

The Phonetic Guide to English Pronunciation

Lesson 1

Symbols used:

- * underlined double vowels are pronounced as a single vowel sound (only 1st examples of a phonetic group are given)
- () indicates silent letters
- e* the 'e' that changes the sound of the vowel
- () silent letters or pronounced with the sound of : (-)
- / divides words with the same sound but different meanings (homonyms)
- aeiou a small letter is a neutral vowel
- (Brit) Standard English pronunciation

1.1 VOWEL SOUND: **E** **oo** (phonetic sound) *E* *oo*

<i>E</i>	<i>oo</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>oo</i>	<i>E</i>	<i>oo</i>
be <u>a</u> t	boot	be <u>a</u> st	bo <u>oo</u> st	kee <u>p</u>	co <u>oo</u> p
cre <u>a</u> m	cro <u>oo</u> n	dre <u>a</u> m	dro <u>oo</u> l	fee <u>l</u>	fo <u>oo</u> l
ge <u>e</u> se	go <u>oo</u> se	gri <u>e</u> ve	gro <u>oo</u> ve	hea <u>t</u>	ho <u>oo</u> t
hea <u>p</u>	ho <u>oo</u> p	kee <u>l</u>	co <u>oo</u> l	lea <u>s</u> t	loo <u>oo</u> sed
me <u>a</u> n	mo <u>oo</u> n	(k)ne <u>e</u> s	no <u>oo</u> se	nee <u>d</u> le	no <u>oo</u> dle
pre <u>e</u> n	pru <u>e</u> n	pee <u>l</u>	po <u>oo</u> l	she <u>e</u> t	shoo <u>t</u>
she <u>i</u> k	shoo <u>k</u>	tea <u>m</u>	tom(b)	thre <u>e</u>	throu <u>gh</u>

1.2 COMPARATIVE VOWELS: a aa oa (phonetic sound) *a* *aa* *oa*

<i>a</i>	<i>aa</i>	<i>aa</i>	<i>oa</i>	<i>aa</i>	<i>oa</i>
at	art	art	<u>au</u> (gh)t	Arthur	autho <u>r</u>
back	bark	bar	bo <u>r</u> e	barn	bo <u>r</u> n
batter	barter	Bart	<u>bou</u> (gh)t	barber	ba <u>u</u> ble
cat	cart	char	cho <u>r</u> e	cart	cau <u>gh</u> t

dad	dart	far	four	farm	form
ham	harm	hark	<u>h</u> awk	hard	<u>h</u> oard
lack	lark	lard	lord	larder	launder
Mac	Mark	Mark	Maude	marl	mall
pat	part	part	port	park	pork
tan	tar	tart	tau(gh)t	shark	short

1.3 COMPARATIVE WORDS : with long & short vowel sounds **E i**

bean/been . . bin	cheap . . chip	cheek . . chick	creak . . crick
<u>d</u> ean . . din	eel . . ill	feast . . fist	feel . . fill
feet . . fit	fleet . . flit	heal . . hill	heap . . hip
heat . . hit	his (z) . . hiss	<u>e</u> ase (z) . . is	eat . . it
feat/feet . . fit	jean . . gin	keel . . kill	leap . . lip
least . . list	leave . . leaf	meal . . mill	neat . . nit
kneel . . nil	peel . . pill	peek . . pick	read . . rid
ream . . rim	sheik . . chic	steel/steal . . still	seen /s(c)ene . . sin
teen . . tin	piece/peace . . <u>p</u> ea <u>s</u> (z)	wean . . win	week/weak . . wick
wheat . . wit	w(h)eel . . will		

1.4 SPELLING VARIATIONS - within the same vowel groups (examples)

SHORT VOWELS: **a e i o u**

(phonetic sound) **e** (also see phonetic sound **ea** – Ref. 6.1)

<u>b</u> ed	<u>b</u> read	<u>f</u> riend	<u>a</u> ny	<u>b</u> ury	<u>h</u> eir
bell	breast	patient	bare		lei <u>s</u> ure (z) (<i>Brit</i>)
belt	breath	patience	care		their
berry	deaf		dare		
best	death		many		
better	head		Mary		
central	health		said		
century	heaven		says		
de(b)t	heavy		share		

dress	jealous
else	meas <u>u</u> re (z)
end	ready
enter	sweat
when	weap <u>o</u> n
where	wear
whether	weather

