

## *Grammar and Mechanics*

### *Letters of the Alphabet: Vowels and Consonants*

The collection of all the letters in English is called “the alphabet.” It is made up of twenty-six (26) letters. Do not refer to any individual letter as “an alphabet.” This is incorrect, because only the collection of ALL the letters taken together is referred to as “the alphabet.” So the English language has only one alphabet which is made up of twenty-six (26) letters.

The English alphabet contains two types of letters: vowels and consonants. Here is a list of which letters are which.

#### Vowels (6)

A  
E  
I  
O  
U  
Y (sometimes)

#### Consonants (20)

B C D F  
G H J K  
L M N P  
Q R S T  
V W X Z

Vowels are very important because they help us pronounce a word. In fact, in the English language, every word must have at least one vowel in it, or else it would be unpronounceable. For example, TBL is not only unpronounceable, but it also means absolutely nothing. However, if we add two vowels (an A and an E), then it becomes the English word TABLE. That is why the letter Y must “sometimes” be considered a vowel, because of words like *try* and *cry*. In words like these, the letter y often has the sound of the vowel I, as in the word *hide* or *ride*.

Consonants are used mainly as sounds which begin words and end words. In other words, consonants are usually used at the beginning of words, in the middle of words, or at the end of words. In between these consonants, there are vowels. When we put the consonants and vowels together, they make it possible for us to pronounce the word.

Here are some interesting facts about some of the letters in our alphabet:

1. Two letters of the alphabet can also be entire words by themselves: A and I, as in this example: Yesterday *I* saw *a* bird.
2. In any English word, the letter *q* must always be followed immediately by the letter *u*.

Examples: *quick, quit, quiet, quite, quarry, unique, quest, question, quench*

3. Most words in English begin with the letter S. The S section is always the largest in any English dictionary.
4. The most often used vowel in English words is E.
5. The letter X begins the least amount of English words. The X section in the dictionary is always the shortest section.