

THE READING ROAD



Chapter 1: Sounds & Letters

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Introduction

The Reading Road is all about learning to read better and faster. Most of the chapters have lessons for kids to read out loud with their tutors. Some of the words in the lessons are hard to read, so kids will need some help from their tutors.

If a really hard word is printed in black, tutors can tell kids what the word is. The words that are in color are the most important ones for kids to practice reading. Tutors can give hints about how to read the colored words, but kids should try their best to use what they know about the alphabet to figure them out.

Chapter 1 is different. It's not really about reading! The main point is to think about the different sounds that make up words when we talk. In this chapter, tutors are supposed to read the lessons out loud to the kids. Kids can just follow along, look at the pictures, listen carefully, and say certain parts of words out loud.

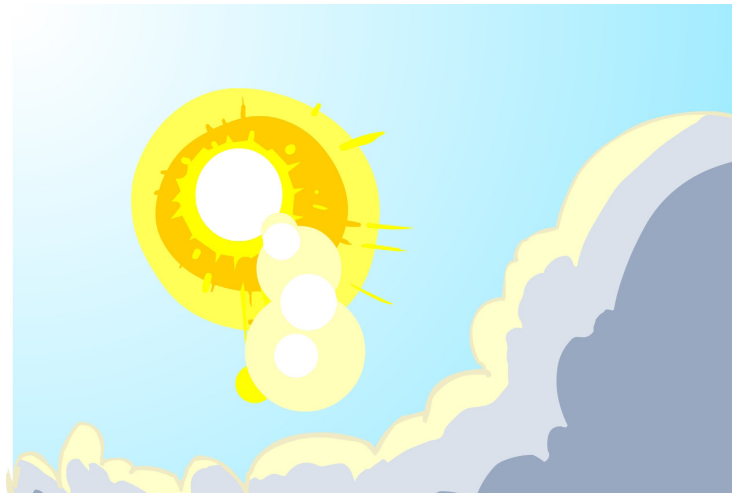
In this chapter, we're going to talk about vowels and consonants, and we're going to talk about short vowels and long vowels. Finally, we're going to look at the tricky letters **b** and **d** and learn a new way to remember which one is which.



Sounds

When we talk, we use lots of different sounds. We don't usually think about the sounds that make up words. But when we read, the letters of the alphabet tell us which sounds are in the word we are reading.

The alphabet is like a secret code, where the letters are the clues that tell us what the word is. To crack the code, first we need to think about the sounds we use to talk.



Let's start thinking about the word **sun**.

How many sounds does it have?

What are they?

Blending

Sun has three sounds.

Say each one as slowly as you can:

sssssssss... uhhhhhhhhhh... nnnnnnnnnnn...

Then say them faster:

sss... uhh... nnn

Now say them really fast:



Can you feel how you put the sounds together into a word by smooshing them together? This is called **blending**.

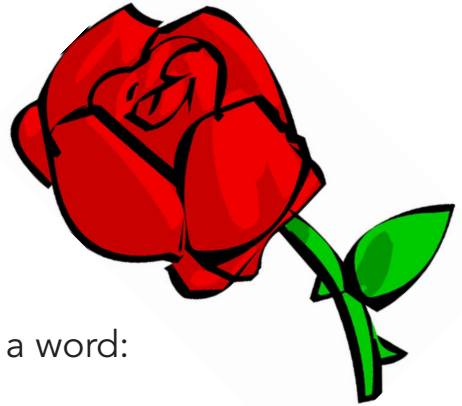
Here are two more words for you to practice blending.
They both have three sounds.

First say these sounds slowly:

rrrrrrr... ohhhhhhhh... zzzzzzzz...

Then say them faster and faster until it makes a word:

rrr...ohhh...zzz...



rose

Say these three sounds one at a time:

ffffff... ayyyyyy... ssssss...

