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BSc Degree

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English - I (Basic English)
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Diphthongs and Semi-Vowels

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Diphthongs and Semi-vowels




Welcome to the class. Today, we will talk about Diphthongs and Semi-Vowels in English. These two terms, diphthongs and semi vowels, they refer to two different types of sounds in English; we know there are sounds like consonants and vowels. If you look at the English sound system, English has total 44 sounds, out of which 24 of them are consonant sounds, and 20 of them are vowel sounds.


When we go into the details of that classification, then we find along vowels that are among 20 vowels, there are some vowels which are called diphthongs. And among consonants, there are two in particular and three in total sounds, which are called semi vowels. Keep in mind, semi vowels are consonants, and we are going to see and look at the details of those sounds and how they function.

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Consonants and Vowels



| | | | | | | |
|------|---------|-------|-------|--------|-------|--|
| I: | I | ʊ | u | ɪə | eɪ | John & Sarah Free Materials 1998 |
| READ | SIT | BOOK | TOO | HERE | DAY | |
| e | ə | ɜ: | ɔ: | ʊə | ɔɪ | əʊ |
| MEN | AMERICA | WORD | SHORT | TOUR | BOY | GO |
| æ | ʌ | ɑ: | ɒ | eə | aɪ | aʊ |
| CAT | BUT | PART | NOT | WEAR | MY | HOW |
| p | b | t | d | tʃ | dʒ | k |
| FIG | BED | TIME | DO | CHURCH | JUDGE | KILO |
| f | v | θ | ð | s | z | ʃ |
| FIVE | VERY | THINK | THE | SIX | ZOO | SHORT |
| m | n | ŋ | h | l | r | w |
| MILK | NO | SING | HELLO | LIVE | READ | WINDOW |
| | | | | | | j |
| | | | | | | YES |



This is what we know as 44 sounds of English in that the first 20 sounds are vowel sounds, and let us take a moment here to understand that. So, those sounds are ‘ea’ as in read, sit, this ‘e’ sound is shorter than the previous one as in sit, and likewise, you see all of them. So, this is a short ‘o’, so, in a word like book, and when we say a word too, then you have longer ‘oo’, then here is what I want to draw your attention to.

So, then you we have ‘a’ as a men, ‘a’ as in America, this shudder of sound, as in America, and then you have ‘o’ as a word and sort, this is another sound. Now, I want to draw your attention to some of these sounds, which are called diphthongs and I will talk about them in details again.

However, so look at this ‘e’ here. So, this one, ‘ay’ as in day, ‘our’ as in tour, ‘oy’ as in boy, and ‘o’ as in go. These are diphthongs sounds in English, which are called diphthong vowels. So, if you see, if you want to go my classification, you can see that some are mono thongs vowels and some are the diphthongs vowels. Diphthongs vowels simply mean a sound which starts with one vowel, but ends with another that vowel is called diphthong. We will look at the details of that.

Now, among the consonant sounds, you have these 24 sounds is consonants. Look at the last three, ‘r’, ‘w’ and ‘y’, the classification of these consonant sounds interesting to know and for complete understanding of the sounds that become so specific and so particular to help our help improve our pronunciation, help improve how we speak, how we understand and so

much more. It is important to know these sounds in detail and therefore, we are spending this time on explaining particular types of sounds to you, so that it helps you better.

One more time being familiar with the sounds of the language we want to focus on and improve is fundamental for improving our language, knowing the sounds in terms of their places of articulations and manners of articulations, helps us immensely in improving our language. With these two fundamental principles, we work on it and we move further to explain the sounds to you.

So, 'r' is a sound, one type of sound and 'w' and 'y' they form one category. So, 'w' and 'y' are particularly known as semi vowels. You may have a question in your mind, these are consonant sounds. So, why are they called semi-vowels? The reason is very simple, they are consonant sounds, but they function more like a vowel. Therefore they are called semi-vowel. And I will show you, I will explain what I mean when I say they functional like vowels. They help vowels, therefore they are called semi-vowels.

