

About This Book

Vowel Practice Pictures satisfies the need for speech-language pathologists, teachers, and parents to have a quick resource for vowel practice. This book contains target words that have been carefully chosen to represent all English vowels organized by phonological patterns. The material is arranged for working with children who have vowel substitutions, distortions, or omissions at all language levels and no matter the cause of their speech delay or impairment. This book can be used in individual or group speech-language therapy or as a source of material for classroom speech improvement activities. It also can be used as a foundation of homework activities, home schooling instruction, or simple one-on-one reading or speech practice time. This book has been printed in black-and-white with spiral binding so that individual pages can be easily reproduced for coloring and other arts-and-crafts projects.

The vowels are the foundation of every syllable and an essential element of intelligible speech. Clients of all ages and ability levels can have difficulty with vowels. Little children who are just learning expressive speech and language need guidance on the full set of vowels, as do children with apraxia or cognitive impairment. Clients with dysarthria and those with hearing impairment need help learning to make the vowels clearly and without distortion. Clients with phonological impairment, clients who mumble and slur, and even those with mild articulation problems like the persistent distortion of /r/ usually need some help with the vowels.

Pronunciation

Vowel pronunciation varies in all dialects of English, both as represented throughout the United States and Canada, and as it changes in all English-speaking populations around the world. Individual readers may agree or disagree with the pronunciations of specific words within this text as a result. It is not possible to make a practice book of vowels that represents all dialects of English, and a decision was made to have this book represent modern *Standard North American English*. Decisions about how to pronounce individual words were settled by consulting *The New Oxford American Dictionary*.¹

The Vowels of This Manual

Eleven basic vowels have been chosen for this material — /i/, /ɪ/, /e/, /ɛ/, /æ/, /u/, /ʊ/, /o/, /ɔ/, /ɑ/, and /ʌ/. *Calvert's Descriptive Phonetics*² and *Vowels and Consonants*³ as well as other resources were consulted in this selection.

Spelling

Spelling differences are unimportant to pronunciation practice, therefore spelling patterns were not considered in the design of this material. Each vowel is represented in words that contain various orthographic spellings. For example, /i/ is represented by the words *Eat, Eve, Eek, Bunny, Cookie, and Key*.

