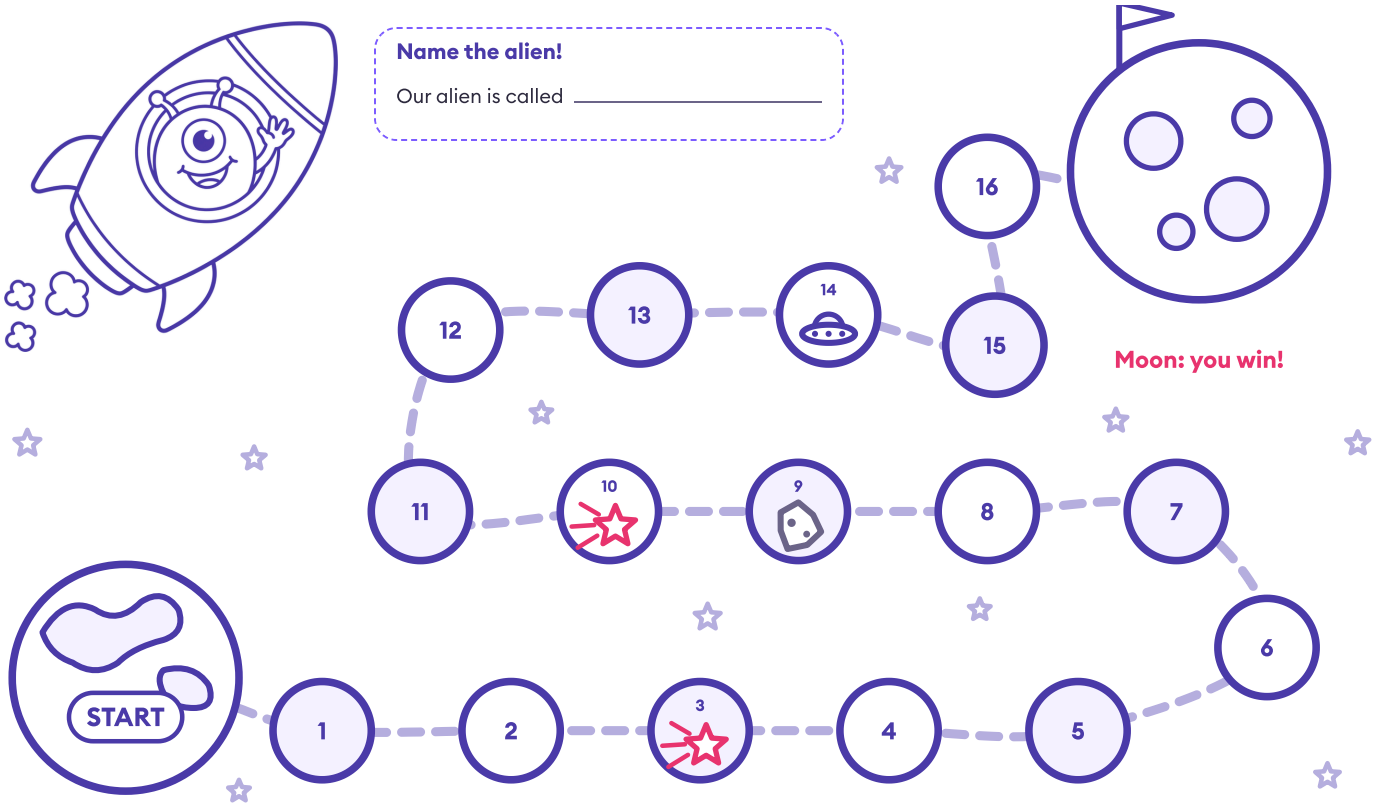
Earth or Alien?

A nonsense word rocket race · 2 to 4 players · about 10 minutes

K 1st 2nd

Name the alien!

Our alien is called _____



You need

- this board and a wheel page
- a paper clip and a pencil
- a coin for each player

How to play

1. Pick a wheel with sounds your child knows.
2. Spin a paper clip around a pencil on the middle dot.
3. Read the word out loud.
4. Real word? Say "Earth word!" Made-up word? Say "Alien word!"
5. Move 1 space for reading and 1 more for a right call.

Land on a picture?

- Jump 2 more spaces
- Go back 1 space
- Spin again

First rocket to the Moon wins and names the alien!

Grown-up tips on page 7.

