

abetter, -or. See -OR.

Abigail. See SOBRIQUETS.

abjection, abjectness. See -ION & -NESS.

ablatively, ablativally, &c. Adverbs from the names of grammatical cases are best formed in -ively. There is no doubt about the names used in modern English grammar; everyone would say *subjectively*, *objectively*, & *possessively*. And, though the Latin case-names have adjectives in -ival, as *dative*, it will be admitted that 'used vocatively', at any rate is hardly tolerable, that none of the forms in -ively is very objectionable, & that it is worth while to secure consistency. The adjectives, then, should be *nominative*, *vocative*, *accusative*, *genitive*, *dative*, *ablative*, *subjective*, *objective*, & *possessive* (though the attributive use of the noun, as in the *genitive termination*, must still be common), & the adverbs *nominatively* &c., *subjectively* &c.

-ABLE, -IBLE, &c. 1. Normal use of -able as living suffix. 2. -able & other -ble forms. 3. Negative forms of adjectives in -ble. 4. -ble words of exceptional form or sense.

1. Normal use of -able as living suffix. The suffix -able is a living one, & may be appended to any transitive verb to make an adjective with the sense *able*, or *liable*, or *allowed*, or *worthy*, or *requiring*, or *bound*, to be —ed. If the verb ends in mute -e, this is dropped except after soft c or g (*usable*, *likable*, *dyable*, *pronounceable*, *manageable*, *bridgeable*). Verbs ending in -y preceded by a consonant change y into i (*justifiable*, *triable*; but *buyable*). Verbs with the Latin-derived ending -ate that have established adjectives drop the -ate (*demonstrable*, *abominable*, *alienable*, *appreciable*, *calculable*, *capable*, *execrable*, &c.); & nonce-adjectives from such verbs should be similarly formed (*accumulable*, *adulterable*, *educable*, *confiscable*, *saturable*, &c.) except when the verb is disyllabic (*dictatable*, *creatable*, *cas-*

*tratable*, *crematable*, *locatable*; not *dictable* &c. on the analogy of *placable* or *probable*); but see also -ATABLE; *administer* & *register* form similarly *administrable* & *registrable*. No verbs in -ble, -cle, -dle, -fie, -gle, -kle, -ple, -sle, -tle, -zle, have established adjectives in -able; but adjectives made for the nonce from them should drop the -e (*baffable*, *hustlable*, *muzzlable*, &c.).

Nonce-adjectives in -able may be formed even from those verbs whose established representatives are in the list of words in -ible &c. given in 2, especially when the established word has to some extent lost the verbal or contracted a special sense. Thus a mistake may be called *uncorrectable*, because *incorrigible* has become ethical in sense; *solvable* may be preferred because *soluble* has entered into an alliance with *dissolve*; & *destroyable* by *dynamite* may seem less pedantic than *destructible* by because *destructible* tends to be purely adjectival.

2. -able & other -ble forms. The following list (to which are to be added the negative or positive forms made by adding or omitting *in-*, *un-*, *non-*, is intended to include all the existing -ble adjectives other than those in -able; words not found in it should be spelt with -able; & for the italicized words, though they exist, it is recommended to substitute the accompanying form in -able. It may be observed that there is only one word in the list, *gullible*, of which the stem is not ultimately Latin; but the form, which should have been *gullable*, may perhaps be thought too firmly established to be meddled with; & the same plea may prevent the rejection of such words as *conduclible*, *distensible*, & *refrangible*, which, though it is a pity they were not originally made of the more easily understood & equally legitimate -able type (*refrangible*, which should be *refringible*, is actually less correct than *refractable*), have at least a technical, though hardly a general currency.

List of *-ble* words not in *-able*: accessible; adducible; admissible; apprehensible; audible; avertable; coercible; *collapsible*, collapsable; *collectible*, collectable; combustible; comestible; compatible; comprehensible; compressible; *conductible*, conductable; *connectible*, connectable; contemptible; *contractible*, contractable; convertible; convincible; corrigible; corruptible; credible; deducible; defeasible; defensible; depressible; *descendible*, descendable; destructible; *diffusible*, diffusable; digestible; dirigible; *discernible*, discernable; discernible; *discussible*, discussable; dismissible; dissoluble; *distensible*, distendable; divertible; divisible; edible; educible; eligible; excerptible; exhaustible; exigible; *expansible*, expandable; expressible; *extendible*, *extensible*, extendable; fallible; feasible; feeble; fencible; flexible; forcible; fungible; fusible; *gullible*, gullable; horrible; *immiscible*, unmixable; impartible (not from *impart*); impassible (not from *pass*); imperscriptible; imprescriptible; incompressible; incontrovertible; infeasible; indefectible; indelible; inducible; intelligible; invincible; irascible; irresistible; legible; negligible; noble; omissible; oppressible; ostensible; perceptible; *perfectible*, perfectable; permissible; *persuasive*, persuadable; pervertible; plausible; possible; *preventible*, preventable; producible; *protrusible*, protrudable; reducible; *reflexible*, reflectable; *refrangible*, refractable; remissible; reprehensible; resensible; resolvable; responsible; *reversible*, reversible; revertible; risible; seducible; sensible; soluble; submersible; suggestible; susceptible; *susceptible*, suspendable; suppressible; tangible; terrible; traducible; vendible; visible; voluble.

