

Phoneme Spelling Frequency Chart: Vowels

ă:

a (*pack*) 97%
a-e (*have*) 3%

ā:

a (*table*) 45%
a-e (*take*) 35%
ai (*paid*) 9%
ay (*say*) 6%

ār:

ar (*parable*) 29%
are (*mare*) 23%
air (*fair*) 21%
ere (*where*) 15%
ear (*bear*) 6%

ār:

ar (*tar*) 89%
are (*are*) 5%
ear (*heart*) 3%

aw:

o (*lost*) 41%
a (*tall*) 22%
au (*haul*) 19%
aw (*jaw*) 10%

ēr:

er (*experience*) 32%
ear (*fear*) 25%
eer (*deer*) 18%
e-e (*here*) 14%
ier (*tier*) 7%

ēr

er (*hammer*) 77%
or (*world*) 12%
ar (*cellar*) 8%

ě:

e (*bed*) 91%
ea (*bread*) 4%

ē:

y (*happy*) 41%
e (*beware*) 40%
ee (*need*) 6%
ea (*eat*) 6%

ə (schwa):

o (*other*) 24%
u (*up*) 20%
a (*alarm*) 19%
i (*panic*) 18%
e (*enough*) 11%
ou (*famous*) 5%

ī:

i (*bit*) 92%
i-e (*give*) 6%
y (*gym*) 2%

ī:

i-e (*pipe*) 37%
i (*tiger*) 37%
y (*by*) 14%
igh (*right*) 6%

ō:

o (*hot*) 73%
a (*want*) 5%

ō:

o (*focus*) 73%
o-e (*hope*) 14%
oa (*boat*) 5%
ow (*row*) 5%

oi:

oi (*oil*) 62%
oy (*toy*) 32%

oo:

u (*push*) 61%
oo (*hook*) 35%
o (*woman*) 5%

ōr:

or (*for*) 97%
ore (*core*) 3%

ow:

ou (*shout*) 56%
ow (*howl*) 29%
ou-e (*house*) 13%

ū:

u (*us*) 86%
o (*ton*) 8%

ū or oo:

u (*human*) 59%
u-e (*use*) 19%
oo (*moon*) 11%
ew (*few*) 4%

In English, phonemes can be represented with multiple graphemes. This handout provides the most common spellings for each sound, organized by frequency. Some low-frequency spellings (used less than 3% of the time) are not included.

Adapted from:

Hanna, P. R., Hanna, J. S., Hodges, R. E., & Rudorf, E. H. (1967). A summary: Linguistic cues for spelling improvement. *Elementary English*, 44(8), 862–865.

Fry, E. (2004). Phonics: A large phoneme–grapheme frequency count revised. *Journal of Literacy Research*, 36(1), 85–98.