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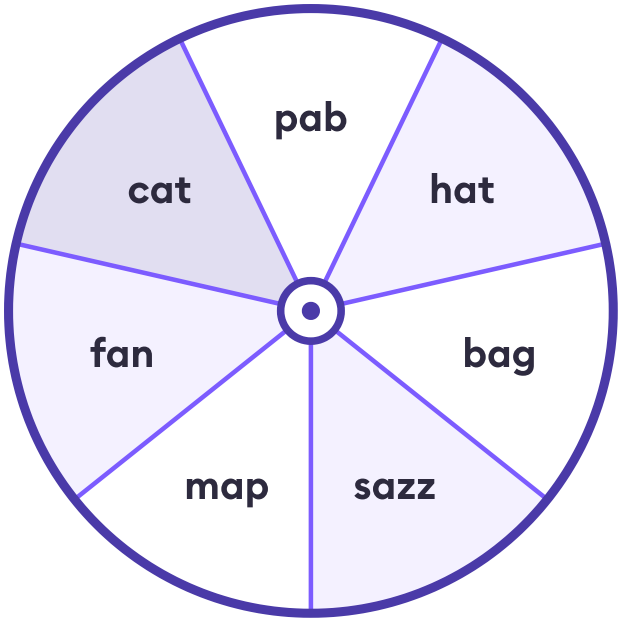
Kindergarten wheels, Set 1: short vowels

Each wheel adds one vowel. Use a wheel only when your child knows every sound on it, or make your own on page 7.

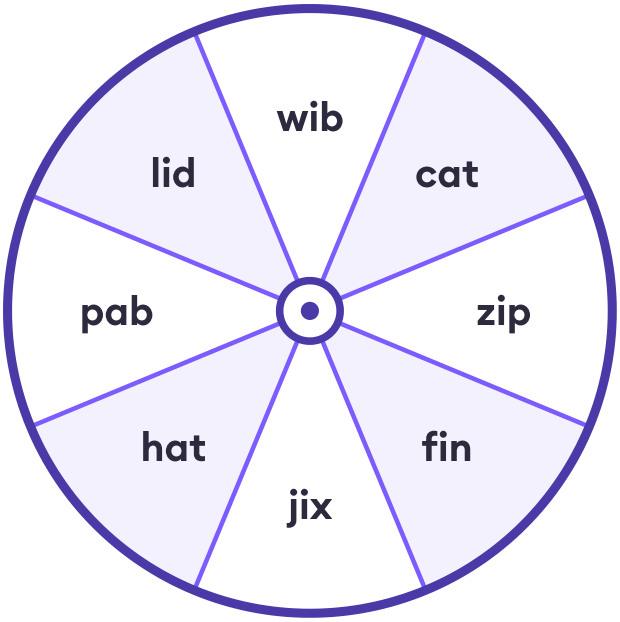
To spin: hold a pencil point on the middle dot, inside a paper clip, and flick the clip.

Short a · Set 1



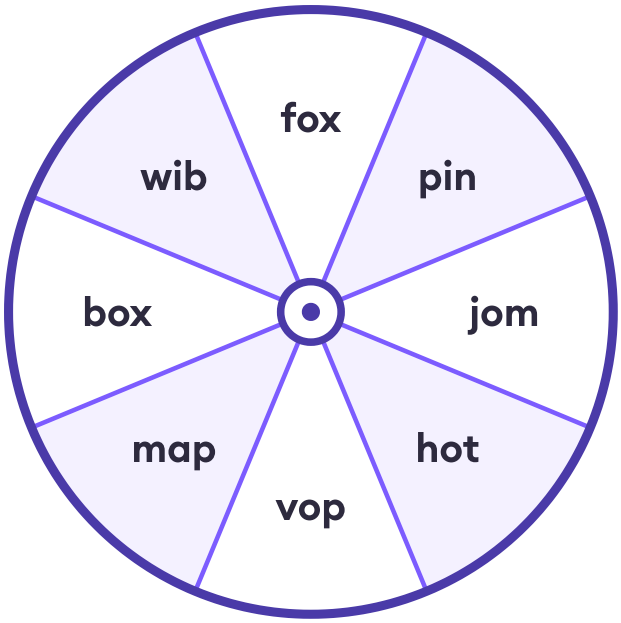
Alien words: pab, sazz

Short a and i · Set 1



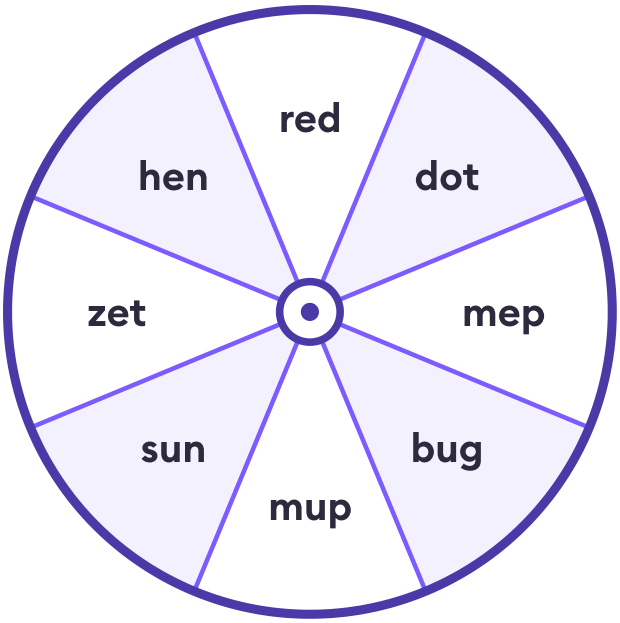
Alien words: wib, jix, pab

Short a, i and o · Set 1



Alien words: jom, vop, wib

All five short vowels · Set 1



Alien words: mep, mup, zet

Our own made-up words, checked for real words, sound-alikes and slang. Practice words, not test items.

