4b: Spelling /ks/

The letter *x* is used for the consonant group /ks/, when that sound group occurs within the same morpheme. In that way, we can distinguish *tax* from *tacks*, *flex* from *flecks*, *wax* from *whacks*, *lox* from *locks*, *okes* from *coax*, and many others.

Notice that the word *complexion* is made up of *complex* (meaning a mixture, or combination) and the suffix *-ion*. The word *reflection*, however, consists of *reflect + ion*.

Because the letter *c* stands for /k/ when it precedes a, o, or u or a consonant, it is not used for the sound /s/ in that position. Thus, the letter *s* is always used for the sound /s/ before a, o, u or a consonant.

Spelling is less clear before *i*, *e*, or *y* where we can use either *c* or *s* for the sound /s/, as in the words *cellar* and *seller*, *cent* and *sent*, *cylinder* and *sylvan*.

Exercise B: Spelling /ks/

Put *x*, *ct*, *cs*, or *cks* in the blanks below to make correctly spelled words. Remember that *x* is only used within a morpheme.

1. criti___  6. perple___ity  11. refle___ion
2. influ___  7. tropi___  12. destru__ion
3. hoa___  8. alamana___  13. anne___ation
4. fle___ible  9. o___  14. prefi___ation
5. compa___ion  10. comple___ity  15. mi___ture