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# Vowels with Vitality

Practicing Long and Short Vowels

Cheryl Callighan

Good Year Books



This book is dedicated to Paul, Bryce, and Shaun for all their loving support.

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# INTRODUCTION

## **Phonics**

Phonics is the study of the relationship between sounds and letters. Debates about the value of phonics instruction and the appropriate emphasis on phonics in reading programs have raged for decades. These days, most educators accept phonics—along with other strategies, such as learning sight words and using context clues—as an essential component of effective reading and spelling programs.

The vowel sounds are generally taught after the single consonant sounds have been mastered. This book assumes that children know all the single consonant sounds.

Every syllable of every word in English has a vowel or vowel sound. Unfortunately, English does not play fair when it comes to vowels. A vowel does not always have the same sound. Each vowel has both a long and a short sound. When vowels are next to each other in words, new sounds may occur. In words, surrounding consonants, such as *l* and *r*, may change vowel sounds. To add to the confusion, the consonants *y* and *w* sometimes function as vowels.

## **Sounds and Focus Words in Vowels with Vitality**

This book emphasizes long and short vowel sounds but includes other common vowel sounds as well. The focus words were selected from several sources: Fry New Instant Word List—300 words that comprise 65 percent of elementary written material (Edward Fry, *The Reading Teacher*, 1980); High Utility 500—the 500 most frequently used words in children’s writing (C.B. Smith and G. M. Ingersoll, *Written Vocabulary of Elementary School Pupils*, 1984); and *The American Heritage Word Frequency Study* (Carroll, Davies, Richman, 1993). Words that follow the same phonics patterns as words on these lists are also included.

The reliability of phonics generalizations was considered, and target words with the most reliable patterns appear in this book. These patterns include CVC, CVC silent *e*, two vowels together giving the first vowel the long sound, and *r*-controlled vowels.

## **Learning Styles**

Appealing to children’s unique learning styles can make the

sometimes daunting task of teaching phonics generalizations to young children easier. These learning styles fall into three major categories: auditory, visual, and tactile. Children are often aware of the style they prefer. A child may say, *I learn a lot by listening* or *I understand better if I can see something*. Of course, no child fits perfectly into only one category. Most children learn well from varied activities that tap into all three learning styles. Here are some behavior cues to help you determine the dominant learning styles of your students.

### **Auditory learners**

- gain understanding better by listening than reading
- learn well from songs
- enjoy small-group discussions
- are usually good listeners
- follow oral directions well
- enjoy making oral presentations
- may hum or talk frequently while working
- learn phonics generalizations better if they pronounce the sounds
- enjoy listening to lessons on audio tape
- have difficulty reading long assignments silently
- prefer studying with background music
- may have sophisticated vocabularies

### **Visual learners**

- learn well by reading silently
- grasp information easily from charts, maps, and graphs
- need to see written directions
- often learn phonics by associating sounds with pictures
- may learn well from videos
- are stimulated by colorful presentations
- often like to doodle
- usually like quiet work environments
- recognize word patterns easily
- may rely heavily on illustrations to aid comprehension
- often have trouble processing information presented orally
- may think and visualize concepts before attempting an activity

### **Tactile learners**

- understand stories better if they act them out
- learn well using manipulatives
- enjoy body movement activities
- can master difficult concepts through texture associations
- often have excellent mechanical skills
- enjoy lying on the floor or being wedged under a desk as they work
- often plunge into activities before directions are given
- may excel at problem solving



- may exhibit repetitive mannerisms, such as finger drumming, foot tapping, and hair twisting as they work

## ***Features in Vowels with Vitality***

- Activities—games, projects, and lessons that reinforce vowel sounds and decoding skills.
- Skits—short plays, each of which introduces a concept and includes a worksheet.

- Reproducible Worksheets—coloring activities and skill sheets that let you choose vowel sounds to practice and review.
- Word Lists—words categorized by vowel sounds to use in projects and activities.

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## ***A Vowel Primer***

The variations in pronunciation of vowels are numerous and can be puzzling. Following is a quick reference guide to the vowel sounds.

