

— BOOK SAMPLE —

FIRST 18 PAGES OF

# Reading with Rules

30,000 Words with Spelling Rules, Reasons and Rebels

by

Paquita Boston

Revised Second Edition  
with CD of Word Lists

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## Reading with Rules

Cover Photography by Rachael Steadman.

Twelve young actors display just some of the characters and events that you will meet in this book.

### Key to Front Cover

Peace is a Soldier on Duty Word	Sam is a scribe writing feather words.	Archie is a Rebel Word
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Frazer is Secret Agent H.	Sam, the hearty pirate.	Floyd and his Trojan horse, full of Greek letters.	Tessa knows why <i>devil</i> is not a Rebel.
Sam sings long terminal vowels.	Raelene chooses a tulip from Stuart.	Tessa and Sam give out Rules along the Road to Reading.	

### Key to Back cover

Sam is Zorro!	Blond Archie but blonde Evie.	Sam glides paper planes in the classroom!	Tessa with some Rebel Lemon Words.	Frazer, the French fox. Tessa, the Viking vixen, is missing.
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Archie and the Romans arrive.
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“Words Carry Culture”, say Gabiella and Lucas.	Evie is Fairy E	Nicholas is The Little Imp	Tessa, Frazer and Archie are Saxons with axes	Frazer, the modern lawyer, types Legal Words.	Holly is Fairy E on the knee of Frazer, a very old legal word.
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These photos are from the Dress Up Gallery on the website [www.readingwithrules.com](http://www.readingwithrules.com).

Please send in your comments and discoveries so that I can add them to the next edition and also lodge them on the website. I hope you see a word pattern which I have missed. Maybe it is strong enough to call a rule. If you think I have left a word off a list, let me know.

**The author takes responsibility for all and any mistakes in this book. All corrections and comments very welcome and can be lodged on the website and in later editions.**

## Reading with Rules

The book starts with someone special and then a big thank you.

The Table of Contents is a preview of our journey along the road to reading.

The Introduction is a “need to read” before setting out on the road to reading.

Part One is about sounds spelt with one letter. First rule takes us 300 words down the road.

Part Two is about consonants blended together and we meet new consonants written with two letters.

In Part Three we decode doublets, meet Fairy E and Bossy R and make paper planes to learn how to glide vowels onto vowels. We meet Greek Y too.

Part Four takes us right to the end of the reading road with new letter codes - digraphs - for vowels long and short and for diphthongs too, double songs or sounds.

The Appendix provides useful summaries, including Loose Lists of similar words gathered together, even though we learn to decode them in a range of lists in the book.

The Index includes all Rebel Words. The Computer Disc inside the back cover is a complete Word Index. Use the Find function of a computer to locate a word, in its list. Then use the list number to find it in the book. This CD is ‘read-only’ but can be copied if you obey the terms of use. Once copied, you can print individual Listening Lists for each pupil.

### Dedication

This book is dedicated to Richard Ainsley Steadman whose short but enthusiastic life has inspired many of us in the Gascoyne to treasure the time we have and each other too. Richard’s grandparents and parents used the power of the pen to overcome the tyranny of distance as pioneer settlers in the Gascoyne. Literacy is treasured in a land where the mailman is a precious link to one’s culture, to commerce and eventually to one’s children, when they no longer mail their school work from home but attend schools far away. Schooling by correspondence is now computerized but still “the pen is mightier than the sword”. Another saying is that “there is no royal road to learning”. Growing up in the Outback, Richard used roads which were often just tracks or mere wheel marks. As I compiled my lists, explaining the ruts, bumps and potholes along the road of learning to read, I expected that he'd smile at the analogy. Richard enjoyed reading and won a literacy prize in his last year at school. He’d approve of a book like this which helps others to read and to enjoy books. Whenever I wearied of compiling this book I recalled how interested Richard always was in what was going on around him, not just his own life but also what others were “up to”. Whatever we do will never fill the gap he left but it helps when we miss him to tap into his energy and enthusiasm.

### Acknowledgements

It is thanks to the support and information over many years from Professor Don Cummings, Emeritus Professor of English at Central Washington University, USA, [www.dwcummings.com](http://www.dwcummings.com), and my dear sister, Dr. Adrianna (Ally) Lynch, that I have accomplished as much as I have. Thank you also to all the children, especially mine, who asked “Why is it spelt like that?” and also to the parents, like Jorge and Idalina Mendes, who said “Keep going, we need that book”. They need it because when you speak English as a second language the way it is written seems very inconsistent. The rest of us have been raised under the false illusion that there are no rules and reasons to our spelling. So we need it too.

Thanks to Jonathan Wray, Nigel Bennett, and Kate Campbell, now Boston, for computer education. Thanks to Samantha da Luz for her teacher’s eye on the first draft. I thank my parents, Peter and Jessica, and all my school teachers, from Grade One, especially Miss Yates, Miss Stewart, Miss Burchell, Mr Hudson, Mr Vogelsang and Miss Wall. Thanks to our local TAFE for language lessons in Yinggarda, by Mary Franklin, and lessons in Wadjarri, by Elvie Mallard.

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Thank you to all of Carnarvon’s school principals for their support for my book. I am daily grateful to the inventors and technicians of the world wide web for all its information and for connecting me, not only to Prof. Cummings, but also to Dr Tom Burton, Reader in English, Adelaide University. Such academic assistance is gratefully treasured. Thanks for the calm professional help from Justine Lawler, enthusiastic assistance from Carnarvon’s young actors and the patience and skill of Cory Heneker and others at Digital Print Australia. Thanks also to Trish and Ainsley Steadman. Some years into researching and writing this book I wondered how much longer it would take. “It will take as long as you need to get it right,” they advised, which was strangely calming.

Especially to my husband, Christopher, and also to the rest of my family, and to a great many of my friends, thank you for all the comments and for surviving my code-busting obsession.

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# Reading with Rules

## Introduction

**This is the book** I dreamed of in the 1970's, when I was teaching my own children to read. I also taught neighbouring children to speak and read in English. We all spoke Pisin, too, which is a very easy language to read. Government notices in PNG were in triplicate: English, Pisin (for us, in New Guinea) and Motu (for Papuans). English was the hardest to read. "If only English decoded as easily as Pisin and Motu," I said to myself. "I wonder why English is hard to read. Are there rules, and reasons for rules, to the spelling of English?" I was trained as a scientist and so I believe there is a reason for everything. It is just up to us to find it. So I began an experiment. Years later, Portuguese and Vietnamese neighbours on the Gascoyne River in Carnarvon, Western Australia, encouraged me to finish the experiment.

## The Experiment

**Aim:** To find and record all the rules that letters use to spell English words and their reasons. If there are exceptions to the rules then list those words and explain them.

**Method:** 1. Make lists of words which decode the same way.

2. Find the rule used to decode each list.

3. Find the reason behind each rule.

4. List all the exceptions to each rule, the words which break the rules, the 'rebel words'.

5. Find out the reason each rebel breaks the rule.

6. Label the rebels without good reasons as 'rascals'.

**Equipment:** Notepads, dictionaries, books and electronic recordings, and world wide web. See bibliography for full list of equipment.

**Early Observations:** There are rules and there are reasons for the spelling of English words.

At this stage I decided to record my findings in a way which would help people learn to read. That is why my first list is full of words which are very easy to decode, to read. That is also the reason that my lists build on each other. They are sequential, follow on from the lists which come before. So, each list comes with a reading rule, a rule to decode letters into words. Some words need two rules, and will not be listed until the second rule is introduced. So *chop* is not listed with *hop*. Nor is *choke* listed with *chop* and other <ch> words. It has to wait for words like *hope* and *yoke* and join their list under a rule about terminal <e>. Some words use three decoding rules. For example, we need three rules to decode *telephone*, which we meet in Part Three.

I discovered information which is not needed by the pupil but is interesting to the teacher and parent and so this has been recorded inside boxes called "Extra". Teachers can pass this on to advanced pupils if they wish.

I discovered rules which are used to encode words, to write spoken words on paper. These are not reading rules. They are *writing rules*. Where relevant, they have been included, but marked *WR* and put in a box.

**Results:** Unlike most languages, English words are not spelt to make reading easy. English words use letters which 'carry culture', through their choice of letters. There are rules, and luckily, most words follow rules, not because we have made rules but because the words themselves have fallen into line over the years. These patterns become obvious when the words are sorted into lists.

**Further Observations:** Kids love rules, and they like to see a list of all the words which obey each rule. They like to know the reason for a rule. When they meet the rebels, the words which break the rules, they like to know why they get away with it. Kids love mastering each list, reading the words effortlessly, before proceeding to the next list.

