The Floss Rule (FLSZ)

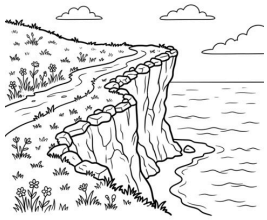
At the end of a **one-syllable** word, right after a **short vowel**, the sounds /f/, /l/, /s/ and /z/ are usually spelled **ff, ll, ss, zz**.

1 One syllable
Clap it. **hill** has one beat.

2 A short vowel
The i in **hill** says /i/, as in itch.

3 Right after the vowel
The /l/ comes straight after the i. In **elf**, an l gets in the way, so it keeps one f.

Yes, yes, yes? Double it. Two letters, one sound.

ff	ll	ss	zz
			buzz
cliff	hill	grass	
puff	bell	mess	fizz
off	doll	kiss	fuzz
cuff	yell	boss	jazz
stuff	gull	dress	frizz
sniff	spell	class	Only a handful of words end in zz.

Not a short vowel: one letter
seal, **snail**, **roof**, **peel**

A letter in between: one letter
elf, **self**, **shelf**, **golf**

Rule breakers. Heart words (the s says /z/): **is**, **as**, **has**, **his**.
These read fine but keep one letter: **if**, **yes**, **us**, **bus**, **gas**.

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Floss Rule Words List

Every word has a short vowel and ends in ff, ll, ss or zz: **two letters, one sound**. Start with the short words. Blends and digraphs come later. Check off each word your child reads.

Short words CVC-shaped, once CVC words are solid

ff	☐ off ☐ puff ☐ cuff ☐ huff
ll	☐ hill ☐ fill ☐ will ☐ pill ☐ bill ☐ mill ☐ ill ☐ dill ☐ doll ☐ bell ☐ fell ☐ sell ☐ tell ☐ well ☐ yell ☐ dull ☐ gull ☐ hull
ss	☐ pass ☐ mass ☐ hiss ☐ kiss ☐ miss ☐ boss ☐ moss ☐ toss ☐ loss ☐ less ☐ mess ☐ fuss
zz	☐ jazz ☐ fizz ☐ buzz ☐ fuzz

With blends two consonants at the start

ff	☐ staff ☐ cliff ☐ sniff ☐ stiff ☐ stuff ☐ fluff ☐ gruff ☐ bluff
ll	☐ still ☐ spill ☐ drill ☐ grill ☐ skill ☐ frill ☐ spell ☐ smell ☐ swell ☐ skull
ss	☐ class ☐ grass ☐ glass ☐ brass ☐ floss ☐ cross ☐ dress ☐ press ☐ bless
zz	☐ frizz

With digraphs after sh, ch, th and wh are taught

ff	☐ whiff
ll	☐ chill ☐ shell ☐ thrill ☐ shrill
ss	☐ chess

Two l's, but a new vowel sound: ball, call, roll, full, pull. They keep the ll, but the vowel is not short, so learn them as chunks. Free -all, -oll and -ull sheets: luvinci.app/printables.

Watch out: words that don't follow the rule

Heart words	**is**, **as**, **has**, **his** (the s says /z/) · **was** · **of** (ends in /v/) · **have**
Read fine, one letter	**if**, **yes**, **us**, **bus**, **gas**, **plus**, **pal**, **this** (only matters for spelling)
Just one z	**quiz** (z is the least reliable floss letter)
Doubled, not a floss letter	**add**, **egg**, **odd**, **inn** (compare in and inn)

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Floss Rule Words List (FLSZ Rule)

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1. Listen and write the ending

Grown-up: read each word aloud from the upside-down answer key at the bottom (fold it back so your child can't see it). Your child writes the ending: **ff, ll, ss or zz**.

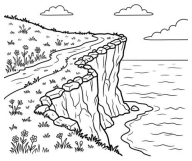
1. **pu** ____
2. **bu** ____
3. **me** ____
4. **o** ____
5. **fi** ____
6. **ki** ____
7. **cu** ____
8. **ja** ____
9. **to** ____
10. **te** ____

2. One letter or two?

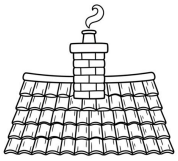
Say the picture word. Is the vowel short, with /f/, /l/, /s/ or /z/ right after it? Write **two letters**. If not, write **one**.
★ = a rule breaker: it keeps one letter.

hi ____

sea ____


cli ____

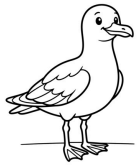
do ____


roo ____

gra ____

be ____

snai ____


gu ____

★

bu ____

we ____

ye ____

3. Read it out loud

1. The be**ll** fe**ll** o**ff** the hi**ll**.
2. The bug wi**ll** bu**zz** in the sun.
3. Kim wi**ll** ki**ss** his do**ll**.
4. Tom did not mi**ss** the bus.

Answer key. 1. Grown-up reads: **1 puff, 2 buzz, 3 mess, 4 off, 5 fizz, 6 kiss, 7 cuff, 8 jazz, 9 toss, 10 tell.**
2. Two letters: **hill, cliff, doll, grass, bell, gull, well, yell.** One letter: **seal, roof, snail** (not a short vowel) and **bus** (a rule breaker).

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