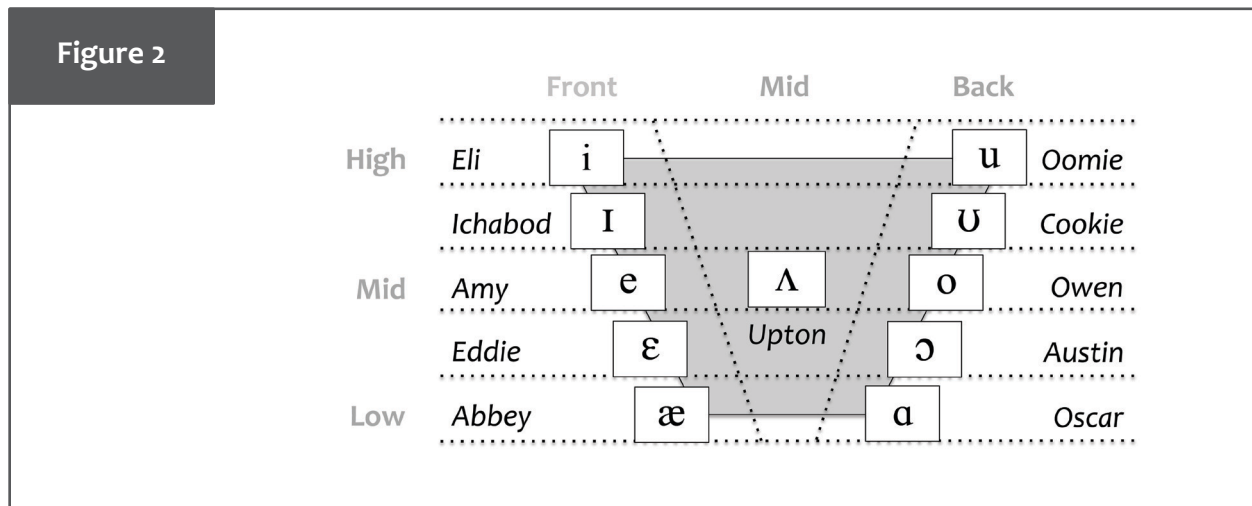
Arrangement of Vowels

Each vowel is introduced with a character and an action or object that represent the target vowel [Figure 1]. For example, /i/ is introduced with Eli who is eating. Each new vowel and its character are identified in a dark rectangle in the upper-right corner of its first page. Subsequent pages related to the same vowel are represented in a lighter rectangle at the top. These shaded page headings help locate target vowel pictures quickly and easily.

		Figure 1
Front Vowels	Back Vowels	
/ i / – Eli is eating.	/ u / – Oomie has noodles.	
/ ɪ / – Ichabod is injured.	/ ʊ / – Cookie is looking good.	
/ e / – Amy is aiming.	/ o / – Owen is opening the box.	
/ ɛ / – Eddie is edging.	/ ɔ / – Austin is awful.	Neutral Vowel
/ æ / – Abbey is acting.	/ ɑ / – Oscar is an octopus.	/ ʌ / – Upton is upside-down.

Vowel Quadrilateral

The vowel quadrilateral was employed as the foundation of this material [Figure 2]. The vowel quadrilateral schematically represents the vowels by jaw position and tongue arching. Jaw positions are designated as high, mid, or low. Tongue arching is identified as high, mid, or low, and as either forward or back of a mid-position pivot point. Professional speech-language pathologists have various versions of the vowel quadrilateral at their disposal in other professional textbooks. The following simplified version is offered for the purposes of this practice material.



Word Selection and Arrangement

The eleven vowels of this book are organized from front-to-back, and from top-to-bottom according to the vowel quadrilateral, and the schwa is presented last. In other words, the front vowels are presented first, the back vowels are presented second, and the schwa is presented last. Most therapists memorize the vowel quadrilateral so ordering the vowels this way makes quick work of locating them during the bustle of a busy therapy session.

Target words were carefully arranged from simple-to-complex in terms of both the concept behind the word and the phonological pattern represented in the word itself. For example, within the pages designated for /u/, the words *oops* and *choo-choo* appear on the first page and the words *caribou* and *statue* appear on the last page.

Words also are arranged by syllable shape and the vowel's position within the word. One style was chosen per page. For example, individual pages are devoted to the vowel in the initial position, the final position, and so forth. A note about word shape or phoneme position appears on each page in the shaded rectangle at the top. For example, on page 25, the words "Initial Position" appear in the shaded box. This means that each word on the page contains words with the target vowel in the initial position of the word.

Some vowels are represented on more pages than others due to the frequency of occurrence within the language. Clusters have been avoided as much as possible to give simplicity to the material although a few were included because the words were important ones. The following word and syllable patterns are represented throughout the manual --

- **Initial Position:** These words contain the target vowel in the initial position of the word (e.g., *Ape*).
- **Final Position:** These words contain the target vowel in the final position of the word (e.g., *Kazoo*).
- **VC:** These words are constructed of a simple vowel-consonant pattern (e.g., *On*).
- **CV:** These words are constructed of a simple consonant-vowel pattern (e.g., *Ray*).
- **CVCV:** These words are constructed of reduplicating CV syllables (e.g., *Rah-rah!*).
- **CVC:** These words are of the closed syllable type with both an initial and final consonant surrounding the target vowel (e.g., *Cat*).
- **Letters:** These are alphabet letters that represent the target vowel (e.g., *B*).

- **Simple Words:** These are simple words with various syllable shapes (e.g., *Oops!*).
- **Variety:** These are longer words with various syllable shapes (e.g., *Equestrian*).