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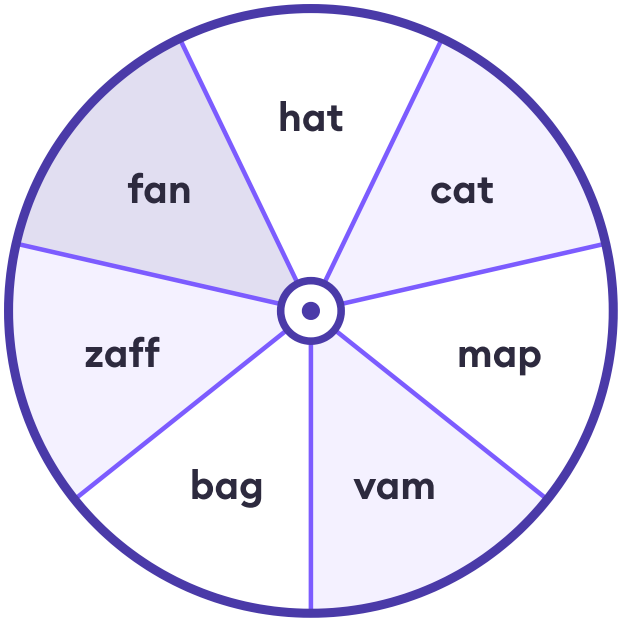
Kindergarten wheels, Set 2: short vowels

The same sounds as page 2 with new alien words. Use these next time.

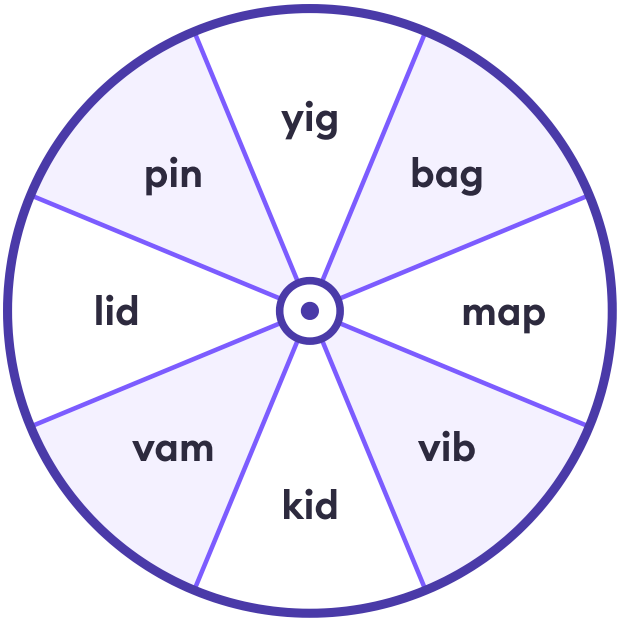
To spin: hold a pencil point on the middle dot, inside a paper clip, and flick the clip.

