

## Litriú / Spelling in Irish

**Do you find it difficult to help your child with Gaeilge spellings? This useful guide may help!**

Irish has a very simple spelling rule which is called 'caol le caol' agus 'leathan le leathan'. This basically means 'slender vowel to slender vowel' and 'broad vowel to broad vowel'. It is applied to practically all words in Irish (words that have more than one syllable).

these are the broad vowels

- a, o, u

these are the slender vowels

- i, e

The golden spelling rule is this:

If there is a slender vowel to the left of a consonant, it has to be matched on the other side with another slender vowel. You can't have a broad vowel and a slender vowel on either side of a consonant. This rule makes it easy to spell words!

Look at these examples which are all verbs in the present tense:

- cuireann sé (he puts)                      tógann sé (he takes)
- itheann sé (he eats)                        ólann sé (he drinks)
- ceapann sé (he thinks)                      dúnann sé (he closes)

The -(e)ann sound at the end of each of these words is pronounced the same but spelled differently. This can be challenging when writing words – how do you decide which ending you choose i.e. is it -eann or -ann? But if you break down the word and apply the spelling rule, it is easy...

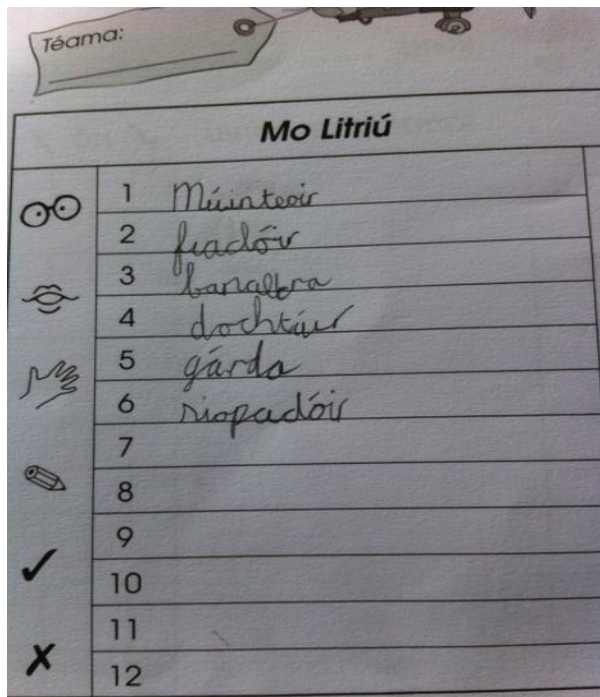
Let's have a look:

Tóg	Which ending? -eann or -ann?	Tóg-ann The -ó must match up with another broad vowel, so it must be -ann. It can't be -eann as the vowels wouldn't match.
Cuir	Which ending? -eann or -ann?	Cuir-eann

*Gaeilge do thuismitheoirí. Gaelscoileanna Teo.*  
 Ábhar samplach do ranganna do thuismitheoirí

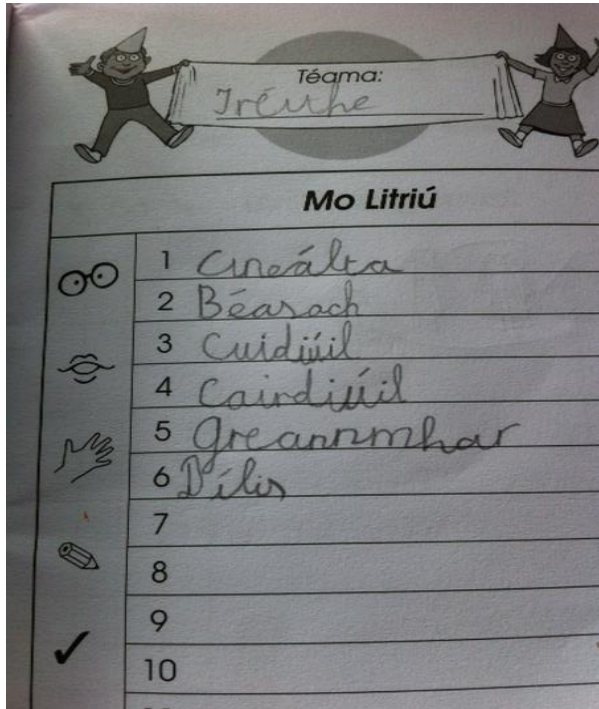
		The -i must match up with another slender vowel, so it must be -eann. It can't be -ann as the vowels wouldn't match.
Ith	Which ending? -eann or -ann?	Ith-eann  The -i must match up with another slender vowel, so it must be -eann. It can't be -ann as the vowels wouldn't match.
Ól	Which ending? -eann or -ann?	Ól-ann  The -ó must match up with another broad vowel, so it must be -ann. It can't be -eann as the vowels wouldn't match.
Ceap	Which ending? -eann or -ann?	Ceap-ann  The -a must match up with another broad vowel, so it must be -ann. It can't be -eann as the vowels wouldn't match.
Dún	Which ending? -eann or -ann?	Dún-ann  The -ú must match up with another broad vowel, so it must be -ann. It can't be -eann as the vowels wouldn't match.

Now some real examples from Rang 2 spelling list!



Múin-t-eoir	the ending has to be -eoir not -óir
Fia-cl-óir	in this case it has to be -óir not -eoir
Ban-al-tra	the root of this word (ban-) is broad, so all the other matching vowels are broad
Siopa-d-óir	the ending has to be -óir nor -eoir
Docht-úir	again, it is broad vowel to broad vowel

Gaeilge do thuismitheoirí. Gaelscoileanna Teo.  
 Ábhar samplach do ranganna do thuismitheoirí



Cin-eál-ta	see how the second syllable has to be -eál not -ál
Béas-ach	has to be -ach not -each
Cuid-iúil	-iúil not -úil like you'd see in a word like 'dathúil'
Caird-iúil	just like 'cuidiúil' above
Greann-mhar	again, it is broad vowel to broad vowel

Note: What is important is vowels on either side of a consonant – don't worry about vowels that sit next to each other. Look at the words 'Aoife' and 'Gaeilge', for example!