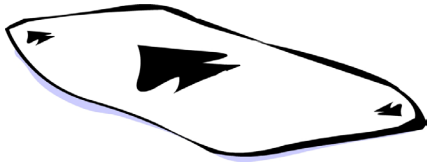
Then smoosh them together:

fff... ayyy... sss...



face

When we take away the *fff* sound in *face*, it's a different word. Do you know what word it is? Try putting the sounds back together, but without the *fff*.



Can you hear how *ace* is *face*
without the *fff* sound?

Let's try taking away the first sound from some other words...



What is *hat* without the *hhh* sound?

What is *mad* without the *mmm*?



What is *sick* without *sss*?

Letters

Now that we have thought about sounds, we're going to think about the connection between sounds and letters.

Basically, letters make sounds. You already know a lot of the sounds different letters can make.

In some words every letter makes exactly one sound. For example, in *sun*, every letter makes a different sound. There are three letters and three sounds. Which letter makes which sound?

s u n

Vowels & Consonants

There are two main types of sounds: vowels and consonants.

Vowels and consonants are types of sounds, but they are also types of letters. Letters make sounds, remember? Most of the time vowel letters make vowel sounds and consonant letters make consonant sounds.

In the alphabet on this page, the vowels are green and the consonants are red. The red consonants always make consonant sounds. The letter y is blue because sometimes it is a vowel, but other times it is a consonant.

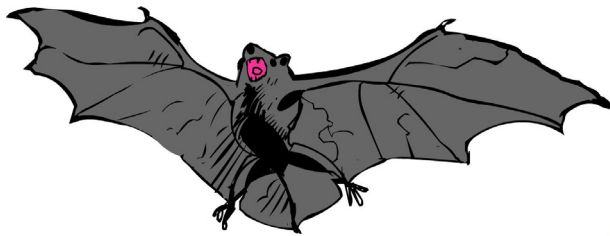


The most important thing to remember is that the vowel letters are a, e, i, o, u and sometimes y. All the other letters are consonants.

Vowels

Vowels are really important because every word has at least one vowel. Remember, there are only five letters that always make vowel sounds: **a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u**. The letter **y** is sometimes a vowel.

Here are some pictures of words that have one vowel letter. Each word has a different vowel sound. First say all of the words. Then figure out the vowel sound in each one and say just that sound.



bat



sick



pot



bed



bus

There are only five vowel letters, but there are a lot more than five vowel sounds in English!

Since we don't have enough letters, we have to use combinations of letters to make some of the sounds. That's why there are lots of words that have one vowel *sound* but two vowel *letters*.

Each picture on this page is of something with a different vowel sound. Even though most of these words have two vowel letters, they all only have one vowel sound. First say the words and then say just the vowel sound in each word.



bee



cook



spoon



coin



bone

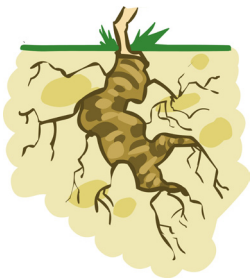


cake



bike

Now let's think about how you make the different vowel sounds by moving different parts of your mouth.

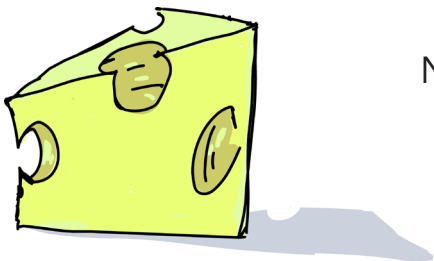


First say *root*.

Then say just the vowel sound:

ooooo...

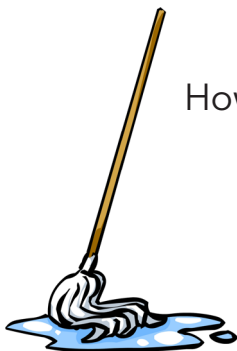
What do you do with your lips
when you say ooo?



Next try the vowel in *cheese*:

eeeeee....

Can you feel the middle of your tongue move up?



How about the vowel sound in *mop*....