Short a · Set 2



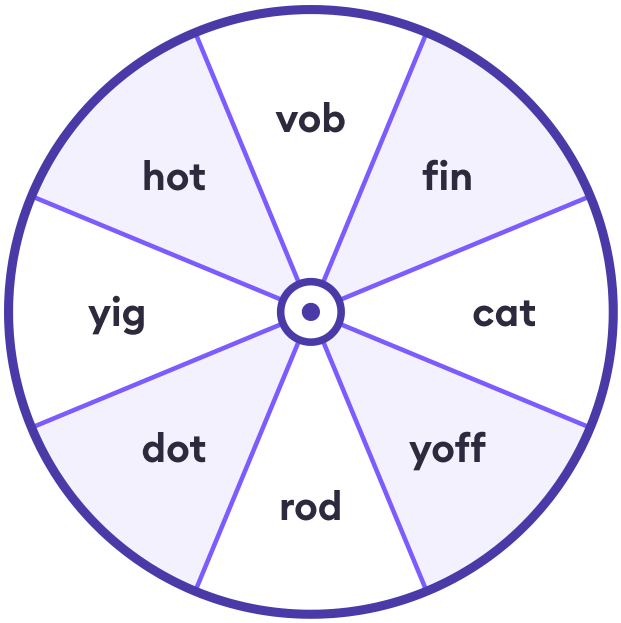
Alien words: vam, zaff

Short a and i · Set 2



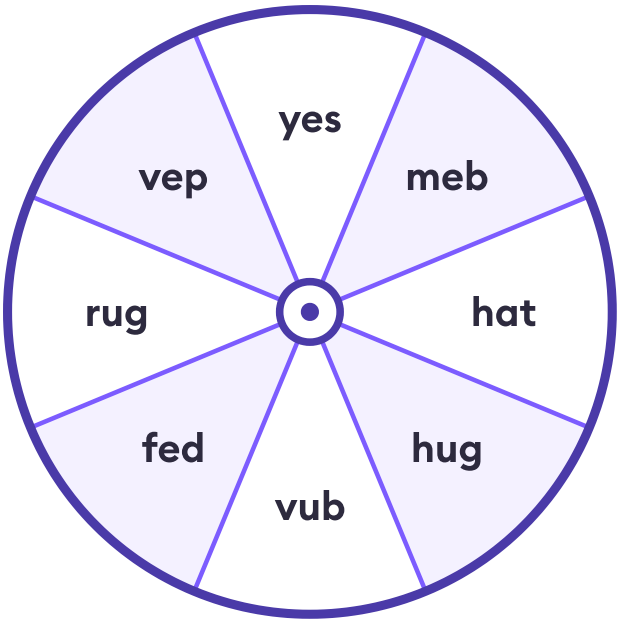
Alien words: yig, vib, vam

Short a, i and o · Set 2



Alien words: vob, yoff, yig

All five short vowels · Set 2



Alien words: meb, vub, vep

Our own made-up words, checked for real words, sound-alikes and slang. Practice words, not test items.

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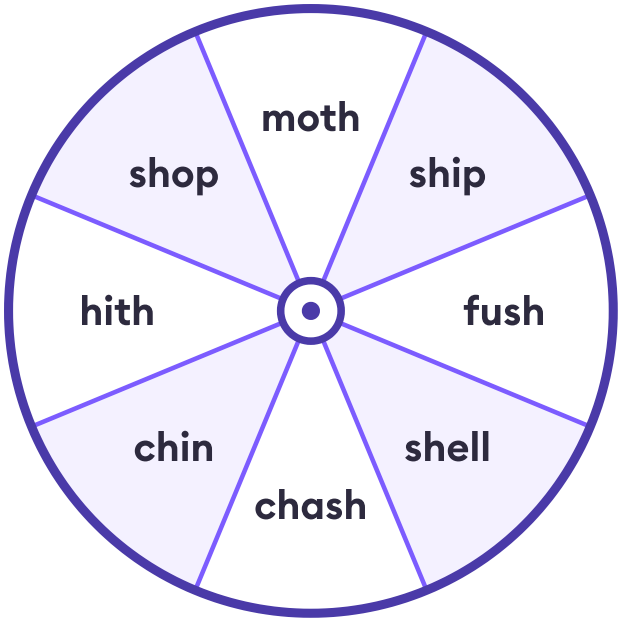
1st grade wheels: sh, ch, th and blends

Use a wheel only when your child has learned every sound on it.

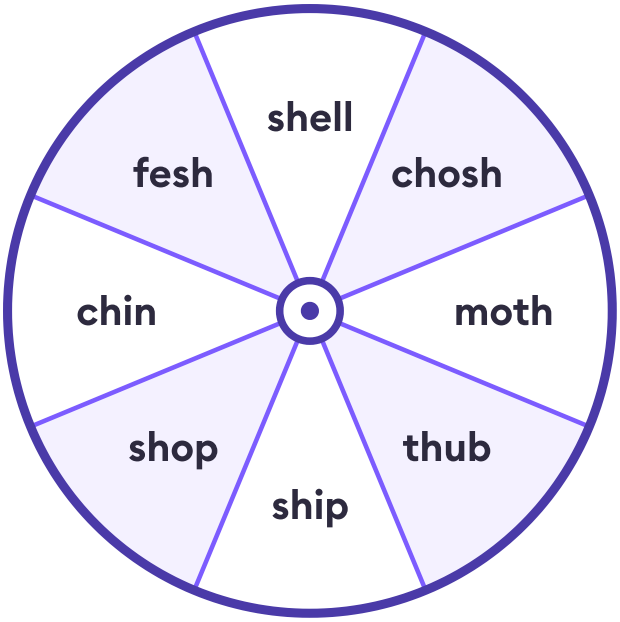
To spin: hold a pencil point on the middle dot, inside a paper clip, and flick the clip.