Teaching Vowels

Vowels generally are taught through basic model-imitate routines using repetition, amplification, prolongation, exaggeration, and alliteration. These methods draw the client’s auditory attention to the target. Gestural and other visual cues are offered as necessary. Jaw and tongue positions are brought to the client’s attention with verbal descriptions and the assistance of a mirror and/or a phonetic placement tool if necessary.

Research has suggested that the vowels are learned most efficiently when taught relative to one another.^{4 5} In other words, have the client work on all the vowels instead of focusing only on those with which he is struggling, and help him learn to hear and feel the similarities and differences between them.

The following sequence is suggested for clients who produce very few vowels [Figure 3]. It comes from the author’s nearly 40 years of personal experience along with intensive study of known vowel research —

1. Teach the neutral vowel /ʌ/ first because it is the easiest to produce. Many clients enter therapy with this vowel established. The neutral vowel is easy because the jaw lowers slightly but the lips and tongue do not have to move.
2. Teach the three most different vowels next to set the extremes of the vowel quadrilateral in place — /i/, /u/, and /a/. Vowel /i/ is taught with a broad tight smile and the jaw high, /u/ is taught with the lips forward and tightly rounded with the jaw high, and /a/ is taught with a big wide-open mouth position.
3. Once these three vowels are set, progress to the two vowels that divide the front and back of the quadrilateral in half — /e/ and /o/. Vowel /e/ is taught with a wide smile and a mid-position jaw, and /o/ is taught with rounded lips and a mid-position jaw position.
4. The last vowels to be addressed are those that further divide the physical spaces again — /ɪ/, /ɛ/, /æ/, /ʊ/, and /ɔ/.

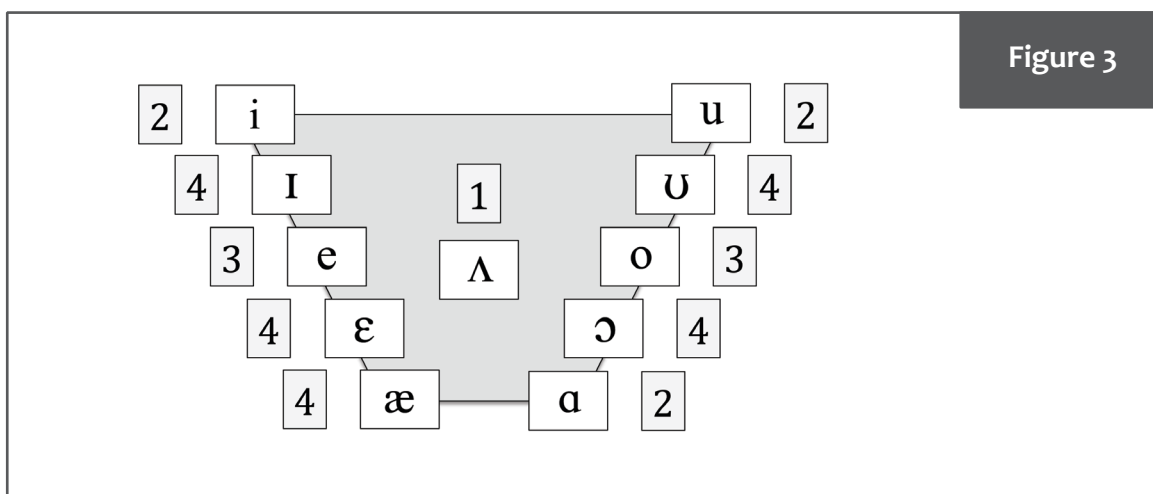


Figure 3

REFERENCES

1. Jewell, E. J., & Abate, F. (2001). *The New Oxford American Dictionary*. NY: Oxford University.
2. Garn-Nunn, P. G., & Lynn, J. M. (2004). *Calvert’s Descriptive Phonetics*. NY: Thieme.
3. Ladefoged, P. (2005). *Vowels and Consonants: An Introduction to the Sounds of Languages*. Australia: Blackwell.
4. Nishi, K., & Kewley-Port, D. (2007). Training Japanese listeners to perceive American English vowels: Influence of training sets. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 50, p. 1496–1509.
5. Nishi, K., & Kewley-Port, D. (2008). Non-native speech perception training using vowel subsets: Effects of vowels in sets and order of training. *Journal of Speech, Language, and Hearing Research*, 51, p. 1480–1493.