Which way does your tongue go?

All of the different vowel sounds have something in common: they are the loudest sound in the word. Think about when you sing. Try singing the word *man*. (If you don't like to sing, you can just call it out really loud.)

First try holding the note on the *mmm* part at the beginning:

mmmmman

Now try holding the *nnn* part at the end:

ma**nnnnnnn**

That's not how you normally sing, is it? No! When you really want to sing out, you hold the note on the vowel. Try it!

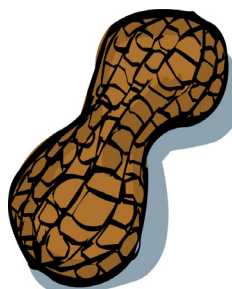


For more practice with vowels, do the **Vowel Matching** worksheet.

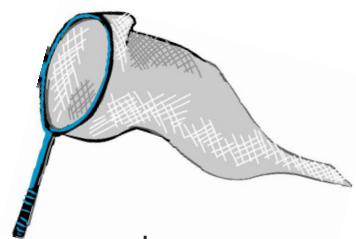
Long & Short Vowels

The tricky thing about vowels is that every vowel letter — **a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u** — can make more than one sound.

When a vowel letter is in the middle of a three-letter word, it makes a *short vowel* sound. The short vowel sounds are the hardest ones to hear. Listen for them in these words:



nut



net



hat



pig



hop

The *long vowel* sounds are easier to remember because they are the same as the names of the vowel letters: **a**, **e**, **i**, **o** and **u**.

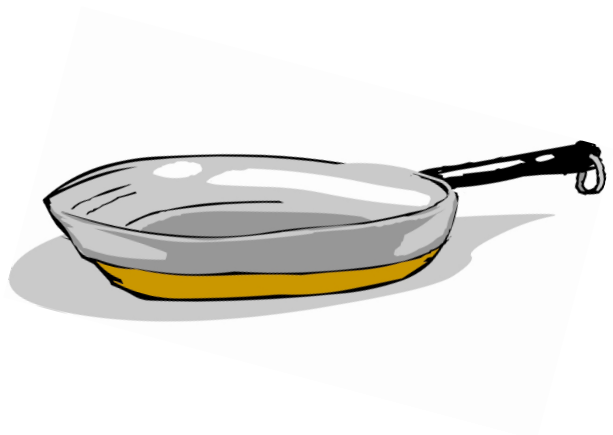
Long & Short A

The long-a sound is just like the name of the letter. Let's say it...

A! It's the vowel sound in *pray* and *cake*.

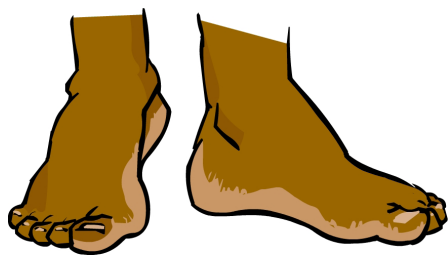


The vowel sound in *rat* and *pan* is short-a.

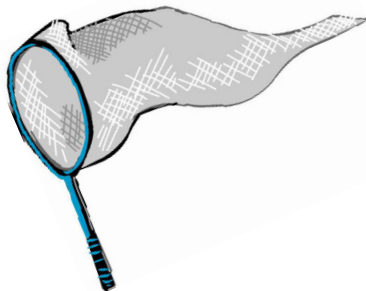


Long & Short E

The long-e sound is the same as the name of the letter: e. It's the vowel sound in *feet* and *bee*.

