Short A CVC Word List

59 words with the short a sound /ae/ as in cat, grouped into 11 word families.

Every word on this page has the same shape: consonant, short a, consonant. Because each letter says its usual sound, a child who knows the letter sounds can decode all 59 of these words without guessing.

Teaching order: work through one family at a time, and within a family change only the first sound. Start with the largest families below (-ab and -ack) because they give the most practice, then move to the one-word families once the pattern is secure.

-ab (2)

lab tab

-ack (8)

back hack jack lack pack rack sack tack

-ad (7)

bad dad lad mad pad rad sad

-ag (4)

bag sag tag wag

-am (4)

ham jam ram yam

-an (6)

fan man pan ran tan van

-ap (9)

cap gap lap map nap rap sap tap zap

-ash (6)

bash cash dash hash lash rash

-ass (4)

bass lass mass pass

-at (7)

bat cat fat hat pat rat sat

-ax (2)

tax wax

Teach it in four steps

1. Review the short a sound on its own, until it is secure.
2. Blend the vowel with the ending (-at, -en, -ig...) and say it as one chunk.
3. Add the first sound to build the whole word (c-at = cat).
4. Read the word in a short sentence.

More: cvc-words.com/short-a-cvc-words.html has pictures, audio and a teaching guide for this vowel.