

Main Vowel Sounds of American English

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1. /i/	<i>read, heat, meet, seat, seen, feet</i>	Please <u>eat</u> the <u>meat</u> and the <u>cheese</u> before you <u>leave</u> .
2. /ɪ/	<i>in, bit, this, give, sister, will, city</i>	My <u>sister Linda</u> <u>will live</u> <u>in</u> the <u>big city</u> .
3. /eɪ/	<i>late, gate, bait, fail, main, braid, wait</i>	Jane's <u>face</u> looks <u>great</u> for her <u>age</u> of <u>eighty-eight</u> .
4. /ɛ/	<i>let, get, end, any, fell, bread, men, said</i>	I <u>went</u> to <u>Texas</u> for my <u>friend's</u> <u>wedding</u> .
5. /æ/	<i>last, apple, add, can, answer, class</i>	The <u>handsome man</u> lost his <u>baggage</u> after his <u>travels</u> .
6. /ɑ/	<i>stop, lock, farm, want, army, possible, got</i>	John is positive that his <u>car</u> was parked in that <u>lot</u> .
7. /ə/	<i>come, up, jump, but, does, love, money, about</i>	Your <u>younger brother</u> <u>doesn't trust us</u> , <u>does he?</u>
8. /ɔ/	<i>all, fall, author, also, applaud, thought, fought</i>	<u>Paula</u> was doing <u>laundry</u> <u>all day long</u> .
9. /oʊ/	<i>go, slow, so, those, post, moment, drove</i>	Oh, no! <u>Don't open</u> the <u>window</u> ; it's <u>cold</u> .
10. /ʊ/	<i>look, took, put, foot, full, wolf, cookie</i>	He <u>would</u> read the <u>good book</u> if he <u>could</u> .
11. /u/	<i>cool, soup, moon, boot, tooth, move, true</i>	Sue <u>knew</u> about the <u>food</u> in the <u>room</u> .
12. /ər/	<i>her, work, sure, first, early, were, earn, occur</i>	What <u>were</u> the <u>first words</u> that <u>girl learned</u> ?
13. /aɪ/	<i>time, nine, dry, high, style, five, China</i>	I <u>advise</u> you to <u>ride</u> a <u>bicycle</u> in <u>China</u> .
14. /aʊ/	<i>south, house, cow, found, down, town</i>	He went <u>out</u> of the <u>house</u> for <u>about</u> an <u>hour</u> .
15. /ɔɪ/	<i>oil, choice, moist, enjoy, avoid, voice</i>	Let's <u>avoid</u> the <u>annoying noise</u> .

1. /i/ AS IN MEET

Track
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A *thief* believes everybody steals.

E.W. Howe

Lips: Slightly smiling, tense, not rounded.
Tongue: Tense, high and far forward near the roof of the mouth.

Common Spelling Patterns for /i/

1. ee
2. ea
3. ie and ei
4. final e
5. e + consonant + e
6. final y
7. endings with ique

meet, feel, see, free
team, reach, mean, sea
belief, piece, neither, receive
me, we, she, he
these, Chinese, Peter
city, duty, country, ability
unique, boutique, critique

Track
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Word Pairs for Practice

- | | |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| 1. deep sea | 6. green leaves |
| 2. beans and cheese | 7. extremely easy |
| 3. severe heat | 8. sweet dreams |
| 4. breathe deep | 9. peaches and cream |
| 5. three meals | 10. speak Chinese |

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Practice Sentences

1. The employees agreed to meet at eight fifteen.
2. Don't keep the TV near the heater.
3. It's extremely easy to cheat when the teacher isn't here.
4. Please speak to Peter about the employee meeting.
5. Steve will reread the email before he leaves.

Track
8

2. /ɪ/ AS IN SIT

In the middle of a difficulty lies opportunity.
Albert Einstein

Lips: Slightly parted, relaxed.

