VC+E and VV in Key Syllables

To use the standard spelling of a word to predict that a key vowel is glided, unglided, or reduced, you need a vowel quality pattern (a combination of word stress, vowel spelling pattern, a vowel prediction) and the name-shape translator. This lesson introduces five basic vowel quality patterns.

A. Parts of a Vowel Quality Pattern

The two most common spellings for glided vowels are illustrated in these two words, pronounced with the vowel /ow/. If we did not know how to pronounce these words, which clues would tell us to use a glided pronunciation? Three clues are needed.

1. Vowel Spelling Pattern. A vowel spelling pattern always consists of (a) the target vowel letter. It may also consist of (b) some surrounding letters (but not the i or u of iV or uV spellings (see VS-3, p. 3) and (c) a position marker which tells where the target letter is in the word. (Remember always to ignore neutral endings, such as -s, -'s, -ly; they are not part of a spelling pattern.)

We can represent the target vowel letter with V and a single consonant letter (but not r) with C. A relevant position marker is a non-neutral ending (E) such as a basic ending (e.g. -e, -ed, -ing). +E means “before a non-neutral ending.” The spelling patterns for the words above are these:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>sole</th>
<th>soap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VC+E</td>
<td>VV</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VC+E has one target vowel letter and one consonant letter. +E means that the VC come before a non-neutral ending, like -e, -ed. Remember that word-final e is always a basic ending except in be, he, me, she, the, we. +E is mentioned only after VC. We call this the VC+E (vee-see-plus-e) pattern.

VV has two vowel letters. The first is the target vowel. Remember that the letters w and y are vowel letters after a vowel letter, as in ow, ay, ey, oy. A following consonant letter is irrelevant, except as noted below. A following ending is also irrelevant; that is, there is no such pattern as VV+E. We call this the VV (vee-vee) pattern.
a. Underline the key syllable in each word below.
b. Identify the spelling pattern of each key syllable.

E.g. cheeses  VV  5. grueling  ______  11. guide  ______
E.g. eloped  VC+E  6. employ  ______  12. styled  ______
1. quote  ______  7. minnow  ______  13. Greek  ______
2. encroach  ______  8. fathomed  ______  14. scheme  ______
3. appealing  ______  9. valley  ______  15. trialing  ______
4. chimes  ______  10. explaining  ______  16. poised  ______

2. Stress. A degree of stress, major (´), minor (¨) (together called ‘stressed’), or
unstressed (¨¨), must be part of every vowel prediction pattern. If a word has a
minor stress on the target vowel, the pattern should have minor stress over its
vowel, too. We center the stress mark directly over the V or VV, e.g. VC+E, VV.

3. Vowel Quality Clue. In VS-2, you learned the name-shape translator: a vowel
“name” is equivalent to a glided vowel, vowel “shape” is a clue to an unglided
vowel, and “reduced” translates as schwa, regardless of how the vowel is
spelled.

Recall the “name” clues for glided vowels:

- a, A /ey/ fade  o, O /ow/ bone
- e, E /iy/ feed  u, U (y)/uw/ boot
- i, I /ay/ fine  y, Y (w)/ay/ fine

B. Vowel Quality Patterns for Glided and Reduced Vowels

Spelling pattern, stress, and vowel quality clue combine in a vowel quality pattern, a
formula you must learn. Spelling and stress information are on the left of the
“predicts” sign (=); a vowel quality clue is on the right. Note how the patterns for
stressed vowels work with the name-shape translator to predict specific vowel
sounds in the key.

NOTE: In the following examples and exercises, the stress of vowels in polysyllabic
words is marked. Later, you will predict word stress for yourself and will not need
stress marks. In one-syllable words, no stress is marked; major stress is assumed to
be present.

1. VC+E = name  case, compéted, tiles, style, diódes, rudely. The key
   syllable (underlined) matches either the VC+E = name or
   VC+E = name pattern. We predict the vowel sound in the key
   as the “name” of the vowel letter in the spelled word, /ey, iy,
   ay, ay, ow, uw/, respectively. Here are the steps to follow:
Step 1: Match Key to Pattern  Step 2: Use Name-Shape Translator

**case**

\[ a + \text{“name” translates into /ey/} \]

\[ \text{VC+E = name} \]

2. \( \text{VV = name} \)  
   *(VV = name)*  
   
   *quaint, greet, received, coal, snow.* The two steps above apply: Match the key to a pattern, then use the name-shape translator with the **first** vowel letter. That process yields /ey, ey, iy, iy, ow, ow/ for these six words, respectively.