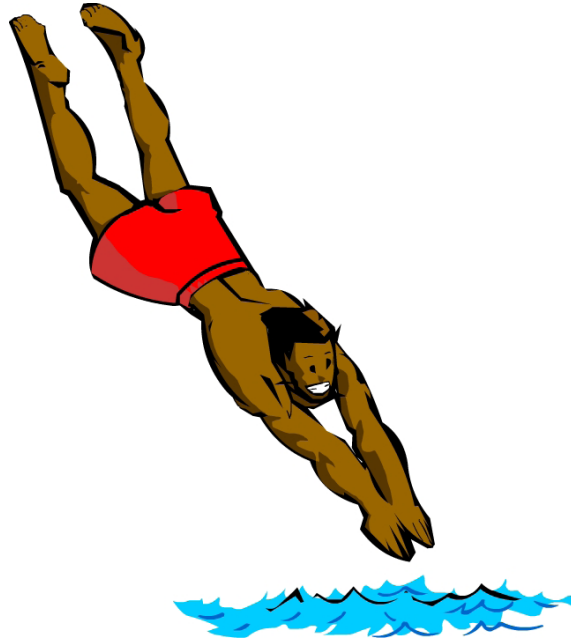
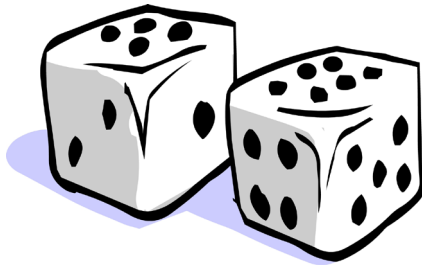


Short-e is the vowel sound in *net* and *bed*. What is the sound?



Long & Short I

By itself, long-i is the word you use to talk about yourself: *I*.
It is also the vowel sound in *dice* and *dive*.



Short-i is the vowel sound in *itch* and *lip*.



Long & Short O

Long-o is the vowel sound in *boat* and *rope*.

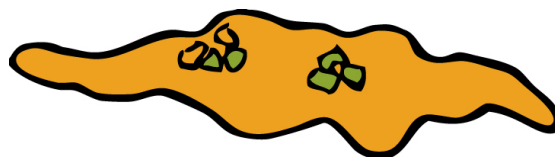
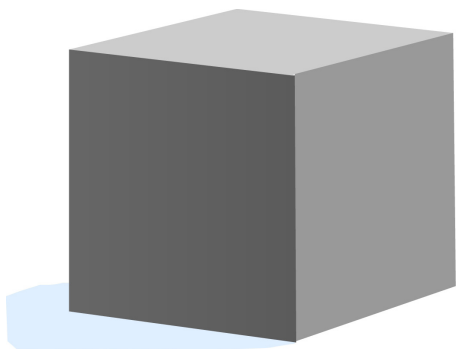


Short-o is the vowel sound in *stop* and *mom*.

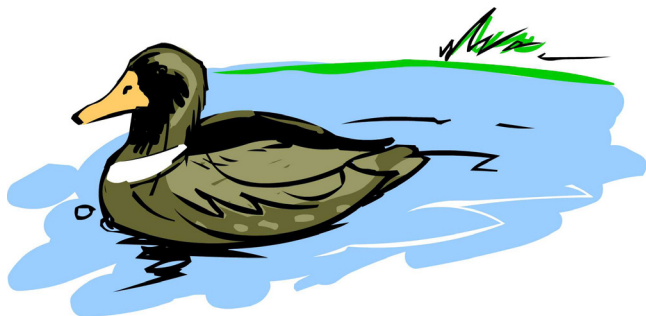


Long & Short U

Long-u is the vowel in *cube* and *puke*.



Short-u is the vowel in *duck* and *gum*.



Actually, long-u can make two different sounds. In *cube* and *puke*, the vowel sounds the same as the name of the letter: u. But in some words, long-u just sounds like ooo. Can you hear the difference between *you* and ooo?

The long-u sound is ooo in *tube* and *tune*.



You can remember which long and short vowels go together by thinking of certain pairs of words that mean similar things.

A

When you turn *insane* into *insanity*,
you turn long-a into short-a.

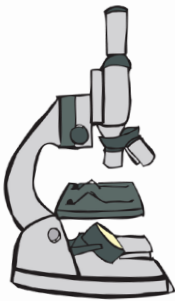


E

When you turn *sweep* into *swept*,
you turn long-e into short-e.