/i/ Eli
Initial Position



Eli is eating.



Eat



Eagle



Eve



Edith



Emu



Eek!

Amy /e/

CV



Ray



K



Blue Jay



Lei



Yay!



Hay



Weigh



May



Neigh

/ u / Oomie
Simple Words



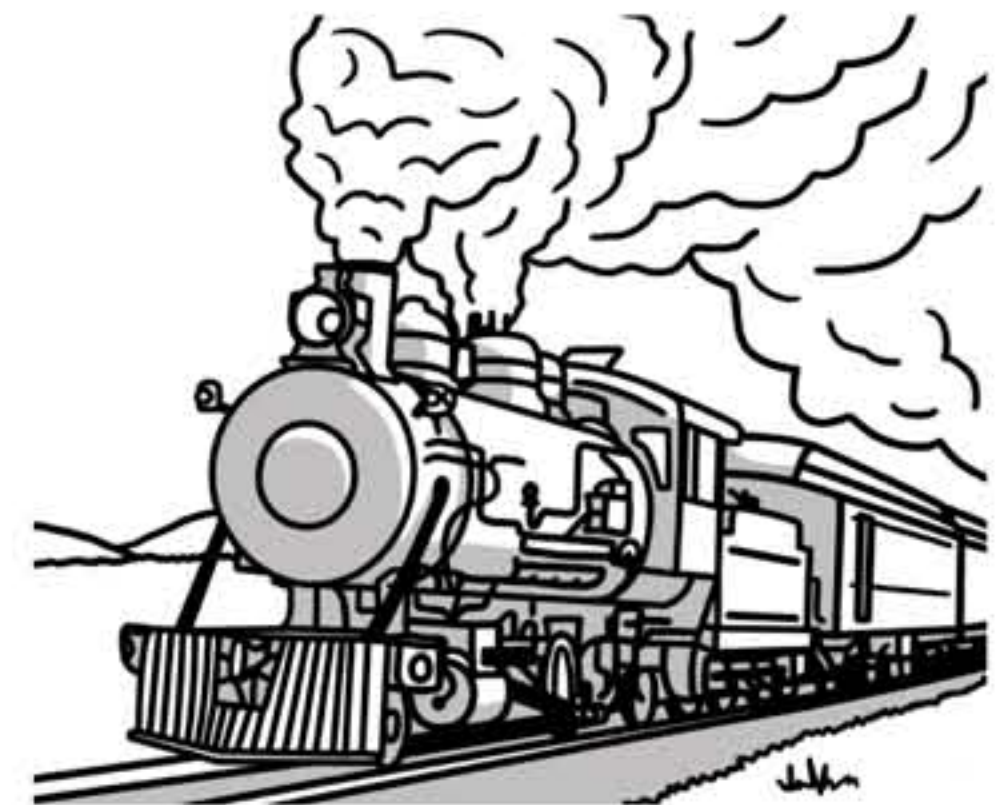
Oomie has
oodles of
noodles.



Oooo!