Tongue: Relaxed, high, but not as high as for /i/. Sides of the tongue touch upper back teeth.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ɪ/

1. *i* (most common) *sit, give, this, dinner*
2. *ui* *build, quit, quick, guilty*
3. *y* between two consonants *system, gym, symbol, hymn*

exceptions:

been

in American English *been* is pronounced the same as "bin," but in British English *been* sounds like "bean."

women

sounds like "wimin" (the *o* is an /ɪ/ sound)

busy

sounds like "bizzy"

Word Pairs for Practice

- | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|
| 1. big city | 6. fish and chips |
| 2. innocent victim | 7. trip to Italy |
| 3. drink milk | 8. spring picnic |
| 4. children's film | 9. this thing |
| 5. simple living | 10. winter wind |

Track
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Practice Sentences

- | |
|--|
| 1. Kim will visit her big sister Linda in Virginia. |
| 2. In the beginning it was difficult for Jim to quit drinking. |
| 3. The Smiths invited him to an informal dinner. |
| 4. This city has an interesting history. |
| 5. When did Bill Clinton visit the Middle East? |

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Quick Review

Word Contrasts for /i/ Versus /ɪ/

Make sure you don't pronounce these pairs of words the same.

/i/	/ɪ/	/i/	/ɪ/
1. leave	live	7. beat	bit
2. feel	fill	8. steal	still
3. least	list	9. each	itch
4. he's	his	10. seek	sick
5. sleep	slip	11. feet	fit
6. cheap	chip	12. sheep	ship

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Word Pairs for Practice

Make sure the two words in each pair are pronounced with different vowel sounds.

1. still sleepy
2. very interesting
3. feeling ill
4. it's easy
5. is he?
6. big deal
7. these things
8. Middle East
9. little meal
10. green pill

Track
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3. /eɪ/ AS IN TAKE

Take time for all things: great haste makes great waste.
Benjamin Franklin

Lips: Not rounded, relaxed.

Tongue: Tense, moves from the mid-high to high position.

Common Spelling Patterns for /eɪ/

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| 1. <i>a + consonant + e</i> | <i>late, came, take, save</i> |
| 2. <i>ai</i> | <i>rain, wait, pain, aim</i> |
| 3. <i>ay</i> | <i>say, away, play, Monday</i> |
| 4. <i>ey</i> | <i>they, survey, obey</i> |
| 5. <i>eigh</i> | <i>weigh, eight, neighbor, freight</i> |
| 6. <i>a</i> | <i>less common:
April, alien, angel</i> |

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Word Pairs for Practice

1. the same day
2. stay away
3. escape from jail
4. take a break
5. stay the same
6. explain the situation
7. play baseball
8. eighty-eight
9. bake a cake
10. save the whales

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Practice Sentences

1. She complained about her weight but ate the cake anyway.
2. Jake hates waiting for trains and planes.
3. It rains and hails in April and May.
4. I will stay in the game even though it's late.
5. My neighbor from Spain moved away today.

4. /ɛ/ AS IN GET

Track 16

Every exit is an entry somewhere.
Tom Stoppard

Lips: Farther apart than for /eɪ/ and relaxed.

Tongue: Relaxed, mid-high position.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ɛ/

exceptions:

said, says, again, against, any, many



Warning: Common Mistake

The verb *say* is pronounced with the /e/ sound in the past tense form and in the present tense form when it is followed by an *s*.

/eɪ/

/ɛ/

I say

I said

he says

Word Pairs for Practice

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- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------|
| 1. presidential election | 6. heavy metal |
| 2. bend your legs | 7. get better |
| 3. plenty of energy | 8. elegant dress |
| 4. remember the pledge | 9. next Wednesday |
| 5. better friend | 10. well read |

Practice Sentences

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- Without some extra effort, you will never excel.
 - Jenny and her friend had eggs for breakfast.
 - I expect this session to end at ten.
 - On the seventh of February, the weather was wet.
 - I see my best friend Fred every seven days.

