



helps students appreciate grammar as a way of organizing language and making sense of words and sentence structure.

- Expansion of memory. Students have an increasing ability to organize, expand, and develop vocabulary and understand more complex grammar concepts.
- Ability to divorce words from concrete reality. Students start to understand that words can have two or more meanings and that words can be used in unusual contexts. This developing ability is particularly important when studying English grammar, which is complex and has many exceptions.
- Awareness of the many ways in which words can be used. At this stage, students increasingly become interested in playing with words. Many students love hearing, creating, and repeating jokes and enjoy word games such as crossword puzzles.
- Ability to articulate more complex motivations, thoughts, and feelings. Students increasingly try out new ways of expressing themselves with language.
- Ability to understand the **passive voice**, speech or writing that removes the actor from the center of the utterance and demonstrates a level of objectivity. With the ability to use and understand more than one voice, students become capable of understanding more complex grammar and language.

Keeping in mind the students' new cognitive interests and abilities, this section on grammar presents four parts:

- The section starts with two parts that provide brief reviews of vowels and consonants as well as parts of speech, important basic concepts that were introduced at the lower elementary level. The activities associated with these reviews provide opportunities for the students to refresh and develop their understanding of these concepts in interesting ways.
- The third part makes up the primary focus of grammar at the upper elementary level, which involves adding new and more complex information about terms that were introduced in the lower elementary years: nouns, pronouns, articles, adjectives, conjunctions, propositions, verbs, and adverbs. This third part builds on the students' new cognitive interests and abilities, presenting the study of English grammar as a fascinating puzzle to be solved and suggesting ways of inspiring students to explore what makes words and sentences work to create the English language.
- The final part focuses on sentence analysis, moving from analysis of simple sentences, which students began at the lower elementary level, to analysis of sentences that are more complicated. Although it appears at the end of the grammar section, the information about sentence analysis is intended to work in conjunction with the other parts of the grammar section. What the students learn about the parts of speech will inform the students when they carry out sentence analysis, and vice versa.

# REVIEW OF VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

## Background Information

A **vowel** is a speech sound made by allowing breath to flow out of the mouth, without closing any part of the mouth or throat (although the lips may move to create the correct sound, as in creating the sound “o”). Letters of the English alphabet that represent vowels: a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y.

A **consonant** is a speech sound made by partially or completely blocking the flow of air through the mouth (using the lips, teeth, tongue, and palate). Letters of the English alphabet that represent consonants include all the letters that are not vowels. Examples: b, d, k, s.

The letter “y” makes a consonant sound when it appears at the beginning of words (examples: yellow, yacht), and it makes a vowel sound when it appears at the end of words (examples: valley, fairy). This dual role explains why the letter y is considered as only sometimes a vowel.

Once students know that vowels are a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes y, and that consonants make up all the other letters, they can usually easily group the letters of the alphabet into vowels and consonants. However, there are vowels and consonants that sound like each other in certain words in English. Students speaking or hearing these vowels and consonants can

sometimes find it difficult to distinguish between them, and that makes these vowels and consonants especially challenging as well as interesting. Here are some examples:

- What happens when what looks like a vowel does not sound like a vowel? For example, the u in “unicorn” makes a consonant sound and is usually preceded by “a,” not “an,” in the English language — people say “a unicorn,” not “an unicorn.” An even more interesting example is the word “ununium” (an artificially produced radioactive element, pronounced yoon-yoon-yoo-nee-um, with the accent on the “yoo”). In addition, the o in “one,” “ouananiche” (a type of landlocked salmon, pronounced wan-an-ish, with the emphasis on the “ish”), and “Ouija” (a trademark for a spiritual and telepathic game board, pronounced wee-jee, with the emphasis on the “wee”), makes a consonant sound. The “w” sound in ouananiche and Ouija is actually made by the combination of the letters o and u.
- What happens when what looks like a consonant does not sound like a consonant? For example, the h in “hour” is silent, so the word “hour” begins with a vowel sound and is usually preceded by “an,” not “a,” in the English language — people say “an hour,” not “a hour.” Other examples: honorary, honesty.

## ACTIVITY 1

# Reviewing Vowels and Consonants

## Purpose

To review vowels and consonants.

