Learn to read the vowels. Unlike most languages, Hebrew letters do not *make vowel sounds*.

* **אֵ Patach**. Patach is basically a line to place under any letter, which becomes that letter with the "AH" sound after it, as in "aqua". Patach is considered a short vowel.
* **אָ Kamatz**. Kamatz makes the same sound as Patach, and looks almost exactly like it. The only difference is that it has a tiny line in the midsection. Kamatz is considered a long vowel.
* **וֹ Cholam Malei**. Cholam Malei is basically the letter Vav with a dot over it. This creates the "OH" sound, as in "doe". However, this doesn't create the "VO" sound, as the v is lost when the dot is added. Cholam Malei is considered a long vowel.
* **בֹּ Cholam Chaser**. This vowel can't go over all consonants, which is why there is also Cholam Malei. When this little dot is over (or a little to the left, but still on top) of any consonant, the consonant gains the "OH" sound, *in addition* to its consonant sound. Cholam Chaser is considered a long vowel.
* **אֶ Segol**. Segol is three dots under a letter that create a triangle shape. These three dots add the "EH" sound as in "echo" to the consonant. For example, adding this to Bet would create the "beh" sound. Segol is considered a short vowel.
* **בֵּ Tzeirei**. Tzeirei is two dots under a letter, creating a horizontal line, (not to be confused with sh'va, which creates a vertical line). This adds the "EH" sound to a consonant, just like Segol. For instance, adding this vowel to Vet would create the "veh" sound. Tzeirei is considered a long vowel.
* **מְ Sh'va. Sh'va** adds the "UH" sound to a consonant. It also has two dots, but they create a vertical line instead of a horizontal one. Adding this to Mem would make "muh". Sh'va may also cause the consonant to be shortened so that it sounds like it has a quick i sound after it or no vowel at all just as if one started to utter something but realized he made a mistake and stopped suddenly. An example would be the sh'va under the bet in the Hebrew word for "in the hand" בְיַד. It would be pronounced biyad or b'yad.
* **וּ Shuruk**. This vowel creates the "U" sound, as in "blue". It never makes the "UH" sound, which Sh'va does. This vowel can only be added to Vav, which loses its v in the process. Shuruk is considered a long vowel.
* **אֻ Kubutz**. Kubutz is three dots that are horizontal under any consonant, going to the right. It creates the "OO" sound, like "food" or "shoo". Adding this to Bet would make "boo". Kubutz is considered a short vowel.
* **אֲ Chataf Patach, Chataf Segol, and Chataf Kamatz**. Chataf is two dots creating a vertical line, however, it is added to Patach, Segol, or Kamatz to shorten the vowel. Think of it as a staccato in music, which shortens the note. These vowels are therefore considered reduced.
* **נִ Chirik**. Chirik makes the "ee" sound, as in "Greek" or "me". It is one dot under any consonant. For example, Chirik under Bet creates "bee". Chirik is considered a long vowel.
* **רָ Kamatz Katan**. This vowel looks like Kamatz, only the second line doesn't actually connect to the midsection. Kamatz Katan creates the "O" sound, like "flow".