*annoy, poised.* When the two key vowel letters are *oy* or *oi*, the translator uses **both** letters to convert the spellings into /oy/, not /ow/: *oy, oi* + “name” predicts /oy/, a glided vowel.

Since a reduced vowel requires an unstressed vowel and a following consonant letter, two patterns for reduced vowels are the following, each with C after the vowel. (If the letter *r* follows the unstressed vowel in either pattern, the prediction is /ar/.)

3. \( \text{VC+E = reduced} \)  
   
   *furnace, determínès, pilöting minútes.* Again, the two steps above apply. This time, “reduced” translates directly into /æ/ or, if the key vowel is *i, e, or y*, the prediction is /æ/ or /ɪ/.

4. \( \text{VVC = reduced} \)  
   
   *cáptain, fórféited.* When the two steps above apply, we can predict the vowel sound in these keys as /æ/ (or /ɪ/ if the first vowel is spelled *i, e, or y*).

   a. **Underline the key syllable in each word below.**  
   b. **Write out the vowel quality pattern of the key.**  
   c. **Transcribe the key vowel using the name-shape translator.**  
   d. **Say each word aloud and check your pronunciation.**

   **E.g.**  
   *engráined* \( \text{VV = name} \) / ey /  
   8. *cónvoy* ____________ / /  
   **E.g.**  
   *cóvěting* \( \text{VC+E = reduced} \) / ø/  
   9. *serénely* ____________ / /  
   1. *mánāging* ____________ / /  
   10. *kérchéf* ____________ / /  
   2. *to invité* ____________ / /  
   11. *pleased* ____________ / /  
   3. *hēarsa’y* ____________ / /  
   12. *ácólýte* ____________ / /  
   4. *repléte* ____________ / /  
   13. *quail* ____________ / /  
   5. *boiling* ____________ / /  
   14. *riöting* ____________ / /  
   6. *exclúded* ____________ / /  
   15. *préfäçe* ____________ / /  
   7. *cólléges* ____________ / /  
   16. *pórpöise* ____________ / /

As noted, reduced vowels require an unstressed vowel plus a following consonant. What if there is no following consonant? One general patterns predicts “name” vowels.
5. \( \text{VV} = \text{name} \) \text{mónkēy, hálōwed.} The prediction steps used before apply equally in these cases. The first vowel is subject to the name-shape translator, yielding \(/iy/\) and \(/ow/\), respectively.

\[ \begin{align*}
\text{a. Underline the key syllable in each word below.} \\
\text{b. Write out the vowel quality pattern of the key.} \\
\text{c. Transcribe the key vowel using the name-shape translator.} \\
\text{d. Say each word aloud and check your pronunciation.}
\end{align*} \]

E.g. tóùrnyē \( \text{VV} = \text{name} / iy / \) 8. phónēy \( \text{______________} / / \)

E.g. párrōting \( \text{VC+E = reduced} / æ / \) 9. insānely \( \text{______________} / / \)

1. shádōwing \( \text{______________} / / \) 10. a cháľice \( \text{______________} / / \)
2. complaïnt \( \text{______________} / / \) 11. widōwed \( \text{______________} / / \)
3. he entóned \( \text{______________} / / \) 12. regrów \( \text{______________} / / \)
4. intúïted \( \text{______________} / / \) 13. prizes \( \text{______________} / / \)
5. plántaïn \( \text{______________} / / \) 14. cášérôle \( \text{______________} / / \)
6. permúted \( \text{______________} / / \) 15. váløjýed \( \text{______________} / / \)
7. overseáš \( \text{______________} / / \) 16. Plýmoðuth \( \text{______________} / / \)

C. Name-Shape Translator (revised)

Modifications to the name-shape translator since lesson VS-2 are summarized here:

The name-shape translator (NST) converts vowel spellings into vowel symbols, given the clue to vowel quality – "name", "shape", and "reduced".

- letter + "name" translates into the glided name of the vowel letter.
- If the spelling is \( \text{oy} \) or \( \text{oi} \), the prediction is \(/oy/\), not \(/ow/\).
- letter + "shape" translates into the unglided vowel linked to the letter.
- letter + "reduced" translates into \(/æ/\), or if the letter is \( e, i, \text{or } y \), \(/æt/\).
- If the letter after the vowel letter is \( r \), only \(/ær/\) is predicted.