

Thai Tone Rules Made Easy

These resources use symbols and pictures as code for the linguistic terminology you can find in text books or on the internet. The symbols relate to the proper terms, but should help you to internalize these rules much more quickly and easily, simply by providing shorthand images.

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Before you start, you should already know some basics about the Thai alphabet. You should know all 44 consonants (as well as their pronunciation when they are at the end of a word) and all of the vowels (as well as their lengths). You should also know how to pronounce each of the 5 tones. All of that information has been covered many times elsewhere, so it is not repeated here. These resources will be most useful for people who already understand the theory behind the tones, but want to be able to read tones automatically and quickly.




(You may share these resources but please credit me: Maia Mounsher)

KEY TO THE SYMBOLS



STONE MARKS

	'Mai Dtree'	(always a high tone, so no symbol is required)
	'Mai Judtawah'	(always a rising tone, so no symbol is required)
	'Mai Toh' (My toe)	These two tone marks are very common. It's useful to know their names, so they are represented in the posters as a toe and an egg - two English words which sound similar to their names in Thai.
	'My Ayk' (My egg)	



CONSONANT CLASS

	Diamond (High Class)	To make distinctions between high/mid/low <u>class</u> and high/mid/low <u>tone</u> , different objects represent the consonant classes. Here, high class is represented by an expensive object (a diamond), mid class by a mid-range object (a car) and low class by a cheap object (a hat). This way, you can still remember the technical terms, by relating them to the 'value' of the objects. (Now you can stop trying to memorize boring and confusing equations like "low class initial consonant + dead syllable + long vowel = falling tone" and learn them instead by using posters as visual reminders)
	Car (Mid Class)	
	Hat (Low Class)	

LIVE/DEAD SYLLABLE

	Live syllable	The smiley face represents a live syllable. The dead face represents a dead syllable.
	Dead syllable	

VOWEL LENGTH

	Short Vowel	I have represented the short vowel as a narrow, dead head and the long vowel as a wide, dead head. In the tests (p13-16) vowel length is represented by long and short arrows. You will only need to know the vowel length for 1 out of the 15 tone rules, but it's still worth remembering the vowel lengths. (Similar sounding words with different vowel lengths can have completely different meanings, regardless of tone).
	Long Vowel	

TONES

	Mid		Low		Falling		High		Rising
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Rather than get confused between 'high, mid and low' class, and 'high mid and low' tone, I choose to represent the consonant classes like this:

Diamond

(High Class)



There are only 11

Car

(Mid Class)



There are only 9

Hat

(Low Class)



If you memorize the two groups above, it will then be easy to remember that all the other consonants will be 'hats' (low class)



Live Syllables

Live syllables are ones which **end** in 'sonorants', also known as 'singing sounds' – sounds that you can drag out for a long time:

Consonants* (ng n m y w sounds)

งนมยว

OR a long vowel



Dead Syllables

Dead syllables are ones which **end** in 'stops', sounds that you can't drag out.

Consonants* (k p t sounds)

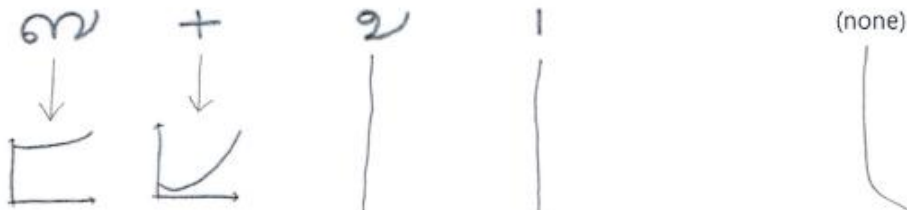
กจตตบป

OR a short vowel

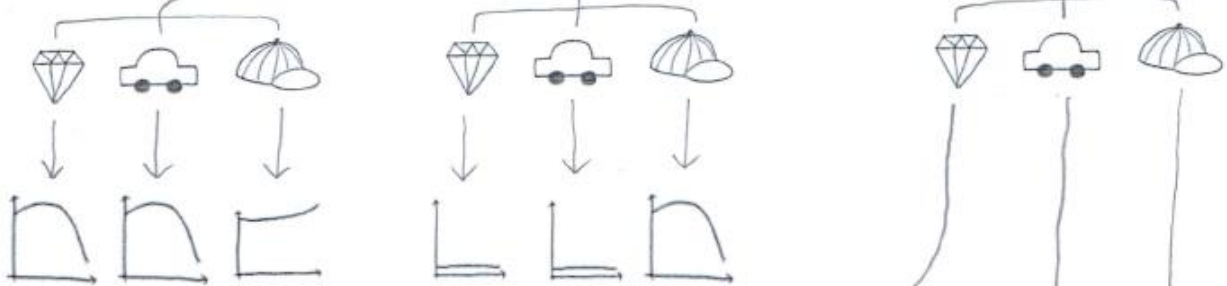
*In Thai many consonants make a different depending on their position in a word. At the end of a word an 'r' becomes an 'n', a 'j' becomes a 't' and so on.