## Material

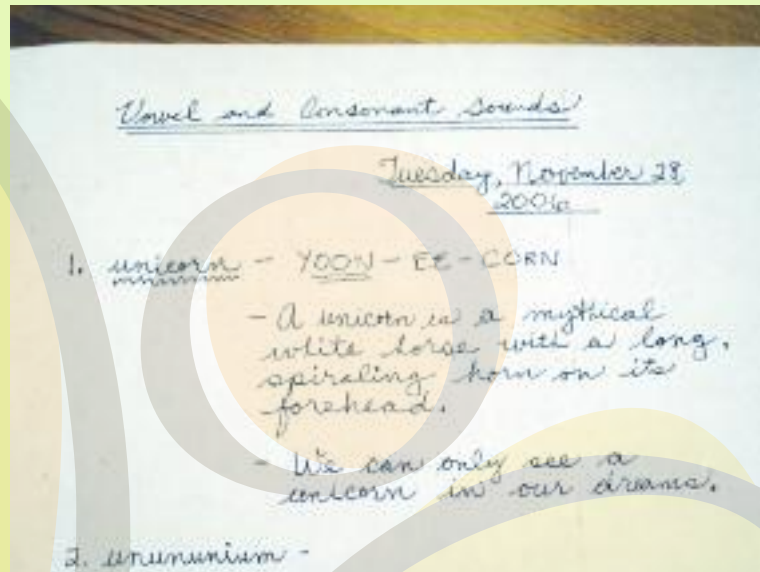
Whiteboard and marker.

Dictionary.

Language Arts journals and pencils.

## Presentation

- Most Montessori teachers present this concept in Year 4 and review in Year 5.
- Announce that the students will have the opportunity to discover interesting vowels and consonants that do not act like vowels and consonants.
- Briefly review what is meant by vowels and consonants, asking the students to provide examples of each.
- Explain that there are words that look like they start with a vowel but sound like they start with a consonant sound and words that look like they start with a consonant but sound like they start with a vowel.
- Write four words on the whiteboard: unicorn, ununinium, ouananiche, and Ouija. Demonstrate the dictionary, and invite the students to look up each word to find its pronunciation. As the students find each word, ask them to read it



aloud. Together, practice pronouncing these words correctly.

- Explain that these words are examples of what happens when what looks like a vowel does not sound like a vowel. Point out that when words like these make a consonant sound, they are usually preceded by “a,” not “an,” in the English language — for example, someone says, “I wish I had seen a unicorn,” not “I wish I had seen an unicorn.”
- Invite the students to use each of the words in a sentence, each word preceded by “a.”
- Write three more words on the whiteboard: hour, honorary, and honesty. Demonstrate the dictionary, and invite the students to look up each word to find its pronunciation. After the students find



each word, ask them to read it aloud. Together, practice pronouncing these words correctly.

- Explain that although this does not happen often in the English language, these words are examples of what happens when what looks like a consonant does not sound like a consonant. Point out that when words like these make a vowel sound, they are usually preceded by “an,” not “a,” in the English language — for example, someone says, “I will be there in an hour,” not “I will be there in a hour.”
- Invite the students to use each of the words in a sentence, each word preceded by “an.”
- Write four more words on the whiteboard: yellow, yacht, valley, dairy. Explain that the letter “y” makes a consonant sound when it appears at the beginning of words (yellow, yacht), and it makes a vowel sound when it appears at the end of words (valley, dairy).
- Point out that this dual role explains why the letter “y” is considered as only “sometimes” a vowel. Invite the students to suggest several other words that start or end with “y,” use each word in a sentence, and say whether the “y” is making a vowel sound or a consonant sound in the sentence.

- Ask the students to use their journals to list each of the 11 words discussed, indicate each word’s pronunciation, explain its meaning, and use the word preceded correctly by “a” or “an” in a sentence, referring to the dictionary as needed.

## Extensions

- Make two lists: one list of words that start with a vowel that sounds like a vowel and one list of words that start with a vowel that sounds like a consonant. Refer to a dictionary to find five or more new examples of each kind of word, and place the word in the appropriate column. Add to the list whenever a new word is discovered.
- Make two lists: one list of words that start with a consonant that sounds like a consonant and one list of words that start with a consonant that sounds like a vowel. Refer to a dictionary to find five or more new examples of each kind of word, and place the word in the appropriate column. Add to the list whenever a new word is discovered.
- Make a list of 20 words that start or end with “y,” and use each word in a sentence.