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Quick Review

Word Contrasts for /ɛ/ Versus /eɪ/

Make sure you don't pronounce these pairs of words the same.

/ɛ/ and /eɪ/

1. pen pain
2. sell sail
3. wet wait
4. west waste

/ɛ/ and /eɪ/

5. tell tail
6. Ed aid
7. test taste
8. men main

Track
20

Word Pairs for Practice

Make sure the two words in each pair are pronounced with different vowel sounds.

1. less rain
2. taste test
3. neck pain
4. fell away

5. wet day
6. main men
7. great dress
8. headache

Track
21

5. /æ/ AS IN FAT

He who laughs last laughs best.

American proverb

Lips: Open, not rounded.

Tongue: Lowest of all the front vowels. Flat on the floor of the mouth.

Common Spelling Patterns for /æ/

a

hat, apple, man, answer

Track
22

Word Pairs for Practice

1. bad example
2. national anthem
3. back at the ranch
4. accurate answer
5. bad habit
6. practical plan
7. annual gathering
8. last chance
9. handsome actor
10. angry man

Track
23

Practice Sentences

1. This is your last chance to give me an accurate answer.
2. Sam sat at the back of the math class.
3. Danny had a salad and a sandwich in the cafeteria.
4. Nancy has a bad attitude in her Spanish class.
5. Kathy would rather study acting at the national academy.

Quick Review

Word Contrasts for /ɛ/ Versus /æ/

Make sure you don't pronounce these pairs of words the same.

/ɛ/	/æ/	/ɛ/	/æ/
1. men	man	5. guess	gas
2. said	sad	6. slept	slapped
3. end	and	7. head	had
4. then	than	8. expensive	expansive

Track
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Word Pairs for Practice

Make sure the two words in each pair are pronounced with different vowel sounds: /ɛ/ or /æ/.

1. sad endings
2. less land
3. angry men
4. ten gallons
5. last exit
6. bad friend

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6. /ɑ/ AS IN FATHER

Never go to a doctor whose office plants have died.

Erma Bombeck

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Lips: Apart, as if you are yawning. Not rounded.

Tongue: Relaxed, flat at the floor of the mouth.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ɑ/

o	hot, stop, modern, job
a	father, watch, dark, want

Track
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Word Pairs for Practice

1. common problem
2. body shop
3. occupy the office
4. office politics
5. top to bottom
6. logical response
7. hot topic
8. modern hospital
9. nonstop
10. sloppy job

Track
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Practice Sentences

1. Ronald is confident that he got the job.
2. Scott goes to a lot of rock concerts.
3. The doctor operated in the modern hospital.
4. Bob will probably lock the office.
5. He's got a lot of dollars in his pocket.

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Quick Review

Word Contrasts for /æ/ Versus /a/

Make sure you don't pronounce these pairs of words the same.

/æ/	/a/	/æ/	/a/
1. hat	hot	5. cap	cop
2. lack	lock	6. add	odd
3. sack	sock	7. rack	rock
4. sang	song	8. tap	top

Track
30

Word Pairs for Practice

Make sure the two words in each pair are pronounced with different vowel sounds: /æ/ or /a/.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. hot <u>p<u>an</u></u> | 4. got <u>b<u>ack</u></u> |
| 2. man's <u>j<u>ob</u></u> | 5. bad <u>d<u>og</u></u> |
| 3. top <u>a<u>nswer</u></u> | 6. back <u>p<u>ocket</u></u> |

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Advice from a Successful Student

"During my drive to and from work, I always listen to audio books. The speaker's voice is usually very clear and not sloppy like the speech I sometimes hear on the street. I listen closely to the accent of the speaker and try to imitate it. I play back certain parts over and over again. The more I do this, the better my accent gets."

Katarina Matolek, Croatia

Track
32

7. /ə/ AS IN FUN*

Love all, trust a few, do wrong to none.
William Shakespeare

Lips: Completely relaxed, slightly parted.

