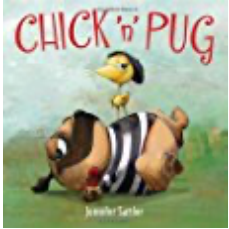


Foundations for Literacy I

Short Vowels



Read: **Chick 'n Pug, by Jennifer Sattler**

(or any other book with a title featuring short vowel words such as *The Cat in the Hat*)

Vowel Song

materials include: 5 letters (red a, gray e, brown i, white o, blue u)

Line the vowels up, facing the students, in a-b-c order: a, e, i, o, u. Share that these letters of the alphabet are very special and that we are going to highlight them this week.

Explain that every single word in the English language has a vowel. (In fact, every single *syllable* in every word has a vowel). You could challenge the kids to look for words around you to see if they can find any words that do not contain a vowel. Because it is important that kids are able to instantly identify vowels (You'll soon see why that's so.), we're going to teach them a song that will help them to quickly recall both vowel names and their corresponding short vowel sounds.

Acknowledge that the kids probably know the song, "Old MacDonald Had a Farm, E, I, E, I, O." Share that it's not fair that only three of the vowels are named in that song and that we're going to let all the vowels be a part of our new song. Use the lyric sheet as you sing the short vowel version of the song, highlighting one vowel at a time. Be certain that the motions are done and that the sounds are produced correctly for each vowel. It might be helpful to notice together what your mouths are doing when you produce the proper sound for each vowel. Inexpensive hand mirrors can be helpful.

Begin with letter a. Ask the students to hold an imaginary apple in one hand. Imagine that it's perfect—your favorite kind, and then open your mouth as if you're going to take a big bite. Make the sound /a/ as in apple. That's the motion and sound for short a. Sing that verse of the song. Point to the letter a.

For letter e, put your pointer finger on your nose, draw it down and away from your body to make an imaginary elephant's trunk. Make the sound /e/ as in elephant. That's the motion and sound for short e. Sing that verse of the song. Point to the letter e. (Review the first two vowels and their sounds by saying, "So when we see an a we say /a/, and when we see an e we say /e/.")

For the letter i, put your finger and thumb together and hold it out as if you're holding an icky worm in front of you. Wrinkle up your nose and make the sound /i/ as in icky. That's the motion and sound for short i. Sing that verse of the song. Point to the letter i. (Review the first three vowels and their sounds by saying, "So when we see an a we say /a/, when we see an e we say /e/, and when we see an i we say /i/.")

For the letter o, open your mouth wide like an opera singer as you draw an invisible o around the outside of your lips. Make the sound /o/ as in opera singer. That's the motion and sound for short o. Sing that verse of the song. Point to the letter o. (Review the first four vowels and their sounds by saying, "So when we see an a we say /a/, when we see an e we say /e/, when we see an i we say /i/, and when we see an o we say /o/.")

For the letter u, open your hand so it's flat and thump it against your chest. Say, "/u/!" (as in up) That's the motion and sound for short u. Point to the letter u. (Review the vowels and their sounds by saying, "So when we see an a we say /a/, when we see an e we say /e/, when we see an i we say /i/, when we see an o we say /o/, and when we see a u we say /u/.")

Sing this song any time you think of it! You may get sick of it, but you'll be so proud when your kids are producing the sounds correctly and (soon!) reading well. Best, your students will be proud of themselves, too.

*Use this song as a line-up song. Wouldn't it be great if all early childhood kids did so? Kids love to sing and do motions, AND they're cementing those short vowel sounds into their memories and making them available for easy access.



Short Vowel Mini-Poster

materials include: red a, gray e, brown i, white o, blue u, yellow construction paper, small green square of construction paper, small bit of brown yarn, one small wiggle eye, two small, long blue rectangles

Upon the yellow piece of construction paper, students will affix each vowel in alphabetical order, as shown in the image. To make the a look like an apple, use a small green square of construction paper (cut it or tear it) to make a leaf and add a piece of brown yarn to make a stem. Make the e look like an elephant by using a crayon to make bendy marks on the "trunk" of the e and by adding a wiggly eye to the hole. Make the i look like a worm by drawing a segmented squiggly shape. Make the o look like lips by adding some color, and make the u with one rectangle or "arm" on each side that bends inward as if it's thumping its own chest.

As you make this poster, continually review each sound.

a- open mouth wide, tongue showing (Hold your hand up by your mouth as if ready to bite an apple.)

e- drop lower jaw/chin (Touch your finger to your nose, then dip your finger down and up as if to make an elephant trunk.)

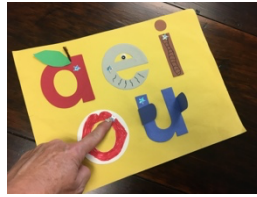
i- wrinkle up nose and show top teeth (Hold an imaginary worm in front of your eyes, and wiggle it while making an "icky" face.)

o- open mouth wide, tongue not showing (Make a circle with your finger around your wide open mouth.)

u- chin forward, no teeth showing (Hit your chest with open palm, and say, "Uh!" like a gorilla.)

