Letters and Sounds: Where Spelling Begins

Before we can become strong spellers, we have to understand the sounds in our language and the letters that represent them. This lesson explains the difference between vowels and consonants, how syllables work, and why English spelling can be tricky.

# 🗣️ Two Kinds of Sounds

1. Vowel Sounds – Open sounds that come from your vocal cords and can be held out (like 'aaaaa').  
 - Vowels: a, e, i, o, u (and sometimes y or w)  
2. Consonant Sounds – These can't be held out and usually block or shape the vowel sounds.  
 - Examples: b, c, d, f, g, etc.

# 🧩 What’s a Syllable?

A syllable is one sound chunk. It must have at least one vowel sound, and may also include consonants before or after it.  
Examples:  
- 'A' is a vowel and also a syllable by itself.  
- 'Go' has one consonant and one vowel.  
- 'Cat' has a consonant-vowel-consonant pattern.

# 🔠 So… What’s the Problem with Spelling?

English has 26 letters, but over 40 sounds. Some letters have multiple sounds:  
- 'c' = 's' in 'circle', 'k' in 'cat'  
- 'x' = 'ks' in 'box', 'gs' in 'exam', 'z' in 'xylophone'  
- 'q' = 'kw' in 'queen'  
Each vowel can have 2 to 7 different sounds. This makes spelling more complex.

# 📚 Recap: Key Facts to Remember

- Vowels are open sounds: a, e, i, o, u (and sometimes y, w)  
- Consonants are blocked sounds that can't stand alone in syllables  
- Every syllable must contain at least one vowel sound  
- Some letters can sound like others or change depending on the word

# ✅ Practice: Test Your Sound Smarts

1. Which letter can be both a consonant and a vowel depending on where it is in the word? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. Can a syllable exist without a vowel sound? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Try breaking this word into syllables: celebrate → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. What sound does the “x” make in exam? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. What are the 5 main vowel letters? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_