

Chapter 3

The Letter I

Long I & Short I

Before You Begin

The letter *i* can produce two different sounds in English:

- **Long I (eye)**
- **Short I (ih)**

Compare these words:

Short I	Long I
sit	site
bit	bite
rid	ride
win	wine

A small change in spelling can completely change the pronunciation of a word. Fortunately, English follows many spelling patterns that make pronunciation much more predictable than most learners realize.

In this chapter, you'll learn the three most useful spelling patterns for predicting whether *i* is pronounced with a **Long I** or **Short I** sound.

1. The Three Most Important Patterns

Before reading a new word, look for one of these spelling patterns.

Pattern	Usually	Examples
i + consonant + silent e	Long I	bike, time, smile
Closed syllable	Short I	fish, gift, milk
-igh, -ind, -ild	Long I	night, find, child

These three patterns appear in thousands of English words. Learning to recognize them will improve both your pronunciation and your reading confidence.

MEMORY TRICK

Instead of asking,
 "Do I know this word?"
 ask,
 "Do I recognize this spelling pattern?"
 Good readers recognize patterns before they recognize individual words.

Pattern 1: Silent E

When *i* is followed by **one consonant** and a **silent e**, the vowel usually says its name.

Examples: bike • ride • time • smile

Pattern 2: Closed Syllables

When a syllable ends with one or more consonants, the *i* usually has a **Short I** sound.

Examples: fish • milk • gift • stick

Pattern 3: Common Long I Letter Patterns

Some letter combinations naturally produce a **Long I** sound.

Pattern	Examples
-igh	light, night, bright
-ind	find, kind, mind
-ild	child, wild, mild

Unlike the Silent E pattern, these words produce a **Long I** sound without a final **e**.

COACH'S TIP

When you see an unfamiliar word, don't guess.
 Pause for a moment and look for one of the three spelling patterns you've just learned. A few seconds of careful observation often leads to the correct pronunciation.

2. Compare the Patterns

Seeing similar words side by side makes the pronunciation patterns easier to remember.

Short I	Long I	Why?
bit	bite	Silent E
fin	fine	Silent E
rid	ride	Silent E
fish	find	Different spelling pattern
hill	child	Different spelling pattern

Notice that a **Long I** sound doesn't always require a silent **e**. That's why recognizing spelling patterns is more reliable than memorizing individual words.

⚠ WATCH OUT!

English has exceptions. Common words such as *give* and *live* (verb) keep a Short I sound even though they end in silent **e**.

Word	Pronunciation
give	Short I
live (verb)	Short I

These words don't follow the usual Silent E pattern. Two other common exceptions are worth remembering: *build* has a Short I sound despite the **-ild** sequence, and *wind* has a Short I in the noun meaning moving air but a Long I in the verb meaning to turn or twist.

3. Think Like a Native Reader

Fluent readers don't memorize every word they encounter. They recognize familiar spelling patterns and use those patterns to predict pronunciation.

When you see a new word, ask yourself:

- Does it end with a silent **e**?
- Is it a closed syllable?
- Does it contain **-igh**, **-ind**, or **-ild**?

These three questions will help you pronounce many unfamiliar words with confidence.

🔍 THINK LIKE A NATIVE READER

Don't try to remember thousands of individual words.

Remember a handful of reliable spelling patterns.

The patterns will help you unlock thousands of words on your own.

4. Practice What You've Learned

Understanding the rules is only the beginning. The more you practice recognizing spelling patterns, the easier pronunciation becomes.

Part A: Long I or Short I?

Write **L** for **Long I** or **S** for **Short I**.

Word	L / S	Word	L / S
bike	_____	milk	_____
fish	_____	child	_____
smile	_____	gift	_____
night	_____	time	_____
think	_____	ride	_____

Part B: Which Pattern?

Identify the spelling pattern that helps you pronounce each word.

Word	Pattern	Word	Pattern
bike	_____	smile	_____
fish	_____	night	_____
kind	_____	child	_____

Patterns: Silent E • Closed Syllable • **-igh** • **-ind** • **-ild**

Part C: Predict Before You Read

Before saying each word aloud, decide whether the **i** should have a **Long I** or **Short I** sound.

time	bridge	kind	milk	ride
bright	little	find	gift	wild

After making your prediction, read each word aloud. Did the spelling pattern help you choose the correct pronunciation?

TRY IT YOURSELF

Write:

- Five words with a Long I sound.
- Five words with a Short I sound.

Next to each word, write the spelling pattern that explains its pronunciation.

5. Chapter Summary

The letter *i* may represent either a **Long I** or **Short I** sound, but the spelling usually provides useful clues.

Remember these three patterns:

Pattern	Usually
Silent E	Long I
Closed Syllable	Short I
-igh, -ind, -ild	Long I

Whenever you encounter a new word, ask yourself:

- ✓ Does it end with a **silent e**?
- ✓ Is it a **closed syllable**?
- ✓ Does it contain **-igh**, **-ind**, or **-ild**?

Using these questions before you pronounce a word will help you make accurate pronunciation choices much more often.

Looking Ahead

In the next chapter, you'll learn the pronunciation patterns for the letter **O** and continue building the pattern-recognition skills that make English reading and speaking easier.