NOTE: /e/ is typically the most difficult sound for kids to distinguish.

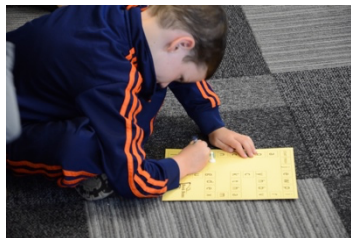
Ideally, all students would make their own vowel posters. Invite a volunteer cut out all the vowels for each student, and make a week of exploring the short vowel sounds.



Short Vowel Letter Formation (using Vowel Mini-Poster)

materials include: 6 small stars, short vowel mini poster

Affix one star onto the fingernail of your readers' dominant pointer fingers. Direct your students to place the other stars, one on each vowel, where the letter would begin when writing it, forming it correctly (see handwriting instruction sheet). Have your readers trace the vowels, beginning with their star-spangled pointer fingers on the stars, practicing forming each letter correctly. If these are the most commonly used letters (There's at least one in every word. In fact, there's at least one in every *syllable* of every word.), we certainly want our kids to be forming the vowels correctly! Have your readers make the short vowel sounds as they trace the letters, again and again, beginning on the stars. Next, practice making each letter with paper and a pencil. Be sure to have the kids make lower case letters only and use the guidelines on handwriting paper. As kids get good at making these important letters, remind them make the sounds associated with the letters, very quietly, as they write them. Soon we'll transition into writing short vowel words.



Short Vowel Game Board

materials include: game board, two movers, a die, crayons

Students will place their movers on start. They'll roll the die and move the shown number of spaces. If the student lands on a letter and can name the vowel and produce the correct corresponding sound, they can color that space in. Once a letter is colored in, it is no longer in play. They'll land upon only the uncolored spaces as they play. This ensures that they're not practicing the same letters over and over again. For students who need more support, you can play with the students. When you land on a letter, name the letter and make the sound, but don't color the space in. This is one way that you're teaching and not just quizzing. If your child knows the letter name and sound, s/he can take your turn and color in the space! Proceed until all letters have been colored. (This game may be played across a couple of days.) Please note that there is no *finish* outside of having all of the letters colored in.

Short Vowel Pinch Strip

materials include: one two-sided pinch strip per student

Provide each child with a pinch strip. You will produce a vowel sound, and the students will "pinch"

the vowel they hear. After some practice, say a short vowel *word* with the vowel in the initial position, and the students will “pinch” the vowel sound they hear at the beginning of the word. Then, say a short vowel word with the vowel sound in the medial position, and have the students “pinch” the vowel sound they hear. After some practice, have the students take turns making a vowel sound or saying words with short vowel sounds, and the other students will pinch the vowels they hear.

For an extra challenge, you can have your students write the vowel they hear when you make a vowel sound. Be sure to coach them on proper letter formation. Initially, you can ask the kids to name the vowel they heard, then tell them how to form that letter correctly while you model the proper formation. Again, vowels are in every single syllable of every single word, so we want our kids equipped to form them neatly and efficiently.

Short Vowel Taste Test

materials include: Tic Tacs, Red Hots, Dum Dums, dry erase boards and markers, a trash bin for spitting out undesired candies

Explain to your students that reading is often about taking risks. Sometimes we just muddle through, making the sounds we know, in order to see if there’s a word, there, that we recognize. We don’t always get the words right on the first try, but we have to be willing to stretch ourselves into the uncomfortable position of just trying. We have to take a chance. We’re going to exchange *knowing* and *being right* for “giving it a go”.

For this activity, ask kids to take a chance on some potentially new flavors. They don’t have to *like* it but challenge them to be brave enough to give each one a try. Of course, we would not force students to taste anything, and some foods/candies are not permissible due to dietary and religious restrictions. (In that case, simply offer a tiny alternative that will be appealing, even if it does not directly relate to the lesson.) So often, the sense of taste is ignored when it comes to aiding memory, however taste can be quite impactful. We’ll be using tiny tastes to facilitate students’ quick access to the lessons we’re teaching. Besides, it makes the learning a little bit more fun!

One by one, write the following letters on a dry erase board and have your students make the sounds, one at a time, as you do so. Write: T and ask, “What sound do we make when we see that letter? Then write i and ask, “What sound do we make when we see that letter? Then write c and ask, “What sound do we make when we see that letter? Then ask: “When you make the sounds, sliding them together, it makes a word. What does that word say?” You’ll do the same with the word T-a-c. Slide the sounds together and ask: “What does *that* word say?” Explain that, now, they are going to taste a Tic Tac and decide whether they like it or not.

You’ll go through the same process with Red Hots. You write one letter at a time, your students will produce the sounds, and then they’ll read the words you’ve written by sliding those sounds together. Give each of them a Red Hot and have them decide if they like it or not.

Finally, you’ll go through the same process with Dum Dum. (I like to make it clear that this is not the word *dumb*. Please clarify the difference.)

Note: Remember that students who do not speak English as their primary language may have difficulty learning new sounds for letters appearing in the alphabets of both languages. Patiently promote accurate sound production, in English, for every vowel sound.