I

When you turn *bite* into *bit*
you turn long-i into short-i.



O

When you turn *microscope* into *microscopic*,
you turn long-o into short-o.

U

When you turn *student* into *study*,
you turn long-u into short-u.



Consonants

All of the sounds that aren't vowels are consonants. Some consonants are louder than others, but they aren't nearly as loud as the vowels. Consonants are quieter because you use your tongue and your lips to block some of the air coming out of your mouth when you say them. You make the different consonant sounds by moving different parts of your mouth. Let's practice noticing which parts you use to make different sounds.



First say the sound the letter *v* makes: *vvv*. Can you feel how your lower lip touches your top teeth?



Now make the *n* sound: *nnn*. When you do this, what do you do with the tip of your tongue?



Next try saying the *k* sound, like at the beginning of *kid*. Can you feel how the back of your tongue moves in the back of your mouth?

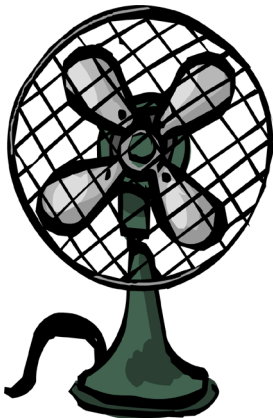
First say all of the words below. Then say just the consonant sound at the beginning of each one.



leaf



sock



fan



gum

Now say the consonant sound at the end of each word.

Just like with the vowels, there are more consonant sounds than consonant letters. That's why we use letter combinations to write some of the sounds.

Think about the word *fish*. It only has three sounds. Do you know what they are?

fff... ihhh... shhh...

But *fish* has four letters. **Sh** is two letters, but it only makes one sound: *shhh*.



fish

For more practice with consonants, do the **Consonant Matching** worksheet.

B & D

Lower-case **b** and **d** are hard letters to read because they look so much like each other. Here's a way to tell the difference:

1. Make both hands into fists
2. Touch your knuckles together
3. Give yourself two thumbs up!

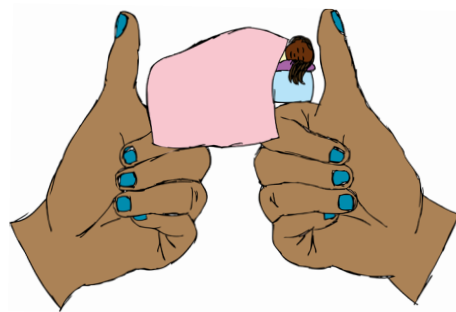
Do you see how one hand (the left one) looks like **b**



and the other (the right one) looks like **d**?



The trick is to think of the word **bed**. It even looks like a bed! See how you can put a very tiny sleeping person on your fingers?



When you look at the **b** and **d** you made with your hands, think about the sounds the letters make in **bed**. Now, whenever you aren't sure which is a **b** and which is a **d**, just make a bed with your hands!

Brainstorm



Can you think of two words that start with **b**?



How about two words that start with **d**?



Can you think of two words that end with a **b** sound?

How about two that end with a **d** sound?



For more practice, do the B & D Hide & Seek worksheet.

Tower Game

To play this game, listen to the words your tutor says. You don't have to look at the words: just listen to them and think about the sounds that are in each one. You can say the words out loud, too.

Part 1

For each word, say if the vowel is long or short. You get a domino for every one you get right. You can use the dominoes to build a tower!

- | | | | | |
|---------|----------|---------|----------|----------|
| 1. teen | 4. puke | 7. hide | 10. mom | 13. bone |
| 2. map | 5. name | 8. rain | 11. wet | 14. hug |
| 3. ride | 6. wreck | 9. sit | 12. poke | 15. kick |

Part 2

Now listen to five more words. For each one, write down if it has a b or a d. You get a domino for every one you get right.



- 16. rid
- 17. bone
- 18. kid
- 19. dig
- 20. rob