of Patterns Appearing in 2026

1. "The Always Tested" (High Likelihood)

These patterns or word types appear in nearly every assessment cycle:

- **Suffixes (-ly):** At least 1–2 words invariably test the addition of *-ly*, often involving a root word change (e.g., *actual* → *actually* or *gentle* → *gently*).
- **The /ʃən/ Sound (-tion, -sion, -ssion, -cian):** This is a staple. Expect at least one word ending in *-tion* or *-sion*.
- **Double Consonants with Suffixes:** Words where the last letter is doubled before adding *-ing* or *-ed* (e.g., *beginning*, *occurred*).
- **Statutory Words (Y5/6):** While the test uses few "direct" list words, 2–3 will always appear. High-frequency candidates from your provided list include **accommodate**, **definite**, **desperate**, and **mischievous**.
- **Homophones:** Expect exactly one. Common past examples include *banned*, *queue*, and *currant*.

2. "The Frequent Rotators" (Medium Likelihood)

These patterns are common but may skip a year:

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- **-cial vs. -tial:** These often rotate. If *-cial* appeared last year (e.g., *special*), *-tial* (e.g., *essential*) is highly likely this year.
- **-able vs. -ible:** Similar to the above, these are frequently tested (e.g., *reliable*, *possible*).
- **Silent Letters:** Words like *island*, *lamb*, *knight*, or *thistle*.
- **The /s/ sound spelt 'sc':** Words like *science*, *scent*, or *scenic*.

3. "The 'Due' Patterns" (High Watch List for 2026)

Based on gaps in recent papers:

- **'ough' patterns:** These did not appear in the 2024 paper, making them a "possibility" for upcoming tests (e.g., *rough*, *though*, *thorough*).
 - **-gue and -que endings:** Words like *tongue*, *unique*, or *antique* rotate in and out.
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Data Overview

Analysis of Key Stage 2 SATs spelling data from 2017 to 2025 identifies several spelling patterns that are consistently prioritized by examiners. Across these seven test cycles (excluding 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic), a total of 140 words have been tested.

The most commonly tested spelling patterns, their total occurrences, and their relative frequency (percentage of the total words tested) are as follows:

1. Adding Suffixes to Multi-syllabic Words (S38)

This is the most frequently tested domain, appearing 14 times (10% of all tested words).

- **The Rule:** Adding suffixes beginning with vowel letters (like *-ing*, *-ed*, *-er*) to words of more than one syllable, where the final consonant is doubled only if the last syllable is stressed.
- **Examples:** *offered* (2018), *numbered* (2023), *referring* (2024), and *rewarded* (2025).

2. Words with 'Silent' Letters (S60)

This pattern has appeared 10 times (7.1% of all tested words).

- **The Rule:** Words containing letters whose presence cannot be predicted by the word's pronunciation, often reflecting archaic spellings.
- **Examples:** *straight* (2017), *lamb* (2023), *island* (2024), and *knight* (2025).

3. Homophones and Confused Words (S61)

This domain has appeared 9 times (6.4% of all tested words).

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- Trend Note: Examiners have recently placed a higher emphasis on this domain; the 2025 test included a record-high of three homophones.
- Examples: banned (2022), queue (2024), through, passed, and scene (all 2025).

4. The Suffixes -ly (S43) and -tion/-sion/-ssion/-cian (S47)

Both patterns have appeared 9 times each (6.4% of all tested words).

- S43 (-ly): Tests the addition of -ly to adjectives to form adverbs, including rules for root words ending in 'y' or 'le'. Examples include reluctantly (2022) and angrily (2025).
- S47 (Endings sounding like /ʃən/): Tests noun endings where the spelling depends on the final letter of the root word. Examples include caution (2022) and suggestion (2025).

5. The Suffix -ous (S46) and the 'ough' String (S59)

Both patterns have appeared 8 times each (5.7% of all tested words).

- S46 (-ous): Often involves changing "our" to "or" or retaining a final 'e'. Examples include ridiculous (2022) and jealousy (2025).
- S59 ('ough'): Notoriously difficult due to having at least seven different pronunciations. Examples include cough (2022), ought (2023), and through (2025).

While these are the most common, examiners also frequently include words from the Year 3/4 and Year 5/6 statutory word lists, which are specifically identified in the National Curriculum as words that pupils often misspell. Examples from recent tests include character (S48), machine (S49), and unique (S50)

Summary Table of Domain Frequency (2017–2025)

Content Domain	Spelling Pattern	Occurrences	Percentage
S38	Suffixes for multi-syllabic words	14	10%
S60	Silent letters	10	7.1%
S61	Homophones	9	6.4%
S43	The suffix -ly	9	6.4%
S47	Endings sounding like /ʃən/	9	6.4%
S46	The suffix -ous	8	5.7%
S59	Words with 'ough'	8	5.7% 4 ...