sh, ch, th · Set 1



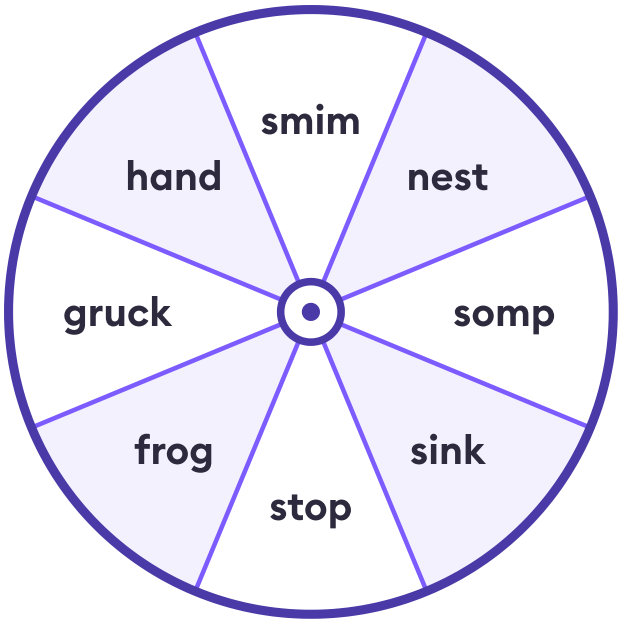
Alien words: fush (rhymes with hush), chash (rhymes with dash), hith (rhymes with smith)

sh, ch, th · Set 2



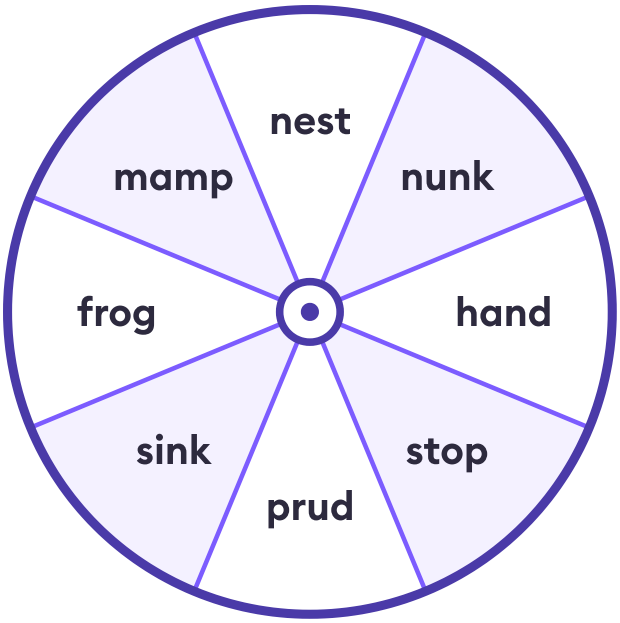
Alien words: chosh (rhymes with gosh), thub (rhymes with sub), fesh (rhymes with fresh)

Blends · Set 1



Alien words: smim (rhymes with him), somp (rhymes with stomp), gruck (rhymes with luck)

Blends · Set 2



Alien words: nunk (rhymes with chunk), prud (rhymes with mud), mamp (rhymes with camp)

Our own made-up words, checked for real words, sound-alikes and slang. Practice words, not test items.

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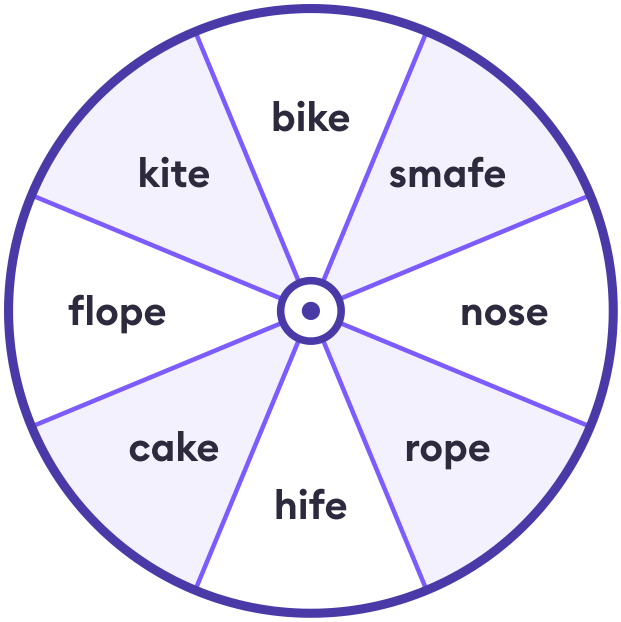
1st grade wheels: magic e and bossy r

Magic e wheels use a_e, i_e and o_e only, so every word has one right answer. Pick the wheel your child is ready for.

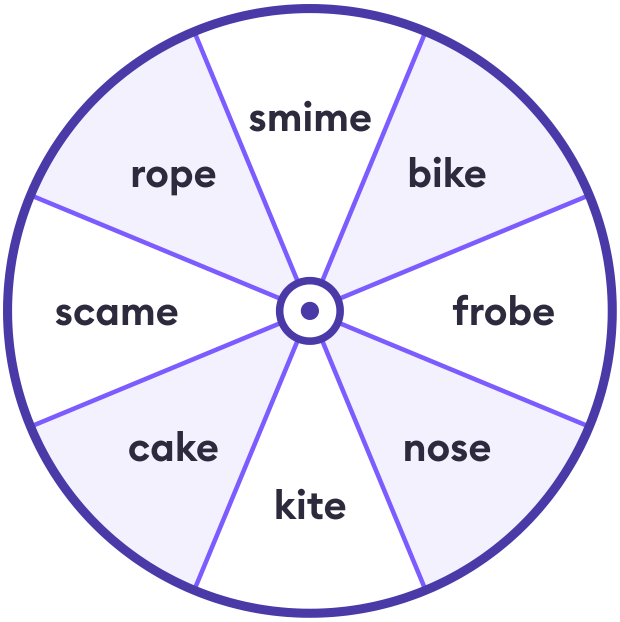
To spin: hold a pencil point on the middle dot, inside a paper clip, and flick the clip.