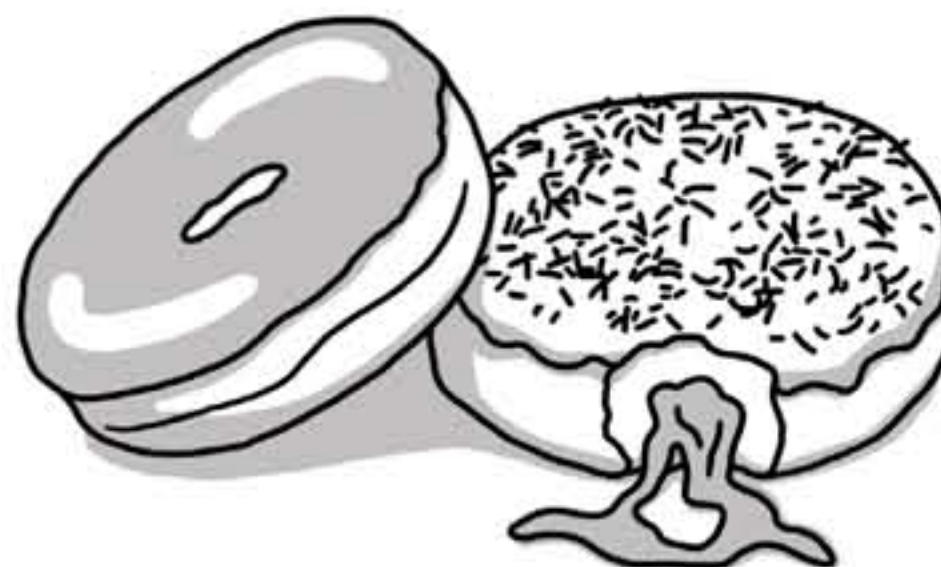
Ah-choo!



Choo-choo!



Oops!



Ooze



Hoo!

