Moving Vowels:

A Practical Guide to Vowel Shifts

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This guide explains how vowel shift lines work in Sherman's Gallifreyan, with step-by-step methods and illustrated examples. It is intended for readers who already understand basic word construction.

The Rule:

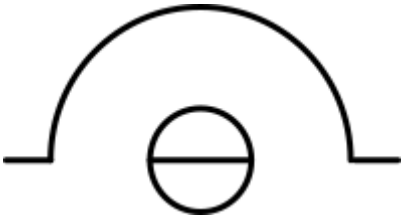
> *"Drawing a line across a vowel moves its position to before the prior letter. This can be used to insert a vowel in between the letters of a multi-letter consonant or several stacked consonants."*

Important Disclaimer: This rule was created with a limited use in mind. Its intended application is to move a single vowel one or two positions backward into a stack of letters, or behind a letter to which it is attached. This is the most common use in the vast majority of Gallifreyan works.

Most of the examples in this guide demonstrate cases where the rule is taken far beyond its original intent. While these techniques can still be used unambiguously to write and decipher Gallifreyan designs, they may introduce an unnecessary level of complexity that most readers will not be familiar enough with to understand without additional explanation. It is advised to avoid complex applications if the intent is clarity and readability.

What Counts as a Vowel Shift Line

The guide provides a clear example of how a vowel shift line should be drawn.



A vowel shift line is a simple line that touches the vowel circle in two places. Stylistic choices may vary: lines may extend beyond the vowel circle, curve, twist, or travel in any direction. Multiple lines can be parallel, cross each other, or create designs, as long as it is clear that it is supposed to be a vowel shift line.

Important: Vowel shift lines should not connect to other letters, punctuation, circles, or modifiers in order to avoid ambiguity. For the same reason, they should not resemble the modifier line for the vowels **U** and **I**.

How to Resolve a Vowel Shift

There are three steps to solve a vowel shift:

1. Decipher the entire word or phrase as it appears.
2. Determine where each vowel movement lands in relation to the original order of the word or phrase.
3. Apply the changes and resolve the reading order using line thickness or contextual clues.

Moving one vowel

For the first example, we will use a design similar to one shown in the guide: **NOT**.

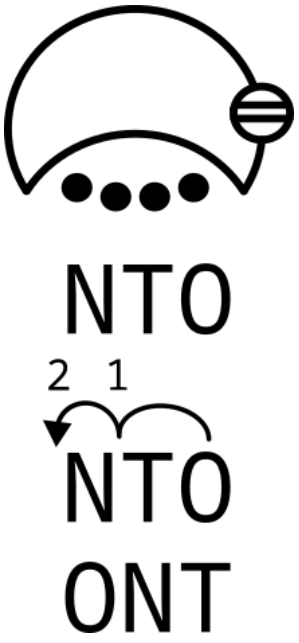
Step 1. Decipher the word as it appears.

Important: Vowel shifts apply only to the letters of the word, not to the symbols of the design.

Step 2. There is only one line on the vowel, which means it moves back one letter, falling between **N** and **T**.

Step 3. Now that we know where the **O** is supposed to fall, we apply the change and get

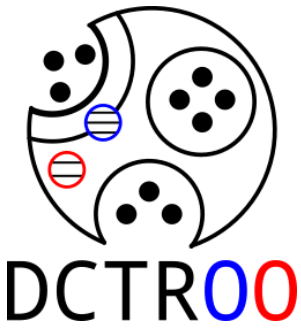
If we add a second line to the vowel, we follow the same steps and get **ONT**



Moving two vowels or more

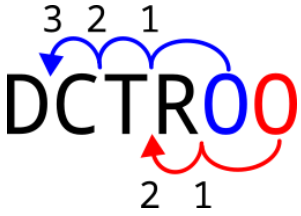
This example demonstrates what happens when vowels are moved past other moving vowels.

Step 1. Decipher the word.



Step 2. Count how many letters each vowel jumps.

The first **O** has three lines, and the second **O** has two.



Important: Make sure to count every jump, even when the vowel is passing another moving vowel. In this case, the second **O** still has to jump over the first **O** to be placed in the correct position.

If we count the jumps, we get the first **O** between the **D** and **C**, and the second **O** between the **T** and **R**.

Step 3. Apply the changes.

DOCTOR

The next example is very similar but with an important difference. In this case, both **O**s are placed in such a way that is impossible to tell which one goes first.

Step 1. Decipher.

Because it makes no difference which **O** goes first, and both are attached to the **TR** stack, they can be treated as occupying the same space after the **R**.

Step 2. Count.

One **O** has three lines and the other has one line.

Notice that we do not need to jump over the vowels because they occupy the same space. One **O** falls between **D** and **C**, and the other falls between **T** and **R**.

Step 3. Apply changes.

