

Vowels: The Good, the Bad, and the Confusing

in Sherman's Circular Gallifreyan

A Companion Walkthrough by The SpellKeeper

Introduction

This walkthrough was designed to be a companion piece to the official guide. It does not replace it, and will probably be very confusing if you haven't read it. Along with providing expanded explanations and visual examples, this walkthrough will cover some rules that have been generally accepted by the community, despite not being in the official guide.

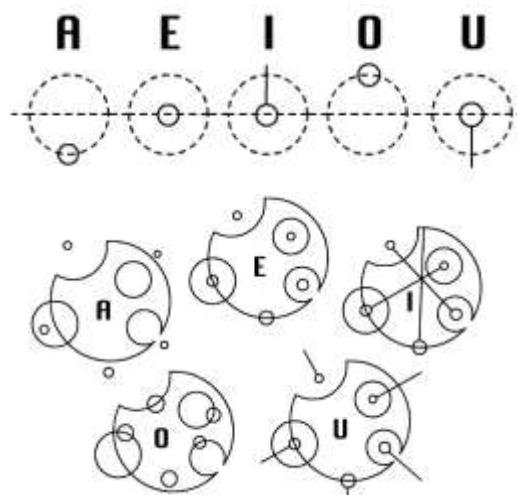
Unofficial Rules

Any rules or variations that are not in the official guide but (probably) won't get you lynched by your fellow scribes will be off-set in a side bar like this one. While these techniques are accepted by some—if not most—they may not be recognized by everyone that reads your work. *Use at your own risk.*

1. Vowel Basics

The figure to the right should be familiar, it's the vowel diagram from the official guide. The straight line through the middle represents the word circle when a vowel is by itself. Above the line is the inside of the word circle, below the line is outside. The dotted circle on each vowel represents a consonant that the vowel may be attached to.

By itself, it can be confusing and a little misleading, but we also have the second diagram to go with it. It shows each vowel by itself and attached to each base consonant. Keep in mind that vowels never *have* to be attached to a preceding consonant. While there are many cases when they do have to be written separately, it is always an option to do so.



2. The Individual Vowels

Here each vowel will be covered in detail. The diagrams for each will show multiple copies of the vowel attached to single letters. Each is an acceptable position for the vowel on that letter, but should not be used together. If you need to double a vowel (such as in "pool") just double the circle as you would when doubling a consonant. If you have 'E's, 'I's, and/or 'U's together (such as in "friend") you can combine them the same way as combining consonants with the same stem, making the each sequential vowel thicker than the previous. Since the 'A' and 'O' have unique positions, they cannot be combined with other vowels.

2.1. "A"

The 'A' is the only letter that is written entirely outside of the word circle. It is normally drawn "free floating" near the word (green), but when words are crowded together, it may be necessary to attach it to the edge of the word (blue). When written by itself – not attached to a consonant – its position in the word is determined by its closest point to the word circle. When attached to a J-stem letter (yellow), the centers of the word, consonant, and 'A' should all be in a straight line. When attached to a B-stem or T-stem letter (red), the 'A' needs to be outside of where the word circle would be if it were not interrupted by the consonant. When attached to a Th-stem letter, the 'A' can be inside, outside, or on the letter, as long as it remains outside of the word circle.



2.2. “E”

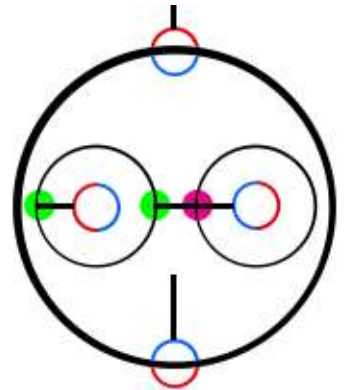
When the ‘E’ is by itself (green), it is written on the edge of the word circle, like a small ‘Th’. This is why it is important to keep it noticeably smaller than nearby consonants. When attached to a consonant, the ‘E’ goes inside the letter; it does not need to be centered in the letter. For B-stem letters (yellow), this is simple. The same can be said for J-stem letters (blue), but it is important to keep it small or else it turns the consonant into a double letter. For T-stem and Th-stem letters (purple), the ‘E’ needs to be both inside the letter and inside or on the word circle.