The principle is that the normal form *-able* should be used when there is no objection to it; there is an objection when a word is itself well established with *-ible* &c. in general use, & therefore *digestible*, *perceivable*, are not to be substituted

for *digestible* & *perceptible*; there is also an objection, though a less forcible one, when, though the word itself is not established in the *-ible* form, it is one of a set that includes an established word in *-ible*; thus *incontrovertible* & *convertible* should decide the form of *avertible*, *divertible*, *pervertible*, & *revertible*; *digestible*, that of *suggestible*; in favour of *adducible*, *educible*, *inducible*, *producible*, *seducible*, & *traducible*, there is added to the influence of (*ir*)*reducible* & *deducible* a legitimate dislike to the ugly forms in *-eable*. The existence of a single established *-ible* word of a more or less technical kind need not be allowed much weight; e.g., *fusible* does not suffice to condemn *confusable*, *diffusible*, *refusable*, & *suffusable*.

3. Negative forms of adjectives in *-ble*. The adjectives in *-ble* being required with especial frequency in negative contexts, the question often arises whether the negative form of any particular word should be made with *in-* or *un-*; the following rules will perhaps be found satisfactory:

(a) Negatives from *-ble* words other than those in *-able* have *in-* (or *ig-*, *il-*, *im-*, *ir-*); the only exceptions are words already beginning with the prefix *im-* or *in-* (*impressible*, *intelligible*), & *feasible*, *feeble*, *plausible*, *voluble*, all of which take, or would take if required in the negative, *un-*.

(b) Negatives from words in *-able* have *un-* unless they are in the following list; and the *un-* form is recommended for the italicized words, though the *in-* (*im-*, *ir-*, &c.) form exists.

Negatives in *-able* not having *un-*: illimitable; immeasurable; immitigable; immovable; immutable; impalpable; impassable; impayable (the French word; cf. *unpayable* from English *pay*); impeccable; impenetrable; imperishable; impermeable; imperturbable; implacable; imponderable; impracticable; impregnable; improbable; inalienable; *in-*

*alterable; inappeasable; inappellable; inapplicable; inappreciable; inapproachable; incalculable; incapable; incognizable; incommensurable; incommunicable; incommutable; incomparable; incomputable; inconceivable; incondensable; inconsiderable; inconsolable; inconsumable; incontestable; incurable; indecipherable; indeclinable; indecomposable; indefatigable; indefinable; indemonstrable; indescribable; indeterminate; indispensable; indisputable; indistinguishable; indistributable; indomitable; indubitable; ineffable; ineffaceable; ineluctable; inequitable; ineradicable; inerrable; inescapable; inestimable; inevitable; inexcusable; inexecutable; inexorable; inexpiable; inexplicable; inexpugnable; inextinguishable; inextricable; inhospitable; inimitable; innavigable; innumerable; insatiable; inscrutable; inseparable; insufferable; insupportable; insurmountable; interminable; intolerable; intractable; invaluable; invariable; inviolable; invulnerable; irreclaimable; irrecognizable; irreconcilable; irrecoverable; irrecusable; irredeemable; irrefragable; irrefrangible (unrefractible); irrefutable; irremediable; irremovable; irreparable; irreplaceable; irreplicable; irresolvable; irretrievable; irrevocable.*

4. -ble words of exceptional form or sense. The normal formation & sense of adjectives in -able has been explained in 1; & adjectives in -ible have the same ordinary range of sense. There are however large numbers of words, & certain usages, that do not conform to this simple type, & to some of them (*a reliable man, perishable articles, dutiable goods, feedable pasture, an unplayable wicket, a carriageable road, an actionable offence, a payable mine, unwritable paper*, & others) exception is often taken. The advocatus diaboli who opposes their recognition has the advantage of an instantly plausible case that can be put clearly & concisely: we do not

