Summary of the development of new diphthongs in early Middle English

Apply all other vowel changes before you apply the diphthong changes.

1. Glides developed between a vowel and [x], the voiceless velar fricative (spelt h in OE, ʒ in early ME, and gh in ME).

   a) A front glide [i] developed between a front vowel and [x]:

   - OE ehta [ɛxta] > ME [ɛɪxtə] eithe
   - OE nēah [næ:ɑx] > [næ:x] > [nɛ:x] > [nɛɪx] neigh

   b) A back glide [ʊ] developed between a back vowel and [x]:

   - OE aht [ɑxt] > ME [ɑʊxt] aught

2. The sequence [Vj] became a diphthong [Vi]:

   - OE dæȝes [dæjɛs] > [dæjəs] > ME [dæɪəs] daies, dayes
   - OE sæȝde [sæjɛd] > [sæjəd] > ME [sæɪəd] saide
   - OE peȝes [wejɛs] > [wejəs] > ME [weɪəs] weies, weyes

   These two diphthongs, [ɛɪ] and [aɪ], fell together in late ME, probably as [æɪ].
   So, for example, Chaucer rhymes day with wey.

3. The sequence [Vy] became a diphthong [Vo]:

   - OE saȝu [sɑɣɛ] > [sɑɣə] > ME [sɑʊə] sawe
   - OE boȝa [bɔɣɑ] > [bɔɣə] > ME [bʊoə] bowe

4. Two diphthongs were borrowed from French:

   - [ɔɪ] joie, joye; cloistre; oystre
   - [ʊɪ] boilener, poison, joine