The Vowels

Learning a new vowel system can require the learner to modify vowels they already have and to develop new ones. This is especially true of the vowel system of English because English uses an uncommonly large number of vowels. In this book we will identify 16 different vowels. However, English has only five letters to represent these vowels: a, e, i, o, u. Obviously this is another challenge for learners: too many vowels; not enough letters. Additionally, many languages have only five vowel sounds. Therefore the total number of English vowel sounds and the insufficient number of vowel letters is a challenge.

The chart below shows the vowel sounds of English. Each vowel sound is represented by one or two letters that will be the symbols in this book for these vowel sounds.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Sound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>EE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AI</td>
<td>AI</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ER</td>
<td>ER</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>U</td>
<td>U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OY</td>
<td>OY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UH</td>
<td>UH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AH</td>
<td>AH</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OU</td>
<td>OU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AW</td>
<td>AW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The phonetic alphabet used in this book is not one of the usual standards. (For a comparison with other common systems, see page 99-100 in the Appendix.) The system in this book was devised because it uses no “strange” letters (such as æ, ʃ, ɔ) or diacritic marks (−, ·), thereby imposing a second alphabet between the learner and the real English alphabet.
This vowel can be considered to be two vowels blending together (called a diphthong). /AY/ begins with /AH/ and moves very quickly to /EE/. For example, you touch something hot and say *Ay Ay Ay*! Notice how the sound glides from /AH/to /EE/. This sound is not a huge pronunciation problem for most learners.

There are some spelling considerations. First note the use of *y* as in *my, by, try, fly*. Second, another common spelling is the letter *i* followed by the “silent e”, as in *side, file, smile, time, nice*. And then there is the strange spelling “igh” as in *sigh, fight, slight, and night*.

This is what you say when you stub your toe or hit your head. Like /AY/, it begins as an /AH/ and then moves toward an /OO/ as in, *Ow! or Ouch!* This is not usually a problem sound for learners, although it may be a new sound. The spelling can be troublesome. Like the symbol OU for the sound, there is the spelling *ou* as in *out, bout, pout*.

However, many words follow the “how now, brown cow” spelling of /ow/.

For worksheets, see page 56 in Section Two.

For worksheets, see page 57 in Section Two.
# The Consonants

The chart below shows the 24 English consonants:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Labial/Labio-dental</th>
<th>Dental</th>
<th>Alveolar</th>
<th>Palatal</th>
<th>Velar</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>T</td>
<td>D</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>th</td>
<td>TH</td>
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<tr>
<td>M</td>
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<td>N</td>
<td></td>
<td>NG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>W</td>
<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## The Key

Say each of these words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Sound</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>bay</td>
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<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>tie</td>
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<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>die</td>
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<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>kill</td>
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<td>G</td>
<td>gill</td>
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<tr>
<td>CH</td>
<td>cheap</td>
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<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Jeep</td>
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<tr>
<td>SH</td>
<td>asher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZH</td>
<td>azure</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The next group of eleven consonants is called fricatives because they all are formed by forcing the air through a narrow channel which causes friction. Again we will see that most of these sounds have voiceless and voiced pairs.

**S and Z**  For worksheets, see page 65 in Part Two.

To begin, let's look at a voiceless /S/ and a voiced /Z/. Start out with a hiss, like a snake, /S/, and then switch to a /Z/ like a snore. Note that the lips are open but the teeth remain closed, and as a result the air is constricted and vibrates as it passes by the alveolar ridge and the teeth. Some learners will substitute the /S/ for the /Z/. So you may need to do some work here. One spelling problem here is that some /Z/ sounds are spelled with “s,” as in as and is.

### The “-s” ending on Verbs and Nouns

The “s” that is used for plurals (dogs), third person singular verbs (hugs), and possessive “s,” (Bill’s) is spelled “s,” “es,” or “ies” (for words ending in “y”), but there are three pronunciations.

- If the word ends in a voiceless sound, the “s” is pronounced /S/ as in walk > /WAWKS/, lip > /LIPS/.
- If the word ends in a voiced sound, the pronunciation is /Z/ as in beg > /BEGZ/, bed > /BEDZ/, Bill’s > /BILZ/.
- If the word ends in /S/, /Z/, /SH/, /ZH/, /CH/, or /J/, a syllable is added, as in bus > /BUHSIZ/, buzz > /BUHZIZ/, wish > /WISHIZ/, itch > /ICHIZ/, edge > /EJIZ/.

*There is a worksheet on this problem on page 66 in Part Two.*

And there are some /S/ sounds that are spelled with a “c,” as in city.
PART TWO * PHOTOCOPYABLE WORKSHEET HANDOUTS

AY

Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>EE</th>
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<td>AW</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Listen and Say

i...e  y  i  igh  others

bite  by  bind  tight  tie
five  sky  I  might  dye
life  dry  mild  sight  eye
time  my  kind  fight  buy

Phrases

a wild ride  a fine drive  a dry fly
a bright light  a white wine  a nice price
a mild night  a white pine  a high rise

Sentences

Why does he cry at night?  Try to arrive on time.
Mice are a frightening sight.  White mice like rice.
She cried at the sight of the mice.  Why did it die?
He tried to be kind to the child.  The time was right.