<i>a</i>	<i>i</i>	<i>o</i>	<i>u</i>
add	big	block	book**
attic	bill	blond	bull
back	bring	body	bullet
band	<u>bu</u> ild	bom(b)	bush
bank	children	boss	cook**
bad	city	bottle	<u>cou</u> (l)d
battle	did	bottom	shook**
black	different	box	boot**
can	dinner	clock	full
carrot	fit	dog	look**
catch	gift	flock	pull
factory	give	fog	push
family	guilt	frog	put
fashion	hid	from	<u>rou</u> te (<i>Brit</i>)
flag	ill	got	<u>sug</u> ar (<i>sh</i>)
gather	kill	hot	<u>sui</u> t
grand	kitchen	jog	shou(l)d
had	lick	(k)not	wood**
hand	lid	lock	wou(l)d
lam(b)	lift	mock	
land	lip	not	

** these words are *not* pronounced with a long oo-vowel because the consonant at the end is hard and shortens the sound.

1.5 CONSONANTS: T D

Articulation exercises : t t t d d d t t t d d d (repeat)

Practice the speech exercises regularly to attain clear diction.

Make a soft, quick 't' sound with the tongue-tip behind the upper teeth

Make a longer, harder 'd' sound with the tongue-tip at the same place, behind the upper teeth.

T / D . . . (these words have the same sound except for soft or hard consonant **beginnings**)

to do	tart dart	tennis Dennis	tore door	taunt dawned
tuck duck	tear dare	tide died	train drain	troop droop
<u>to</u> ur dour	tab dab	tame dame	team deem	tip dip
try dry	tread dread	tomb doom	tank dank	tyre dire
tent dent	ton done	trip drip	town down	

. . . T / D (these words have the same sound except for soft or hard consonant **endings**)

at add	ate aid	bat bad	beat bead	Bert bird
boot bood	bout bowed	bet bed	but bud	cot cod
cut cud	clot clod	cart card	dead debt	feet feed
fort ford	hurt heard	hit hid	hat had	heart hard
heat heed	latter ladder	mat mad	plot plod	inside insi(gh)t
ri(gh)t ride	sat sad	wait wade	<u>wei</u> (gh)t wei(gh)ed	

1.6 HOMONYMS: (words having the same sound but with different meanings and variations of spelling)

aid /aide	air / heir	bail / bale	base / bass	bare / bear	beat / beet
been / bean	beau / bow	berry / bury	blue / blew	born / borne	bore / boar
bou(gh) / bow	bridal / bridle	carat / carrot	cede / seed	cent / sent	census / senses
creak / creek	c(h)ord / cord	caught / court	clause (z) / claws (z)	course / coarse	cue / queue
cymbal / symbol	broach / brooch	check / cheque (k)	close / clo <u>se</u> (z)	boy / b(u)oy (Brit)	
cite / site / sight	(a)i(s)le / i(s)le				

1.7 PRONUNCIATION & STRESS PATTERNS:

THE NEUTRAL VOWEL - part 1: **a e i o u** - any of these vowels should be neutralized to sound like 'ə' (uh, eh)

- The stress patterns of English rely heavily on the neutral vowel to give it smoothness and fluency.
- English vowels are not always pronounced as they are written.
- It is correct in many words to neutralize / 'flatten' a vowel and to pronounce it like 'uh' or 'eh'.
- It is incorrect to over-articulate all the vowels in most words
- There are thousands of English words that contain neutral vowels

Examples:

a - sounding like ə

a house, a car, a book (etc)

as at am and can (kin) has (hiz) that was (wiz)

again (egen) ambulance (ambulins) Arab (Areb) bargain (bargin) breakfast (brekfist) certain (sertin)

China (Chineh) coral (corel) curtain (kertin) delicate (deleket) England (Inglind) husband (husbind)

instant (instint) particular (peticuleh) separate (seperit) Scotland (Scotlind) (etc)

e - sounding like ə

the

because (biciz) before (biffor) bucket (bukkit) burden (burdin) fearless (feerliss) golden (goldin) student (studint)

i - sounding like ə

in is it

action (akshin) engine (enjin)

o - sounding like ə

for (fir) from (frim) of (iv) to (te)

armour (ahmeh) apron (aprin) author (autheh) blossom (blossim) camphor (camfeh) carrot (carret) doctor (docteh)

favour (favuh)

lesson (lessin) police (pelees) sailor (saileh) symbol (simbil) visitor (viziteh) handsome (hansim)

u - sounding like ə

but (bit) just (jist) must (mist)

asylum (asylim) chorus (koris) circuit (serkit) cupboard (cubberd) famous (famus) glamour (glamuh)