Thai Tone Rules – Easy to Follow Flow Diagram

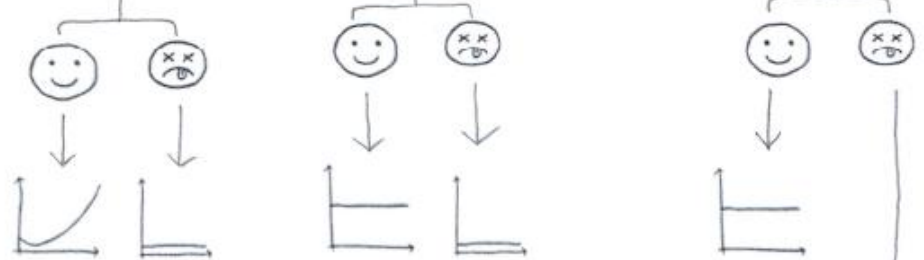
1) Tone mark?



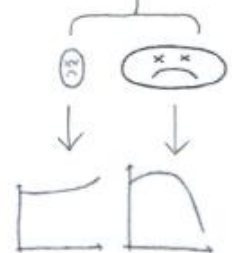
2) Consonant Class?

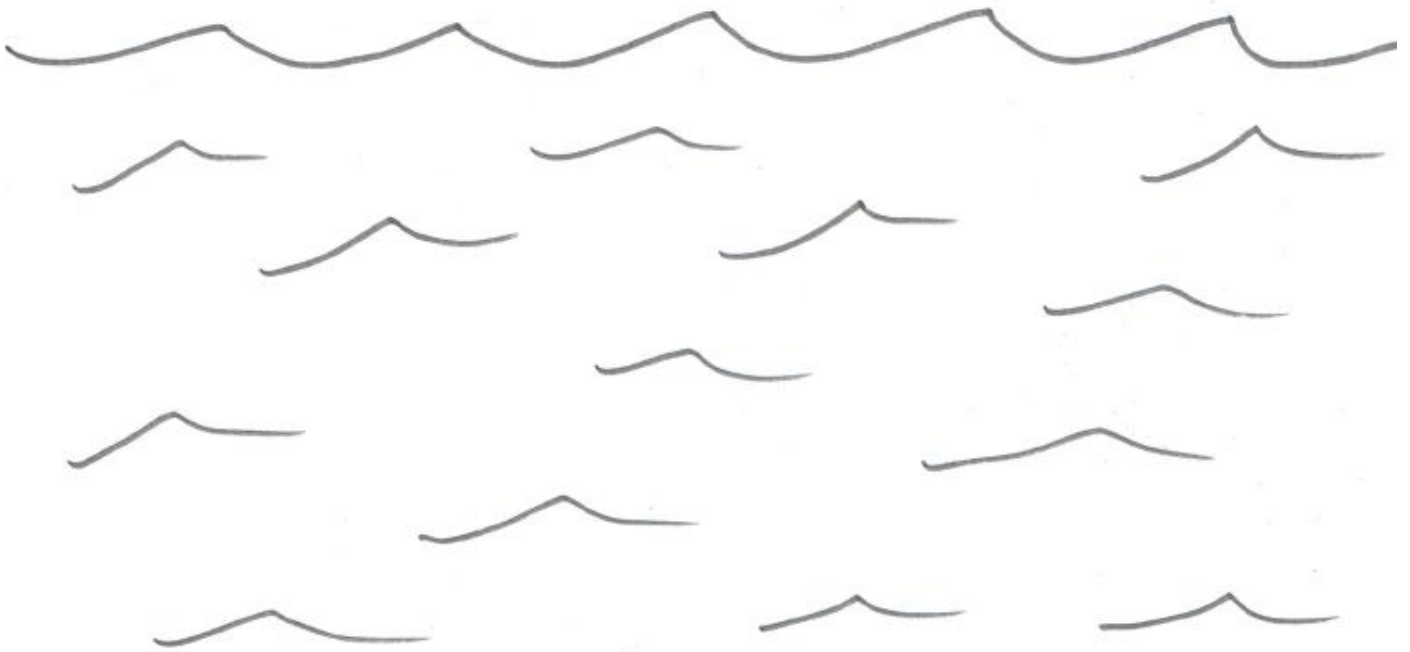
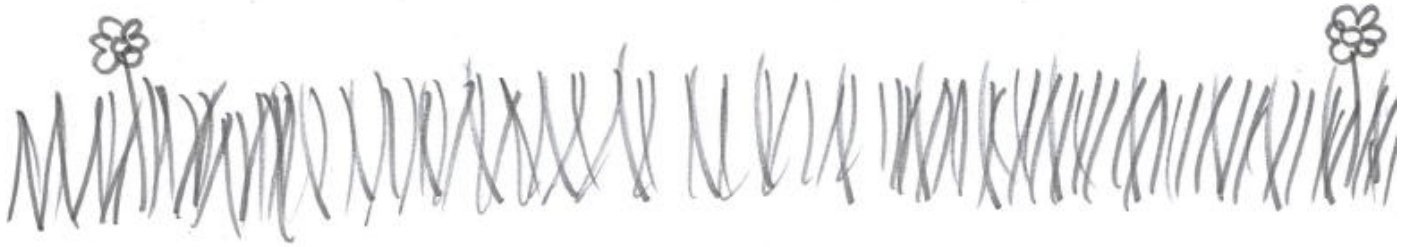


