Most examples, not to mention the general outline, are taken from J. Weingreen (1959), *A practical grammar for classical Hebrew.*

**VOWELS**

The long vowels are: ֹ, ֵ, ָ, ֶ, ַ, ָ, ֹ, ֵ, ָ.

The short vowels are: (when it is a qamets hatuf) ָ, ֵ, ָ, ֶ, ַ, ִ, ְ.

An open syllable ends in a vowel, a closed one ends in a consonant, so ֶ֫ רֶ֫ץ (earth, land) consists of a short vowel in an accented open syllable ֶ֫ followed by an unaccented closed syllable with a short vowel ֶ֫.

The general rule for unaccented syllables is: if it is open the vowel us usually long; if it is closed the vowel *must* be short. Accented syllables have no such constraints.

ָ can be either silent or slightly voiced. Whereas Modern Hebrew solves the problem of silent sheva's by simply dropping them, in Biblical Hebrew we have to figure out whether the sheva is vocal or silent (if it is vocal it is still not *very* vocal to תֶּדָּות, account [generations, account] is to*ַּּדְּדָּות, not to*ַּּדוֹדָּט). A voiced sheva is the result of a regular vowel that gets rushed past due to a shift in emphasis or syllabification, like the ‘e’ in ‘magnet’ when we turn it into the verb, ‘magnetize’ (Modern Hebrew often just slurs it out creating a blend [like ‘st], as long as the two consonants are amenable to such blending). The feminine form of גָּדוֹל is גְּדוֹלָה (big). The emphasis has shifted from the second to the third syllable, shortening the first vowel.

But if you don’t already know the base word, you may need more help, so here are some rules:

- Sheva is vocal when it begins a syllable. Obviously this is the case if it is at the beginning of a word (_meshăr). It is silent if it closes a syllable.
- It is vocal after a long vowel (תֶּלָּד), silent after a short one (תֶּלָד).
• When two appear next to each other in the middle of a word, the first is silent, the second vocal (at the beginning of a word, the first is lengthened into a full vowel).
• Since a dagesh forte doubles letters, if there is a sheva under a dageshed letter it is really under both letters. The first is silent the second is vocal. So קִטְּלוּ is really קִטְטְלוּ, and so is pronounced qîtṭ'lu.

**Quiescent Letters**

Certain letters are so weak that they are sometimes lost entirely (are said to quiesce – i.e. become quiet). These letters are: ר & הא. Examples:

הִים (to/for God) becomes, first, לָאֶלֹהִים, and then the א quiesces and the initial vowel is lengthened to get לָאֶלֹהִים.

יְהוּדָה (to/for Judah) cannot be לָיְהוּדָה so we get an imaginary לַיְהוּדָה, but the י quiesces and we get לִיְהוּדָה.

מֹשֶׁה (death of Moses) can get connected with a maqqef. This turns it into functionally one word, so that מָוֶת loses its accent and the ו gets shortened to צ. The resulting מָוְת־מֹשֶׁה quiesces the ו and becomes מָוְת־מֹשֶׁה (note that the qamatz is absorbed into the compatible ו sound, צ).

At the end of syllables, a ר or a ו preceded by a vowel quiesces only if the vowel is compatible: מִי = mî, מֵי = mê, וּלְ = lū, and וּלְ = lō. But דַי = day, גּוֹי = gōy, קָנוּי = qanwy, צַו = tsav, פִיו = pîv, & קו = qav.

**Gutterals**

The letters י & והא are called gutterals because they are (or were historically) pronounced in the throat. This makes them act differently than other consonants as follows.
They cannot be doubled. In compensation (where another consonant would receive the dagesh) the previous vowel will be lengthened, if possible. So instead of מָאָדָם we get מֵאָדָם. They do not take a simple א, rather they take one of the shortened forms (אא א). Which one they take is usually determined by the next vowel. If the next vowel is a shortened vowel already, you will get a full version of the same vowel (see vowel rules).

They have a tendency to prefer the vowel א. Instead of the expected זֶבֶח we get זֶבַח. Instead of נֶעֶר we get נַעַר.

The letters ח, ה or ע can only be preceded by an ‘a’ vowel at the end of a word. Consequently, if this happens, we get an additional א preceding it (called a furtive pataḥ). The infinitive of שְׁמֹע (to hear, obey) is not שְׁמֹע, but שְׁמֹעַ. The expected form רוּח appears as רוּח (wind, spirit). The furtive pataḥ is pronounced before, rather than after the final guttural (in a properly typeset document, it should appear a little to the right of the guttural, but MS Word does not have that option, as far as I can tell).

**Weak Verbs**

When one of these unusual situations (gutterals, quiescents) occurs or a verb begins with ב, the verbal paradigms are affected in generally predictable ways. The grammar on the web page has a full list of paradigms, but generally the rules will make them unnecessary. Since the word “to do” is פֹּעַל in Hebrew, letters in the three letter roots are often associated with them. So a verb like נתן (to give) is said to be pe-nun since the first letter (where pe stands in פֹּעַל, is nun). פֹּעַל itself is ayin-gutteral since the second letter (where ayin is in פֹּעַל) is a guttural letter.
Examples:

ןפל (to fall) is weak since it is pe-nun, which is usually assimilated if there is a leading consonant in the paradigm. So, where the expected imperfect would be ינפל, but when we lose the nun and compensate by doubling the following letter (not really visible in this case since it already has a dagesh-lene which is being replaced by a dagesh-fortê), we get יפל.

עזב (to leave) is weak since it is pe-gutteral. In niphal (passive) imperfect we might expect ינעב but we first loose the nun, getting יעב, and then since we can’t double the ayin we have to compensate by lengthening the previous vowel: עיב.

יטב (to be good) is pe-yod (i.e. pe-quiescent). We would expect the imperfect to be ייטב, but the yod quiesces and we get ייטב.

Obviously verbs sometimes have combinations of these, so it can get quite confusing. For example, נגע (to touch) is both pe-nun and lamed-gutteral. It is said to be doubly weak.

In fact, most verbs exhibit one weakness or another (like most people). This is why so many paradigms of the regular verb use a verb like קטל (to kill) which might otherwise seem sort of morose, even though it is not one of the really high frequency words.

[Words with begad-kefat letters are also not good paradigm words, since there is no way of telling whether a dagesh is hard or soft (lene of fortê).]