**Summary:** My aims were achieved and surpassed. The lists are powerful tools. They are long and so the teacher or parent chooses suitable words from a list and then lets the child read them over and over, the rebels too. "Listening to the lists" is far easier than "hearing the reading", but that too becomes easy if we create "listerature" from the lists - any literature using accumulated list words. Use the lists from day one and you will not have to resort to a remedial reading course. Making listening lists from the CD is easy, if you obey the terms of use.

## Over to You.

If you are like me and would like to give a reasonable answer to "What does this word spell?" and "Why is it spelt like that?" then this book is for you.

All you need to know to make a start is that letters come in pointy brackets, <a>, <b>, <c>, because we write them with pointy pens and pencils. The sounds they spell come in boxy brackets, [a], [b], [k], because they come from voice boxes.

## The Book is Big.

It's big because it's a step by step road to reading and also a reference book. It's a new kind of dictionary, one which explains how and why written symbols - mainly letters, also apostrophes, hyphens, etc. - decode into words. Meanings and origins of words are not supplied, unless useful in explaining how we decode a word. Words are not listed A to Z because it would take too long to explain how to decode each word individually. This dictionary groups words which decode the same way into an alphabetical list. The lists are sequential, simplest words to read, i.e. decode, come first. We start with *cat* and *dog* words but we cannot list *has* with them because it does not spell [has]. It spells [haz]. We do not list *was* when we list *has*. It does not spell [waz]. We relish each list and roll along the road to the next list, learning

## Reading with Rules

to decode as we go. Extra information is boxed, **Extra** to show that we don't need to read it, that it's not "need to know" information, just "nice to know".

**Extra** Italics XE "Italics" began in Italy (Italian style letters) in 1490, to crush words to make them fit into tiny books. Now we use italic letters to emphasize a *word* or otherwise draw attention to it.

### Finding Your Way

The book is a rich resource. It's easy to follow if you start at the beginning and take time to enjoy the journey, one list at a time. Words are listed in upper case, in capital letters. If a word is discussed in the text it is written in *italics*. Each list comes with a rule and any words which rebel against the rule. These 'rebel words' are listed individually in the index. All the lists are numbered and appear on the CD in Rich Text Format inside the back cover. To look up any word search the CD, with 'Find', and the word will appear in its list. Use the list number to find it in the book. Rule numbers match list numbers. Continue the search, because some words appear in more than one list and are discussed more than once.

### Based on a "Need to Know"

The book unfolds on a "need to know" basis. You will not be told anything until you need to know it. So if you ask "But what about...?" wait and see if it comes later, maybe in a list of longer words or after a few more letters have been decoded. If I mention a word before it is listed I put it in {curly brackets}. {These brackets show that it's coming later, maybe quite soon.} We need rules to decode and read the words in the lists. We shall get each rule as we need it. A "need to know" approach makes learning to read easy. We might need to use two or even three rules to decode (read) a word. So start at the beginning of the book and that way you will be able to read every word you meet in a list.

### Listening to the Lists

We have a reading machine in our brain. It is a living machine, in three parts, all connected. The sounder, behind the left eye, matches letters to sounds and informs the word analyser (or working memory) behind it. We would be very slow readers if we had to analyse a word each time we read it. Luckily for us there is a third part to our reading machine, further on towards the back of the head, called the automatic detector. Each time we read a word it is loaded into the automatic detector, (Lynch p. 10), until one day it is automatically detected. This frees up the word analyser to analyse or decode more words and in turn load them into the auto detector. That is why the more we read the easier it gets. It's like playing the piano: quite soon the fingers themselves seem to "read" the notes. Reading lists of words out loud is like practising piano scales, for the words, like the notes, become automatic. Current teaching methods insist on reading words in context (i.e. in sentences and stories) but they also insist that practice makes perfect. Children are expected to practise reading at home and parents are expected to hear their children read stories. Some parents speak English but cannot read it. Some parents can read but do not "hear the reading", do not have time to listen and check their children as they read a story. However, every mum and dad can "listen to the lists". Each list comes with just one new rule and so the whole family can learn to read English together. Sometimes we meet words in a list before we hear them spoken. This means we are broadening our vocabulary, learning new words as we learn to read them.

### Not a History Book

This book is not a history of the English language but we need to read the following short history of English spelling. Before Britain was invaded by Romans the skill of reading was a secret. When the Celts, Britain's aborigines, were shown message sticks carved with secret symbols called Runes they were amazed that a message could travel in silence from lands across the sea. Wonder of wonders, some were messages from the past, communications from the dead. The old men's wonder turned to fear when they realized that younger men would no longer need them, to teach them the songs and sagas, the poems and pedigrees of their culture. Besides, should the sticks be lost or burnt their culture would be lost forever. Better to stay with tradition and insist the bards and minstrels commit everything to memory. The young men needed over twenty years' tuition from the old men to learn everything. No wonder the elders were so treasured and respected. Meanwhile the elders learnt to read the marks on the message sticks, but kept the skill a secret amongst themselves. They learnt to make the marks too, in order to record and remember the recipes of their magic potions and the chants of their spells. So when they read and wrote the runic letters they were 'spelling', reading and writing their spells, and we still call it spelling today.

**Extra** It was not only the elders of Britain who kept the knowledge of spelling, of reading and writing, a secret. Aboriginal elders in the Kimberley kept little wooden message sticks hidden in knots of hair, high up on their heads. One flat wooden message stick in the National Museum of Australia, collected by K Goddard, has clearly carved symbols on both sides. We'll read of message sticks in WA's Gascoyne, where these "aids for the blind", *pamburu*, were used to communicate with friends who were quarantined out of sight on leper islands. We'll read of Aboriginal message sticks in Melbourne and in Arnhem Land, and of more "yabber sticks" in the NT.

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Then came the Romans, who brought their alphabet with them and shared their knowledge and after that Britain was invaded by many nations. They all had symbols for spelling words and none of them kept their symbols a secret. Those who could write, the scribes, matched the symbols to the sounds as best they could. Just as today there is no one correct way to draw a dog, back then there was no one correct way to spell a word. Besides, each region spoke with its own accent and used its own choice of words too. Also, if the scribes were short of paper, they spelt words the shortest way possible but if they were paid to write, paid by the line, they chose the longest spelling possible! England was not the only country which had many ways to spell each word.

Once printing took on in Europe books were easy to make and they multiplied. In Italy in 1582 a committee was formed to keep Italian pure and make it easy to read. France began controlling French spelling and vocabulary the same way in 1634, but in England foreign words were welcomed and spelling was not simplified. It was not until 1858 that the English formed their committee, the Philological Society. To join it one had to be a gentleman of leisure and learning. Such men had plenty of time and knew lots of Greek and Latin as well as English. They did not imagine that one day everyone in England would learn to read. In fact, they feared that an equal opportunity for everyone to read would lead to revolution, like “liberty, equality and brotherhood” had in France.

Being men of learning they knew that the spelling of English words showed their origins. They feared a simplified spelling system would blot out the origins of the words. Those origins reflect the history of England because each invader, or settler or trader or returning explorer brought new words to England and new ways to use letters to spell them. So whilst other European lands simplified their spelling the English chose to merely unify theirs.

The committee united and agreed on just one (unified) way to spell each word. They recorded their choice for each word in a dictionary called “A New English Dictionary on Historical Principles”, NED for short. It was eventually published in 1928 as OED, “The Oxford English Dictionary”.

Sadly the OED did not include the stories behind the words, the historical principles. They gave no reasons to explain the spelling, no keys to unlock the very history they wished to save. Even the special stories attached to loners like *yacht* were omitted. There have been many attempts to simplify English spelling (in Appendix 25) but, as none of them have succeeded, the spelling of English words continues to “archive the past”.

This has enriched the English language, and if you know the reasons behind the reading rules you are “really reading” for they open doors on the past, on the hidden treasures of history. This book can unlock those treasures for you.

### Not a Phonetics Book

Phonetics is only mentioned if it is needed to explain spelling. Phonetics is the study of speech, a very detailed study of how the sounds which make words are produced, how they travel and how they are heard.

Word-sounds are called phonemes. You do not need to know that to enjoy this book. Nor do you need to know a lot of other words that describe the sounds of speech. However we need to know the following five points, about English Phonetics, as follows.