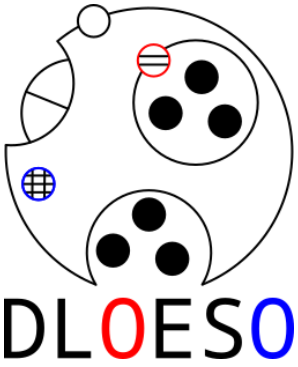
DOCTOR

There are times when moving two or more vowels will make them land on the same place between two letters. When this happens, there are two things to consider:

- Are they the same vowel? If so, it does not matter which is read first or last, so there is no ambiguity and the result can be left as is.
- Are they different vowels? If two or more different vowels land on the same place, they must be different thicknesses so they can be read from thinnest to thickest in the intended order.

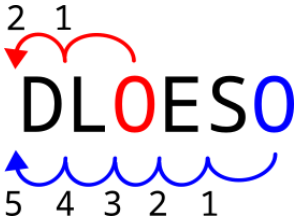
Example of two similar vowels landing on the same place

Step 1. Decipher.



Step 2. Count.

There are two lines in the first **O** and five on the second **O**.



We can see that in this example, both vowels will end up right before the **D**.

Step 3. Apply changes.

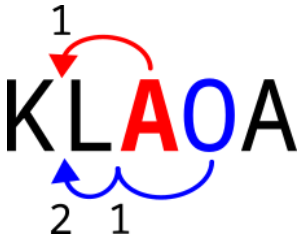
Both letters end up at the start of the word. It doesn't matter if it says **OO**DLES or **OO**DLES, so the ambiguity of which letter comes first can be ignored.

When the ambiguity needs to be fixed, we use line thickness to resolve it. In the next example, we have two letters that fall on the same spot and arrange themselves with line thickness.

Step 1. Decipher.

Step 2. Count.

A has one line and **O** has two lines.



Step 3. Apply changes.

This time both the **A** and the **O** fall at the same place between the **K** and the **L**.

Because both vowels fall on the same place, some ambiguity is created as to which should go first. The difference in line thickness fixes that. With the **O** being thinner than the **A**, we know the word should read as K**O****A**LA.

Important: Making the vowels a different thickness can affect **Step 1** and how they are placed at the original arrangement. Make sure to keep track of that.

Moving repeated vowels

Sometimes you may want to move multiple vowels like a double **E**. They might be at the same place in a word or phrase and you want to move both at the same time to a different spot. For example:

Step 1. Decipher.

In this case, both **E**s are in the same place after the stack of consonants. The guide only shows what to do when you want to move one vowel, and by strict adherence to the rule, you should put a line in each vowel. But we can use the context rule to think a line crossing both vowels is meant to mean that both vowels are supposed to be moved together.

Step 2. Count.

There is one line across both vowels.

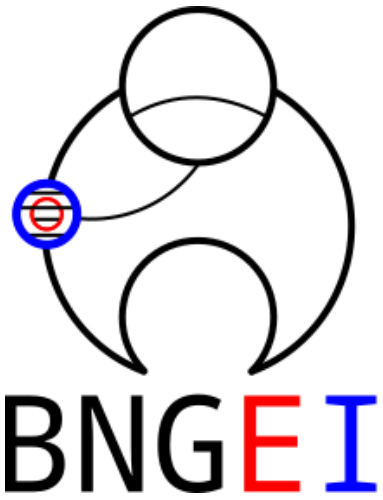
Step 3. Apply changes.

Once again, because it doesn't matter which **E** goes first we can ignore the ambiguity and read this as **TREES**.

Moving vowels when they are stacked

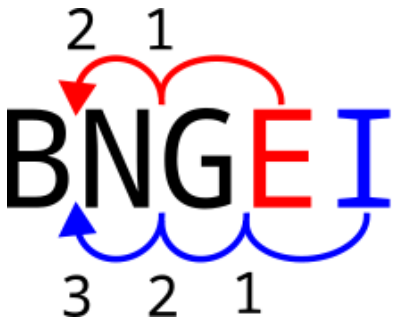
In this example we move two stacked vowels, a thin **E** and a thick **I**.

Step 1. Decipher.



Step 2. Count.

The **I** has three lines and one of them crosses the **E**. The **E** has two lines, one contained completely within it and one shared with the **I**.

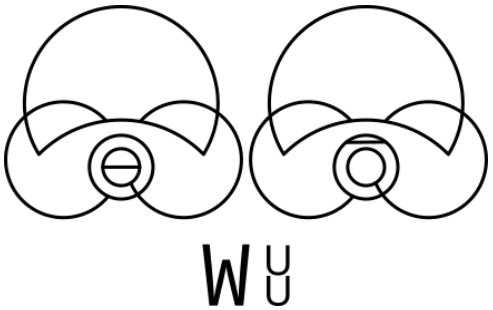


Step 3. Apply changes.