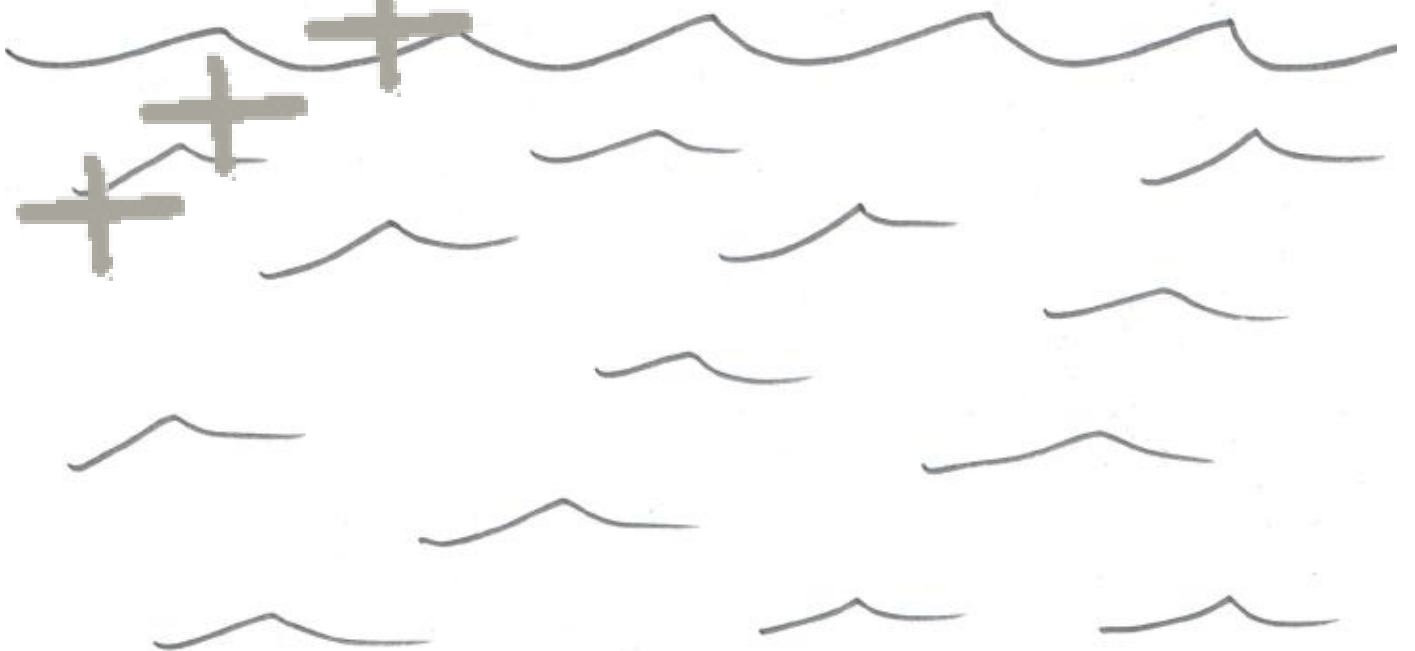
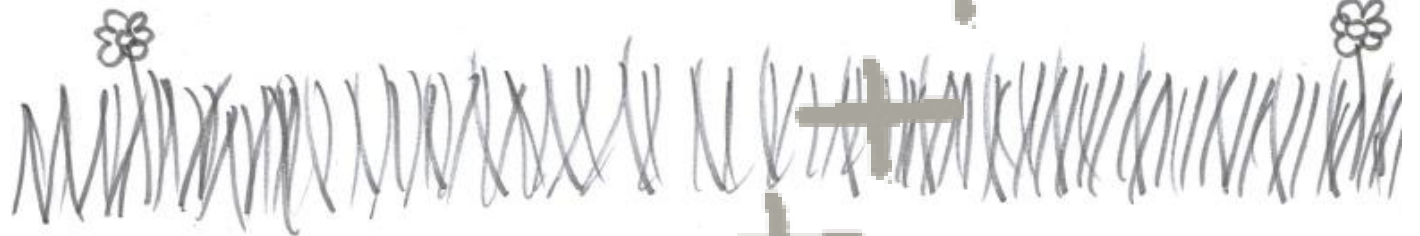
3) Live/Dead Syllable?