Tongue: Relaxed, middle position.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ə/

u

but, fun, summer, drunk

o

love, done, come, son

ou

cousin, country, enough

*The IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) symbol for the stressed vowel is /ʌ/ and for the unstressed vowel it is /ə/. They are basically the same sound. Throughout this book the /ə/ will be used for both. For further study of this reduced, neutral sound, refer to Chapter Five, which deals with syllable stress and reduced vowels.

Word Pairs for Practice

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| 1. young son | 6. under the rug |
| 2. jump up | 7. number one |
| 3. fun in the sun | 8. undercover |
| 4. another subject | 9. enough money |
| 5. wonderful mother | 10. Sunday brunch |

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Practice Sentences

1. Your younger brother doesn't trust us.
2. What country does he come from?
3. I had another fun summer in London.
4. I don't have much stuff in the trunk of my truck.
5. I love the sunny summer months.

Track
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Quick Review

Word Contrasts for /a/ Versus /ə/

Make sure you don't pronounce these pairs of words the same.

/a/	/ə/	/a/	/ə/
1. Don	done	5. lock	luck
2. shot	shut	6. non	none
3. fond	fund	7. robber	rubber
4. got	gut	8. doll	dull

Track
35

Word Pairs for Practice

Make sure the two words in each pair are pronounced with different vowel sounds: /a/ or /ə/.

- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. <u>come</u> <u>on</u> | 5. <u>fun</u> <u>job</u> |
| 2. <u>got</u> <u>lucky</u> | 6. <u>stop</u> <u>running</u> |
| 3. <u>not</u> <u>enough</u> | 7. <u>jump</u> <u>on</u> |
| 4. <u>cost</u> <u>much</u> | 8. <u>gunshot</u> |

Track
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8. /ɔ/ AS IN SAW

Courage is the first of human qualities because it is the quality which guarantees all the others.

Winston Churchill

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37

Lips: Apart, very slightly rounded, oval shape.

Tongue: Slightly tense, down near the floor of mouth.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ɔ/

<i>aw</i>	<i>saw, law, awful, awesome</i>
<i>au</i>	<i>author, August, applaud, audition</i>
<i>al</i>	<i>small, walk, tall, always</i>
<i>ought</i>	<i>bought, thought, fought</i>
<i>aught</i>	<i>daughter, caught</i>
<i>o</i>	<i>gone, off, long</i>

Track
38

Word Pairs for Practice

1. pause in the hall
2. awful thought
3. water the lawn
4. talk until dawn
5. autumn in Austria
6. walk the dog
7. small talk
8. already exhausted
9. tall wall
10. caught the ball

Track
39

Practice Sentences

1. The audience applauded even though the talk was awful.
2. His small daughter thought that Santa Claus would come in August.
3. I saw your mother-in-law in the mall.
4. He bought an automobile at the auction last fall.
5. This sauce is awesome, Paula!

Track
40

Quick Review

Word Contrasts for /ə/ Versus /ɔ/

Make sure you don't pronounce these pairs of words the same.

/ə/	/ɔ/	/ə/	/ɔ/
1. cut	caught	5. but	bought
2. hull	hall	6. sung	song
3. done	dawn	7. cuff	cough
4. dug	dog	8. flood	flawed

Track
41

Word Pairs for Practice

Make sure the two words in each pair are pronounced with different vowel sounds: /ə/ or /ɔ/.

1. another dog
2. long month
3. much talk
4. bought lunch
5. coffee cup
6. small club

9. /oʊ/ AS IN BOAT

Track
42

No bird soars too high if he soars with his own wings.
William Blake

Lips: Very rounded and tense.

Tongue: A bit tense, moves from mid to high position.