rely a man, nor perish articles, nor play a wicket; therefore we have no right to call a man unreliable, & so with the rest. An answer on the same pattern would be that neither do we dispense a man, yet our right to call him indispensable is not questioned. But it is better to go on broader lines, sacrificing the appearance of precision & cogency, & point out that the termination -ble has too wide a range in regard both to formation & to sense, & the analogies offered by the -ble words are too various & debatable, to allow of the application of cut-&-dried rules. The words & usages to which exception is taken should be tested not by the original Latin practice, nor by the subsequent French practice, nor by the English practice of any particular past period, even if any of these were as precise as is sometimes supposed, but by what inquiry may reveal as the now current conception of how words in -ble are to be formed & what they may mean. In determining that conception we cannot help allowing the incriminated words themselves to count for something; it may seem unfair that *reliable* should itself have a voice in deciding its own fate; but it is no more unfair than that possession should be nine points of the law; the existence of the still more modern *payable mine, playable wicket, unwritable paper*, has in the same way its value as evidence; the witness-box is open to the prisoner. Apart, however, from this special proof that the current conception of -ble is elastic, it is easy to show that at the present stage of its long history & varied development it could not be rigid. In the first place the original formation & meaning of many common words containing it are obscured by the non-existence in English of verbs to which they can be neatly referred (*affable, amenable, amicable, urable, audible, capable, credible, culpable, delectable, durable, edible, equable, fallible, feasible, feeble, formidable*,

*horrible, hospitable, impeccable, impregnable, legible, liable, miserable, mutable, palpable, plausible, possible, probable, terrible, visible, & many others*). Secondly, there are many common words in which the sense of *-ble* either is (as sometimes in Latin), or (which is as much to the point) seems to be, not passive but active (*affable, agreeable, amiable, amicable, available, capable, changeable, comfortable, conformable, conversable, delectable, durable, fallible, favourable, hospitable, impeccable, irascible, mutable, passable, perishable, pleasurable, profitable, sociable, stable, suitable, susceptible, terrible, variable, vegetable, visible, voluble, &c.*). Thirdly, *-ble* is often appended, or (which is as much to the point) seems to be appended, to nouns instead of to verbs (*accessible, actionable, available, carriageable, changeable, chargeable, charitable, clubbable, comfortable, companionable, creditable, dutiable, equitable, fashionable, favourable, forcible, impressionable, knowledgeable, laughable, marriageable, miserable, objectionable, peaceable, personable, pleasurable, profitable, proportionable, reasonable, reputable, responsible, salable, seasonable, sensible, serviceable, sizable, sociable, treasonable, unexceptionable, valuable, veritable, &c.*). To take a single example in detail, no-one but a competent philologist can tell whether *reasonable* comes from the verb or the noun *reason*, nor whether its original sense was that can be reasoned out, or that can reason, or that can be reasoned with, or that has reason, or that listens to reason, or that is consistent with reason; the ordinary man knows only that it can now mean any of these, & justifiably bases on these & similar facts a generous view of the termination's capabilities; *credible* meaning for him worthy of credence, why should not *reliable* & *dependable* mean worthy of reliance & dependence? *durable* meaning likely to endure, why should not *payable* & *perishable* mean likely to pay & perish?

In conclusion, a selection follows of words in *-ble*, some of them established & some questionable, that illustrate the looser uses of the termination; the paraphrases are offered merely by way of accommodating each word to what is taken to be the current conception of *-ble*:—*accountable*, liable to account; *actionable*, liable to an action; *answerable*, bound to answer, answering (*a. to expectation*); *appealable*, subject to appeal; *available*, that may avail; *baileable*, admitting of bail; *carriageable*, fit for carriages; *chargeable*, involving charge; *clubbable*, fit for a club; *companionable*, fit for a companion; *conformable*, that conforms; *conversable*, fit for conversing; *customable*, liable to customs; *demurrable*, open to demur; *dependable*, worthy of dependence; *descendable*, subject to laws of descent; *dutiable*, liable to duty; *feedable*, that will serve for feed; *impressionable*, open to impressions; *indispensable*, not admitting of dispensation; *knowledgeable*, having or capable of knowledge; *laughable*, providing a laugh; *marriageable*, fit for marriage; *merchantable*, fit for the merchant; *objectionable*, open to objection; *payable*, likely to pay; *peaceable*, inclined to peace; *perishable*, apt to perish; *personable*, having person or presence; *perspirable*, permitting perspiration; *playable*, fit for play; *pleasurable*, affording pleasure; *practicable*, adapted for practice; *profitable*, affording profit; *proportionable*, showing proportion; *reliable*, worthy of reliance; *revertible*, liable to reversion; *risible*, adapted for laughing; *salable*, fit for sale; *seasonable*, fit for the season; *sizable*, having size; *skatable*, fit for skating; *statutable*, according to statute; *tollable*, subject to tolls; *unconscionable*, not according to conscience; *unexceptionable*, not open to exception; *unwritable*, not fit for writing.

**ablutions.** See PEDANTIC HUMOUR.