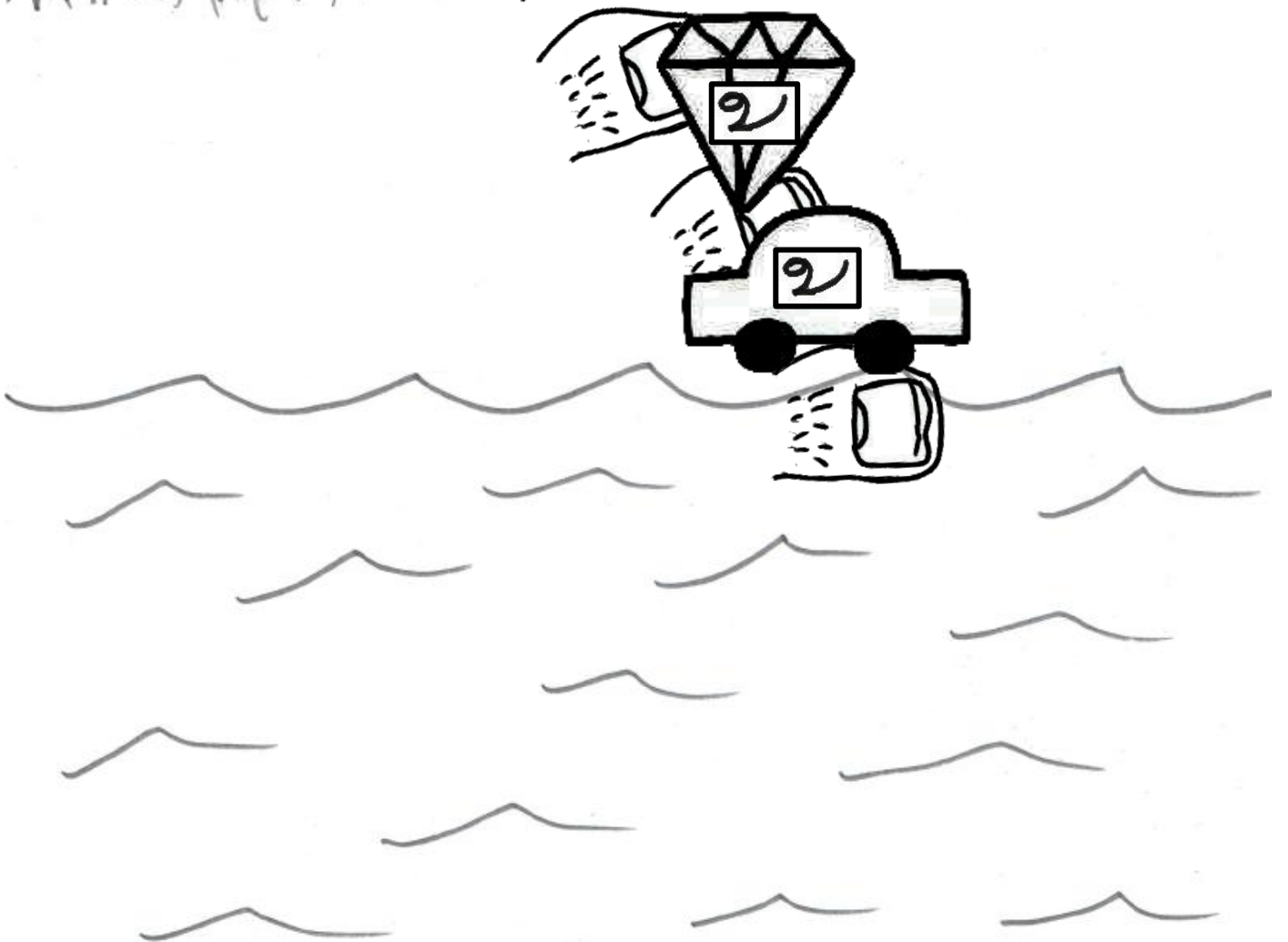
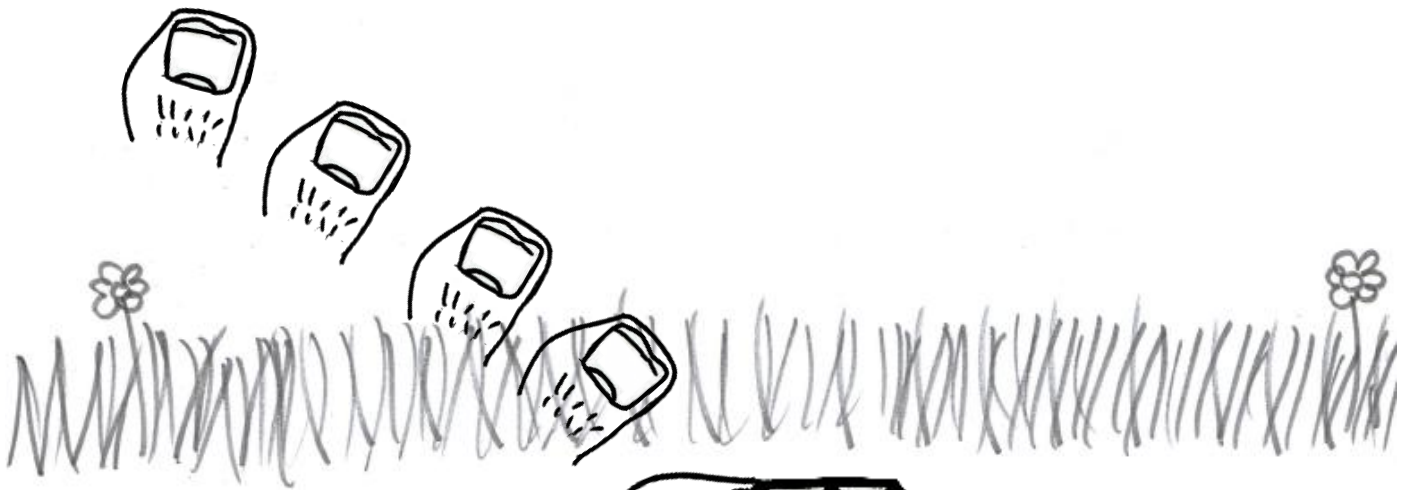