Both fall in the same place but because the **E** is thinner than the **I**, it reads B**EI**NG.

This example shows how to move only one vowel from a stacked pair of vowels.

Step 1. Decipher.



Both of these designs can be deciphered the same way. The only difference is on which letter is the vowel shift line. When the vowel shift line is placed on the larger vowel, it would be recommended to make sure it only crosses the vowel intended to shift to avoid creating ambiguity.

Step 2. Count.

In either example, one **U** has one line.

Step 3. Apply changes.

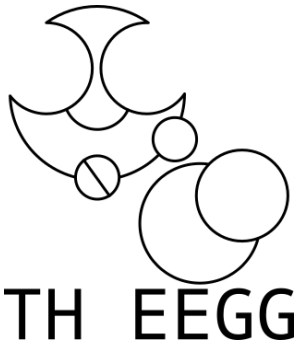
UwU

Moving vowels past the start of words

It is possible to move a vowel a space behind a word, either to attach it to a previous word or to create a new word at the start of the sentence.

This example uses a vowel movement to transfer a vowel from one word into another.

Step 1. Decipher.



Step 2. Count.

The first **E** has one line.

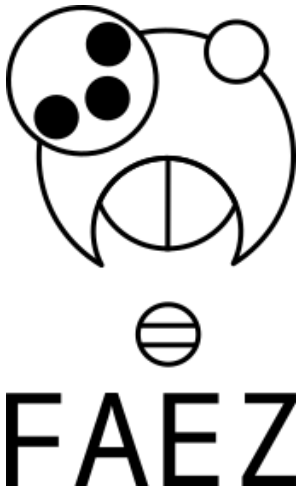
One line on the **E** will make it move past one blank space into the end of the previous word. If there is no previous word, then it would move past the blank space and turn into its own word at the start of the sentence.

Step 3. Apply changes.

THE EGG

In this example, a vowel is moved past the start of the word to create a one-letter word to start a sentence.

Step 1. Decipher.



Step 2. Count.

There are two lines on the **A** which indicates the jump behind the **F** and then a blank space.

Step 3. Apply changes.

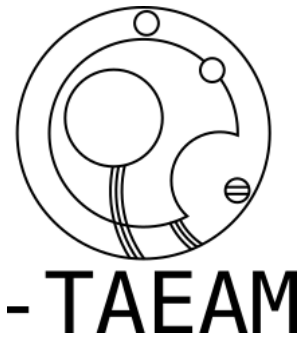
A FEZ

This makes it possible to save space in your designs by omitting the need of a word circle for a lone vowel.

Even more unusual movements

This example is meant to show how vowels can move past punctuation marks.

Step 1. Decipher.



Step 2. Count.

The first **A** has two lines.

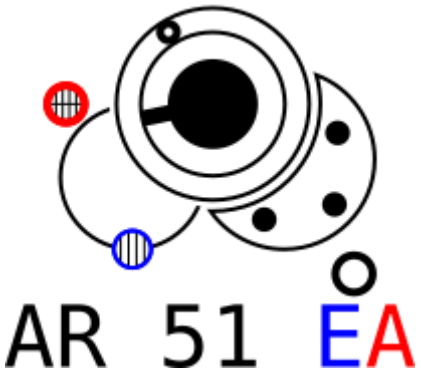
The thing to note here is that the dash counts as a character for the purposes of counting movements. Other punctuation marks like periods, commas, question marks, etc. would also need to be taken into consideration when jumping.

Step 3. Apply changes.

A-TEAM

This example demonstrates how to move past numbers.

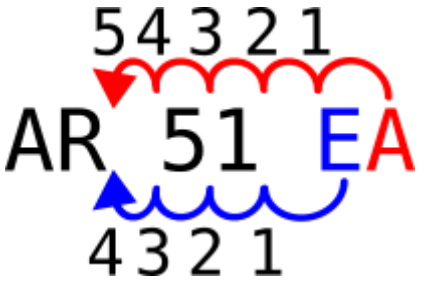
Step 1. Decipher.



For this particular design, it is important to notice the different line thickness for the **E** and the **A**.

Step 2. Count.

The thin **E** has 4 lines and the thick **A** has 5 lines.



In this case, we need to count the vowel we are jumping, the empty spaces, each digit of the number, and if there was a decimal point, we would count that as well just like we would count other punctuation marks.

Step 3. Apply changes.

As we noted before, the **E** is thinner than the **A** so there is no ambiguity even when they land at the same place between the **R** and the Blank Space which makes the design read as: **AREA 51**

Final Example

This example is meant to show some of the things you can do with vowel shifts while simultaneously demonstrating how unnecessarily more difficult it can turn a design when overused.