

Long Vowel Sounds

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A long vowel says its own name. Here are the five, and three ways each one gets spelled.

a A



/ay/
as in cake

cake **rain** **day**
a_e ai ay

e E



/ee/
as in eel

feet **leaf** **happy**
ee ea y

i I



/eye/
as in bike

bike **light** **my**
i_e igh y

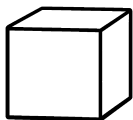
o O



/oh/
as in bone

bone **boat** **snow**
o_e oa ow

u U



/yoo/
as in cube

cube **blue** **moon**
u_e ue oo

Long u is two sounds: /yoo/ in cube, and /oo/ in blue and moon. Both are called long u.



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The Four Ways to Spell a Long Vowel

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One sound, four different jobs for the letters around it. Read the words across and look at what comes after the vowel.

1. A silent e on the end

The e says nothing itself. It reaches back over one consonant and makes the vowel say its name.

cake bike bone cube

Not always: have, give, come and love end in a silent e that changes nothing.

There is almost no e_e word. See wonsterwords.com/resources/silent-e-words

2. A partner letter beside it

Two letters sit together and spell one sound, so rain has four letters and three sounds.

rain feet boat blue

Not always: a team can be short instead, as in bread and book.

See wonsterwords.com/resources/vowel-team-words

3. Nothing after it

A vowel at the end of a syllable usually says its name, because nothing follows it to cut it short.

me go hi baby

Usually, not always: to, do and who all break it.

4. A pair of consonants that often force it

A few endings often make the vowel long even though nothing marks it: -ind, -ild, -old and -ost.

kind wild cold most

Often, not always: build, wind, cost and lost keep the short vowel. Learn these word by word.

"Long" does not mean held longer

It means the letter says its own **name**. Stretching the a in cat does not turn it into the a in cake; it turns it into a different sound altogether. Say the name, not a longer version of the short sound.



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Short or Long?

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The same five letters, two sounds each. Read each pair across: the silent e is what flips it.

short

long

cap → cape

them → theme

Almost the only one. e_e is rare.

kit → kite

hop → hope

cub → cube

Which comes first

Short vowels come first, and most children read short-vowel words for months before a long vowel turns up. If your child is still working on cat, pig and sun, this chart is for later.



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Which Spelling Do You Use?

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These pairs sound exactly the same, so a child cannot hear which one to write.
Read each pair across, then say the rule.

ai or ay? both say /ay/

rain mail train

day play stay

ay goes at the END of a word. ai goes in the MIDDLE.

ee or ea? both say /ee/

feet seed green

leaf meal dream

There is no rule here. Both are common in the middle of a word, so these are learned one word at a time.

oa or ow? both say /oh/

boat coat goat

snow grow slow

ow goes at the END of a word. oa goes in the MIDDLE. Careful: ow also says /ow/, as in cow.



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Which Long Vowel Do You Hear?

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Say a word out loud. Your child listens for the long vowel and writes the word in that column. Use it again tomorrow with new words.

a

cake

e

eel

i

bike



bone



cube

[illegible]

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How to Use This Chart

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Five minutes, most days, beats an hour on Sunday.

1. **You:** point to a letter and say its NAME, then the word beside it. Long vowels are the one time the letter's name is the answer.
2. **You:** say the whole row the same way every time: a, cake, /ay/. Then read the three words across and let the spellings be different.
3. **Your child:** says the sound back, reads the three words, and points at the part that makes the long sound.
4. **Both:** one vowel a week, not five in a day. Short vowels come first, so if your child is still reading cat and pig, this chart is for later.
5. **Both:** when a word comes home spelled rane or bote, turn to the spelling page and read that pair across.

The one mistake to avoid

Do not teach a long vowel as a stretched short one. A child who learns “hold the a longer” says caaat, not cake. The long sound is the letter’s **name**, and it is a completely different sound from the short one.

What comes next

Once your child hears all five long sounds, the next step is choosing between the spellings when they write: page 4 is the pair to start with. Word lists for each vowel, with free worksheets, are at wonsterwords.com/resources.



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