

BBN–ANG–242 Phonology

5. Letter-to-sound rules; graphic positions

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Vowel pairs



not before R		before R	
at	a t	a <u>r</u> t	a: t
pot	ɒ t	p <u>o</u> rt	ɒ: t
fist	fɪ st	f <u>i</u> rst	fə: st
bet	bɛ t	B <u>e</u> rt	bə: t
bun	bʌ n	b <u>u</u> rn	bə: n
put	ʊ t	p <u>u</u> rr	ʊ:



last week

not before R		before R	
bee	bɪ j	bee <u>r</u>	bɪ: bɪj.ə
queue	kju:	c <u>u</u> re	kju: kjuw.ə
so	sə w	so <u>r</u> e	sɔ: —
pay	pɛ j	pai <u>r</u>	pɛ: —
tie	taɪ j	ty <u>r</u> e	taɪ.ə ta:
how	haʊ w	hou <u>r</u>	aw.ə a:
coy	koɪ j	coi <u>r</u>	koɪ.ə (ko:)



last week

Alternations

Free–checked vowel pairs

/ɛj/ ~ /a/

sane – sanity
grave – gravity
vain – vanity
state – static
grade – gradual

/ɪj/ ~ /ɛ/

keep – kept
metre – metric
secret – secretary
intervene – intervention
receive – reception

/aj/ ~ /ɪ/

type – typical
Bible – Biblical
divine – divinity
decide – decision
final – finish

/əw/ ~ /ɔ/

holy – holiday
tone – tonic
sole – solitude
know – knowledge
allophone – allophonic

/ɜw/ ~ /ʌ/

assume – assumption
reduce – reduction
produce – production

Letter-to-sound rules:
*relations between **spelling** and **pronunciation***

Free–checked vowel pairs
and their **spelling with a single vowel-letter**

Vowel-letter	Free value	Checked value
A	ɛj	a
E	ɪj	ɛ
I/Y	aj	ɪ
O	əw	ɔ
U	ʉw	ʌ

Graphic positions

Some terms and definitions

orthography: the relationship between pronunciation and spelling

grapheme: a letter or letter-combination used to represent one particular phoneme or a group of phonemes

digraph: a grapheme composed of two letters (e.g. Eng. *ck*, *ph*, *sh*, *th*, *oo*, *ai*; Hun. *cs*, *sz*, *gy*)

Graphic positions

the **graphic position** of a vowel letter:

determined by the letters immediately following it in spelling, whether they are pronounced or not:

- **free** graphic position
- **covered** graphic position

Graphic positions

Free graphic position:

a single vowel-letter is in free graphic position if

- (a) it is not followed by a consonant, i.e. it is followed by
 - another vowel-letter (VV)
e.g. *chaos, poetry, due, lie*
 - nothing (V#)
e.g. *go, he, flu*
- (b) it is followed by one consonant-letter + a vowel-letter (VCV)
e.g. *legal, lazy, hide, care*
- (c) it is followed by two consonant-letters **if** $C_1 = \text{stop}^1$, $C_2 = \text{liquid}^2$ (VSLV)
e.g. *cycle, able, fibre*

¹ b, d, g, p, t, k, c

² l, r

Graphic positions

Covered graphic position:

a single vowel-letter is in covered graphic position if it is followed by

(a) two (or more) consonant-letters (VCC)

e.g. *doctor, hammer, anthem, kiss, luck, term, tax*

(b) one final consonant-letter (VC#)

e.g. *dog, bath, car, begin*

Note: the digraphs *ch*, *ph*, *sh* and *th* count as *one* consonant-letter, whereas *x* counts as *two*.

Graphic positions

Covered		Free			
Graphic Position		Graphic Position			
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
<u>V</u> CC	<u>V</u> C#	<u>V</u> CV	<u>V</u> SLV	<u>V</u> V	<u>V</u> #

Graphic positions

Further examples

Covered		Free			
Graphic Position		Graphic Position			
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)
<u>V</u> CC	<u>V</u> C#	<u>V</u> CV	<u>V</u> SLV	<u>V</u> V	<u>V</u> #
h <u>a</u> mm <u>e</u> r	pl <u>a</u> n#	<u>a</u> n <u>i</u> m <u>a</u> l	st <u>a</u> bl <u>e</u>	ru <u>i</u> n	be#
<u>a</u> ft <u>e</u> r	ca <u>r</u> #	ba <u>t</u> h <u>e</u>		li <u>e</u>	Wi-Fi#
ch <u>e</u> ss	admi <u>t</u> #	pr <u>i</u> ce			no#
ta <u>x</u> i	ba <u>t</u> h#	gl <u>o</u> ri <u>o</u> us			
te <u>r</u> m	prefer#	hi <u>d</u> e			
	hi <u>d</u> #				

OK, but how can it help us?

