Choosing the right ending

reversible   acceptable   digestible   desirable

In English the endings -**able** and -**ible** are a common spelling pattern for adjectives.

They usually sound the same, so how do we know which one to use?

Here are some hints to help you make the right choice:

If the root word does not change, add -**able**.

understand**able**   predict**able**   comfort**able**   depend***able***

In some words that end in '**e**' the word remains the same, except the '**e**' is dropped:

eg valu**e** - valu**able**   desir**e** - desir**able**

Words ending in -**ible** can't usually be divided up like this. If you take away the ending, you're not left with a root word:

poss**ible**   permiss**ible**   horr**ible**   aud**ible**

Words ending in -**ible** usually come originally from Latin. This means there are no new words that use -**ible**. Some words that end in -**able** also come from Latin, but many of them do not. And -**able** is used for any new words that are being created:

eg network**able**, childproof**able**

There are more words ending in -**able** (about 900) than -**ible** (less than 200). So it's much more likely that a word will end in -**able**. One way of dealing with this is to learn the common -**ible** words and use -**able** for the rest. Here are some useful examples. You may want to add others to the list:

access**ible**   compat**ible**   digest**ible**   flex**ible**   illeg**ible**

incred**ible**   ined**ible**   invis**ible**   irresist**ible**   sens**ible**