Rhymes

sign  white  my  rice  ride

For Fun

As I was going to St. Ives,
I met a man with seven wives;
Each wife had seven sacks,
Each sack had seven cats,
Each cat had seven kits,
Kits, cats, sacks, and wives,
How many were going to St. Ives?
OU

Vowels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EE</th>
<th>ER</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>AY</td>
<td>OU</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>AW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Listen and Say

- ou       ow
  cloud    ow
  south    brown
  out      now
  house    town
  flour    flower

Phrases

- a brown cow    about the house
- a loud sound   without a doubt
- a proud scout  around the town
- down on the ground   a pound and an ounce

Sentences

- The clown fell down.  The sound in the town was loud.
- The mouse was brown.  The brow of the cow was brown.
- The cow was found.  The shout from the crowd was loud.

Rhymes

town  out  around

For Fun

Downtown Brown has a brown hound
That hangs around the town; it thinks it’s a clown.
It makes no sound; it just lounges around
In the park on the ground.
The cops came around, put the hound in the pound.
It cost Brown a pound to get his brown hound
Out of the pound.
### S and Z

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<tr>
<th>P</th>
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<td></td>
<td>L</td>
<td>R</td>
<td></td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Listen and Say

1. **price**
2. **prize**

1. **race**
2. **raise**

1. **Sue**
2. **zoo**

1. **place**
2. **plays**

1. **loose**
2. **lose**

1. **close**
2. **close**

### Phrases

- A slow start
- A safe speed
- A soft song
- Safe and sound
- A loose tooth
- Nice rice
- Lazy girls
- Crazy boys
- Busy bees
- The zebra at the zoo
- A dozen daisies
- Frogs’ legs
- A crazy place
- A priceless prize
- The city zoo

### Sentences

- He received a prize for first place in the race.
- Sally likes to sew dresses. The bees were busy and buzzing.
- She hopes to pass science. The boys were crazy and dizzy.
- Sally wants to see Sammy. The bears were Fuzzy and Wuzzy.

### For Fun

- In the Gambia, a Zambian musician playing jazz made a fateful decision.
  - He picked up the bongo and went to the Congo
  - Where now he’s a famous physician.
- Simple Simon met a pieman going to the fair;
  - Said Simple Simon to the pieman, “Let me taste your ware.”
  - Said the pieman to Simple Simon, “Show me first your penny.”
  - Said Simple Simon to the pieman, “Sir, I haven’t any!”

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*SECTION ONE HANDOUTS  *  THE SOUND SEGMENTS OF ENGLISH (Phonemes)
The Suprasegmental Phonology System

As the term suggests, this aspect of phonology deals with the aspect of sound and pronunciation that overlays the individual segments of sound. At its basic level it affects loudness of syllables (stress) and the pitch of syllables (intonation).

As syllables are strung together in flowing speech, vowel reduction and linking take place, and the utterances result in rhythmic phrasing.

Syllabification

For worksheets, see page 79 in Part Two.

Before taking on the first element of the suprasegmental system, it is worthwhile to review the concept of “syllable.” Simply put, a syllable is a unit of sound that has a vowel at its core and possible consonants before and after the vowel. A syllable can be simply a single vowel sound (V), for example the \textit{a} in \textit{pronunciation}, or a consonant and vowel (CV), as in \textit{ci}, or CCV as in \textit{pro}, or CVC as in \textit{nun} and \textit{tion}. The following are common English syllable patterns.

\begin{verbatim}
V    C-V      C-V-C    C-C-V-C    C-C-C-V-C    C-C-C-V-C-C
/EE/  /TEE/   /TEEM/   /STEEL/   /STREEK/   /STRENGth/
\end{verbatim}

In multisyllable words it is not always easy to tell where one syllable ends and another begins, so when in doubt consult a dictionary. The main point is that there must be one and only one vowel in every syllable. As we shall see in the next section, stress will fall on that vowel. Break each word in this list into syllables and show the syllable pattern. The first one is done.

\begin{verbatim}
_____ review      re view      CV   CCV
_____ column
_____ headline
_____ newspaper
_____ editorial
_____ opinion
_____ classified
_____ political
_____ accident
_____ international
_____ information
_____ advertisement
\end{verbatim}

Answers on page 101.
Stress

For worksheets, see page 81 in Part Two.

Stress in linguistic terms refers to the amount of energy that a syllable receives when it is uttered. In simpler terms, it is how loud the syllable is. A stressed syllable is louder and usually a bit longer than the other syllables in a word or phrase.

