

# The Third Vowel Rule and VCV

---

CK-12 English

To access the online version of this FlexBook  
click the link below:

[https://www.ck12.org/c/spelling/the-third-vowel-rule/lesson/The-Third-Vowel-Rule-and-VCV/?referrer=concept\\_details](https://www.ck12.org/c/spelling/the-third-vowel-rule/lesson/The-Third-Vowel-Rule-and-VCV/?referrer=concept_details)

To access a customizable version of this book, as well as other interactive content, visit [www.ck12.org](http://www.ck12.org)

CK-12 Foundation is a non-profit organization with a mission to reduce the cost of textbook materials for the K-12 market both in the U.S. and worldwide. Using an open-source, collaborative, and web-based compilation model, CK-12 pioneers and promotes the creation and distribution of high-quality, adaptive online textbooks that can be mixed, modified and printed (i.e., the FlexBook® textbooks).

Copyright © 2022 CK-12 Foundation, [www.ck12.org](http://www.ck12.org)

The names “CK-12” and “CK12” and associated logos and the terms “**FlexBook®**” and “**FlexBook Platform®**” (collectively “CK-12 Marks”) are trademarks and service marks of CK-12 Foundation and are protected by federal, state, and international laws.

Any form of reproduction of this book in any format or medium, in whole or in sections, must be attributed according to our attribution guidelines.

<https://www.ck12info.org/about/attribution-guidelines>

Except as otherwise noted, all CK-12 Content (including CK-12 Curriculum Material) is made available to Users in accordance with the CK-12 Curriculum Materials License

<https://www.ck12info.org/curriculum-materials-license>



Complete terms for use for the CK-12 website can be found at:  
<http://www.ck12info.org/terms-of-use/>

Printed: February 5, 2022 (PST)



**AUTHORS**  
CK-12 English



## The Third Vowel Rule

Third vowel sound from the end of the word will be short if it is stressed

### The Third Vowel Rule and VCV



[Figure1]

The rule that calls for a long vowel in a VCV string can be overruled by the rule that calls for a short vowel in front of the suffix *-ity*. The Suffix *-ity* Rule is part of a larger rule that explains why many other words have VCV strings with short head vowels.

### Examples

In a word like *sanity*, the short 'a' is the third vowel sound from the end of the word:

sanity  
 ↑↑↑  
 3 2 1

There is a very strong tendency for the third vowel sound from the end of a word to be short if it is stressed, even if it is the head vowel in a VCV string.

### Review

Notice the length of the vowels spelled by the letters in bold type in the pairs of words below. Use these words to answer the questions that follow.

|                 |                    |
|-----------------|--------------------|
| <b>n</b> ation  | <b>n</b> ational   |
| <b>c</b> ompete | <b>c</b> ompetitor |
| <b>c</b> rime   | <b>c</b> riminal   |
| <b>n</b> ature  | <b>n</b> atural    |
| <b>r</b> ation  | <b>r</b> ational   |
| <b>g</b> rade   | <b>g</b> radual    |
| <b>r</b> ite    | <b>r</b> itual     |
| <b>s</b> olo    | <b>s</b> olitude   |
| <b>s</b> upreme | <b>s</b> upremacy  |
| <b>n</b> avy    | <b>n</b> avigate   |
| <b>l</b> egal   | <b>l</b> egacy     |

The two words in each of the pairs are closely related. In most cases the word on the right is formed from the word on the left, by adding one or more suffixes. In other cases both words have the same stem. But you should hear a difference in how the vowels in bold letters are pronounced. In each pair one vowel will be long, one will be short. Fill in the blanks.

1. In the left-hand column how many of the vowels in bold letters spell the third vowel sound from the end of the word? \_\_\_\_\_.
2. In the right-hand column how many of the vowels in bold letters spell the third vowel sound from the end of the word? \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Are the vowels in bold letters in the left-hand column long, or are they short?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
4. Are the vowels in bold letters in the right-hand column long, or are they short?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
5. Are the vowels in bold letters in the left-hand column the first vowels in VCV strings?  
\_\_\_\_\_.
6. Are the vowels in bold letters in the right-hand column the first vowels in VCV strings? \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Are the vowels in bold letters in the left column stressed? \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Are the vowels in bold letters in the right column stressed? \_\_\_\_\_.
9. The third vowel sound from the end of a word will often be \_\_\_\_\_ if it is \_\_\_\_\_, even if it is the first vowel in a \_\_\_\_\_ string.
10. Each of the following words contains a vowel that is an example of the Third Vowel Rule at work. Underline the vowels that are examples of the rule and be ready to discuss why they are and the others are not.

|         |            |          |            |
|---------|------------|----------|------------|
| legacy  | positive   | hesitate | assimilate |
| citizen | accelerate | analysis | criticize  |

11. In sixteen of the words below, the vowel in bold type is covered by the Third Vowel Rule. In the other eight words, the vowel in bold type is not covered by the Third Vowel Rule — sometimes because it is not stressed and sometimes because it is not the third vowel sound from the end of the word.