Magic e · Set 1



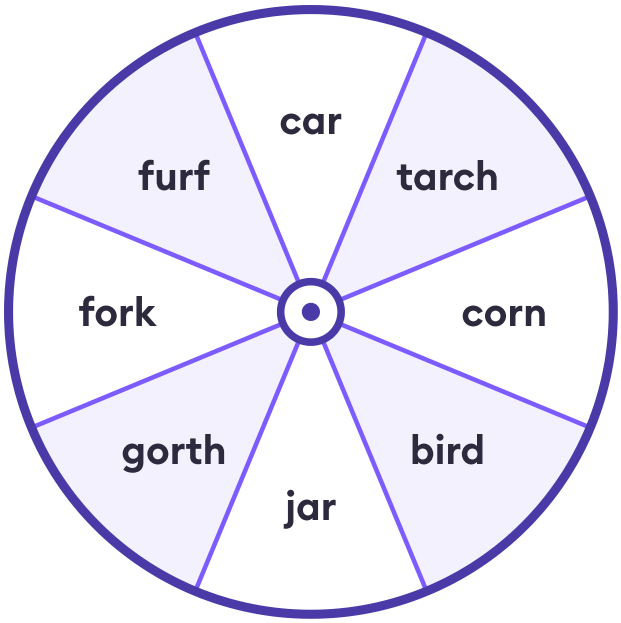
Alien words: smafe (rhymes with safe), hife (rhymes with life), flope (rhymes with hope)

Magic e · Set 2



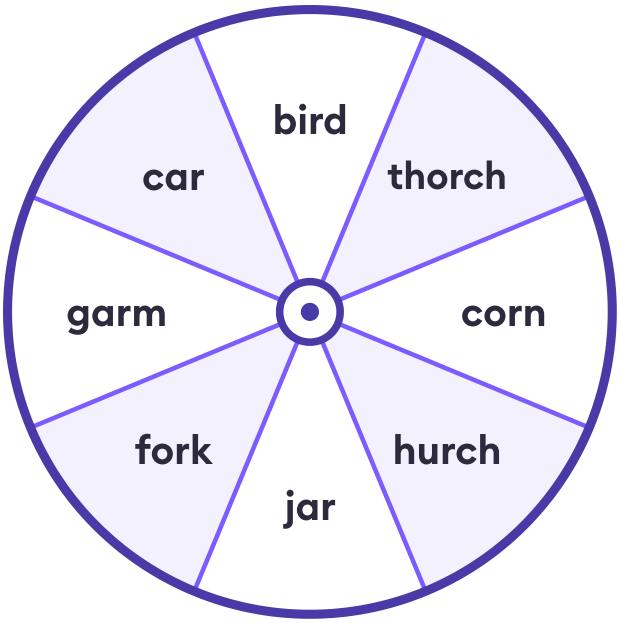
Alien words: smime (rhymes with time), frobe (rhymes with robe), scame (rhymes with name)

Bossy r · Set 1



Alien words: tarch (rhymes with march), gorth (rhymes with forth), furf (rhymes with surf)

Bossy r · Set 2



Alien words: thorch (rhymes with porch), hurch (rhymes with church), garm (rhymes with farm)

Our own made-up words, checked for real words, sound-alikes and slang. Practice words, not test items.

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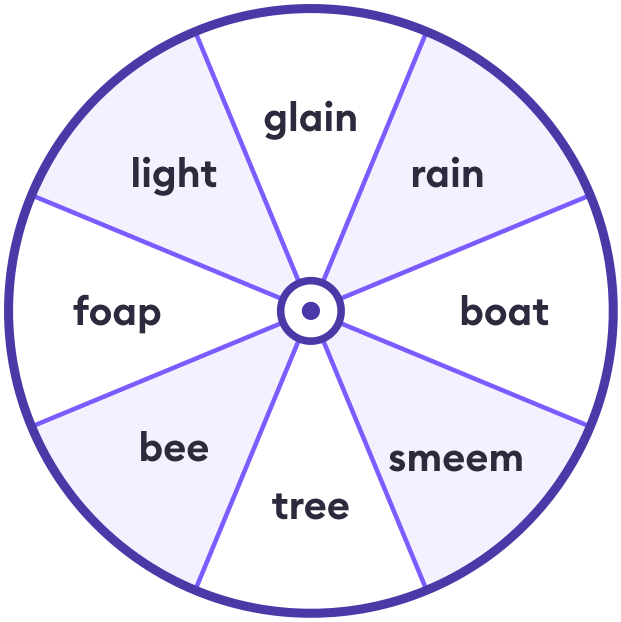
2nd grade and up: vowel teams and two-syllable words

Vowel team wheels use ai, ee, oa and igh, the teams with one main sound. For two-syllable words, read each part, then the whole word.

