

# ONE TO ONE Tutoring Tips

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## The Long and Short of It!

From the 26 letters in the English alphabet, 21 letters are used to make the consonant sounds. The other 5 letters are used to make the vowel sounds. Sometimes *y* is considered a vowel sound when there are no other vowels in a word such as in the word *spy*.

Understanding that each vowel makes both a long and short sound doesn't always come easily for many students. It's helpful to tell students that the vowels are like managers, or bosses. They have lots of jobs to do and often get together in groups or with other letters to do special jobs.

### **Short and Long Vowels**

There are 5 *short* vowel sounds: /a/ as in apple, /e/ as in elephant, /i/ as in igloo/ and /u/ as in umbrella.

The *long* vowel sound is the name of the letter. Here are some examples: long /a/ as in gate; long /e/ as in keep; long /i/ as in rice; long /o/ as in spoke, and long /u/ as in cube.

### **Vowel Digraphs**

Vowel digraphs are a group of two vowels in which only one sound is heard. Here are some examples: /ai/ as in maid; /ee/ as in sweet; /oa/ as in boat. You can also have consonant digraphs such as /sh/ in sheep and /ch/ in chicken.

### **“R” Controlled Vowel Sounds**

When a vowel is followed by the letter “r”, the vowel does not make a long or short sound but is considered a “Rcontrolled” vowel sound such as /or/ as in store, /ar/ as in far, /er/ as in her and /air/ as in fair.

### **Diphthongs**

Diphthongs are a combination of two sounds, each with two different spellings. For example, the diphthong /ow/ and /ou/ make the /ow/ sound as in the word cow.

### **Long and Short /oo/**

Then we have a long and short /oo/ sounds such as /oo/ in look and /oo/ as in moose. So, there you have it, the long and short of vowels.

## How to Beat Those Tricky Vowels

Students in kindergarten through second grade learn the basics of sounds; however, a student in the intermediate grades can also require assistance. One of the reasons that students have difficulty with the short vowels is that the sounds of the vowels are so similar.

Use a variety of approaches to help reinforce the vowels. Begin by reviewing what the written vowels look like; use the dry erase board to illustrate. Choose words from a reading passage and ask the student to identify all of the vowels in each word. Say the words aloud, placing vocal stress on vowel sounds. Ask the student to repeat the words.

Choose words with only one vowel in them. Write each word on the dry erase board replacing the vowel with a blank. Ask the student to fill in the blank with the correct vowel to complete the word. If the word has more than one possible vowel, add a picture of the word you want the student to write.