We can predict the checked/free value of the stressed vowel of a word based on its graphic position:

- If a stressed single vowel-letter stands in **covered** graphic position, it is *normally* pronounced as a **checked** vowel.*
- If a stressed single vowel-letter stands in **free** graphic position, it is *normally* pronounced as a **free** vowel.*

* If the vowel letter in covered graphic position is followed by the letter *r*, it is pronounced as the pre-R counterpart of the respective checked vowel (unless the *carrot* phenomenon applies). If the vowel letter in free position is followed by the letter *r*, the pre-R counterpart of the free vowel is pronounced. (*See the slides of the previous lesson.*)

Covered graphic position – checked vowel

A	E	I=Y	O	U
căp	yěs	hĭt	dōg	cŭp
ădd	ěgg	mĭss	ōff	skŭll
hămmer	lětter	wĭnner	stōpping	sŭmmer
făctory	wrěstle	sŷstem	dōnkey	mŭstard
ăggravate	sěttle	mĭddle	bōggles	sŭckle
cărrot	běrry	mĭrror	sōrrow	cŭrrent

Covered graphic position – **checked** vowel
... or its pre-**R** counterpart

A	E	I=Y	O	U
câr	hêr	stîr	nôr	fûr
hârd	têrm	fîrst	fôrm	hûrt
Spârtan	mêrmaid	Vîrgo	spôrts	ûrban
anârchic	intêrnal	affîrm	accôrding	distûrb
stârring	refêrred	stîrrer	abhôrred	fûrry

Free graphic position – free vowel

A	E	I=Y	O	U
cāpe	scēne	fīve	hōme	cūbe
grimāce	suprēme	advīce	explōde	ređuce
rāzor	fēver	tīger	ōpen	sūper
vācant	rēcent	horīzon	mōment	stūdent
bāthe	ēther	cīpher	Lōthian	Lūther
cāble	mētre	mīgrant	nōble	scrūple
chāos	nēon	bīas	pōet	crūel
Māe	hē	appl̄y	nō	flū

Free graphic position – **free** vowel
... or its pre-**R** counterpart

A	E	I=Y	O	U
cāre	hēre	fīre	mōre	cūre
prepāre	sevēre	admīre	befōre	insūre
Māry	ēra	sīren	glōry	fūry
pārents	hēro	spīral	Dōrian	rūral

Covered graphic position – **checked** vowel
Free graphic position – **free** vowel

Then what about this one?...



Graphic position – checked/free value

Further examples

Covered graphic position → checked vowel		Free graphic position → free vowel	
	<i>Exceptions</i>		<i>Exceptions</i>
bĕtter		hīde	
wīnner	dānger	phōne	gīve
sŷstem	kīnd	crāzy	vĕry
lēcture	trūth	stāple	cīty
lĭttle	āngel	mĕtre	ātom
mĭss	mōst	gō	sālad
mŭst	sīgn	flū	bōdy
hĭd		tōe	
lōt		trūe	

Terms to check

orthography (*ortográfia/helyesírás*)

grapheme (*graféma*)

digraph (*digráf/kettősbetű*)

letter-to-sound rules (*betű–hang szabályok*)

alternation (*alternáció/váltakozás*)

covered graphic position (*fedett grafikus helyzet/íráshelyzet*)

vs. **free graphic position** (*szabad grafikus helyzet/íráshelyzet*)

Recommended reading

- **Spelling vowels**
(<http://seas3.elte.hu/phono/notes/141-spelling.html>)
- **Alternations**
(<http://seas3.elte.hu/phono/notes/alternations.html>)
- **Graphic positions – 1st part, ending with “diphthongs in cov. pos.”**
(<http://seas3.elte.hu/phono/notes/141-graphicposition.html>)