Primary Stress

Remember that a syllable includes one vowel sound with one or more consonant sounds before and/or after the vowel, although a syllable can be just a vowel sound. Say the words below, break them into syllables, and underline the loudest syllable.

Example: Canada  Can  a  da
Boston
Cleveland
Ontario
Nebraska
Minneapolis
Philadelphia
Los Angeles

Answers on page 101.

Weak Stress

Now let’s take a closer look at two-syllable words in English and observe the stress. Say these words and underline the stressed syllable, for example, Portland.

listen  pencil  vowel  common  purpose  English

If you say these words at normal speed, do you notice that the vowel in the second syllable is very weak, even hard to hear?

LIS uhN  PEN suhL  VOU uhL  CAHM uhn  PER PuhS  ING LuhSH
**Secondary Stress**

*For worksheets, see pages 82 and 83 in Part Two.*

Now say these words. Underline the primary stress and notice the second syllable.

- Pronoun
- notebook
- laptop
- phoneme
- email
- keyboard

In this series of words something different happens. Let’s look at *pronoun*. The “pro” is stressed, right? But the “noun” is too, agreed? *Noun* is not as loud as *pro*, but it is still loud enough for us to hear the quality of /OU/ in noun. What we have here is secondary stress.

We will therefore consider English to have three levels of stress: primary (●), secondary (○), and weak (•).

**Compound Word Stress**

You may also have noticed that in the second group of words, there are actually two words joined together to form a new word. This process is called compounding, and most compound nouns follow the stress pattern of primary-secondary.

- PRONOUN
- NOTBUK
- LAPTAHP
- FONEEM
- EEMEYL
- KEEBORD

Although this stress pattern is common for nouns, compound verbs (including phrasal verbs) and adjectives often have the reverse pattern:

- overcome
- log on
- look up (a word)
- far-reaching
- outstanding
**Syllable Stress 1:** ● ●

Pronounce the word *teacher*. The word has two syllables: *tea-* and *-cher*. The first syllable has is louder and a little longer than the second syllable: *tea* cher. This is called stress. The longer and louder sound of the first syllable is called PRIMARY stress and the shorter and quieter sound of second syllable is called SECONDARY.

Listen to these words. The first syllable has primary stress. It is printed in capital letters. The big circle represents primary stress. The smaller circle represents secondary stress.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>● ●</th>
<th>● ●</th>
<th>● ●</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>tea cher</td>
<td>Mon day</td>
<td>morn ing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eng lish</td>
<td>col lege</td>
<td>un der</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lec ture</td>
<td>pa per</td>
<td>o ver</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Practice saying these names:**

Albert  Francis  Kenneth  Paula  Victor
Betty  Georgia  Laura  Quentin  Walter
Carlos  Harold  Michael  Robert  Yuri
Donna  Ingrid  Nancy  Sandra  Zoey
Edward  Jason  Oden  Thomas

**Syllable Stress 2:** ● ●

Some words have primary stress on the second syllable. Listen to these words.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>● ●</th>
<th>● ●</th>
<th>● ●</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a bove</td>
<td>re peat</td>
<td>a fraid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>re turn</td>
<td>al low</td>
<td>pre tend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sur prise</td>
<td>mis take</td>
<td>ap pear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There are no rules that are always true for stress, but we can make some general statements.

1. **Most** two-syllable words have primary stress on the first syllable.
2. Two-syllable words that have a prefix are *usually* pronounced with the primary stress on the second syllable.

**Practice.** Listen to these nonsense words and circle the syllable that has primary stress.

kinning  desack  kipful  pertrop
anoop  uggles  repalled  untrock
gopply  vapy  kuster  fredded
prothorbed  tishken  affrond  norking
fribble  gulpin  imprale  sumpster

*Answers on page 102.*
Syllable Stress

With some words, moving the primary stress from one syllable to the other can cause a change in the part of speech. A noun can become a verb and vice versa. There may also be a change in meaning.

Listen to these words. If the primary stress is on the first syllable, circle it and say “one.” If it is on the second syllable, circle it and say “two.”*

object   conduct   address
increase  produce   permit
contract  perfect   project

Which words are verbs? Can you make a rule?

Answers on page 102.

Say these words as verbs:

subject  reject   record
conflict  address   decrease
convert   present   protest
rebel     contrast   extract
insult    progress   suspect
permit    refuse    desert
annex     conduct

Now say them as nouns.

Say these sentences:

1. There are conflicting reports that the conflict may be over.
2. He converted to Islam last year. As a convert he now prays every day.
3. We can’t permit you to do that. Your permit has expired.
4. She presented him with a beautiful present.
5. The dump refused to take the refuse because it was full.
6. The suspect addressed the jury and protested that he was not guilty.
7. They converted the annex into a shoe store.
8. The rebels rejected the peace plan.
9. Several soldiers deserted in the Western Desert.

* Teacher’s note: hear answers for the pronunciation on the CD.