Oomie / u /

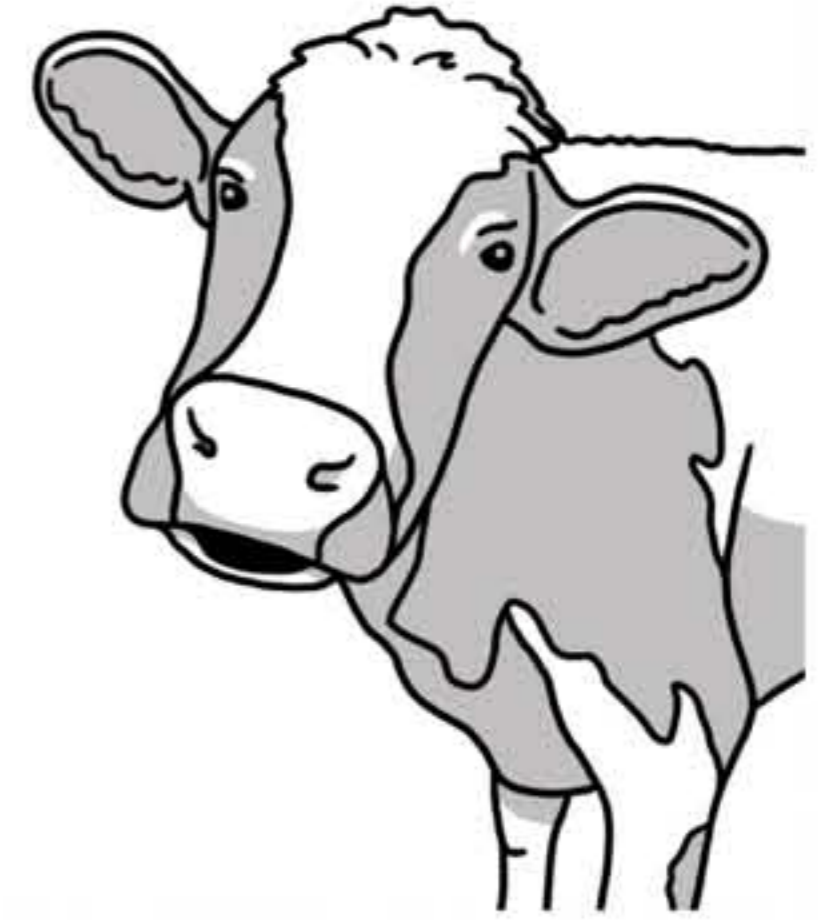
CV



Shoe



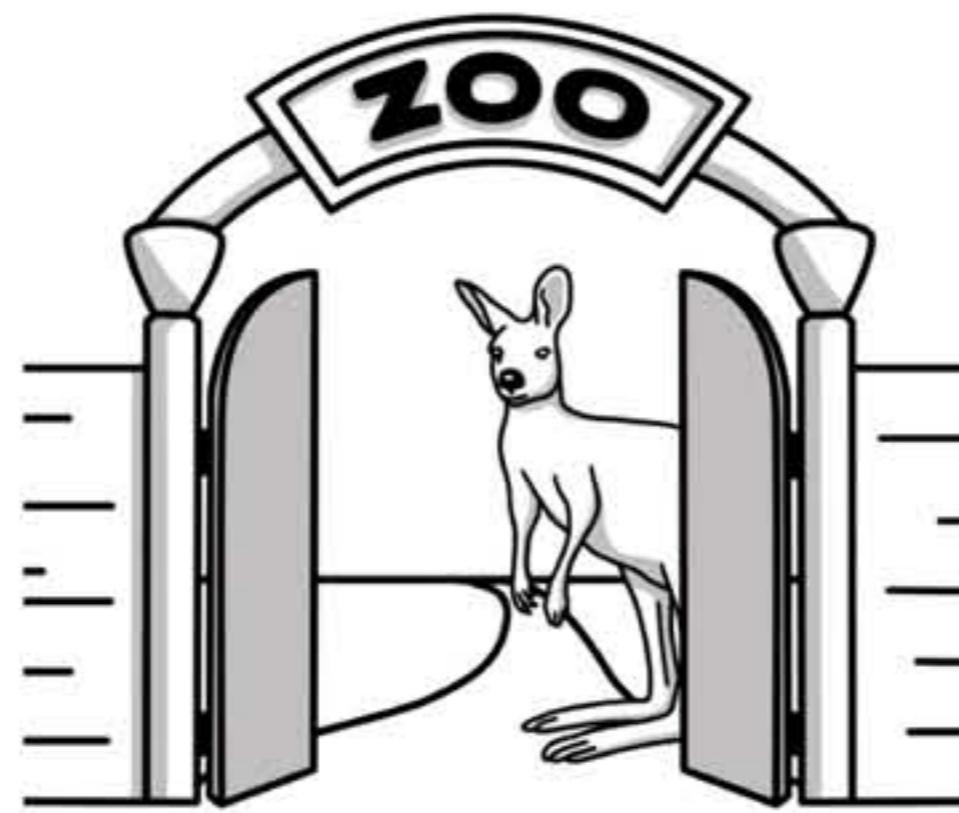
You



Moo



Boo!



