

## Spelling

### 1. The alphabet

The English alphabet has 26 letters. It is made up of **5 vowels** and **21 consonants**.

- The vowels : **A – E – I – O – U**
- The consonants by pronunciation group :
  - The sound /ee/: **B – C – D – G – P – T – V**
  - The sound /e/: **F – L – M – N – S – X – Z**
  - The sound /ei/: **H – J – K**
  - The sound /ai/: **Y**
  - The sound /u/: **Q – W**
  - The sound /ah/ : **R**
- Difficult letters for some learners :
  - **G** is pronounced **dji**
  - **J** is pronounced **djay**
  - **H** is pronounced **aitch**
  - **Y** is pronounced like the question **why**
  - **Z** is pronounced **zed** in British English and **zee** in American English

### 2. Letters

**A – E – I – O – U** : these are **capital** or **upper case letters**.

**a – e – i – o – u** : these are **small** or **lower case letters**.

**Capital letters** are used for the following :

- 1) The first word of a sentence.
- 2) The first person subject pronoun "I"
- 3) The names of countries : **England – Scotland – Wales – Ireland**
- 4) The days of the week : **Monday – Tuesday – Wednesday**
- 5) The months of the year : **January – February – March**
- 6) Abbreviations and acronyms : **USA – NATO – UNICEF**

- 7) Nationalities : **English – French – Polish – American**
- 8) All proper nouns : **Stuart – London – the Eiffel Tower – the Golden Gate Bridge**
- 9) Street names : **Oxford Street – Fleet Street**

### 3. Pronunciation

The English language is not a phonetic language and the spelling of words can sometimes seem a little strange. This is due to the vast amount of influences on the language from invaders and settlers down the ages.

- Some letters are **silent** (not pronounced)

Examples : silent letters are shown in brackets [ ].

- [k]now – [k]nee – [k]nit – [k]nock – [k]no[w]ledge
- ha[l]f – ca[l]m
- [w]rite – [w]rong – [w]rap

- Some letter groups are pronounced differently.

Examples : The group **ough**

- The sound /uff/: tough – rough – enough
- The sound /aw/: bought – sought – nought – [w]rought – brought
- The sound /ow/: plough (also spelt plow) – bough
- The sound /o/: dough
- The sound /off/: cough

### 4. The articles

There are 2 articles in English.

- The **indefinite** article: **a / an**
- The **definite** article: **the**

**A** is used before a word beginning with a **consonant** : **a bike, a car.**

**An** is used before a word beginning with a **vowel** : **an apple, an orange, an egg, an exercise, an ice cream, an uncle.**

The vowel **u** is sometimes an exception to this rule depending on how it is pronounced.

When it is pronounced /you/ as in **university – union – unicorn**, it takes the indefinite article **a**, because the /Y/ sound at the beginning is considered to be a consonant.

## 5. Double letters

When spelling a word orally, if the word has a repeated letter we say 'double'.

Examples:

- **Orally** is spelt – o – r – a – double-l – y
- **Tell** is spelt – t – e – double-l
- **Miss** is spelt – m – l – double-s

This rule also applies to numbers: 00 41 = double 0 – four – one