

## The Vowel Ladder Sets

The Vowel Ladder games provide a very effective and enjoyable way of developing phonological awareness, vocabulary, phonic knowledge and an understanding of spelling patterns.

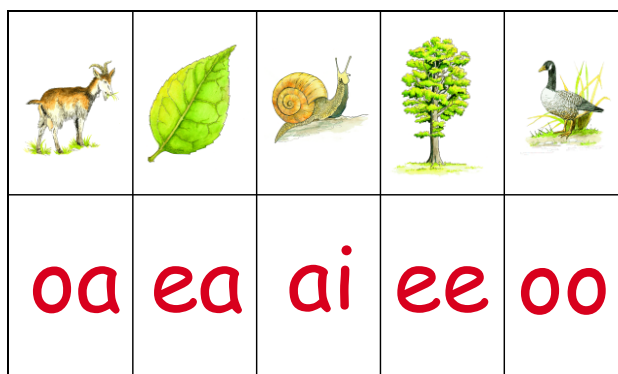
Games are suitable for 1:1 or group use (up to 4 players) and each game will only take 5 – 10 minutes, which makes an enjoyable break in lessons.

If the games are used correctly, they will develop important aspects of phonological awareness (processing the sounds in language). These include segmentation, blending, phonemic awareness and, in particular, vowel sound discrimination. Learners with disabilities find these aspects particularly difficult, but the games can be used as part of normal literacy development.

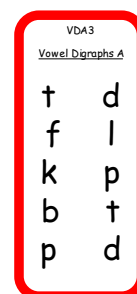
Because of the strong emphasis on phonological development, it is important that the games are played correctly, with constant vocalisation of sounds and words.

### Contents

There are currently two sets of Vowel Ladder games. The sets each contain 3 or 4 games. Each game has a colour-coded baseboard and 12 individual gamecards.



**Baseboard**  
(Vowel Digraphs Level)



**Gamecard**  
(Vowel Digraphs Level)

Vowel digraphs or 'r' modified vowels are sometimes included in more than one game. This is to provide additional reinforcement and to practise different aspects.

## Vowel Ladder Set 1

**Game 1** – Short vowel sounds (2 sets of gamecards covering: CVC, initial and end blends and consonant digraphs)

**Game 2** – Long vowel sounds (silent 'e' pattern)

**Game 3** – Vowel digraphs (oa, ea, ai, ee, oo)

## Vowel Ladder Set 2

**Game 4** - Vowel digraphs and 'er/ir'

**Game 5** - Vowel digraphs and 'ur'

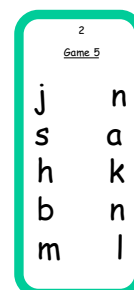
**Game 6** - 'r' modified vowels

**Game 7** – Vowel digraphs, including 'ie/ei'

A die and wipe-clean pen are also provided.

## General

In Game 3 of Vowel Ladder Set 1, each digraph is only intended to be used with one sound option and that sound is illustrated on the main baseboard. If a pupil suggests an alternative sound which works, that's fine, but pupils are not expected to understand all the alternatives at this stage.



Vowel Ladder Set 2 is designed for a higher level and it is expected that learners will be (or be becoming) familiar with different sound options for digraphs: e.g. 'ea' as in 'bread', or 'ea' as in 'seam'. Only one alternative is illustrated on the baseboard, but it is worth pointing out to pupils that other options may be needed in the game. A discussion about other possibilities would be a useful revision activity at this stage.

Please note that not every gamecard uses every digraph or 'r' modified vowel. There are also a number of words which have multiple possibilities.

Bear in mind that one benefit from using the Vowel Ladder games is vocabulary development. It is useful to ensure that pupils can use the words in a sentence.

## Main Game Instructions

Give each player a gamecard, which is placed in front of the player. Place the baseboard where all the players can see it, with the numbered side upwards.

Players take turns to throw the dice, saying the letter sound which goes with that number. Make sure that players give the letter sounds, not letter names.

When the player has correctly given the letter sound, he looks at his gamecard and tries to use that letter or letter pattern to make a word.

Encourage the learner to try all the possibilities, sounding out each individual sound, then blending them to make a word (or non-word). e.g. “p – a – t”, that makes ‘pat’. Yes, that’s a real word.” The letter or letter pattern can then be written into the space to complete the word. You can, of course, choose to vary the rules and allow learners to write a letter into several different words, but it is likely to make the game finish too quickly, so we would suggest allowing a letter to only be written into one word per go.

Make sure that all the players sound out letters/letter patterns and then say the words, even the non-words. For phonological development, it’s just as useful to sound out non-words.

If you make sure that you go through all the steps correctly (vocalising everything) when it’s your turn, then pupils will copy you.

If a player cannot make a word, the next player takes his turn. The winner is the player who completes his card first.

You can vary the requirements of the game by insisting that players complete the words in order. This will take longer.

## **Game Variations**

There are a number of different ways of playing, particularly if you have a wipe-clean gameboard (see our gameboard range).

### **Variation 1**

Use a wipe-clean gameboard from the Gameboard Set. Write the relevant vowels, vowel digraphs or ‘r’ modified vowels into the spaces on the gameboard with a wipe-clean pen.

Give each player an individual Vowel Ladder gamecard, as usual. Players play the board game in the usual way, but when they land on a space, they can then use that sound on their VL gamecard.

### **Variation 2**

There are a number of vowel dice from retailers like Smartkids or Every Educaid. The letter dice can be used instead of using a numbered dice. It is also possible to make your own using cardboard.






### Variation 3

Allow players to have 2 gamecards (if there are only a few players in the game – up to 3). This gives more variety, but obviously takes longer.

### Revision Idea

The sounds used are illustrated on the reverse of the baseboard. It is a good idea to revise these briefly before starting the main game. One handy practice idea with younger learners is:

Place 3 small lollies (M&Ms are ideal!) on each picture illustrating a letter or letter pattern. The teacher says the sound and the learner has to point to the correct letter or letter pattern. If it is correct, the learner gets a lolly. If incorrect, you get it (surprisingly good motivation for the pupil!).

				
a	e	i	o	u

You can vary this by saying a word which incorporates that sound, which is obviously more difficult.

### Steps Software Programme

There is an interactive version of the above games on the Steps software programme. This enables the learner to play against the computer (the 'Steps Guy') or against another learner. The speed is customizable, as well as the level.



Have fun!

*The Learning Staircase Ltd*

P O Box 582

Rangiora 7440

Ph: 0800 701 107

Fax: 0800 000 703

[info@learningstaircase.co.nz](mailto:info@learningstaircase.co.nz)