- (1) There are 26 letters **but** there are 43 word-sounds.
- (2) Letters are put inside pointy brackets like this: <a>, <b>, <c>, <ph>, which is easy to remember because pens are pointy and we write with pens. The sounds that letters spell are put inside square brackets like this: [a], [b], [k], [f].
- (3) When two letters spell a word-sound they form a **digraph**.
- (4) Speech sounds (word-sounds) can be sorted in many ways but the simplest way to sort them is into two groups – those that are spoken without using the voice box (unvoiced) and those which use the voice box (voiced). Those that make our fingers vibrate when placed on the voice box are voiced sounds. English uses nine unvoiced sounds. They are all consonants, made with lips, teeth, palate and throat but not with voice box. *Con-sonant* means “with sound”, which means only used with another sound, not on their own. Vowel sounds, e.g. *I, a*, can spell words on their own. Consonants cannot. Consonants are used with vowel sounds to form words, e.g. *me, the, am*.
- (5) Stressed syllables are pronounced louder and longer than other syllables in a word. When we **stress** a syllable we give it **strength**. A syllable is a single vowel sound, with or without one or more consonants. Words are made of one or more syllables. Just as some food takes many bites to swallow it, some words need many word-bites to say them. We can think of a syllable as a word-bite. (See more on stress in Appendixes 4, 5 & 6.)
- (6) Some English speakers pronounce [r] after vowels when the vowel is coded with the digraphs <ar>, <er>, <or>, <ir> and <ur>. Australians do not do this, but many Americans, Scots and others do “roll their R’s”.

**Extra** Other languages have other word-sounds, some more than 43, some less. Young infants babble in most sounds of every known language and can recognize any consonant or vowel in any language. However, this ability to discriminate between word-sounds decreases if they do not hear them spoken and by 12 months a child acts as if “deaf” to non-native word-sounds. After that, most children can only repeat them as the most similar sound in their own language, (McGuinness p. 161). Babies can drink without stopping to breathe because air flows to the lungs while milk flows to the tummy. In fact they cannot close off the airway until older. So like adult monkeys, babies cannot control air flow and so just make simple sounds. Words come once air flow can be controlled.

## Reading with Rules

### The 43 Sounds of English Speech.

Refer to this chart when needed. You will meet them all gradually.

	Voice Box or Voiced Sounds, 19 vowels and 15 consonants of which 2 are made with the nose as well. Put your fingers on your voice box, feel them vibrate.	9 Unvoiced Sounds These sounds do not make your fingers on voice box vibrate.
	<u>Short vowel sounds</u>	
1	[a] is the sound <a> spells in <i>cat</i> .	
2	[e] is the sound <e> spells in <i>bed</i> .	
3	[i] is the sound <i> spells in <i>pin</i> .	
4	[o] is the sound <o> spells in <i>top</i> .	
5	[u] is the sound <u> spells in <i>cup</i> .	
6	[uu] is the sound <oo> spells in <i>book</i> .	
	<u>The long vowel sounds</u>	
7	[ay] is the sound <ay> spells in <i>say</i> .	
8	[ar] is the sound <a> spells in <i>father</i> and <i>pa</i> .	
9	[ee] is the sound <ee> spells in <i>meet</i> .	
10	[I] is the sound <eye> spells.	
11	[oh] is the sound <o> spells in <i>most</i> .	
12	[or] is the sound <a> spells in <i>all</i> and <i>talk</i> .	
12 again	[or] is the sound <aw> spells in <i>paw</i> .	
13	[yoo] is the sound <u> spells in <i>unit</i> .	
14	[oo] is the sound <oo> spells in <i>soon</i> .	
	<u>Diphthongs, 2 vowel sounds merged in a single syllable.</u>	
15	[oi] is the sound <oi> spells in <i>join</i> .	
16	[ow] is the sound <ow> spells in <i>cow</i> .	
.	<u>R Coloured Vowels, (Bossy R)</u>	
17	[er] is the sound <er> spells in <i>her</i> .	
8 again	[ar] is the sound <ar> spells in <i>bar</i> .	
12 again	[or] is the sound <or> spells in <i>for</i> .	
18	[air] is the sound <air> spells in <i>hair</i> , a long [e].	
	<u>The "schwa" sound</u> has no letter of its own. It is the way we grunt <a> in the word <i>ago</i> . A new symbol has been invented to show how it sounds.	
19	[ə] is the sound <a> spells in <i>ago</i> .	
19	[ə] is the sound <e> spells in <i>taken</i> .	
19	[ə] is the sound <i> spells in <i>pencil</i> .	
19	[ə] is the sound <o> spells in <i>lemon</i> .	
19	[ə] is the sound <u> spells in <i>circus</i> .	
.	<u>The Voiced Consonants</u>	<u>The Voiceless Consonants</u>
20&21	[z] is the sound <z> spells in <i>zebra</i> .	In <i>sit</i> <s> spells [s]
22&23	[d] is the sound <d> spells in <i>day</i> .	In <i>top</i> <t> spells [t]
24&25	[g] is the sound <g> spells in <i>get</i> .	In <i>kitten</i> <k> spells [k]
26&27	[v] is the sound <v> spells in <i>van</i> .	In <i>fat</i> <f> spells [f]
28&29	[b] is the sound <b> spells in <i>bat</i> .	In <i>pen</i> <p> spells [p]
30		In <i>hat</i> <h> spells [h]
31&32	[th] is the sound <th> spells in <i>this</i> .	In <i>thin</i> <th> spells [th]
33&34	[zh] is the sound <s> spells in <i>vision</i> .	In <i>shop</i> <sh> spells [sh]
35&36	[j] is the sound <j> spells in <i>jam</i> .	In <i>chin</i> <ch> spells [ch]
	<u>The Liquid voiced consonants</u> (Sound flows on and on.)	
36	[l] is the sound <l> spells in <i>leg</i> .	
38	[r] is the sound <r> spells in <i>red</i> .	
	<u>The Nasal voiced consonants</u> (Fingers on nose vibrate.)	
39	[m] is the sound <m> spells in <i>man</i> .	
40	[n] is the sound <n> spells in <i>not</i> .	
41	[ng] also written [ŋ] <ng> spells in <i>sing</i> .	
	<u>The Semi-vowel voiced consonants</u>	
42	[w] is the sound <w> spells in <i>will</i> .	
43	[y] is the sound <y> spells in <i>yes</i> .	

**Note:-** [or] is the sound <or> spells in *for*. It is also the sound <aw> spells in *paw*, and the sound <a> spells in *talk*; [ar] is the sound <ar> spells in *bar*, and also the sound <a> spells in *pa* and *father* and *dance*. Some people pronounce the [r] in [or], [ar] and [er] but only if it's spelt <or> or <ar> or <er>. So we never hear [r] in *paw*, *talk*, *pa* and *dance*.

**Note:-** Use this chart to check speech sounds prior to Grade One, as in 'Early Childhood Speech and Reading Readiness', Appendix 7.

## Reading with Rules

### Decoding and Encoding

Decoding letters into sounds is called reading. Encoding words into letters is called writing. This book tells us how to decode but also gives encoding rules along the way. The best book on encoding word-sounds into letters is by Professor Don Cummings. His title, “American English Spelling - An Informal Description”, is too accurate and too modest. It is much more than just an American version of things and it is far more than an informal description. Don is Emeritus Professor of English at Central Washington University. His book is big and concentrated, published by The John Hopkins University Press. The Australian agent is Footprint Books in Sydney. It is in 4 sections. The last section shows more correspondences between sounds and letters than provided by Thrass, the Teaching Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills programme. Prof Cummings gives word examples, but not full lists. His earlier sections provide phonetic explanations and historical backgrounds. It is all well indexed. My book decodes words. Learning to read, to decode, makes encoding far easier. If we know that *has* spells [haz], not “hass”, when we hear the word-sound [haz] we already know how it is written and we encode it, or write it, as *has*. Writing Rules are interesting to look at but are not needed along our Road to Reading and so they are boxed up. They are all marked *WR* for *Writing Rules*, although some are mere tips and others are rather weak rules, for spelling words onto paper.

### The Rules

Yes, there are rules. Bill Bryson in his 1990 book “Mother Tongue” tells us that 85% of English words follow rules. However he does not tell us the rules. Many books give us funny and interesting stories about English words, but this book explains them. By the end of this book you will have met all the Reading Rules and you will find that the rebels to the rules are numbered in hundreds, not thousands. The rules are not there to punish our words. They are there to make it easier for us to read them. Yes, English spelling follows rules and just like footy rules they have to do a lot. Football rules have to keep the players safe, make the game flow, not interfere with other rules and lots of rules are just there through tradition. Rules of any game can only change slowly, usually after much discussion. Rules are reassuring, even when a student is too young to fully understand them. Just knowing they exist is a comfort. The first thing kids say when asked “Do you want to play?” is “Sure, what are the rules?” Reading should be as much fun as any game, taught with just enough rules to start playing and then the game can be developed with new skills and new rules along the way. To be able to give **reasons** for the rules, when teaching someone to read, shows respect for that person and also builds respect for the teacher.

