Vocalic R Word List



Vocalic R is what happens when R swallows the vowel in front of it. The tongue makes the same bunched or retroflex shape as consonant R, but it holds - there is no vowel afterward to glide into. Each r-controlled vowel starts from a slightly different jaw and lip position, which is why a child can nail "car" and still miss "chair."

SOUND	TYPICAL AGE	TYPE
/er/ /ar/ /awr/ /er/ /ir/ /air/	By age 5-7	Voiced R-controlled vowels

PRACTICE TIP

Always probe all six r-vowels before you pick a target. Most kids have one or two that are already close to correct - start there, get a stable production, then generalize outward to the others.

/r/ errors are among the most common reasons school-age children are seen for speech sounds. Work one r-family at a time rather than "R" as a whole.

Initial Position (28 words)

The sound is at the beginning of the word.


earth


arch


arm


earring


armchair


armor


artist


earmuff

These and 5 more pictured words are in the Vocalic R picture cards.

1 Syllable

4 words

earth	arch	arm	art

2 Syllables

18 words

early	organ	armor	earthquake	orchard
earring	argue	artist	earthworm	orange
orbit	arcade	artwork	errand	
order	armchair	earmuff	error	

3 Syllables

4 words

area	argument	orchestra	ornament

4 Syllables

2 words

ordinary
oregano

High-frequency initial words

Everyday words rather than picture-card words - which is why most lists leave them out. A child already says these hundreds of times a day, so they carry more carryover value than any noun above. Target them in conversation, not in drill.

are, or, around

Medial Position (125 words)

The sound is in the middle of the word.


church


shirt


fork


harp


cart


heart


farm


yard

These and 76 more pictured words are in the Vocalic R picture cards.

1 Syllable

35 words

church	start	card	fern	shorts
shirt	guard	yarn	purse	sport
fork	heart	skirt	dirt	short
tarp	farm	first	girl	fort
bark	yard	herd	beard	storm
harp	tart	turn	weird	thorn
cart	dark	learn	board	port

2 Syllables

76 words

birthday	carpet	garbage	popcorn	parents
thirty	target	garlic	quarter	sheriff
turtle	airport	harbor	scarlet	barefoot
garden	barnyard	hurdle	shortcake	parrot
forty	birdhouse	journal	sparkle	cherry
corner	burner	journey	squirrel	caring
purple	cartoon	learner	starfish	tired
market	charcoal	marble	sturdy	mirror
morning	charming	marching	thermos	hero
circle	circus	mermaid	thirteen	story
turkey	cornbread	nervous	turban	horseshoe
party	cornfield	northern	turnip	forest
thirsty	curly	partner	warning	
hornet	dessert	perfect	whirlpool	
curtain	dirty	perfume	worker	
surprise	farmer	person	alarm	

3 Syllables

11 words

barbecue	gardener	submarine	pyramid
carnival	porcupine	thunderstorm	tornado
carpenter	silverware	cereal	

4 Syllables

3 words

ordinary	purple crayon	supermarket

High-frequency medial words

Everyday words rather than picture-card words - which is why most lists leave them out. A child already says these hundreds of times a day, so they carry more carryover value than any noun above. Target them in conversation, not in drill.

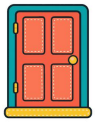
very, sorry, girl, understand, yourself, tomorrow, turn, working, different, started, sort, perhaps, scared, others, worked, careful, wonderful, turned, yesterday, tired, worse, birthday, certainly, forgot, afternoon, starting, third, dirty, herself, ourselves

Final Position (95 words)

The sound is at the end of the word.


car


star


door


four


chair


bear


deer


cheer

These and 38 more pictured words are in the Vocalic R picture cards.

1 Syllable

56 words

car	bore	jar	spare	tar
star	care	near	square	fur
door	cheer	pair	stair	stir
four	clear	pear	store	dare
chair	core	pier	their	stare
bear	dear	pour	there	steer
deer	fair	rear	wear	gear
more	far	roar	were	chore
floor	fear	score	where	
her	flare	shore	year	
sir	for	snore	your	
bar	hair	soar	share	

2 Syllables

32 words

fire	feather	doctor	wire	never
tire	letter	explore	zipper	spider
teacher	dollar	father	super	dinner
water	actor	guitar	before	dryer
butter	appear	hour	compare	
tiger	collar	mirror	indoor	
flower	color	sugar	whisper	

3 Syllables

6 words

anywhere	dinosaur	together
umpire	volunteer	campfire

4 Syllables

1 word

elevator

High-frequency final words

Everyday words rather than picture-card words - which is why most lists leave them out. A child already says these hundreds of times a day, so they carry more carryover value than any noun above. Target them in conversation, not in drill.

for, your, there, where, were, our, their, before, after, ever, another, remember, together, brother, year, under, four, sister, either, hour, somewhere, anywhere, teacher, everywhere, color, nowhere, wore

AR /ar/ (64 words)

Jaw drops open, then the tongue pulls back. Often the easiest r-family.


car


star

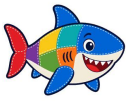

jar


farm


arm


barn


park


shark

These and 26 more pictured words are in the Vocalic R picture cards.

