[**fon**-iks] [**bey**-siks]

Phonics Basics

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Phonics: predictable relationships between phonemes (sounds) and graphemes (letters.) The 26 letters in English can make 44 different sounds, but there are more than 500 ways to represent those 44 sounds.

Some think that with all the exceptions in English it’s not worth it to spend too much time on phonics, but rather on memorizing and recognizing the most common words.

Memorizing high frequency words is important. Edward Fry has ranked the 1000 most commonly used words in English, in frequency order.

 “The first 25 make up about a third of all printed material. The first 100 make up about half of all written material, and the first 300 make up about 65% of all written material.” (Fry & Kress, 2006).

If you aren’t teaching these common words to your students, you can get the list here <http://bjh.dadeschools.net/assets/fry_complete_1000.pdf> or many other free sites.

So why teach phonics? To read the other 35% of the words! Instead of listing phonics “rules” (with many exceptions,) call them strategies. I tell my students I am teaching them the strategy to try first.

Today I will focus on the vowels and the basic strategies for vowel sounds. Also note that instant words/sight words are not necessarily words that don’t follow any “rules.” Of the first 100 Instant words, that make up about half of all written material, about 70 of them are decodable using the vowel strategies I will show you today.

1. Today is all about the vowels
* Every word and every syllable needs a vowel
* Long sounds
* Short sound
* Consonant
* Syllable
* Make sure your students know these terms

1. Where the vowels are located in a word makes all the difference – imagine the letters of a word as your students lining up to go out for recess and jostling for position. Those kids who always want to be in a certain position in line – vowels.
2. Closed
* A closed syllable has a single vowel sound and ends in a consonant.
* The vowel usually says its short sound.
* Finger spelling
1. Open
* An open syllable ends in a vowel sound and the vowel is usually long.
1. Vowel-Consonant-Silent e
* Silent e reaches around one consonant and taps the vowel on the shoulder and says, “Say your name!”
1. Vowel Digraphs
* Two or more adjacent vowels that make a single sound is a vowel digraph.
* Less common digraphs: NEW and SAW (yes! W is considered a vowel in this case!)
1. Vowel diphthong
* [**dif**-thawng, -thong, **dip**-]
* A sound produced when the tongue glides from one place to the other
* oi, oy, ow, ou
* They sound like they’re whining
1. R-Controlled
* The A and the O can sometimes have a little control over that R, but mostly in an R-controlled syllable you hear only the R.
1. Consonant-le
* Only occurs in a word with more than one syllable.
* The –le pulls one preceding consonant into the syllable with it
1. Sight Words
* Don’t like rules or don’t fit in a common category

**Source List**

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Boston, MA: Pearson.

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**Vowel and Syllable Patterns** Linnette Fehr 2015

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| --- |
| **Closed**top kiss in black whenClosed: has a single vowel and ends in a consonant The vowel is usually short. |
| **Open**no me my sheOpen: ends in a vowel soundThe vowel is usually long. |
| **Silent e**came home hole white stoveSilent e: has the pattern of Vowel – consonant- silent eThe first vowel is usually long.else MudgeThe silent e rule usually does not work if there is more than one consonant. |
| **Consonant + le**puddle trouble able circleConsonant+le: the le pulls a single consonant into the syllable with it.You usually hear the consonant + l. |
| **R-Controlled**bark first curlR-controlled: any vowel with an r right after itYou usually hear the r sound. (a and o sometimes have a little to say) |
| **Two Vowels, Digraph**train straight eat toes cream vowel digraph: Two or more adjacent vowels that make a single sound.You hear one vowel sound. |
| **Two Vowels, Diphthong**cowboy shouts noise Vowel diphthong is a sound produced when the tongue glides from one place to the other. You hear two vowel sounds. The diphthongs are oi, oy, ow, and ou. |
| **Sight Word**moon the wasSight words don’t like rules! |

**Vowel and Syllable Pattern Chart**

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Closed**It ends in a consonant.The vowel sound is short. | **Open**It ends in a vowel.The vowel sound is long. | **Silent e**The silent e reaches around one consonant and says to the vowel, “Say your name!” (long) | **Consonant + le**le always pulls one letter with it. You hear that letter and the l sound. |
|  |  |  |  |
| **R-controlled**You mostly hear the r sound. | **Two Vowels, digraph**Two vowels make one sound. | **Two Vowels, diphthong**Two vowels slide their sounds together: ow, ou, oi, oy. | **Sight Word**It doesn’t follow the rules! |
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