The dictionary makers decided to keep the old spelling as a code to the past but they also saw that spelling links “cousin” words together and helps us get their meaning. For instance, *publiscity* is easier to read than *publicity* but we would not see its link to *public* and we might think it meant “pub-loving” or “a lease on a pub”, if written with an *s*. English is spoken all over the world and so if we wrote it down as it sounded to us people in another place may not understand what we have written at all. Noah Webster, the man who wrote America’s first great dictionary, said spoken language is like a great river running freely under the rigid covering of winter ice. So the written word gives us the freedom to play with language, invent new words and pronunciations, just like cold ice keeps the river warm and running, for we can speak in many accents and yet, in writing, we can make our message very clear, so that it reaches its destination safely. Rules which cover all situations are general rules, but reading needs a few special rules, too, just like real life. For instance, in hockey the goal keeper needs to be ahead of the ball, so while everyone else is not allowed to be off-side, the goalie is. Another special rule allows us to drive without a seat belt, at special times, like reversing, or when pregnant. Most airlines have a special rule which lets children under the age of two fly free of charge. Special rules always over-ride general rules. Even the Australian Constitution has special rules. Section 51 xxvi says when the Australian Government can make special rules for some people and not for others.

### The Rebels

**Rebels**, words which disobey the rules, usually have good excuses. If not, we call them **Rascals**. **Rappers** are a small groups of rebels who are obeying their own little rule, a special rule, and we picture them dancing on the road side to a tune of their own. *Should*, *could* and *would* are the only words which use <ould> to spell [uud] and so we can think of them as rap dancing to their own tune. We shall see that *academy* intentionally disobeys rules in order to link us to the past, he’s a **Rebel with a Reason**, but *colonel*’s excuses are too weak to save him. He’s a **Rascal**! Some words have Diplomatic Immunity; others have been adopted but not adapted. Others, like *choir*, have been re-spelt by the dictionary committee to reflect their origins. Rebels which are abbreviations of words or slang words are excused because they do not have to obey any rules. Nor do Proper Nouns and that includes personal names. Proper Nouns and personal names which obey rules have been added to the lists as an added resource.

### Frequently Used Words

We use some words more than others. The words depend on who we are and where we live. The 20 most written words in London are, most to least, *the*, *of*, *to*, *in*, *and*, *a*, *for*, *was*, *is*, *that*, *on*, *at*, *he*, *with*, *by*, *be*, *it*, *an*, *as*, *his*, (Crystal 1987, p. 86 and see Appendix 14 for more such lists). The following chart lists, in order of use, the words used most frequently in Western Australia. Teachers are told that students should be able to read, spell and use them in context by the end of

## Reading with Rules

Year One. Those without numbers are listed in Part One. Those which are underlined are introduced in Part One and join longer lists later on, in Parts 2, 3 or 4.

the	he	when	<u>out</u> <sup>4</sup>	as	down <sup>4</sup>	get	could	<u>found</u> <sup>4</sup>	next <sup>2</sup>
<u>and</u> <sup>2</sup>	my	so	got	<u>her</u> <sup>3</sup>	be	from <sup>2</sup>	two	night <sup>2</sup>	put
I	they	that	with	saw <sup>4</sup>	<u>home</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>our</u>	took <sup>3</sup>	see	us
a	on	but	at	<u>came</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>like</u> <sup>3</sup>	what	over <sup>3</sup>	little <sup>2</sup>	did
to	went <sup>2</sup>	one	you	him	<u>some</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>house</u> <sup>4</sup>	an	people <sup>4</sup>	<u>come</u> <sup>3</sup>
was	had	were	all	back	them	this	by	do	now
it	is	there	his	after <sup>3</sup>	would	<u>time</u> <sup>3</sup>	their <sup>4</sup>	started <sup>3</sup>	door <sup>3</sup>
we	then	up	day <sup>4</sup>	<u>are</u> <sup>3</sup>	not	will	<u>around</u> <sup>4</sup>	man	just <sup>2</sup>
in	<u>for</u> <sup>3</sup>	<u>she</u> <sup>2</sup>	have	<u>about</u> <sup>4</sup>	because <sup>4</sup>	going <sup>2</sup>	if	ran	cup
of	said	me	go	very	into	off	who	told <sup>2</sup>	can

Words with no number, or underlined, are in Part One. Words with numbers belong to Part 2, 3 or 4.

### Getting Started

To begin this book I listed all the words which are simplest to read, list 1-1. The next easiest became list 1-2 and so on. There are many rules and reasons to explain English spelling but you only need to know the first rule to start reading. Do not learn all the rules at once. Just learn them as you need them. I will tell you what you need to know as we go along. We go down one road, no branches. Only once do we have a little look ahead, so that we can read *time*, *came*, *home* and *like* which we use a lot. The other early words like *she* and *shall* come in early if they match simpler words, *she* matches *he*, or if they are rebels like *shall* which is the only word in which <all> spells [all]. We meet all the other <sh> words later. When we want to talk about words we have not met yet we put them inside {} brackets, which is why when I say ‘*she* starts the same as {*shin*}’ I put *shin* inside curly brackets to show we have not met *shin* yet. There are only three types of brackets to remember: The letters <sh> spell the sound [sh] in *she* and {*shin*}.

**Part One** sets the ground rules, tells us the sounds that the letters usually spell taken one by one. We all agree that <c> spells [k] in *cat*. We all agree that <a> spells [a] in *cat*. However, we do not all agree that <a> spells [a] in *dance*. This is because we have one way to write English and many ways to speak it. My English is Australian, mid-way between British and American English. Australian speech has very little regional difference and Australians do not use a great variety of words in day to day speech. We used to read some words which we never heard pronounced, and so we said them as we saw them. Radio changed that, and used to sound very British. Through TV and film we learnt that people in England do not all speak English the same way and we heard many Americans speak, e.g. some roll [r] in *car* and pronounce <o> in *sob* as the [ar] in *pa*. Australians do not pronounce [r] in *car*, so it rhymes with *pa*. Whilst we often sing like Americans, especially in *lost* [larst] *love* [larv] songs when we *sob* [sarb] our hearts out, in speech, *sob* is still [sob] and *love* is still [luv].

**Extra** People in Scotland speak with clear clipped words and treat speech in London and elsewhere along the River Thames as “Estuary English”. The further north you go in England the more the vowels in *book* and *spook* rhyme and *dance* and *ants* rhyme but go south and *dance* and *aunts* rhyme. “Why can't the English teach their children how to speak? This verbal class distinction by now should be antique. An Englishman's way of speaking absolutely classifies him. The moment he talks he makes some other Englishman despise him. Hear a Yorkshireman, or worse, hear a Cornishman converse, the Scotch and the Irish leave you close to tears and there are parts where English is painful to the ears. There even are places where English completely disappears. In America, they haven't used it for years!” (Paraphrased from ‘Why Can't the English’ in *My Fair Lady*.) It's true, “one common language I'm afraid we'll never get” because English is a living language.

Many children arrive at school able to sing the alphabet song to the tune of Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star,  
 ♪ “A [ay], B [bee], C [see], D [dee], E [ee], F [ef], G [jee], H [aych] or [haych], I [I], J [jay], K [kay], L [el], M [em], N [en], O [oh], P [pee], Q [kyoo], R [ar], S [es], T [tee], U [yoo], V [vee], W [dubel yoo], X [eks], Y [wI], Z [zed], And now I'm off to bed,” or XYZ [zee]. Now I know my ABC, won't you come and play with me?” ♪

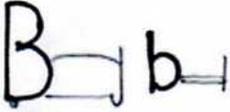
That's fine. Now, in **Part One**, they will learn how each letter looks and what sound or sounds each letter spells.

# Reading with Rules

## Part One

One way to learn the shape of each letter is to hear the story of the alphabet. Long ago everyone drew pictures to leave messages. One day an Arab worker looked at a story in pictures on a wall in Egypt. He decided to use just a bit of a picture to draw a sound, the first sound of that picture. The idea spread and the bits of pictures became letters. We can do that too. The letters that spell the first sound of the word *ant* are bits of an ant picture. B and <b> spell the first sound of *bed* and they are each bits of beds. Name the picture, (*ant*) say its first sound, [a]. Can you see a bit of the ant picture has been used for the letter A? And another bit for <a>? (also <a>)? Repeat this for each picture. Each big letter is not always the same as its little letter but they both spell the same sound. Long ago in another language the first picture was an Alph and the next picture was a Bet. Those letters formed an 'Alphabet'. The letters have changed a bit since then but we still call the ABC the "Alphabet". If English speakers had invented the ABC it could be called the "Antabed".