1 Syllable

33 words

car	park	art	far	smart
star	shark	bar	hard	spark
jar	yard	bark	large	start
farm	harp	cart	marsh	tar
arm	march	carve	part	tart
barn	dark	charm	scarf	
card	arch	chart	sharp	

2 Syllables

30 words

guitar	argue	cartoon	market	party
marker	armor	charcoal	marble	scarlet
garden	artist	darling	pardon	sparkle
carpet	barber	garlic	parka	starfish
target	barnyard	harbor	parking	tardy
alarm	carton	harvest	parsley	yardstick

3 Syllables

1 word

apartment

OR /awr/ (64 words)

Lips start rounded for "or," then the tongue bunches. Watch that the round does not turn it into /w/.



These and 22 more pictured words are in the Vocalic R picture cards.

1 Syllable

32 words

corn	short	chore	porch	sort
horse	sport	cord	port	torn
fork	torch	core	pour	wore
door	storm	cork	roar	worn
four	thorn	floor	score	
store	board	fort	shore	
more	born	horn	snore	

2 Syllables

27 words

popcorn	before	corny	ignore	storm cloud
morning	boring	explore	order	story
forty	chorus	forklift	organ	thorn bush
orange	cornbread	forward	quarter	
acorn	corner	hornet	seashore	
forest	cornfield	horseshoe	shortcake	

3 Syllables

4 words

tornado	horrible	morning star	ornament

4 Syllables

1 word

ordinary

AIR /er/ (52 words)

Starts wide and smiley like "eh," then pulls back. Kids often say "chay-uh."

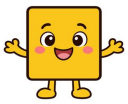

chair


bear


hair


pear


stairs


square


share


airplane

These and 7 more pictured words are in the Vocalic R picture cards.

1 Syllable

22 words

chair	square	scared	pair	there
bear	share	bare	rare	where
hair	care	dare	spare	
pear	fair	flare	stare	
stairs	wear	glare	their	

2 Syllables

29 words

airplane	staircase	haircut	square dance	airbag
fairy	barely	marry	stairway	airline
cherry	beware	merry	unfair	airmail
berry	careless	midair	upstairs	hairdo
parent	compare	prepare	wearing	hairpin
careful	hairbrush	repair	airport	

3 Syllables

1 word

cherry pie

EAR /ir/ (38 words)

Starts high and tight like "ee," then pulls back into R.


deer


beard


cheer


gear


pier


earring


mirror


reindeer

These and 1 more pictured words are in the Vocalic R picture cards.

1 Syllable

15 words

deer	beard	fear	gear	smear
near	cheer	steer	pier	sphere
year	clear	fierce	rear	weird

2 Syllables

14 words

earring	zero	cashier	earphone	series
mirror	appear	cheerful	nearby	spearmint
hero	reindeer	clearly	nearly	

3 Syllables

9 words

cereal	cheerleader	engineer	souvenir	volunteer
serious	disappear	pioneer	steering wheel	

ER /er/ (80 words)

The most common vocalic R in English. Shows up in every -er ending.


bird


girl


shirt


nurse


church


worm


dirt


earth

These and 40 more pictured words are in the Vocalic R picture cards.

1 Syllable

32 words

her	chirp	herd	squirt	word
bird	curl	learn	stir	work
girl	dirt	perch	surf	world
shirt	earth	purse	thirst	worse
nurse	fern	search	turn	
church	first	serve	were	
worm	fur	skirt	whirl	

2 Syllables

47 words

turtle	spider	circus	ladder	sister
purple	dollar	curtain	mother	sugar
thirty	summer	dessert	number	thirteen
teacher	actor	dirty	over	thunder
water	after	doctor	paper	turkey
butter	answer	early	perfect	under
tiger	birthday	eager	person	winter
flower	burger	finger	river	
feather	certain	hamster	rubber	
letter	circle	journey	silver	

3 Syllables

1 word

hamburger

IRE /air/ (1 words)

A diphthong plus R - the jaw drops, glides up, then the tongue pulls back.

fireworks

Generalization

Word lists get a sound into a child's mouth. Generalization is what gets it into their life. These are activities where the target words come up on their own, so nobody has to be talked into practicing.

Play-based ideas for young children

Farm and barn play

Set up a barn with animals. AR words dominate: barn, farm, car, yard.

Words that come up: barn, farm, car, yard, star, arm, dark, park, more, door, corn, horse, bear, chair

Parking lot

Park toy cars in numbered spaces. Drive them far, near and around.

Words that come up: car, park, far, are, star, door, more, four, corner, garage, over, under, here, there

Teddy bear picnic

A picnic with bears on a chair. AIR words come free.

Words that come up: bear, chair, share, care, hair, there, where, pear, stairs, more, four, teddy bear, over, here

Conversation and verbal games for older kids

Compare and contrast

Compare two things in detail. Comparatives all end in -er: bigger, smaller, harder, faster.

Where were you

Talk about where you were and what you were doing. "Where," "were," "there" and "here" are among the highest-frequency vocalic R words in English.

Career day

Describe jobs and what each worker does. Teacher, doctor, farmer, firefighter, engineer - job names are an -er goldmine.