

LESSON 2

Review—Consonant and Vowel Sounds

Understand the Concept

Words are made up of sounds. As you know, the **vowel sounds** are sounds made by the **vowels** *a, e, i, o, u*, and sometimes *y* and sometimes *w*. The **consonant sounds** are sounds made by the **consonants**, that is, all the other letters of the alphabet.

Vowel Sounds

There are only five vowels in English—not counting sometime-vowels *y* and *w*—but there are more than twice as many vowel sounds. This is because every vowel can make more than one sound. For example, the letter *a* can make a short sound (*a*), a long sound (*ā*), a short *o* sound (*ä*), an *aw* sound (*ô*), or a **schwa** sound (*ə*), an indistinct sound like *eh* or *uh*.

EXAMPLES *cat, mate, father, call, attend*
(/a/, /ā/, /ä/, /ô/, /ə/)

Below are all the different sounds made by vowels in English.

Short sounds	Long sounds	Other sounds
/a/ <i>pan, sap</i>	/ā/ <i>mate, sail</i>	/ô/ <i>or, raw, author</i>
/e/ <i>bet, sell</i>	/ē/ <i>be, deep</i>	/ù/ <i>soot, foot, put</i>
/i/ <i>kít, líp</i>	/ī/ <i>my, ice</i>	/ou/ <i>out, now</i>
/o/, /ä/ <i>lot, star</i>	/ō/ <i>so, boat</i>	/oi/ <i>toy, boil</i>
/u/ <i>up, scrub</i>	/ü/ <i>tune, crew</i>	/ə/ <i>tractor, even</i>

Often, a team of two vowels will combine to make a long vowel sound. The following are different vowel teams, or **digraphs**, that can make the long vowel sounds /ā/, /ē/, /ī/, /ō/, and /ü/.

- /ā/ ai, ay, ei, ey (**aim, play, vein, obey**)
- /ē/ ee, ea, ie (**seen, bead, niece**)
- /ī/ ie, uy (**tie, buy**)
- /ō/ oa, oe, ow (**boat, toe, show**)
- /ü/ oo, ou, ui, ue, ew (**boot, group, suit, clue, flew**)

The sounds /ou/ and /oi/ are **diphthongs**. That is, they contain two vowel sounds in one. They begin with one vowel sound and end with another.

Word of the Week

agitated (ə' jə tāt' əd) *adj.*, in a nervous or uncomfortable state

The agitated young man could not stop worrying about his appearance.

The word *agitated* contains two schwa sounds (ə). The schwa sound is usually found in a syllable that is not stressed, that is, it is not pronounced forcefully. This sound also appears in words such as *extra, label, motivate, and helpful*.

Tip Sometimes *y* can be a vowel that sounds like a long *i* (**cry, my**) or long *e* (**surely**).

Sometimes *w* can be a vowel when it is combined with an *o* or an *a*, as in *paw* and *cow*.

Tip The vowel sound /ù/, made by some words with *oo, u, or ou*, is different than a long or short *u*. It sounds a bit lower and is pronounced towards the back of the throat.

Tip You may have heard the saying “When two vowels go walking, the first does the talking.” In other words, the first vowel “says its name.” This is true for many vowel teams. Below are some examples.

aim, **play**
seen, **bead**
tie
boat, **toe**, **show**
suit, **clue**

Tip Notice that when the vowel has a long sound, it “says its name.” In other words, a long *a* as in **safe** and **ace** has a sound like the letter *A*.

Tip *Y* and *w* are sometimes consonants and sometimes vowels.

As consonants: **yes**, **will**

As vowels: **cry**, **surely**, **pa**w****, **cow**

Some vowel teams can make more than one sound. There are at least three ways to pronounce the vowel team **ea**:

/ē/ **bead**

/e/ **head**

/ay/ **wear**

Try It Yourself

EXERCISE A

Some of the words below have a short /a/ sound as in *cat* and *mat*, and others have a long /ā/ sound as in *state* and *bay*. In your notebook, create a three-column chart. Label the first column “Short /a/ [cat, mat];” the second column “Long /ā/ [state, bay];” and the third column “Other [star, bear, awful].” Put each word in the correct group. Some words will not fit in either group. Put these oddballs in the third column.

aid	grasp	neighbor
art	guitar	rant
babble	hail	rein
care	jab	straw
crane	lair	task
display	lame	veil
flame	make	

EXERCISE B

Circle the word that does not belong in each of the following categories.

1. /ou/ about, vow, know, shout
2. /oi/ boil, joy, poise, nose
3. /ô/ small, gnaw, auction, sauce
4. /ù/ could, full, proud, foot

Each of the following words is missing one vowel that is pronounced with a schwa sound. Fill in the missing vowel.

5. act____r
6. incred____ble
7. import____nt
8. confid____nce

Consonant Sounds

The **consonant sounds** are sounds made by the **consonants**, that is, all the letters of the alphabet other than the vowels *a*, *e*, *i*, *o*, *u*, and sometimes *y* and sometimes *w*.

Consonant Sounds		
/b/ but, cub	/l/ lip, pull	/t/ tip, cut
/ch/ child, patch	/m/ man, lamb	/th/ thank, forth
/d/ doll, cod	/n/ not, can	/th/ there, that
/f/ fall, cuff	/ŋ/ sing, ink	/v/ very, cove
/g/ girl, hug	/p/ pull, up	/w/ wet, twin
/h/ hope, ham	/r/ ram, core	/y/ your, yard
/j/ jam, fudge	/s/ sip, miss	/z/ zip, pleasure
/k/ kid, pick	/sh/ ship, lotion	

Some consonants make more than one sound. The consonants *c*, *q*, and *x* make the sounds shown below.

- c** can have a soft sound like /s/ if it is followed by *e*, *i*, or *y* (*cell*, *city*, *icy*), or a hard sound like /k/ if it is followed by *a*, *o*, or *u* (*cap*, *cone*, *culture*).
- q** combines with *u* to make the sound /kw/ (as in *quack*) or /k/ (as in *unique*).
- x** can sound like /ks/ (as in *next*) or, rarely, /z/ (as in *xylophone*).

In addition, *g* can have a soft sound like /j/ if it comes before *e*, *i*, or *y* (*gem*, *giant*, *gym*), and *s* can have a sound like /z/ at the end of a word (*is*, *rose*).

Try It Yourself

EXERCISE C

- In some of the words below, the letter *c* makes its soft sound, /s/, and in others it makes its hard sound, /k/. In your notebook, create a three-column chart. Label the first column “Soft *c* [cell, city];” the second column “Hard *c* [cake, actor];” and the third column “Other.” Put each word in the correct group. Some words will not fit in either group. Put these oddballs in the third column.

candid	march	receive
citrus	nice	recent
curtain	ocean	
factory	popcorn	

- The following words all contain the sound /sh/. However, they use different letters to spell the sound. On your own paper, sort them into groups according to the way they are spelled.

ashamed	mission	special
commercial	nation	sugar
dish	patient	tissue
initial	shell	unsure

Tip When two consonants combine to create one sound, they are known as a **digraph**. Consonant digraphs include *ch*, *sh*, *th*, *wh*, *ph*, and *gh*.

Tip Because vowels and many consonants in English make more than one sound, spelling can often be tricky. Recall, for instance, that there are at least five ways to spell the vowel sound /ü/ (*tune*, **boot**, *group*, *suit*, **clue**, **flew**). Meanwhile, there are at least four different ways to spell the consonant sound /f/ and six ways to spell /k/.

/f/ **fall, bluff, phone, cough**

/k/ **kiss, cat, tick, school, account, antique**