'The Antabed Chart'.

 <b>An ant</b>	 <b>Another ant</b>	 <b>Big bed, Little bed</b>	 <b>Cool cat</b>
 <b>D</b>	<p style="font-size: 2em; transform: rotate(-45deg); opacity: 0.5;">SAMPLE ONLY</p>		 <b>Egg</b>
 <b>U</b>			 <b>F</b>
 <b>T</b>			 <b>S</b>
 <b>W</b>			 <b>W</b>
 <b>Xylophone</b>	 <b>x ends OX</b>	 <b>Yellow yabby</b>	 <b>Zippy zips</b>

## Reading with Rules

“Each big letter is not always the same as its little letter but they both spell the same sound” is a rule with two exceptions. When I and O are used as words they do not spell the same sound as the lower case letters <i> and <o>. Instead, capital I spells [I], the sound that *eye* spells, and capital O spells the sound <o> spells in *most*.

**Reason** The tiny rebel word *I* was originally *ic*, which spelt [ik]. Then it became just *i* which spelt [ee]. In those days <i> had no dot and was difficult to read amongst other sloping letters, all written with heavy down strokes. Eventually scribes made it longer so that it stood out on the page. Some scribes gave it a tail so it became a dotless <j> and others wrote it as a capital letter I. This is why a simple pronoun is allowed to use a capital letter, to stop it getting lost on the page. All other pronouns, words like *you, me, he, us* and *them*, have to start with little letters. Common nouns, too, ordinary nouns, like *girl, town, country*, cannot start with capitals. Only Proper Nouns, like *Anne, Amsterdam, Africa, England* and so on, can start with a capital letter. Why did people stop saying [ee] and [mee] and start saying [I] and [mee]? Maybe this was to make it sound very different to *me*. Many people think that it changed from [ee] because if someone said “Will you do this?” the reply “Aye” meant both “yes” and “I, I will do it.” The [ee] - [I] story is closely linked to the two ways of saying *neither* in which <ei> can spell [ee] or [I], (Ayto 1990, and [www.etymonline.com](http://www.etymonline.com)). Some say the vowel [I] mimics that in *myself* – [ml-self] and but then we ask why *meself* became *myself*. “*I myself*” sounds stronger, more important than [ee] [mee-self].

**Extra** The word *I* is very ancient for it’s not only related to *je* in French and *io* in Italian but can be traced right back into extinction for Max Müller says, “*aham*, the Sanskrit form of *I*, has been carried down the stream of language from distant ages” from the extinct ancestor of both English and Sanskrit, the ancestor language called the Indo-European parent language, (Hewitt p. 60).

In *I’m* we are looking at a little hook, <’>, which has hooked out the letter <a> of *I am*. We say *I am* so much that we have reduced it to *I’m*. Does it look like a hook to you? It is called an *apostrophe* [ap-ost-roh-fee] and in Greek it means turn away or hook out.

We usually use two letters to spell [oh], like this, *oh*. The <h> tells us that in this word <o> spells [oh], not [o]. Capital O normally spells [o], as in *Oscar* and *Oregon*, but the little rebel O is allowed to spell [oh] in prayers and poetry, e.g. ‘O lord, hear us we pray,’ or ‘O rose thou art sick’. *O* is never followed by punctuation symbols, unlike *oh*, e.g. ‘Oh, I think it was red,’ or “We waited for, oh, seven hours,” or “Oh! You frightened me,” (Bryson 2004, p. 149).

## Ground Rules

Our first rule is easy to remember if we learn our letters using the “Antabed Chart”

**Rule 1-1 Twenty two letters spell one simple sound each. Unless we are told otherwise, that is the sound they spell, as follows:**

<a> and <ā> spell [a] in <i>ant</i> .	<f> spells [f] in <i>feather</i> .	<r> spells [r] in <i>roo</i> .
<e> spells [e] in <i>elephant</i> .	<g> spells [g] in <i>grub</i> .	<s> spells [s] in <i>snake</i>
<i> spells [i] in <i>igloo</i> .	<h> spells [h] in <i>hut</i> .	<t> spells [t] in <i>teeth</i> .
<o> spells [o] in <i>orange</i> .	<j> spells [j] in <i>jug</i> .	<v> spells [v] in <i>van</i> .
<u> spells [u] in <i>umbrella</i> .	<l> spells [l] in <i>letter</i> .	<w> spells [w] in <i>wave</i> .
-----	<m> spells [m] in <i>mum</i> .	<y> spells [y] in <i>yabby</i> .
<b> spells [b] in <i>bed</i> .	<n> spells [n] as in <i>net</i>	<z> spells [z] in <i>zip</i> .
<d> spells [d] in <i>door</i> .	<p> spells [p] in <i>pea</i> .	

**Reason** The reason why the letters spell these sounds is interesting. They did not start out like this. See ‘How Writing Began’ in Appendix 22. **Note:** Don’t rush this first rule. We can have lots of fun learning it, as you can see in ‘Early Childhood Speech and Reading Readiness’ in Appendix 7. If we make our own alphabet scrap book we can make sure that illustrations show that <u> spells [u] as in *umbrella*. We do not want a picture of a unicorn, not yet!

**Rule 1-1 continued: 2 letters spell the same sound:**

<c> spells [k] as in *king* and *cat*

<k> spells [k] as in *king* and *cat*

**Reason** The Romans used <c> to spell [k] in their own Latin words and they used <k> to spell [k] in the Greek words they adopted into Latin.

**Extra** When the Romans took their alphabet to Britain in AD 43 it had only 20 letters, all upper case: ABCDEFGH IKLMNOPQRSTV. X was added soon after, (Davies p. 108). These letters originated from a place that had camels, said [ka-mel] or [ga-mel], (like saying [mee-ka-tha-ra] or [mee-gar-dar-ar] for the town of *Meekatharra*.) So the original C spelt two sounds, [k] and [g]. The Greeks used C for [g] and invented K for [k]. However the Romans used C for [k] and added a tail to C to make G to spell [g]. Sometimes Romans borrowed a Greek word with the [k] sound and they wrote it with <k> to show it came from Greece.

Before printing was invented, letters which headed names and sentences were called “**capital letters**” because *capital* meant “little head”. The Romans wrote in capital letters. At first they all had jagged shapes because they began as jabs and scratches in wood and stone. Then, with paper and pen, some letters were rounded, like B. Then Emperor Carolus Magnus, (Karl the Great), invented little letters to make writing on paper quick and easy. These little ‘carolines’ were

## Reading with Rules

named after him. Capitals were still used, at the head of sentences and names. It was not until printing was invented that they were called *upper case* and *lower case* for the metal letters were kept in cases on the wall near the printing press, capitals in the upper case and carolines in a case beneath it, lower down, easier to reach as they were used more often. Another name for lower case letters is *minuscules* and upper case are called *majuscules*. Some lower case letters look like smaller versions of upper case letters. Some do not because they were designed to be easy to write and to join up, in a flowing hand, and unlike upper case, they were not limited in height or depth.

### A little driving lesson before we start off down the road of reading.

Readers start by sounding out each letter, like a gear change on each letter. Pretend you are in a car moving a gear stick as each letter spells a sound [a] [m]; [b] [a] [d]; [k] [a] [t]. As you become a better driver your gear changes will get smoother and smoother [a-m]; [b-a-d]; [k-a-t]. One day it will be like driving an automatic car. You will look at the word and your voice will be on automatic: -[am]; [bad]; [kat]; you will say. What fun! Then you'll start the next list!