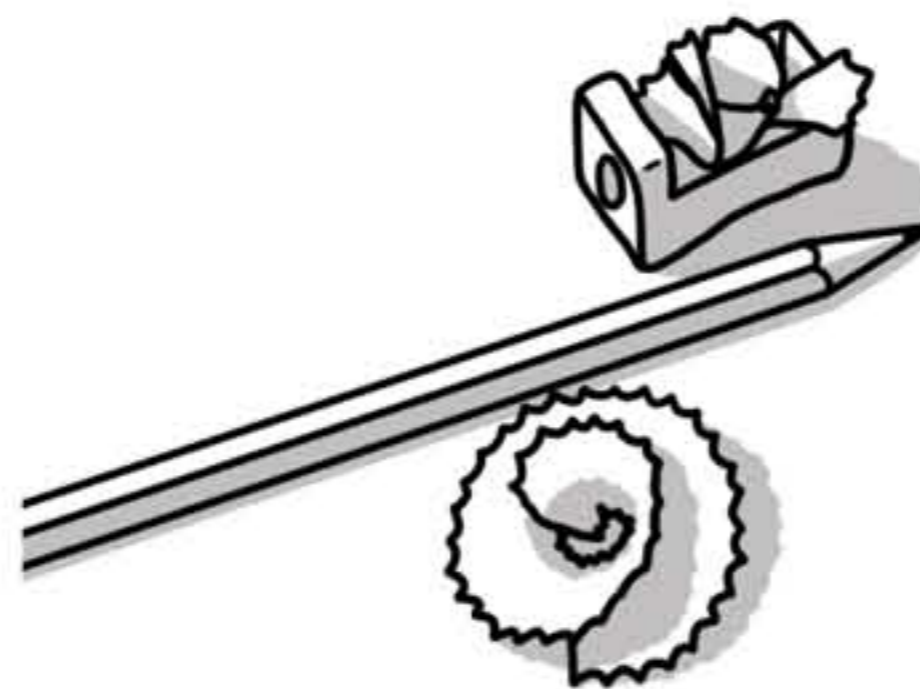
Zoo



Two



Sue



New



Chew

Alphabetical List of Target Words

- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|
| A, 17 | Ax, 25 | Cake, 19 | Dam, 27 |
| Abacus, 25 | B, 9 | Camera, 46 | Dan, 27 |
| Abbey, 25 | Baby, 8 | Can, 27 | Dancing, 16 |
| Ace, 17 | Bagel, 20 | Candy, 8 | Dee, 10 |
| Acorn, 17 | Ball, 42 | Cane, 19 | Dock, 44 |
| Acrobat, 26 | Bamboo, 32 | Cap, 28 | Dog, 40 |
| Acting, 25 | Banjo, 37 | Cape, 19 | Doggie, 8 |
| Adam, 25 | Basilica, 46 | Caribou, 32 | Draw, 42 |
| Add, 25 | Bat, 28 | Cat, 28 | Duck, 48 |
| Afghan, 26 | Bead, 11 | Caught, 40 | E, 9 |
| Africa, 26 | Bed, 23 | Caw-caw, 39 | Eagle, 7 |
| Ah, 43 | Bee, 10 | Cha-cha, 43 | Earing, 12 |
| Ah-choo, 29 | Beet, 11 | Chew, 30 | Easel, 12 |
| Aiming, 17 | Ben, 23 | Choo-choo, 29 | Eat, 7 |
| Alien, 17 | Bib, 15 | Cinema, 46 | Eating, 7 |
| All done, 39 | Big, 15 | Claw, 42 | Eddie, 21 |
| Alligator, 26 | Birthday, 20 | Coat, 38 | Eddy, 22 |
| Ambulance, 26 | Blue Jay, 18 | Cockatoo, 32 | Edge, 22 |
| Amy, 17 | Boat, 38 | Comb, 38 | Edging, 21 |
| Ant, 25 | Bone, 38 | Cone, 38 | Edith, 7 |
| Antelope, 26 | Boo, 30 | Cook, 33 | Education, 24 |
| Antler, 26 | Book, 33 | Cookie, 33 | Eek, 7 |
| Anvil, 26 | Boom, 31 | Cookie, 8 | Egg, 22 |
| Ape, 17 | Boot, 31 | Cooking, 16 | Egret, 12 |
| Apple, 25 | Bow, 36 | Cop, 44 | Egypt, 12 |
| Argue, 32 | Brushing, 16 | Cot, 44 | Eight, 17 |
| Arkansas, 42 | Bug, 48 | Cub, 48 | Elbow, 22, 37 |
| Atom, 26 | Bun, 48 | Cubby, 49 | Electric, 12 |
| Austin, 39 | Bunny, 8 | Cup, 48 | Elephant, 24 |
| Away, 20 | Bush, 34 | Cutting, 16 | Elevator, 24 |
| Awful, 39 | Butch, 34 | D, 9 | Eleven, 12 |
| Awning, 42 | C, 9 | Daddy, 8 | Eli, 7 |
| Aww, 39 | Cage, 19 | Daisy, 20 | Elk, 22 |