Vowel Alternation
Long to Short or Schwa

The vowel sound in the accented syllable of a base word can change from long to short or from long to a schwa sound when suffixes are added.

However, the vowel itself remains the same.

Remembering that the vowel doesn’t change in the accented syllable can help you remember how to spell related words.

Long to Short

vol/cā/no  →  vol/cān/ic
se/rēne  →  se/rēn/i/ty

Long to Schwa

com/pōse  →  com/pā/si/tion
de/fīne  →  de/fē/nī/tion