

HARD WORDS

Lesson 1 – Answer Guide

1. normal / nor mal (with syllable break) / Or uh (vowel 'x-ray') / Nor ml (Clear Alphabet)

a) Two vowel spellings 'or' and 'a' indicate two syllables. [2] There is a syllable break after 'r'. 'r' is part of the vowel sound spelling or, not a consonant sound. As such it is not pronounced. This makes a vc connection. [vc]

b) Working from right to left: 'al' is a suffix [suffix], which is usually unstressed; 'a' is a schwa sound, not the short vowel sound a [schwa]. If the second syllable of a two-syllable content word is weak, the first syllable must be stressed. [stressed syllable]

c) 'or' is a spelling pattern in the 'vowel + r' group [vowel + r]. The spelling 'or' usually represents the vowel sound or, although it can also represent the vowel sound er, e.g. in 'word' and 'work'.

2. bought / bought / Or / Bort

a) One vowel spelling 'ough' indicates one syllable. [1] There are no syllable breaks, so no sound connections.

b) In a one-syllable content word, the whole syllable is stressed. [stressed syllable]

c) 'ough' is a spelling pattern from the 'vowel + other' group, i.e. vowel + other consonant letter than 'r'. [vowel + other] The consonant letters 'gh' are not pronounced. The spelling 'ough' has at least seven different pronunciations, making it one of the more difficult vowel spellings to predict. In 'bought' it represents the long vowel sound 'or'. 'bought' is a common verb which should be learned as a sight word, along with other common irregular verbs.

3. focus / fo cus / Eu uh / Feu ks

a) Two vowel spellings 'o' and 'u' indicate two syllables. [2] There is a syllable break after 'o', creating an easy-to-pronounce vc connection. [vc]

b) Working from right to left: 'us' is a suffix, which is usually unstressed; [suffix] 'u' is a schwa sound, not the short vowel sound u. [schwa] If the second syllable of a two-syllable content word is weak, the first syllable must be stressed. [stressed syllable]

c) We know that 'o' is long and says its alphabet name eu because of the vcv rule: 'ocu'. [vcv]

4. people / peo ple / Ee uh / Pee pl

a) The vowel spelling 'eo' and the embedded schwa sound between 'p' and the suffix 'le' indicate two syllables. [2] The schwa is embedded because we cannot pronounce 'p' and 'l' together without producing a schwa sound, and there is no vowel spelling. [schwa] The syllable break is after 'o', creating a vc connection. [vc]

b) Working from right to left: 'le' is a suffix, which is usually unstressed; [suffix] the letter 'e' at the end is a silent letter – not pronounced. [silent letter] It has no function in the word. If the second syllable of a two-syllable content word is weak, the first syllable must be stressed. [stressed syllable]

c) 'eo' is a vowel digraph – two vowel letters together representing one sound. [vowel digraph] It is a very unusual digraph. There are no other common words with this digraph representing the long vowel sound ee, although 'eo' represents e in 'leopard' and iy in 'theory'.

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5. **the** / the / uh or ii / th

'the' is the only function word in the Hard Words course. As the most common word in written English it deserves to be included.

a) There is one syllable. [1]

b) As a function word, 'the' is weak. [function word] The letter 'e' represents a schwa sound when before a consonant sound (e.g. 'the day') [schwa] and a short ii sound before a vowel sound (e.g. 'the other') or when stressed for emphasis (e.g. 'the best'). [ii]

c) The vowel sound is not stressed because it is a function word.

d) 'th' is a consonant digraph – the two letters represent the voiced th consonant sound.
[con. digraph]

6. **hotel** / ho tel / eu E / heu Tel

a) The vowel spelling 'o' and 'e' indicate two syllables. [2] The syllable break is after 'o', creating a vc connection. [vc]

b) Working from right to left: 'tel' is not a suffix; the 'e' is stressed as e because of the cvc pattern. With this stressed vowel sound, the final syllable is stressed, making the first syllable weak. [stressed syllable] Despite being weak, it has a strong vowel sound (svs), which we recognise as eu due to the vcv rule: 'ote'. [svs]
[vcv]

c) 'e' is the stressed vowel sound e due to cvc, as mentioned above. [cvc]

d) 'hotel' is a loan word from French, and also an international word, like 'taxi', 'visa', and 'menu'. [loan word] The unusual stress pattern could be blamed on this...