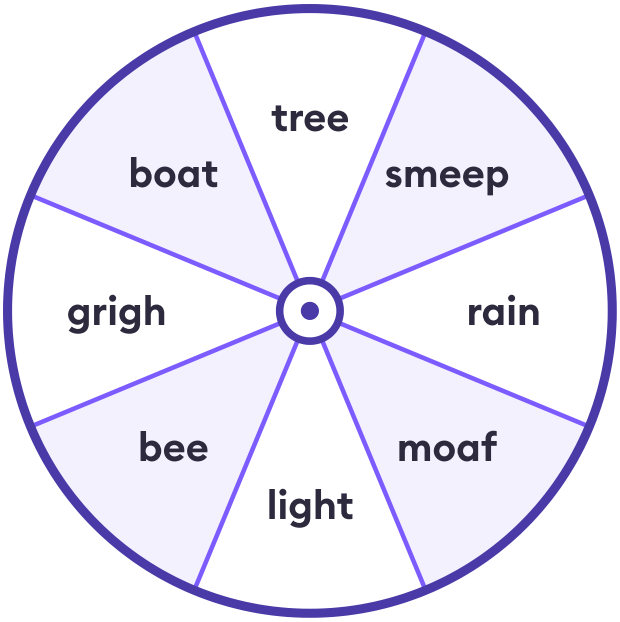
To spin: hold a pencil point on the middle dot, inside a paper clip, and flick the clip.

Vowel teams · Set 1



Alien words: glain (rhymes with gain), smeem (rhymes with seem), foap (rhymes with soap)

Vowel teams · Set 2

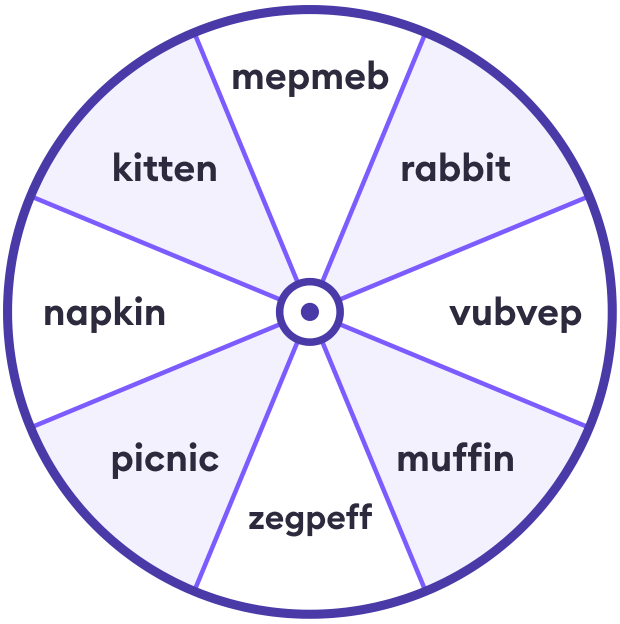


Alien words: smeep (rhymes with keep), moaf (rhymes with loaf), grigh (rhymes with high)

Two-syllable words · Set 1

Alien words: wib-mup, pab-zet, jom-yig

Two-syllable words · Set 2



Alien words: mep-meb, vub-vep, zeg-peff

Our own made-up words, checked for real words, sound-alikes and slang. Practice words, not test items.

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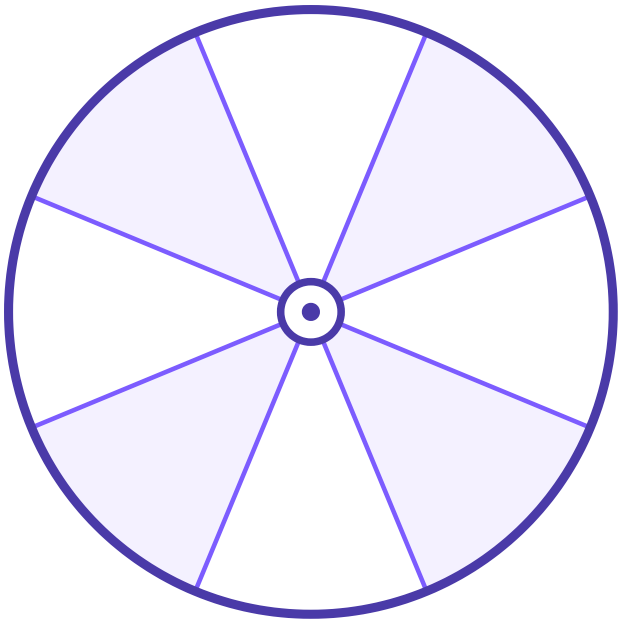
Make your own wheel

