

Vowels

Vowel sounds often cause spelling problems, because there are so many different ways of spelling the same sound. Here are some examples of different spellings of the short and long sounds ‘a’, ‘e’, ‘i’, ‘o’, and ‘u’:

short ‘a’: cat, plait

short ‘e’: get, leather, friend

short ‘i’: fish, mystery, pretty

short ‘o’: dog, cough, sausage

short ‘u’: cup, colour, rough

long ‘a’: game, plain, hay, great, neighbour

long ‘e’: greed, beat, concede, seize, field

long ‘i’: time, lie, cycle, height

long ‘o’: toe, grow, coat, sew

long ‘u’: flute, true, flew, route

VOWEL BRICKS

These words have lost their vowels. Can you put them back in each word in the right order?

F	R			N	D
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L				S	
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B		S	C			T
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B				T		F		L
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S		L	H				T	T	
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	S	S		S	S		N		T			N
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Q				
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W				R	D
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M		D		C		N	
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D		F		N		T		L	Y
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	B	B	R		V			T			N
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E	I
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A	E	I	I
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I	I	U
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A	E	I	U	U
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E	E	I	O	U
---	---	---	---	---

A	A	A	I	I	O
---	---	---	---	---	---

E	E	U	U
---	---	---	---

E	I
---	---

E	E	I	I
---	---	---	---

E	E	I	I
---	---	---	---

A	A	E	I	I	O
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Unstressed vowels

Unstressed vowels are not clearly pronounced in normal speech and so are particularly difficult to spell, because you have no sound to guide you. Examples include the **a**'s at each end of *agenda*, both of which are pronounced with a vague ‘uh’ sound. To help remember the spelling of unstressed vowels:

- Think of other members of the same word family in which the vowel is stressed. For example, you can remember the unstressed second **a** of *grammar* by thinking of *grammatical*, the unstressed second **e** of *competition* by thinking of *compete* or *competitive*, or the unstressed first **i** of *medicine* by thinking of *medical* or *medicinal*.
- Say the word several times to yourself or out loud in a way that shows how the unstressed vowel would normally be pronounced, for example *sep-AH-rate*, *hyp-OH-crite*.
- Many words have other words inside them, or at the beginning or end. For example, the word *favourite* contains *our* and *rite*, and the word *mother* contains *moth*, *other*, *the*, *he*, and *her*. Finding and remembering these ‘words within words’ can help you to learn a difficult spelling. This ‘words within words’ strategy can be particularly useful for remembering the spelling of unstressed or silent vowels, for example **g**et in *vegetable* or **s**in in *business*.