### **Short Vowels**

Short *a* — *add, can, hatch, past, rack, tag*

Short *e* — *bed, check, egg, left, set, ten*

Short *i* — *bridge, ink, mix, pick, ring, witch*

Short *o* — *box, dog, frog, knob, off, pond*

Some programs include the sound of short *o* in *dog* and *soft*. Other programs limit short *o* to the sound in *hot*. The activities in this book take the former approach.

Short *u* — *brush, cup, hug, plum, punch, truck*

## Long Vowels

Long *a* — *bake, day, lace, pail, rain, stage*

Long *e* — *beach, cheese, eve, key, seal, three*

Long *i* — *bike, die, mine, pipe, rise, tried*

The letter *y* often yields this long vowel sound, as in *my, rhyme, spy, type*. This book includes these words under long *i*.

Long *o* — *go, bone, dome, hole, joke, rope*

Many educators also place the vowel digraph *ow*, as in *blow, crow, grow, slow*, in this category.

Long *u* — *blue, cute, fuse, huge, rude, tube*

Long *u* appears in many other combinations. The pairing of *e* and *w* yields *few, grew, stew, view*. Single *o* gives us the long *u* sound in *do*. A combination of *o* and *u* provides the long *u* sound in *you* and *youth*. These miscellaneous spellings will be included with the long *u* lessons in this book.

## R-Controlled Vowels

Pairing vowels with the letter *r* creates an entirely new set of sounds known as *r*-controlled vowels.

*ar* — *arm, dark, hard, jar, smart, starch*

*er* — *fern, germ, her, perch, serve, verb*

*ir* — *bird, chirp, dirt, firm, sir, third*

*or* — *born, cord, for, more, port, stork*

*ur* — *burn, curb, fur, hurt, surf, urge*

### Miscellaneous Vowel Sounds

*aw*—*bawl, claw, hawk, lawn, saw*

The vowel combination *a* and *w* is often taught along with *au*, since *aw* and *au* yield the same sound.

*ow*—*brown, cow, now, prowl / show, grow, flow*

Context clues generally provide the best way to teach the difference between *ow* in *down* and *ow* in *blown*.

Teachers need to be aware that regional dialects will affect the pronunciation of, mastery of, and ability to discriminate some vowel

sounds. Be sensitive to these speech variations. Students with English as a second language will also need special attention for vowel mastery.

# Activities

The following pages contain organized activities for children to do, either as a class, in small groups, or in pairs. The activities give children an opportunity to practice and apply what they are learning about long and short vowels. They are intended as practice or enrichment—a supplement to your school’s reading and spelling curricula. You should follow the guidelines set down by your current programs, which may require you to modify some of the activities.

Each activity page consists of a list of the materials required for the activity, teacher preparation instructions when necessary, and the procedure for children to follow. The page also indicates which learning styles children use in the activity: tactile, visual, and/or auditory. Children most easily learn concepts presented in their dominant learning style, but lessons that elicit their less dominant learning styles help them develop other ways to learn.

When an activity calls for you to provide words using long or short vowel sounds, you may refer to the list of such words at the back of the book.

# Vowel Shape Posters

This activity helps teach and reinforce long and short vowel sounds. Vowel shape posters provide a ready reference for vowel sounds throughout the school year.

## Preparation

1. Draw and cut out shapes for the items listed below:

hat—short <i>a</i>	whale—long <i>a</i>
egg—short <i>e</i>	tree—long <i>e</i>
fish—short <i>i</i>	kite—long <i>i</i>
sock—short <i>o</i>	boat—long <i>o</i>
bus—short <i>u</i>	cube—long <i>u</i>

Make the shapes large enough to accommodate lists of words.

2. Label the top of each shape with its vowel sound. (For example, the cutout of a cube will be labeled “long *u*.”)

## Procedure

1. Introduce one vowel sound and its corresponding shape poster at each session. Show the class the cutout and say the word it represents. Explain that words that rhyme with this word all have the same vowel sound. As an example, words that rhyme with *kite* might include *bite*, *night*, and so on. Ask children to think of such rhyming words. Print the words children suggest on the poster.
2. Read the words on the poster with the class. Display the poster so that children can refer to it later.
3. Repeat this procedure as you introduce or reinforce other vowel sounds. Children can add words to the posters during the year.

## Materials

poster board or heavy construction paper  
scissors  
marker