🔊 Vowel Sounds: Strange Substitutes and Sneaky Shifts

This lesson explores tricky vowel sound changes—where letters or combinations make unexpected sounds. Understanding these patterns can help improve both your spelling and pronunciation, even when the rules get weird!

# 🌀 Vowel Substitutes: When Letters Pretend to Be Other Letters

Here are some tricky combinations and what they sound like:

ew → long u (few, chew)

é / ê → long a (fête, abbé – French words)

i → long e (machine – often in French words)

o → long oo (tomb, womb, move)

o → short oo (wolf, women)

o → short u (love, some, above)

u after r → long oo (rude, rule)

u → short oo (put, bull, sure)

ea → can be long a, long e, short e, or ah (great, heat, head, heart)

ei → long e, long a, or long i (receive, freight, either)

ie → long i, long e, or short i (lie, belief, sieve)

ai → long a or short a (laid, bail, plaid)

ay → long a (play, say, betray)

oa → long o (moan, foam, coarse)

Curveball Examples:

any, many → a = short e

women → o = short i

busy, build → u = short i

said → ai = short e

people → eo = long e

gauge → au = long a

what → a = short o

# 🎭 Vowel Changes by Location (Vowel Shifts)

Vowel + r → Blurred sound (her, bird, burr, myrtle)

o + r → Can sound like aw (or, for)

Unaccented syllables → Slightly shortened vowels (fătality, négotiate)

Long a in care/fare → Slightly different than plain long a

There, their, where → Sound like a stretched e or a soft long a

Pass, class, laugh → a = between short a and Italian a

# ✅ Practice: Find the Strange Vowels

Write down the vowel combo and what sound it makes in each word:

1. tomb → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2. great → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. belief → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. wolf → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

5. any → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. receive → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

7. said → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

8. people → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

9. rude → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_

10. laugh → \_\_\_\_\_\_\_