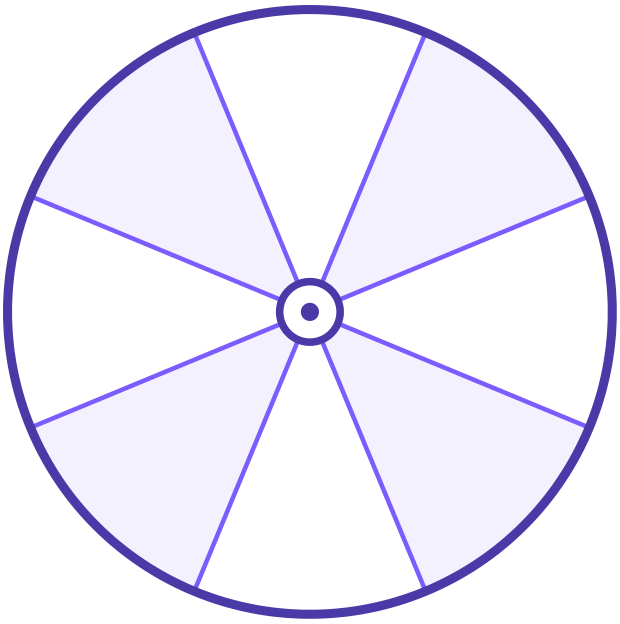
Write 5 real words and 3 alien words from page 8, with sounds your child knows. Keep the alien words apart. Write them upside down on the bottom line, in pencil, so you can change them next week.

Sounds: _____



Alien words (for grown-ups): _____

Sounds: _____



Alien words (for grown-ups): _____

For grown-ups: a quick check, not a drill

- Nobody can guess or remember an alien word, so reading one shows real sounding out.
- Keep it short: about 3 alien words per child in a game. If the clip lands on an alien word your child already read, spin again. Everything else is real words, and that is where practice counts.
- Mixed ages? Give each child their own wheel page. Clip on a line? Spin again.
- Use only wheels with sounds your child has been taught. Swap Set 1 and Set 2 so no wheel gets learned by heart.
- No timer and no score. Sounding out first is fine. Read jix as six? Point at each letter and try again.
- Please don't practice with the sheets your child's school uses for its reading checks. Once a child knows those words, the check stops working.
- Coins and paper clips are small: keep them away from babies and toddlers.

Our own made-up words, checked for real words, sound-alikes and slang. Practice words, not test items.

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Nonsense Words List by Grade

Kindergarten to 2nd grade and up. Every alien word from the wheels, with real words to read next. For grown-ups: pick a row your child has been taught.

Sounds	Set 1	Set 2	Then read (real words)
Kindergarten: short vowels (CVC)			
short a a as in apple	pab sazz	vam zaff	cat hat map bag fan
short i i as in itch	wib jix	yig vib	lid fin zip pin kid
short o o as in octopus	jom vop	vob yoff	hot box fox dot rod
short e e as in egg	mep zet veb peff zess	meb vep zeg yeff zezz	hen red fed yes bed
short u u as in up	mup vuzz yuff vup	vub zuff vuss vuff	sun bug rug hug nut
1st grade Some programs teach bossy r before vowel teams and some after.			
sh, ch, th two letters, one sound	fush chash hith jesh chep	chosh thub fesh chith sath	ship chin moth shop shell
blends two sounds, say both	smim somp gruck nend crad	nunk prud mamp snim twug	frog hand nest sink stop
magic e: a_e, i_e, o_e a_e as in cake	smafe hife flope glame drile	smime frobe scame fline spope	cake bike rope kite nose
bossy r: ar, or, er, ir, ur er, ir and ur sound the same	tarch gorth furf tharsh	thorch hurch garm torth	car fork bird corn jar
2nd grade and up			
vowel teams: ai, ee, oa, igh ai as in rain	glain smeem foap gright	smeep moaf grigh flait	rain tree boat light bee
two syllables each part has a short vowel	wibmup wib-mup pabzet pab-zet jomyig jom-yig vopvib vop-vib	mepmeb mep-meb vubvep vub-vep zegpeff zeg-peff vupveb vup-veb	napkin rabbit picnic muffin kitten

Magic e uses a_e, i_e and o_e only, and the vowel teams are ones with one main sound, so every word has one right answer. Use the most common sound for each letter. A double letter at the end (sazz, peff) makes one sound.

How we checked this list

1. Only spellings English really uses, like ck at the end, and ff, ll, ss, zz after a short vowel.
2. Not a real word or a name.
3. Checked for sound-alikes of real words in US or UK speech.
4. Checked against slang and rude-word lists for US, UK and Australian English, Spanish, French and German.
5. Two sets per stage, so no list gets learned by heart.

How to use it and why: luvinci.app/blog/nonsense-words/

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