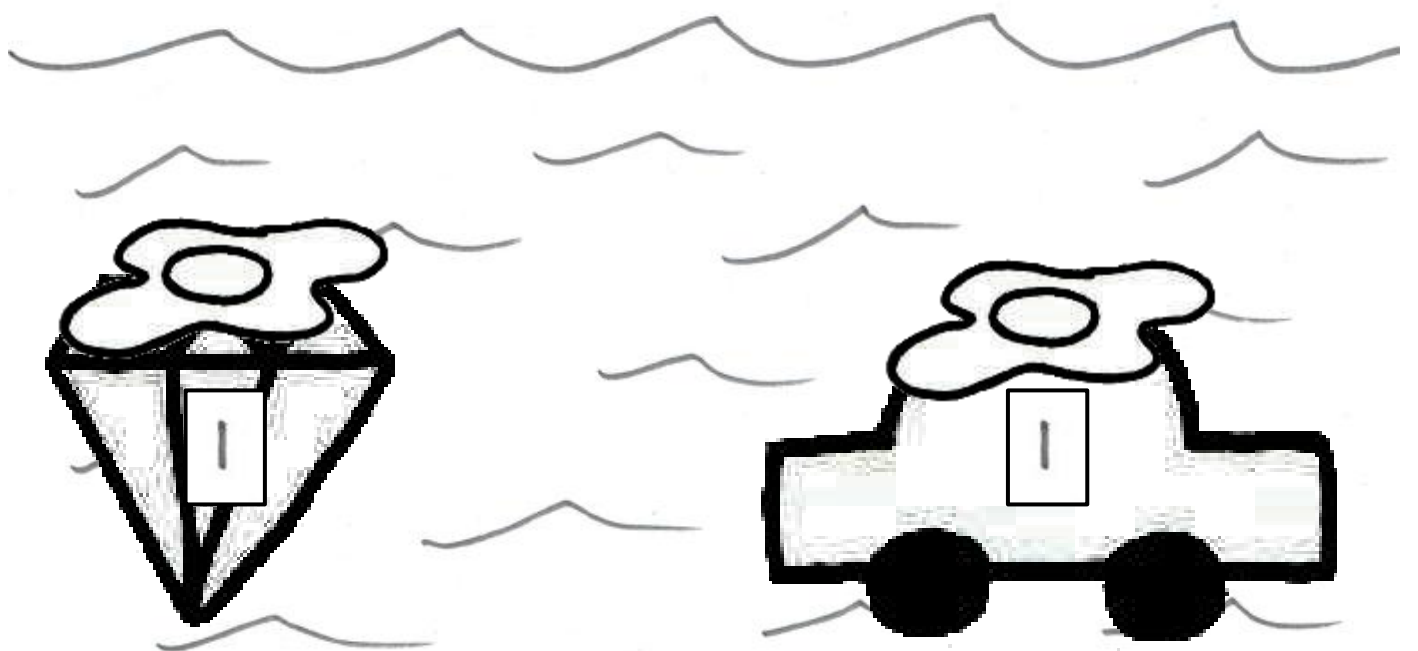
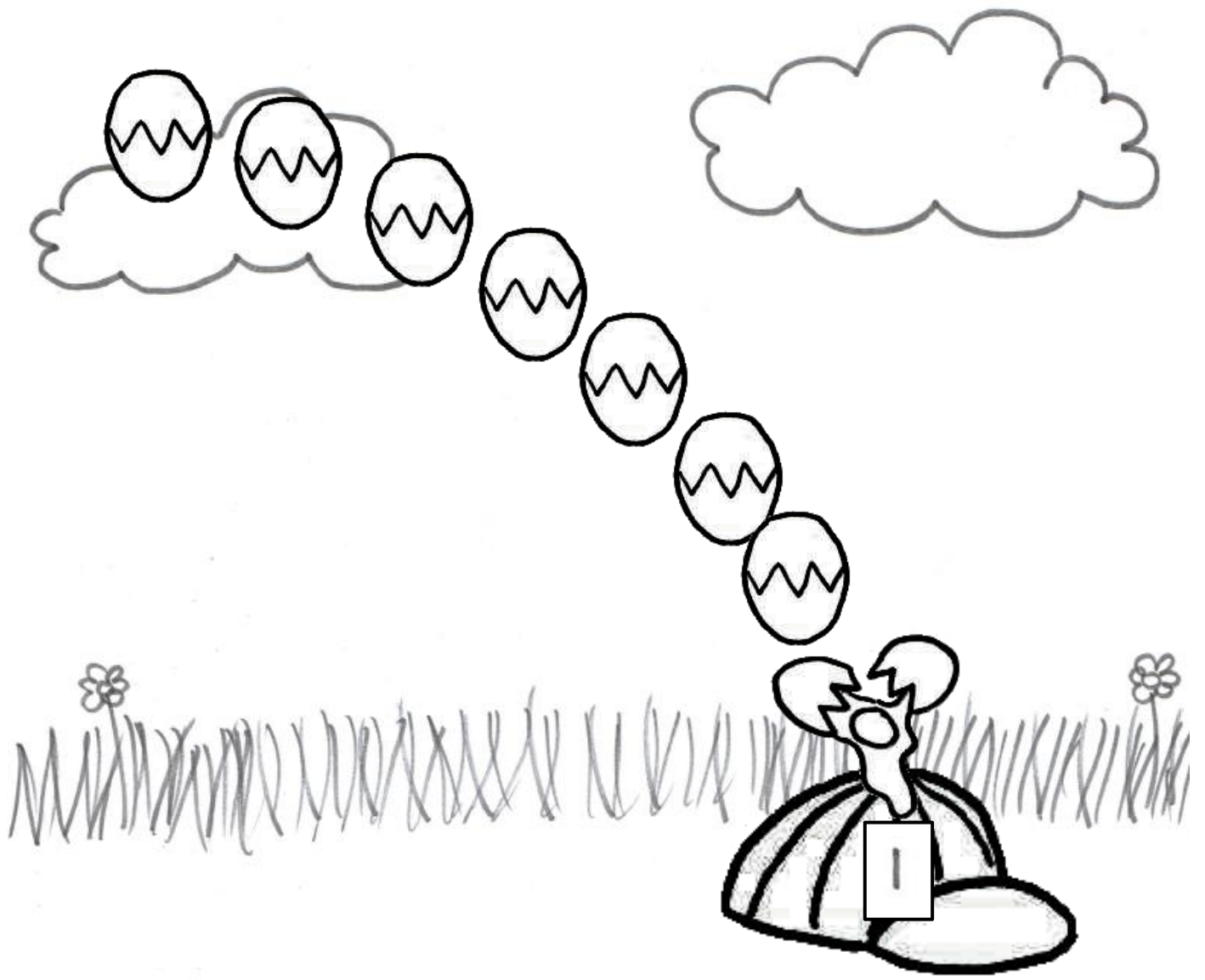
4) Vowel length?