Common Spelling Patterns for /oʊ/

<i>o</i>	<i>no, don't, home, only</i>
<i>oa</i>	<i>road, coat, boat</i>
<i>ow</i>	<i>own, slow, window</i>
<i>ough</i>	<i>though, although</i>

Word Pairs for Practice

Track
43

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| 1. phone home | 6. don't smoke |
| 2. own a home | 7. low profile |
| 3. almost over | 8. slow motion |
| 4. open road | 9. old poem |
| 5. drove slowly | 10. golden bowl |

Practice Sentences

Track
44

1. We both hope it's going to snow.
2. Oh, no! Don't open the window! It's cold.
3. Do you want to go bowling or roller skating?
4. I chose a bowl of soup, potatoes, roast beef, and a soda.
5. I don't know if Joan smokes.

Quick Review

Track
45

Word Contrasts for /ɑ/, /ɔ/ Versus /oʊ/

Make sure you don't pronounce these pairs of words the same. Please note that /ɑ/ and /ɔ/ sound almost the same, and therefore are both listed in the first column.

/ɑ/, /ɔ/	/oʊ/	/ɑ/, /ɔ/	/oʊ/
1. bought	boat	6. caught	coat
2. law	low	7. walk	woke
3. clause	close	8. not	note
4. odd	owed	9. got	goat
5. want	won't	10. non	known

Track
46

Word Pairs for Practice

Make sure the two words in each pair are pronounced with different vowel sounds: /əʊ/ or /oʊ/

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. <u>old</u> <u>law</u> | 4. <u>odd</u> <u>boat</u> |
| 2. <u>not</u> <u>home</u> | 5. <u>walk</u> <u>slowly</u> |
| 3. <u>those</u> <u>dogs</u> | 6. <u>only</u> <u>daughter</u> |

Track
47

10. /ʊ/ AS IN GOOD

Without words, without writing and without books there would be no history, there could be no concept of humanity.

Hermann Hesse

Lips: Very slightly rounded.

Tongue: Relaxed, back is raised, higher than for /oʊ/.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ʊ/

<i>oo</i>	<i>good, look, childhood, understood</i>
<i>u</i>	<i>push, full, pull, sugar</i>
<i>ould</i>	<i>would, could, should</i>
<i>exception:</i>	<i>woman sounds like "wumun"</i>

Track
48

Word Pairs for Practice

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. good book | 6. sugar cookie |
| 2. took a look | 7. push and pull |
| 3. good looking | 8. wool pullover |
| 4. fully cooked | 9. wooden hook |
| 5. shook his foot | 10. good childhood |

Track
49

Practice Sentences

1. Would you help me look for my book?
2. The sugar cookies taste good.
3. The butcher is a good cook.
4. He would read the book if he could.
5. Butch visited his old neighborhood in Brooklyn.

Track
50

11. /u/ AS IN TOO

If you could choose one characteristic that would get you through life, choose a sense of humor.

Jennifer Jones

Lips: Tense, rounded, as if blowing a balloon.

Tongue: Slightly tense, high.

Common Spelling Patterns for /u/

<i>oo</i>	<i>too, food, school, tool</i>
<i>ue</i>	<i>true, blue, avenue</i>
<i>o</i>	<i>do, who, lose, prove</i>
<i>ew</i>	<i>new, blew, drew</i>
<i>u</i>	<i>super, rule, duty, student</i>

Word Pairs for Practice

Track
51

1. too few
2. fruit juice
3. soup spoon
4. new suit
5. true value
6. blue shoes
7. new moon
8. suitable suitcase
9. two rooms
10. super cool

Practice Sentences

Track
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1. The new roof was installed in June.
2. I drink fruit juice and eat a lot of soup.
3. Your blue shoes are really cool.
4. I need proof that you're telling the truth.
5. The statue on the avenue is truly beautiful.

Quick Review

Track
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Vowel Contrasts for /ʊ/ Versus /u/

Make sure you don't pronounce these pairs of words the same.

