

Vowels (a, e, i, o, u)

Vowels are VERY important when reading. But they make SO many different sounds. Here are some pointers you can use when helping your child to read words that have different vowel patterns. You may even remember some of these rules from your own school years. Keep in mind, though – for every language rule that we teach, there are always rule breakers. These rules are helpful with MOST words but NOT ALL words.

Short Vowel Sounds: Short vowel words are words or syllables that have only one vowel, which is followed by one or more consonants. Short vowels have no “helpers” with them that make them say their names. Use the following words and pictures as a guide when pronouncing the short vowel sounds.

short a



apple

short e



elephant

short i



igloo

short o



ostrich

short u



umbrella

Long Vowel Sounds: Long vowels do not stand alone. Long vowels typically have another vowel helper. Long vowels always say their own name. Use the following words and pictures as a guide when pronouncing the long vowel sounds.

long a



acorn

long e



eagle

long i



ice cream

long o



ocean

long u



uniform

Types of Long Vowels:

- **Open Vowels:** A word or syllable that ends with one vowel. This vowel is a long vowel and says its name. Some examples: me, she, hi, go, fly, flu, a, I
- **The Magic ‘e’:** Magic E can also be called Helper E, Silent E, Bossy E. Sometimes when a word ends in the letter ‘e’ it will give all of its power to the vowel in front of it. With this power, that first vowel is able to say its own name and the ‘e’ remains silent. I often tell the children that the Magic E reaches over, touches that first vowel and changes it from its short sound to its long sound. And because ‘e’ is a helper, it is quiet and will not say anything.
- **Double Vowel Talkers:** You might remember the saying “When two vowels go walking, the first one does the talking – and says its own name, as in the word ‘boat’”. It’s an oldie, but it’s a goodie, because this saying still works! I also tell the children to think of

the second vowel as a helper. Just like Magic E, the second vowel is also a helper. Its job is to reach over, touch that first vowel and change it from its short sound to its long sound. And just like Magic E the double vowel helper is only a helper, meaning it is quiet and will not say anything.

Other Vowel Sounds:

- *Double Vowel Whiners:* SOMETIMES when two vowels are next to each other, they make a funny, whining sound – like when you fall down and say “Ow”, “Aw”, “Oy”, or “Boo-hoo”. Whiner vowel combinations are: au, aw, oy, oi, ou, ow, oo, ew. This is a time when the letters Y and W pretend that they are vowels too. The following words are examples of vowel whiners: caught, crawl, boy, soil, loud, owl, moon, threw.
- *Bossy R Words:* Bossy R Words are also known as r-controlled vowels. Bossy R Words are words that have a vowel followed by the letter r. Such combinations are: ar, or, er, ir, ur. I tell the students that the letter R is SO bossy that it tells the vowel to make an /r/ sound instead of its own sound. Some examples are: car, her, first, horn, curl shirt, sharp, clerk.