In each word put an accent mark over the vowel that has stress on it, and put a ‘3’ under the vowel letter that spells the third vowel sound from the end of the word. If a word does not have three vowels sounds, do not put a number under it. We have given you a start with *xerógraphy* and *committees*:

|                          |           |            |           |
|--------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|
| xer <b>ó</b> graphy<br>3 | remedy    | accomplish | calculate |
| comm <b>i</b> ttées<br>3 | energy    | president  | scissors  |
| solvable                 | hesitate  | telephone  | venerate  |
| personality              | symphony  | excessive  | satisfy   |
| alternate                | objective | definite   | tolerate  |
| ambassador               | elephant  | affection  | migrant   |

12. Sort the words into the two groups described below. Remember that for one of these vowels to be covered by the Third Vowel Rule, it must have an accent mark over it and a ‘3’ under it. In the Reason column show why the vowels in bold type in the eight words are not covered by the rule: Put “No stress” if they are not stressed or “Not #3” if they are not spelling the third vowel sound from the end of the word:

Words in which the vowel in bold type . . .

| is covered by the Third Vowel Rule |  | is not covered by the Third Vowel Rule | Reason           |
|------------------------------------|--|----------------------------------------|------------------|
| <i>xerography</i>                  |  | <i>committees</i>                      | <i>No stress</i> |
|                                    |  |                                        |                  |
|                                    |  |                                        |                  |
|                                    |  |                                        |                  |
|                                    |  |                                        |                  |
|                                    |  |                                        |                  |
|                                    |  |                                        |                  |
|                                    |  |                                        |                  |

[Figure2]

13. In the sixteen words in which the vowel in bold type is covered by the Third Vowel Rule, eleven of the bold vowels are the first vowel in a VCV string; five are in a VCC string. Sort the sixteen words into these two groups.

Words in which the vowel in bold type is . . .

| the first vowel in a VCV string | in a VCC string |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
|                                 |                 |
|                                 |                 |
|                                 |                 |
|                                 |                 |
|                                 |                 |
|                                 |                 |

[Figure3]

14. Are the vowels in the VCV strings in the eleven words long or short? \_\_\_\_\_

Why? \_\_\_\_\_

## Review (Answers)

1. In the left-hand column how many of the vowels in bold letters spell the third vowel sound from the end of the word? None of them.

2. In the right-hand column how many of the vowels in bold letters spell the third vowel sound from the end of the word? All of them.

3. Are the vowels in bold letters in the left-hand column long, or are they short? Long.

4. Are the vowels in bold letters in the right-hand column long, or are they short? Short

5. Are the vowels in bold letters in the left-hand column the first vowels in VCV strings? Yes

6. Are the vowels in bold letters in the right-hand column the first vowels in VCV strings? Yes

7. Are the vowels in bold letters in the left column stressed? Yes

8. Are the vowels in bold letters in the right column stressed? Yes

9. The third vowel sound from the end of a word will often be short if it is stressed, even if it is the first vowel in a VCV string.

10. Each of the following words contains a vowel that is an example of the Third Vowel Rule at work. Underline the vowels that are examples of the rule and be ready to discuss why they are and the others are not.

r\ eference

p\ ositive

h\ esitate

c\ itizen

acc\ elerate

an\ aly

11.

xerógraphy

3

rémedy

3

accómplish

3

cálcuate

3

commíttees

3

énergy

3

président

3

scíssors

solvable

3

hésitate

3

téléphone

3

vénerate

3

personálicity

3

sýmphony

3

excéssive

3

sátisfy

3

áternate

3

objéctive

3

définite

3

tólerate

3

ambássador

3

élephant

3

afféction

3

mígrant

12.

### Words in which the vowel in bold type ...

| is covered by the Third Vowel Rule |                  | is not covered by the Third Vowel Rule | Reason    |
|------------------------------------|------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------|
| <i>xerography</i>                  | <i>elephant</i>  | <i>committees</i>                      | No stress |
| <i>solvable</i>                    | <i>president</i> | <i>alternate</i>                       | No stress |
| <i>personality</i>                 | <i>telephone</i> | <i>objective</i>                       | Not #3    |
| <i>ambassador</i>                  | <i>definite</i>  | <i>accomplish</i>                      | Not #3    |
| <i>remedy</i>                      | <i>calculate</i> | <i>excessive</i>                       | No Stress |
| <i>energy</i>                      | <i>venerate</i>  | <i>affection</i>                       | Not #3    |
| <i>hesitate</i>                    | <i>satisfy</i>   | <i>scissors</i>                        | Not #3    |
| <i>symphony</i>                    | <i>tolerate</i>  | <i>migrant</i>                         | Not #3    |

13.

**Words in which the vowel in bold type is...**

| the first vowel in a VCV string |                   | in a VCC string    |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|
| person <b>ality</b>             | tele <b>phone</b> | xerog <b>raphy</b> |
| rem <b>edy</b>                  | def <b>inite</b>  | sol <b>vable</b>   |
| en <b>ergy</b>                  | ven <b>erate</b>  | ambass <b>ador</b> |
| hesit <b>ate</b>                | satis <b>fy</b>   | sym <b>phony</b>   |
| eleph <b>ant</b>                | tol <b>erate</b>  | calcul <b>ate</b>  |
| presid <b>ent</b>               |                   |                    |

14. Are the vowels in the VCV strings in the eleven words long or short? Short.  
 Why? They are stressed and they are the third vowel sound from the end of the word, so they are affected by the Third Vowel Rule.

---



# 1.0 REFERENCES

| Image                                                                             | Attributions                    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
|  | <b>Credit:</b> CK-12 Foundation |
|  | <b>License:</b> CC BY-NC        |
|  | <b>License:</b> CC BY-NC        |