#### List 1-1 Letters spell their ground rule sounds.

AM	DIB	GUM	JIG	MET (office)
*AN	DID	GUN	JOB	MID
*AND	DIG	GUN DOG	A BAD JOB	MID-ON
AT	DIG IN	GUT	JOB LOT	MOB
AT IT	DIM	HAD	JOG	MOB-CAP
BAD	DIN	HAG	JOG ON	MOM (USA)
BAG	DIP	HAM	JOT	MOP
BAN	DOC.	HAT	JUG	MOP UP
BAT	DOG	HEM	JUT	MUD
BED	DON	HEN	KEG	MUG
BEG	DOT	HET UP	KEN	MUM
BET	DUB	HID	KID	NAB
BIB	DUD	HIM	KIN	NAG
BID	DUG	HIP	KIP	NAN
BIG	DUN	HIP-HOP	KIT	NAP
BIG TOP	FAB	HIT	LAB	NET
BIN	FAD	HIT AND RUN	LAD	NIB
BIT	FAG	HIT MAN	LAG	NIL
BOB	FAN	HIT OFF	LAM	NIP
BOG	FAT	HIT ON	LAP	NIT
BUB	FAT CAT	HOB	LAP-DOG	NOB
BUD	A FAT LOT	HOB-NOB	LED	NOD
BUG	FED	HOD	LEG	NON-U
BUM	FED UP	HOG	LEG UP	NOT
BUN	FEN	HOP	LEG IT	NUB
BUT	FEZ	HOP IN	LET	NUN
CAB	FIB	HOP IT	LET UP	NUT
CAD	FIG	HOT	LET IN	ON
CAM	FIN	HOT DOG	LET ON	*OP.
CAN	FIT	HOT-POT	LID	PAD
CAP	FIT IN	HOT ROD	LIP	PAL
CAT	FOB	HUB	LIT	PAL UP
COB	FOG	HUB-CAP	LOB	PAN
COD	FOP	HUG	LOG	PAP
COG	FUN	HUM	LOG IN	PAT
COP	GAB	HUT	LOP	PEG
COT	GAD	ID	LOT	PEN
CUB	GAG	IF	BAD LOT	*PEP
CUD	GAP	IN	LUG	PET
CUP	GET	IT	MAC	PIG
CUT	GET AT	JAB	MAD	PIN
CUT IN	GET ON	JAG	MAM	PIP
CUT UP	GET IT	ON A JAG	MAN	PIT
DAB	GET-UP	JAM	MAP	PIT-A-PAT
DAD	GET UP	JET	MAT	POD
DAM	GIG	JET LAG	*MEN	POP
DEN	GOT	JIB	MET	POP-UP

## Reading with Rules

POT	TIN CAN	WOK	ZIT	DEL
PUB	TIN GOD	YAK		DOM
PUG DOG	TIN HAT	YAM	<u>Australian words</u>	DON
PUN	TIN POT	YAP	BOT	ED
PUP	TIP	YEN	DAG	HAL
RAG	TIP TOP	YET	DAM	JAN
RAM	TIT	ZED	DOB	JED
RAM-JET	TOG	ZIG ZAG	DOG	JEFF
RAN	TOG UP	ZIP	GIG	JIM
RAP	TOM	ZIP-BAG	GUN (shearer)	JIM
RAT	TOM-CAT		GUV	KAT
RED	TOM-TOM	<u>Slang</u>	HUM	KEN
REP. (representative)	TOP	BIG GUN	JOB <i>verb.</i>	KIM
REV. (Reverend)	ON TOP	BIGWIG	KIP	LEN
RIB	TOP DOG	BOP	LOB IN	LIZ
RID	TOP HAT	CON	MOB	MAC
RIG	TOP UP	CON MAN	MUD MAP	MAL
RIM	TOT	DIM-WIT	PAD	MAT
RIP	TUB	FAT CAT	POM	MEG
ROB	TUG	GAL	RUN	MEL
ROD	UNCUT	GOB	RUM	NAT
ROT	UNFIT	GUM UP	TAP (of work)	PAM
RUB	UNZIP	LAV		PAT
RUB ON	*UP	MAC (macintosh)	<u>Proper Nouns</u>	ROB
RUG	VAN	MAG (magazine)	BIG BEN	ROD
RUM	VAT	MOG (cat)	GOD	RON
RUN	VET	MUT (dog)	JAG <i>car</i>	ROZ
RUT	VIM	NON-U	MED.	SAL
TAB	*VIZ.	REV	ZEN	TED
TAG	WAG	TAD		TIM
TAN	WEB	TOP DOG	<u>Names</u>	TOM
TAP	WED	TUM	AL	VAL
ON TAP	WEN	TUT-TUT	BEN	VIN
TAT	WET	WOG (insect)	BEV	ZAC
TEN	WIG	YEP	BOB	
TIC	WIN	YOB	CAL	
TIN	WIT	YUM	DAN	
		YUP		
		ZAK		
		ZAP		

When a word is shortened, e.g. from *operation* to *op.* the full stop shows that this has happened. Words which have been shortened are called *abbreviations*, or *abbrev.* for short. \**Pep* is an example of a word which was once an abbreviation, of *pepper*, but is now written without a full stop, as in *He gave a pep talk, to pep up the team.* Many abbreviations are treated as slang words. Some later become accepted as ordinary words, some fade away and some are slang forever. \*Nowadays *an* always spells [an]. It used to spell [uun], and [un] too. We use it before a vowel sound and so we say **an egg in a box.** We use *an* before a vowel **sound** and so we say **an M.P.** [em-pee] **sent an S.O.S.** but **a U.K.** [yoo-kay] **citizen.** {Later we shall learn why we say **an umbrella** but **a useful tool** and also **an hour** and **an honest heir.**}

**Extra** Long ago, when very few could read and write, King Sound ruled the land. People copied the sounds of words from each other. Words changed quite rapidly in those days. By the time Queen Quill came along and wrote them down some words had changed for ever: *an ekename* had become *a nickname*, *an ewt* had become *a newt*, *a nadder* had become *an adder*. *An apron* has been *a napron* like a napkin, *an orange* was once *a narange* (from Arabic *nāranjī*), *an auger* was *a nauger*, *a nonce* was *an once*, and *an umpire* used to be *a nonper*, as in “non-peer”, impartial, not paired in any way with any of the players.

\**And* is the only word in this list which has two consonants together.

\**Up* is used a great deal. See {*awake*} for more about this very useful little word.

\**Viz.* This is a word we read but do not say out loud, as you will soon see.

\**Men.* Little children say *two mans*. Why do we say *men*? Why not *two mans*? New English speakers, big and little, are quick to learn this pattern – *1 pan, 2 pans; 1 pin, 2 pins; 1 pen, 2 pens.* However long ago there was another pattern. That pattern has nearly faded out. It is only left in a few words – *child, children; ox, oxen; brother, brethren.* The word *man* used to belong to that pattern, *man, mannen.* However, if you say that often enough you get ready to say [e] and say it for [a] too! That is why *mannen* became *mennen* and then just *men*.

## Reading with Rules

**Extra** We say *man* “umlauts” to *men* because it changes its vowel sound. It umlauts to show it is plural. We shall see this again in *mice* and *lice*, *feet*, *teeth* and *geese*. Umlaut is German for “switch sound about” for *um* means *about* and *laut* means *sound*. Jakob Grimm, one of the Fairy Tale Brothers Grimm, began using *umlaut* for “vowel change” in words in 1819. He and Wilhelm noticed all the ways people said words as they travelled about collecting folk stories and fairy tales.

Three words in this list are very old but still in use. The Aborigines of Britain were using them before AD 1. The Celts are the Aborigines of Britain. In some parts there are Celts still speaking Celtic languages. Look in list 1-1 for *cam* (crooked, as in cam shaft), *dun* (a dingy -brown colour) and *tan* (a yellow-brown colour), all old Celt words.

A word which disobeys a rule is called a rebel or an exceptions to the rule. Some people go around saying “the exception proves the rule” without realizing that *prove* meant *test* when this saying began. Even today we test the yeast in dough by seeing if the bread will rise and we call this proving the bread or the yeast. So when a word disobeys a rule it tests the rule. If it has a good excuse for its rebellious behaviour then we cannot say the rule is wrong or useless.

**Rebels** I, I'M, O, A, OF

**Rebels' Reasons** In the tiny rebel word *a*, <a> spells [u]. The little word *a* is used so much that it has become easier to say [u]. This sound, [u], uses fewer muscles than [a]. Try it for yourself. We just have to open our mouth to say [u], whereas we have to raise our cheeks to say [a].

The rebel word *of* spells [ov]. Long ago the letter <f> spelt <v>. The word *of* is the only remaining word in which this still happens. *Off* and *of* spell [of] and [ov]. *Iff* long ago spelt [if] but, as there was no *if* and no [iv], the word *iff* shortened to *if*, and so *of* is the only word left in which <f> spells [v].

Reasons for Rebels *I*, *I'm* and *O* were given earlier.

Slang words do not have to obey rules. We shall only add them to lists if they obey the rules. Their origins are usually very interesting. For instance, *yob* is just *boy* backwards.