2.3. “I” and “U”

The positioning of ‘I’s and ‘U’s is the same as for ‘E’s, but now they have a line on them. The difference between the ‘I’ and ‘U’ is what direction the line points. On an ‘I’ the line needs to point into the word circle, while the ‘U’s line points out of or away from the word circle. The nonsense word to the right reads “ijiu pu”. When a line connects to the blue side of the circle, it makes an ‘I’, and the red side makes a ‘U’.

Remember that lines passing through other letters don’t change them (the pink spot; this line still leaves the consonant a ‘J’). Lines from a vowel inside a consonant will still affect that letter, same as lines from the outside (green dots).



For more on what to do with these lines, see “All About Lines”

Direction vs. Contact Point

There has been some debate as to the spirit of this rule when it comes to more decorative pieces. If it is necessary for your design, you may be able to convince people to accept that a line connected to the red side of a vowel makes it a ‘U’, even if the line crosses through the letter and points into the word (or vice versa). It is more common that such a situation would be read as an ‘I’ due to the direction of the line.

2.4. “O”

When the ‘O’ is by itself (green), it is written just inside the word circle, like a small ‘J’. This is why it is important to keep it noticeably smaller than nearby consonants. When attached to a consonant, the ‘O’ goes on the edge of the letter. For J-stem, B-stem, and T-stem letters (yellow), this is simple. For Th-stem letters (purple), the ‘O’ needs to be both on the edge of the letter and inside the word circle.



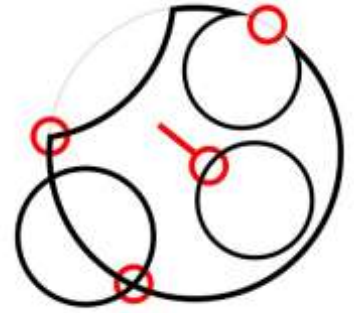
3. Bad Placements

There are many places that vowels can go, and getting them wrong usually means that it gets read as a different vowel. However, there are a few positions that just aren't possible by any vowel.

On the edge of a letter, with a line: A common mistake is to place an 'I' or 'U' on the edge of a letter rather than inside it. This results in an 'O' with a line, and that's no good.

In the gap of a B-stem: This is a common misplacement for an 'A'. Since it's not outside of the word circle, it can't be an 'A'; it's on the word circle which wants it to be an 'E' but also on the letter circle which wants it to be an 'O'.

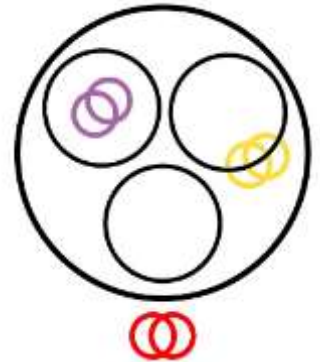
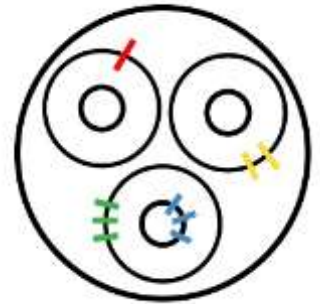
On the corner of a T-stem or Th-stem: This one's not trying to be an 'A', but is still torn between being an 'E' or an 'O'.



4. Diacritics

Some vowels need to be modified by adding a diacritic mark. *Accent grave* marks (è) are represented with three hash-marks across the edge of either the vowel itself (blue) or the letter the vowel is attached to (green). An *umlaut* (ë) is the same but with only two hash-marks (yellow). An *accent acute* mark (é) is only one hash-mark (red).

Some unique vowels are written as two interlocking circles in place of a similar vowel. An "ã" takes the place of an 'A' (red), a "ø" takes the place of an 'O' (yellow), and an "Æ" takes the place of an 'E' (purple). While shown here attached to 'J's, they can be written separate just like any other vowel.



For other accent marks and unique characters, see "Konsonants or Consonants"