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### The English Writing System

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The English writing system uses the Latin alphabet, otherwise known as the Roman alphabet. There are twenty-six letters in total, which consist of twenty-one consonants and the five vowels -a, -e, -i, -o, and -u. Each letter has two forms: the uppercase and the lowercase. Technically, we do not use **diacritics** in English.

English has words from many different languages, including French, Greek, and Latin. We can see this in the **orthography** of many English words. English does follow a **phonemic rule**; however, because of these different influences, the rules are complex to learn and follow. That is why the spelling is not always the same for the same pronunciation.

Also, the Great Vowel Shift that took place between 1400-1700 also accounts for spelling and pronunciation **discrepancies**. There are several theories as to why there was so much change in vowels during this time period. One theory states that, due to the fact that many immigrants had to communicate with one another, English speakers had to **adjust** their speech so that they could understand.