/ʊ/	/u/
1. full	fool
2. look	Luke

/ʊ/	/u/
3. pull	pool
4. stood	stewed

Word Pairs for Practice

Track
54

Make sure the two words in each pair are pronounced with different vowel sounds:
/ʊ/ or /u/.

1. good food
2. full room
3. cook stew
4. blue book
5. two cookies
6. too full

Track
55

12. /ər/ AS IN **BIRD**

Life is uncertain. Eat dessert first.

Ernestine Ulmer

Lips: Slightly rounded.

Tongue: Tense, mid-level position. Tip is curled up a bit and pulled back.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ər/

er	her, mercy, mother, winner
ear	heard, learn, earth
ir	first, girl, firm
or	doctor, word, worry
ur	occur, curtain, jury
ure	insecure, culture
ar	grammar, collar

Track
56

Word Pairs for Practice

1. first person
2. purple shirt
3. learn German
4. other world
5. serve dinner
6. third term
7. firm words
8. early bird
9. nervous girl
10. thirty-third

Track
57

Practice Sentences

1. I will work during the third term.
2. They served turkey for dinner.
3. Her purple shirt is dirty.
4. She gave birth to a third girl.
5. It's not worth worrying about another birthday.

Track
58

13. /ai/ AS IN **TIME**

*We must use time wisely and forever realize
that the time is always ripe to do right.*

Nelson Mandela

Lips: Open, not rounded, closing a bit when moving to the /i/ position.
Tongue: Relaxed, moves from flat to high position.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ai/

y
i
igh
ie

*fly, sky, apply, style
nice, kind, fine, sign
light, fight, sight, night
lie, tie, tried*

Word Pairs for Practice

- 1. lime pies
- 2. white wine
- 3. fly a kite
- 4. nice try
- 5. nine lives
- 6. bright light
- 7. fly high
- 8. sign on the line
- 9. fine dining
- 10. ninety-nine

Track
59

Practice Sentences

- 1. Why is the price so high for that design?
- 2. The wildfire started on Friday night.
- 3. He was tired after hiking for five hours.
- 4. It's a nine-hour drive to Iowa.
- 5. We had lime pie and dry white wine.

Track
60

14. /aʊ/ AS IN HOUSE

Track
61

It is better to keep your mouth closed and let people think you are a fool than to open it and remove all doubt.

Mark Twain

Lips: Start not rounded, but as you move toward /aʊ/, lips begin to close and become tense.

Tongue: Moves from relaxed, low to high position for the /aʊ/.

Common Spelling Patterns for /aʊ/

ou
ow

*found, loud, around, thousand
now, down, crowd, vowel*

Track
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Word Pairs for Practice

1. about an hour
2. crowded house
3. downtown
4. loud announcement
5. countdown
6. around the mountain
7. brown couch
8. found out
9. down and out
10. pronounce the vowel

Track
63

Practice Sentences

1. I doubt that the clown will say something profound.
2. There are flowers all around the house.
3. Is that your spouse in the brown blouse?
4. The clouds behind the mountain will bring showers.
5. The brown cow is near the fountain.

Track
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15. /ɔɪ/ AS IN BOY

Don't worry about avoiding temptation. As you get older, it will avoid you.
Winston Churchill

Lips: Move from slightly rounded, oval position to relaxed, slightly parted position.

Tongue: Relaxed, move from mid-high to high position.

Common Spelling Patterns for /ɔɪ/

oi

avoid, oil, moist, join

oy

enjoy, toy, employ, royal

Track
65

Word Pairs for Practice

1. enjoy the toy
2. spoiled boy
3. appointment in Detroit
4. broiled oysters
5. boiling point
6. annoying noise
7. destroy the poison
8. loyal employee
9. moist soil
10. avoid the moisture

Track
66

Practice Sentences

1. He destroyed the poison by flushing it down the toilet.
2. Roy had an appointment in Detroit.
3. Joyce is annoyed and a little paranoid.
4. I was disappointed with Joy's choice.
5. Why is Floyd avoiding Roy?