

## **TEACHING NOTES**

### **VOWELS AND CONSONANTS**

**Vowels** are **a,e,i,o,u** (and **y**).

They are voiced letters. The rest (consonants) are made with the tongue, lips and teeth.

**y** is sometimes a consonant ( **yet, yacht** ) but more often a vowel (**fancy, sky, psychologist** ).

**Vowel sounds** may have regional variations. For instance long and short **u** are the same as long and short **oo** in northern England (So **book** and **buck** sound the same in Yorkshire) . In Norfolk, **eer** is frequently pronounced **air**, so **beer** and **bare** sound the same.

Only standard, southern English pronunciation. is considered here.

## **Hard and soft**

**Hardening vowels** are **a,o,u**

**Softening vowels** are **c,e** (and **y**)

Hardening vowels make **c** say **k** (**cup, cat, cot**) and **g** say **g** (**gap, gut, got**)

Softening vowels make **c** say **s** (ceiling, **rice, Cirencester, cycle**) and **g** say **j** (George, **rage, gin, encouraging, gyrate**).

As always in English, there are exceptions (**get, gift, girl, begin**).

## **Long and short**

Briefly<sup>1</sup>, each of the five vowels has a principle long and short form. The long form is the sound in the letter name. The short form is the first sound given in the Alphabet Rap.

### **SHORT**

**cap**

**pet**

**sit**

**hop**

**cut**

**foot**

### **LONG**

**cape**

**Pete**

**site**

**hope**

**cute**

**boot**

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<sup>1</sup> There are other long forms of vowels. The **a** in past, for instance is long. The forms above are the only ones children will need to know - and not until they come to the modifying **e**.

## NOTES TO WORD LISTS 1-40

(Numbers refer to those found at the beginning of each list)

- 1 Long **o** and **e** are included from the very beginning (**go, he**). This poses no problem, since children are taught from the beginning that vowels have more than one sound. This is done in the **Letter Sounds Rap**.
- 4 CVCC words are deliberately taught before CCVC words. At the beginning, children seem to find it easier this way round.
- 7/8 There are only two phonemes in such words as **may**. The **y** is not a true consonant.
- 9 The combination **ck** only occurs after a single, short vowel. If the vowel sound is long (**break, make**) there is no **c**. If it is doubled (**peek, look**) there is no **c**. If there is another consonant before the final **k** sound (**park, tank**), there is no **c**.
- 10 Teach **ng** as a single sound. So **s-i-ng** is 3 phonemes.
- 11 There should be no problem introducing the 3 digraphs **ch, sh, th** at the same time, provided adequate oral preparation (blending and segmenting) has taken place before introducing the graphemes. Games can reinforce the three sounds: children join together to make a train for every time they hear **ch**; they put their fingers to their lips for **sh**; they stick their tongues out for **th**. The same game can then be played by showing the grapheme cards rather than saying the sound.
- 12/13 Words ending in double letters could be dealt with in blending and segmenting by using a simple hand signal at the end of the word (thumb and forefinger, for instance, to indicate 2 letters.)
- 14 Revise list 12 and focus on word **shall** before teaching this new sound. Children need to be aware that **all** may be pronounced in two different ways.

- 15 The modifying **e** needs explicit teaching first of all. It saves time and confusion if the terms 'long' and 'short' are used from the beginning.

An **e** at the end of a word after a single consonant makes the preceding vowel long.<sup>2</sup> (**hop – hope; rip-ripe; mat – mate**) I deal with the silent or magic **e** during blending and segmenting by drawing an **e** in the air. I draw it backwards so it appears the right way round to the class. They soon copy the action.

- 16 The short and long forms of **oo** are treated together. Both are new sounds at this stage. Plenty of practice blending and segmenting should, as always, precede introduction of the grapheme. Thereafter, I would have the digraph card clearly visible during the oral drills in order to remind children of the grapheme.
- 17 The grapheme '**ee**' needs to be introduced quite early, since children have already come across the long **e** sound in words such as **be, she, he**, and could visualise the words incorrectly.
- 18 Revise lists 7/8 before beginning this list and point out that although the phoneme is the same, the grapheme is different. I invite children to find a rule for each. (**ay/ey** are usually just at end of word, whereas **ai** is followed by a consonant.)
- 20 Revise list 17 (**ee**) before introducing this grapheme.
- 21 Do not attempt to pronounce the **h** in these words. Treat it as silent. During blending and segmenting drills, our sign for a silent letter in a word is a finger to the lips.
- 22 Revise list 18 (**ow**) before introducing this grapheme. Children need to be aware of spelling choices.
- 23 Most words with the phoneme **ch** at the end are spelt **tch**. Exceptions are **rich, much, such, which**, which should already be known.
- 24 I cheat, and teach just two phonemes for these words, although the children will probably (rightly) hear three (f, y, oo). I include the letter sound **U** in the letter sounds rap. Some areas (e.g. Norfolk) will not have this problem because **ew** is pronounced **oo**

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<sup>2</sup> In fact, this modifying effect is not confined to the letter **e**, nor to the fact that it is silent and at the end of a word. All vowels following single consonants tend to make the preceding vowel long (**fading; rival; hoping; writing; papal; prudish; human; regal; sated; pupil; pony; later; lunar**). There are, of course, many exceptions (**model; pedant; rivet; fidelity**). But it is worth bearing in mind when it comes to teaching the suffix **-ing**.

- 25 Children can be taught that the letter **j** does not occur at the end or in the middle of English words. The sound is spelt with a **g** after long vowels (**page, wager**) and **dg** or **dge** after short vowels (**ridge, badger, hedging**)
- 26/27 These can be taught together if the children have already learnt the spelling rule associated with **ay** and **ai** (lists 7 & 19)
- 28 Revision of long **o** made with modifying **e** (**hope, rode, cone**) might be useful at this point, to reinforce earlier learning and make children aware of spelling choices.
- 29/30 These two lists could be taught together. The children need to know that the phoneme **ar** does not occur before **s**. If they are not taught this explicitly, they are likely to write **larst, parst, farst**.
- 33/34 Revise list 31 (**or**) before teaching this grapheme.
- 35/36/37 We use a silent letter sign (finger on lips) during blending and segmenting.
- 39 Revise list 38 before teaching this list. Once again, a single phoneme has more than one grapheme.
- 40 Revise list 19 before teaching this phoneme. Previously children have learnt that a single phoneme can have more than one grapheme (**ay, ai; ow, ou**) This time, a single grapheme has two phonemes (long and short **e**)