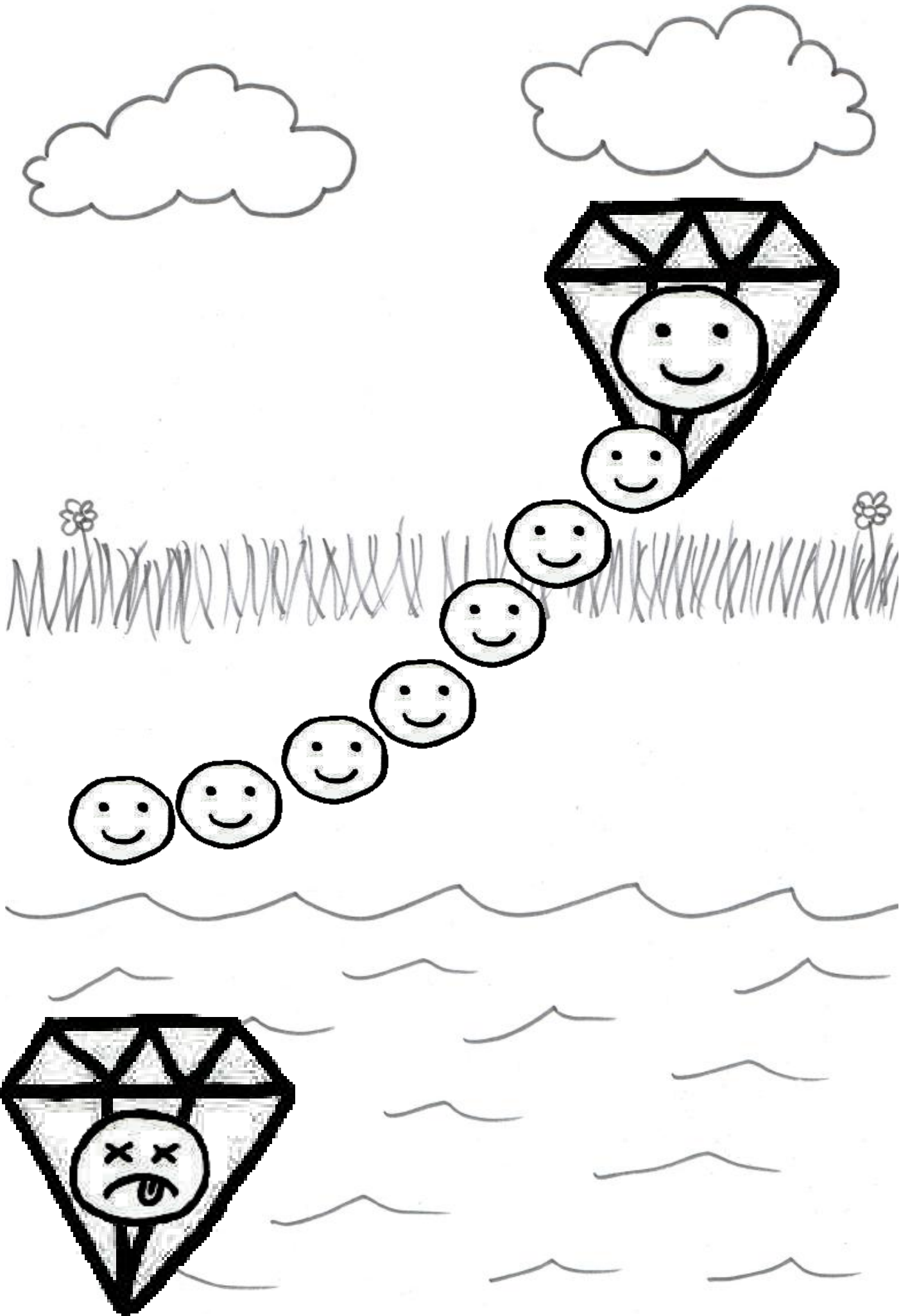


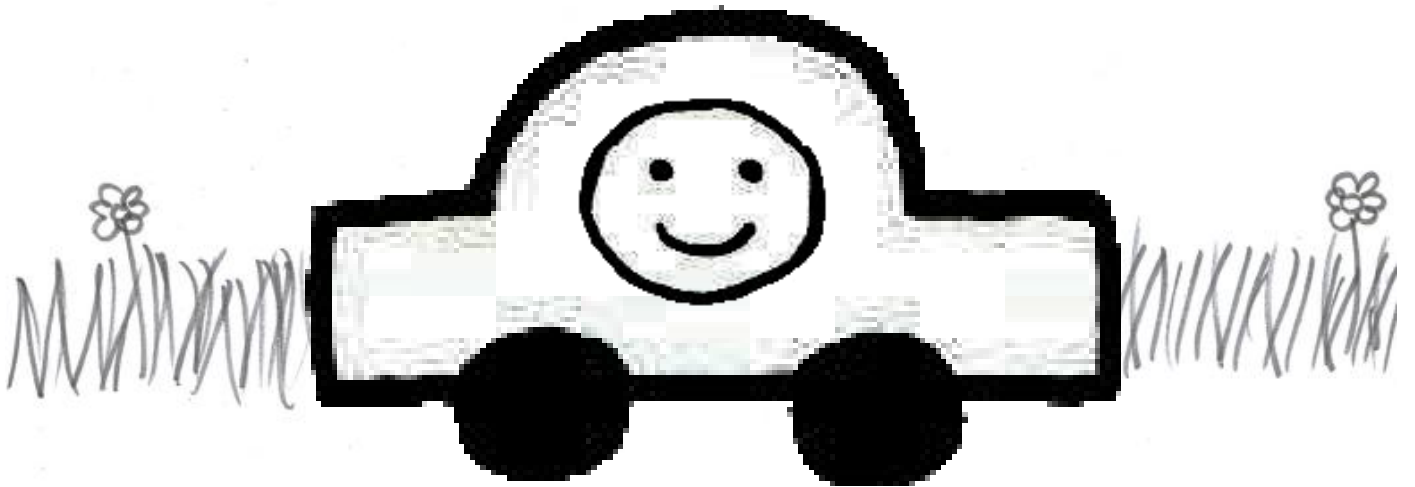


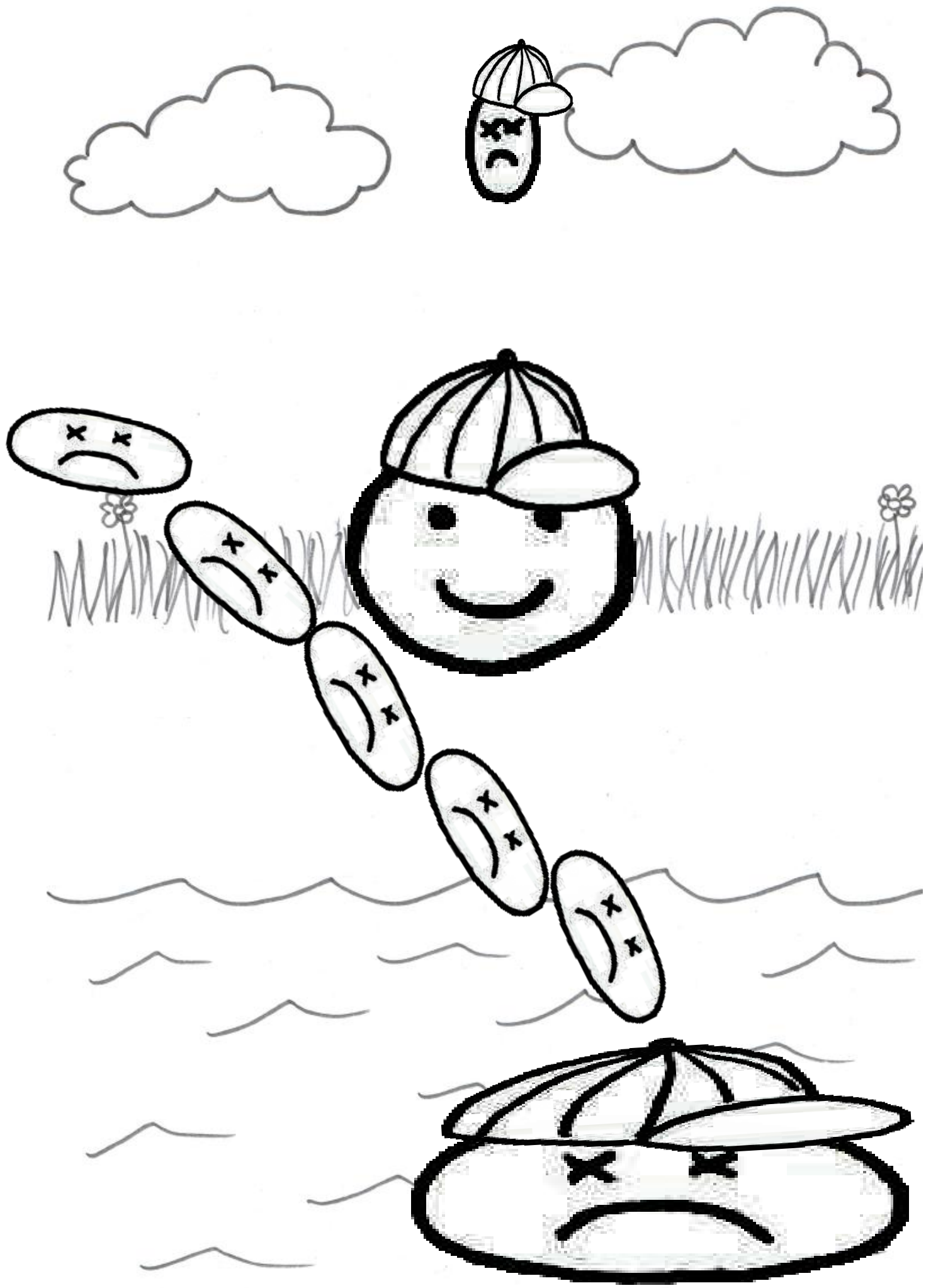












TONES TEST

Circle the symbols and see if you can draw the correct tone.

The first few have been done for you.

Answers are on the next page.

ก + ช |

Tone mark?



Initial Consonant class?



Live/Dead syllable?



Vowel length?



mid tone



low tone



falling tone



high tone



rising tone

โต๊ะ	ก+ช	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
ตัว	ก+ช	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
ข้าว	ก+ช	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
ก้อน	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ร้อน	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ห่อ	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
อ่าน	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ร่ม	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
สาม	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ถูก	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
จง	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
บอก	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ยาม	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
รัก	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
มีด	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
กล้วย	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
บน	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ถาม	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ลิง	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

รอบ	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
วง	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
แป้น	ก+ช	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
หก	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
