

High School Word Ladder Lesson: *Vowel-Consonant-e (VCE)*

Pattern

Focus Phonics Skill: Long vowels with silent **e** (also called "magic e")

Grade Level: 9–12 (Struggling Readers)

Teacher Instructional Guide

1. Objective

Students will:

- Identify and manipulate sounds in words following the Vowel-Consonant-e (VCE) pattern.
- Develop decoding and encoding strategies using familiar and academic vocabulary.
- Increase phonemic awareness and fluency.

2. Materials

- Copies of the word ladder (digital or printed)
- Whiteboard or projector for modeling
- Student notebooks or graphic organizers
- Optional: Vocabulary cards for discussion

Word Ladder: From “tap” to “tape”

1. tap
2. tape (Add silent e to change the vowel sound)
3. gape (Change the first letter)
4. game (Change the second letter)
5. fame (Change the first letter)
6. flame (Add a consonant blend)
7. frame (Change the first consonant)
8. phrase (Change initial blend, introduce digraph)

Step-by-Step Lesson Plan (30–40 minutes)

◆ Warm-Up (5–7 min)

- Write the word “tap” on the board.
- Ask students what sound the vowel makes.
- Then write “tape.” Discuss how the vowel sound changes.
- Briefly explain the VCE pattern: “The silent e makes the vowel say its name.”

◆ Guided Word Ladder (15–20 min)

- Work through the ladder together, one word at a time.
- After each step, ask:
 - *What changed?* (letter/sound)
 - *What does this word mean?*
 - *Can you use it in a sentence?*
- Highlight word parts: e.g., blends in **flame**, digraph in **phrase**.
- Use visuals or definitions for unfamiliar words if needed.

◆ Student Practice (10 min)

- Have students build their own mini word ladders using a new VCE word (e.g., *fine*, *rate*, or *hope*).
- Encourage peer sharing and explanations.

Extensions & Differentiation

Vocabulary Building

- Discuss nuanced meanings: *flame* (literal vs metaphorical), *frame* (noun vs verb), *phrase* (grammar/linguistics).
- Add Greek/Latin root discussion for “phrase” (from Greek *phrazein*, to tell).

Writing Integration

- Have students write a short story or paragraph using 3–5 words from the ladder.
- Challenge: Can they write it in sequence?

Phonics Anchor

- Create a class anchor chart of common VCE patterns (a_e, i_e, o_e, etc.)

Assessment & Reflection

- **Formative check:** Can students articulate how the VCE pattern affects pronunciation?
- **Exit ticket idea:** “Write a VCE word and explain how the silent e changes its sound.”

Teacher Tips

- Use tone and pacing that honors their age. Avoid over-simplifying language.
- Validate students' observations and interpretations — even phonics can connect to real-world meaning and self-expression.

- Use multisensory techniques: sound boxes, color-coding vowels, or even tapping out syllables if needed.