e) ...making it an exception. [EX]

7. **automatic** / au to ma tic / or uh A i / or t Ma tik

a) The vowel spellings 'au', 'o', 'a', and 'i' indicate four syllables. [4] The syllable breaks come after the first three vowel spellings, creating three vc connections. [vc] [vc] [vc]

b) Working from right to left: 'ic' is a suffix. [suffix] We always put the stressed syllable before 'ic'. [stressed syllable] [always stress before -ic] 'ic' has a short 'i' sound, [i] 'o' has a schwa sound, [schwa] and 'au' is the long vowel sound or. This is a strong vowel sound in a weak syllable. [svs]

c) It is an exception that the stressed vowel sound is short a when the rule is vcv: 'ati'. It does not fit our rule.
[EX]

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8. **comfortable** / com forta ble / U uh uh / Kum ft bl

a) The vowel spellings 'o', 'or', 'a', and 'bl' (with an embedded schwa sound) indicate four syllables. However, as we say the word, it is clear only three syllables are heard. [3] As we say it aloud, we hear the syllable breaks come after the 'm', making a friendly connection, [F] and after 'a'. [vc]

b) Working from right to left: 'able' is a two-syllable suffix. [suffix] This means the stressed syllable must be the only remaining option – the first. [stressed syllable] There is an embedded schwa sound between 'b' and 'l', [schwa] while 'e' is silent and of no account. [silent letter] In the middle syllable 'a' has to be a schwa sound: it is not 'i' (pronounced i) or 'y' (pronounced 'ii'). [schwa] We delete the 'or' suffix part of the root word ('comfort') [suffix] [delete] [root word] meaning two syllables are absorbed together into one: ft (with a schwa sound at the end). Weak syllables often merge. This helps to emphasise the stressed syllable and especially the stressed vowel sound.

c) The stressed vowel sound is u, represented by 'o'. This is unusual, but not unheard of, e.g. 'won'. We know the vowel sound is short due to the vcc rule ('omf') [vcc] and the short vowel sound + 2 weak rule. [short + 2 weak]

9. **generally** / gen era lly / E uh ii / Jen r lii

a) The vowel spellings 'e', 'e', 'a', and 'y' indicate four syllables. [4] However, as we say the word, it is clear only three syllables are heard. As we say it aloud, we hear the second 'e' syllable is deleted. [delete] The syllable breaks come after the 'n', making a friendly connection, [F] and after the 'a', which is a schwa sound. [vc] [schwa]

b) Working from right to left: 'ly' is a suffix. [suffix] Because of the letter 'y' we can be sure the weak vowel sound is ii. [ii] We can guess the 'a' is a schwa because it comes from the unstressed suffix in the root word 'general'. [suffix] [root word] This means the stressed syllable must be the only remaining option – the first. [stressed syllable]

c) The structure of the word is STRONG + schwa + ii, so the short + 2 weak rule applies: the stressed sound will be short e. [short + 2 weak]

d) The double 'l' consonant digraph is the result of 'general' + suffix 'ly' to make the adverb form. [con. digraph] We can count one of the 'l's as a silent letter, because only one 'l' is pronounced. [silent letter]

10. **interesting** / in tere sting / I uh i / In tr sting

a) The vowel spellings 'i', 'e', 'e', and 'i' indicate four syllables. However, as we say the word, it is clear only three syllables are heard. [3] As we say it aloud, we delete the first 'e', [delete] removing that syllable, and creating a 'tr' consonant blend, which is easier – and quicker – to pronounce. [con. blend] We now have three syllables. Removing weak syllables helps to emphasise the stressed vowel sound and get to the next one more quickly. The syllable breaks come after the 'n', making a friendly connection, [F] and after the remaining 'e'. [vc]

b) Working from right to left: 'ing' is an unstressed suffix [suffix] with the weak vowel sound i [i] and the consonant digraph 'ng'. [con. digraph] We can guess the 'e' is a schwa because it comes from the unstressed suffix in the root word 'interest'. [schwa] [suffix] [root word] This means the stressed syllable must be the only remaining option – the first. [stressed syllable]

c) The structure of the word is STRONG + schwa + i, so the short + 2 weak rule applies: the stressed syllable will be short i. [short + 2 weak] We can be doubly sure that 'i' is short because it fits the vcc rule: 'int'. [vcc]