**Extra** *Yob* belongs to a secret language called Backslang which was used by pick pockets and stall holders in London. Backslang developed into Ackslanga when the first letter was dropped and <a> added to the end of the word. In Ackslanga “Good Luck” is “Ooda Ucka.” It’s like Yeraka, spoken by Aboriginal girls in WA’s Great Southern. According to Von Brandenstein, “hawaka yuwaka gowaka?” is “How are you going?” in Yeraka, a clever invention which dresses English up to sound like another language.

Letter <s> is missing from List 1-1. Why? The letter <s> spells [s] as in *snake*. However it also spells [z] as in *zip*. In fact <s> is used more often than <z> to spell [z]. It depends where <s> is in a word. It never spells [z] if it starts a word. If <s> starts a word, it initiates it, and we say <s> is “initial”. That is why we call the letters which start each of your names your “initials”.

**Rule 1-2 When <s> starts a word it spells [s]. It never spells [z].**

**Reason** We’d expect word-initial <s> to spell [s] because <s> spells [s] at the beginning of *snake*. Long ago, when people were too scared to write <z>, because it was the sign of the dagger, they used <x> if they wanted to start a word with [z].

**Rebels** There is a big group of words which disobeys this rule, words which start with <s> but the next letter is <h>. All these words start with the sound [sh]. They are not rebels because they follow their own rule, the rule that <sh> spells [sh]. They are words like *ship* and *shut*, which you will meet later, when we meet Secret Agent H. There are only three other words in which initial <s> does not spell [s]: {*sugar*, *sure* and *sumac*} and words made with these words. {} brackets indicate words which will be listed later, and so we shall hear more about these rebels later. (Initial <s> does not spell [s] in *Sean* and *Seamus*, but names do not have to obey rules.)

**List 1-2** Initial <s> spells [s].

SAC	SET IN	SIP	SOD	SUN
SAD	SET ON	SIT	SOP	<u>Names</u>
SAG	SET-UP	SIT ON	SOT	SAL
SAP	JET SET	SIT UP	SUB	SAM
SAT	SIC	SIT-IN	SUP	SID
SET	SIN	SOB	SUM	SOL

**Rule 1-3 Letter <s> spells [z] at the end of short words, words we can say in one short breath.**

**Reason** Long ago before <z> was added to the alphabet <s> spelt [z] and twin <ss> spelt [s]. It took a bit longer to write *kiss* than it took to write *has*, but it meant that *hiss* and *his* looked different and sounded different. Also boys called *Les* were not called *Less* and girls called *Tess* were not called *Tez*.

When <z> was added to the alphabet people were afraid of it because it was the sign of the dagger, a warning sign. Later on Americans told stories of a man who was not afraid to write it. His name was Zorro. He carved <z> on walls and doors with three quick cuts of his long thin sword. He was a good man, like Robin Hood. His Zed, or Zee, struck fear only into the wicked hearts of bullies. He only wrote Z to scare bad people.

**Extra** The letter <z> was unpopular from earliest times, when it was the sign of the dagger and named “zag” or “zayin”, meaning dagger. Long ago it crept into 7<sup>th</sup> place in the Roman alphabet to spell a few Greek words and was then thrown out and only let back in hundreds of years later at the tail end of the Roman alphabet, the very last letter. It’s said to have been the 14<sup>th</sup> letter of Ireland’s

## Reading with Rules

Ogham tree alphabet, a letter named *straif* meaning *blackthorn*. Blackthorns traditionally stood for things getting out of control and beyond help and so the Ogham letter meant bad luck and strife.

No wonder <z> was not welcomed into English. At first it was only used to spell the sound we now spell with <ts> in *tsar*. However, the Norman French used <z> and [z] a lot. "Zounds! What eez theez pleeze?" They invaded England in 1066 and changed its language a great deal. They spread their [z] words everywhere and changed English [s] words into [z] words, e.g. *dysig* changed to *dizzy*, but hundreds of years later <z> was still unpopular. In 1606 Shakespeare uses <z> to insult a character in *King Lear*: "Thou whoreson zed! Thou unnecessary letter!" It had lots of names. *Zee*, from Greek *zeta*, was one of them and that name was taken to the American colonies but died out in England. Another name for Z was "*izzard*", meaning "*S hard*", for it was a hard sounding <s>. *Izzard* was shortened to *zed*. Zed is still the least used letter of written English. Look for Zorro in the website's Dress Up Gallery. It is not just English which tries to avoid using <z>. In German <ts>, as well as <z>, spells [z], as in *tsar*, also <s> can spell [z]; German <ß> and <ss> spell [s]. In modern French, <x> spells [s] at the end of a word, and terminal <s> is usually silent but they can both spell [z] if linked to the next word, if it starts with a vowel. In Italian <s> between vowels spells [z].

**Q.** Weren't people afraid of S for Snake? After all, it looks like a snake!

**Ans.** No, because the letter S began as the sign of the Tooth! It was not a sharp tooth. It was a back tooth with two round bumps. The letter <s> first of all spelt [sh], because it started *shin*, which is still the Hebrew word for *tooth*. Later on it was drawn sideways with only one bump, S, and then it spelt [s], (Davies p.98). The letter N began in Egypt as a drawing of a snake going up stairs, from right to left. The neighbouring Phoenicians called it a fish, which in their language was *nun* and when the Greeks copied it they called it *nu* and made the stairs very steep which turned it into N, so it is nothing like a snake anymore, (Davies p. 88).

**List 1-3** Letter <s> spells [z].

AS spells [az]

AS IF

AS YET

HAS spells [haz]

\**Tis* is an old way of saying "it is".

HIS spells [hiz]

IS spells [iz]

\**TIS* spells [tiz]

Names

LES [lez]

ROS [roz]

WES [wez]

### Rebels

BUS

PUS

YES

SIS

GAS

US

YES-MAN

### Rebels' Reasons

Words which are abbreviations do not have to obey rules. *Bus* is short for *omnibus* which means "for all", Latin *omni* (all) followed by a suffix meaning *for*, (Cummings p. 83). *Sis* is short for sister, and is also a slang word, which is another reason it does not have to obey rules.

Words longer than one syllable can end in <s> spells [s] if they end 'weakly', like *tennis* in which we say <ten> louder than <is>. *Gas* comes from a word like that, *chaos*, [kay-os].

*Pus* is allowed to use a single <s> to spell [s] so that it does not look like *puss*, [puus], an old word for cat.

*Us* comes from Latin *nos* which in Latin spells [nos], not [noz].

*Yes* is a combination of *yea so*, 'Yea, let it be so', (Hewitt p. 205). So the <s> in *yes* originally spelt [s] because it started a word.

Draw a picture of a little "spy-bug" to remember these little rebels, by their first letters, *SPY-BUG*.

**Rebels? No**, ITS, IT'S and LET'S are not rebels. They spell [its] and [lets], because <s> follows a consonant, not a vowel. That consonant is [t], which is a special sort of consonant. Say it with your fingers on your voice box. Do you feel a buzzing, a vibration? No. Now say [d] with your fingers on your voice box. You will feel your voice box vibrate. Look at Rule 1-3 again. It does not say what <s> spells after consonants. The truth is, it can spell [z] after a consonant if that consonant makes voice boxes vibrate. These consonants are called voiced consonants. Appendix 3 tells us which consonants vibrate the voice box and which do not, but we can find that out for ourselves. There are only nine consonants which do not vibrate the voice box. Can you work out which they are by "listening" with your fingers when you speak? This is a good time to find out about Anne Sullivan, a wonderful teacher who taught little Helen Keller to communicate with her fingers because even though she was blind and deaf she could still feel – with her fingers, and with her heart too! There are many books and websites about Helen and Anne. We are lucky for we can hear the [z] in *dogs*, *pubs*, *fogs*, *dens*, and *hams* and we can hear the [s] in *dots*, *pups*, *docks* and *its* and *it's*. Now we know why <s> spells [z] at the end of some words and [s] at the end of others.

IT'S is short for *it is*. The old way to shorten *it is* was *'tis*. The newer way is *it's*. The little hook called an apostrophe pulls out a letter in both *'tis* and *it's*.

ITS means "of it" and has no apostrophe because *its* has not had <i> hooked out of it, for *its* was never *itis* – just like *his* was never *hisis*.

LET'S is short for *let us*. The apostrophe has hooked out the <u>.

## Reading with Rules

**Rule 1-4 The letter <q> is always followed by <u> and together they spell [kw]. Qu, qu.**

**Reason** A very old word *gwen* meant ‘woman’ and in England it changed to *cwen* for ‘queen’, [kween]. However when the French invaded they said “You can’t spell [kw] like that!” They used <u> to spell [w] and <q> to spell [k], because the French do not like <k>. The French ruled England for hundreds of years and imposed their way of spelling on to the English language. England eventually regained her freedom but even today <qu> still spells [kw]. (In just a few words <gu> still spells [gw] as in *penguin*.) You might like to make a play of this and call it “The pen is mightier than the sword”, because the French no longer rule England with swords but their choice of letters remains in many English words.