หา	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ห้า	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ส้ม	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
จิ้ม	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ถ้วย	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ถอด	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ฝั	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
พืด	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
บน	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ไข	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ตัด	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
กำ	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
พัก	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
เลี้ยง	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
ยุง	ก+ช	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

ANSWERS

Here, the answers have been filled in for you.

Following the flow chart, you will see that for some words, the tone can be worked out from the tone mark alone. You only need to circle as many symbols as it takes to figure out the tone. If you like you could circle one of each set of symbols for extra practice.

ก + ข |

Tone mark?



Initial Consonant class?



Live/Dead syllable?



Vowel length?



mid tone



low tone



falling tone



high tone



rising tone

โต๊ะ	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ตัว	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ข้าว	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ก้อน	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ร้อน	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ห่อ	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
อ่าน	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ร่ม	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
สาม	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ถูก	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
จอบ	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
บอก	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ยาม	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
รัก	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
มีด	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
กล้วย	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
บน	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ถาม	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ลิง	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	

รอบ	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
วง	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
แป้น	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
หก	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
หา	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ห้า	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ส้ม	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
จิ้ม	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ถ้าย	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ถอด	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ฝ	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
พืด	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
บน	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ไข	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ตัด	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
กำ	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
พัก	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
เลี้ยง	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	
ยุ่ง	ก+ข	♦	🚗	☂	😊	😞	→	→	