**List 1-4 <qu> spells [kw]**

QUID	QUIN	QUIP	QUIT	QUIZ	QUOD
------	------	------	------	------	------

The letter <x>, spells two sounds blended together, [ks]. It can also spell [z] and [gz], but at the end of words <x> always spells [ks]. When a letter ends a word we call it terminal. Terminal <x> spells [ks], as in *ox* and *fox*.

**Rule 1-5 Terminal <x> spells [ks].**

**Reason** This is the sound that <x> spelt in the west of Greece, nearest to Rome. Maybe the Romans said “Let’s use this letter from Greece. It is easy to carve and saves us carving two letters.”

**List 1-5**

BOX	FIX UP	MAX	POX	VEX	<u>Names</u>
BOX IN	FOX	<i>abbrev.</i>	SEX	WAX	MAX
BOX UP	FOX <i>verb.</i>	MIX	SIX		REX
COX	HEX	NIX	TAX		SAX
FIX	LAX	OX	TUX <i>abbrev.</i>		TEX

### The Short Word Rule

Words that are not function words tend to be three or more letters long, (Cummings p. 88). Some words add silent <e> in order to obey this rule, like *axe*. Some words repeat the last letter to obey this rule, like *egg*.

Function words are prepositions like *in*, *on*, *at*, or conjunctions like *as*, *if*, or pronouns like *I*, *us*. Nouns, adjectives, adverbs and verbs are not function words. They are the words that function words link up to make sentences. We can say that they are too important to have just two letters.

You may say “What about *ox*, *do*, *go*, *be*, *am* and *is*? They all have two letters and one is a noun and the rest are verbs.” *Ox* is a very ancient word. It can be traced back to the prehistoric language from which we think many languages spread west across Europe, and also east across Asia as far as India. We call it the Indo-European language. Many languages started but this one spread far and wide. *Ox* is a very old word, a “living fossil”, one of the first words to be written, long before the Short Word Rule took hold. *Axe* is just as old and was spelt without an <e> for a long time. *Axe* used to be *ax* but after 1885 it gave in and conformed and added a silent <e> as you can see in dictionaries after that date.

The verbs “to be” and “to do” and “to go” are used more than any other verbs. Therefore they are written more than other verbs. They have been shortened over time, from *beon*, *beom*, *beo*, *bist*, *be-eth*, to *be*; *eom*, *eam* to *am*; *est*, *ist* to *is*; *don*, *doth*, *doeth* to *do*; *gan* to *go*. All except *are* have shrunk down to two letters.

**The Short Word Rule** is that:

**Rule 1-6 All verbs, nouns, adjectives and adverbs have three or more letters except for the noun *ox* and the verbs *to be* and *to do* and *to go*.**

**Reason** To ensure that nouns, adjectives, verbs and adverbs stand out on the page. The reasons for the short word *ox*, and the short little verbs is given above.

We use the verb *to be* when we say *I am*, *you are*, *he is*, *she is*, *we are*, *you are*, *they are*. Also when we say *I shall be*, *you will be*, *he will be* or *I was*, *he was*, *you were* and so on. We could write *are* with just two letters, *ar*, because as part of the verb *to be*, it does not have to obey the Short Word Rule. However, *are* hangs on to its silent <e>, (maybe to show it has shrunk down from the olden days words *aron* and *art*. Maybe if it shrank anymore it would look too much like *or*.) This is the first of many words in which <ar> spells [ar] and we shall meet them all later.

**Please Note:** Your teacher might decide to take you on a short cut at this stage because now you know that <ar> spells [ar] you can read words like *ark*, *arm*, *bar*, *bark*, *etc* but you can’t read *chart*, *sharp*, *large*, *quart*, *warm*, *arthritic*, *etc*. and many other words in which <ar> spells [ar]. If you take a short cut you still need to double back and go the long way or else you will miss out on how to decode <ch>, <ge>, <sh>, <th> and so on. Go the long way to read every <ar> word, even the words in which <ar> does not spell [ar].

## Reading with Rules

### List 1-6

As we know, AM spells [am] .

Now we know that ARE spells [ar].

As we shall see {BE} spells [bee].

As we shall see {DO} spells [doo].

As we shall see {GO} spells [goh].

As we know, IS spells [iz].

As we know, OX spells [oks].

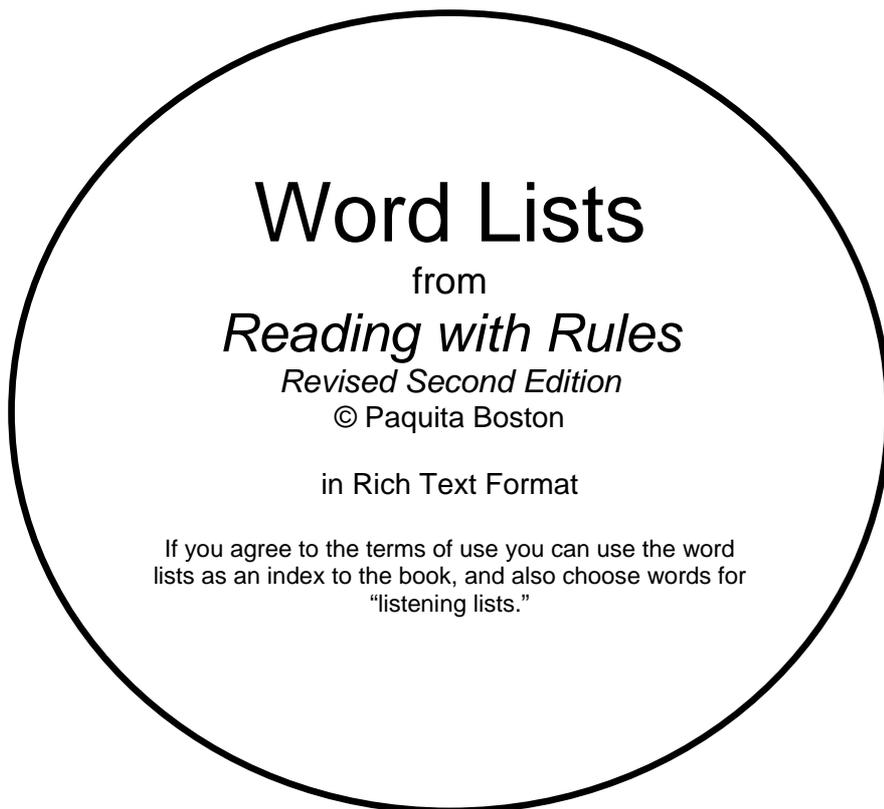
**Rebels?** Are the words we sing for musical scales rebels? No, *do, re, mi, fa, so, la, ti*, do not disobey the Short Word Rule because they are all abbreviations, clipped from the words in a medieval hymn to which the notes were sung. Abbreviations do not need to obey rules. Babies are also allowed to break the rules it seems, in their own language, baby talk: *ma, pa, Jo* and *An* can break the Short Word Rule too because Proper Nouns need not conform to rules. The little word *id* does not break the Short Word Rule because it comes from “it” in Latin, a pronoun. Psychologists use it to describe the unconscious instinctual force in each of us, each individual’s ‘it’ factor. The word game Scrabble quotes lots of two letter words from a 1998 Chambers dictionary but these words are either very foreign or Scottish or obsolete or misspelt names of the letters of the alphabet, e.g. *es* for the letter S, which we know would spell [ez], not [es], and *ef* for the letter F, which we know would spell [ev]. Whilst it is fun to try to spell the names of letters it is unnecessary.

Repeated consonants are called **twins** and we call repeated vowels **doublets**. We do not have a name for repeated semi-vowels for we rarely see <ww> or <yy>.

### Orm’s Rule

The earliest attempt at simplifying English spelling was by Orm around 1150, in order to write sermons for monks which were easy to read. Orm was a Norman, which makes his name easy to remember, Orm the Norman. He did not like fancy spelling, he wanted spelling to be normal, with no exceptions to the rules.

The end of the book sample. As seen from the Table of Contents, the book is big.  
It is 210mm x 295mm x 16mm, with a computer disc inside the back cover.



If you are keen to learn more, go to ‘buy the book’ on the home page of  
[www.readingwithrules.com](http://www.readingwithrules.com)