Why not semi consonants? That is not an important question for us because they are consonants they are full consonants. So, they cannot be called semi-consonants. They are called semi vowels because they help vowels they functional like vowel. Again, third question for the sake of an argument, why if they function like vowels, then why not full vowels, they are not full vowels, because you will learn it later in the course, that vowels sounds are fundamental for syllabification, allow me a moment here to tell you.

Syllable is a smaller unit of word, some words are monosyllabic, that is, even one syllable can be a full word. A word can have more than one syllable. So, when we want to understand words in details, so moving from sounds to words, it is helpful to understand syllables. And one specific thing that you must know about the syllable is every syllable must have a vowel sound in it. Therefore, vowels are also called syllabic sounds.

Now, coming back to semi-vowels, semi-vowels are not syllabic, therefore, they cannot be full vowels, hope this makes sense to you.

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8

Diphthongs

12

Monophthongs

DIPHTHONGS

/eɪ/ as in 'take' /tʰeɪk/

/aɪ/ as in 'buy' /baɪ/

/ɔɪ/ as in 'boy' /bɔɪ/

/ɪə/ as in 'fear' /fɪə/

/eə/ as in 'care' /kə/

/əʊ/ as in 'go'

/ʊə/ as in 'poor'

/aʊ/ as in 'cow'



Now, we start with diphthongs, and then we will go to semi-vowels in this class. So, these are the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 of them are diphthongs vowels in English. So, you can clearly see the distinction that 12 of them are monophthongs, that is, they have only one vowel quality. That is, they start with one and end with one. This one, these eight of them have these eight of them start with one, end with the other, and therefore they are called diphthongs. What do we mean when we say start with one and end with the other? Look at this, this one, a starts with 'a' and ends with 'e'.

Now, when we talk about these sounds in isolation, we can also say if they are too if they are they look like combinations of two different vowel sounds. Then why do not we take them as two different vowel sounds? Actually, they are not two different vowel sounds when we say them, when we speak them in the in flow in a word. So, they form a special category. Let us take it as given and there are eight of them. So, first one is 'a' as in how do we pronounce this word take, 'take'. This paying attention to these sounds will help you improve your pronunciation we can say 'take', 'take'.

Now, we can reach that pronunciation only when we know that the vowel sound here is a take. 'ai', 'buy', 'ai', 'buy' as in buy, 'oi' as in boy, 'ea' as in fear, 'ar' as in care, 'au' as in go, 'oh', as in poor, 'au' as in cow. So, if you write the phonetic transcription of these words that are given here, this is how it becomes. So, you have 't', 'ei' and 'k'.

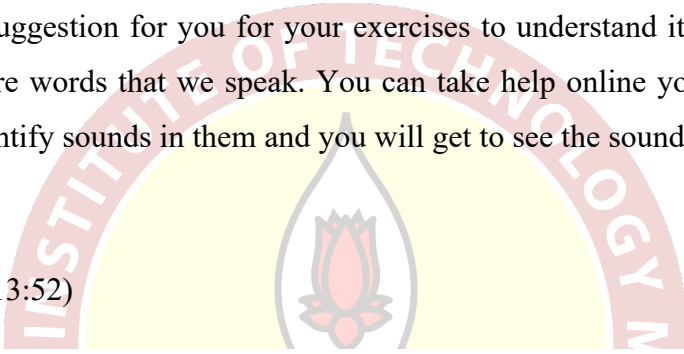

So, there are three sounds in this word, consonant, vowel and consonant only three sounds and this t also becomes little aspirated, you will get to learn that further. So, it is pronounced

as take, three consonants, three sounds in this word 't', 'ei' and 'k', take, buy you have 'b', 'ei', boy, 'b', 'o' and 'a' this is the phonetic transcription of boy. So, when you write words with their phonetic transcriptions and identifying sounds, that is the process to help improve our pronunciation. Fear, so, we have sound for 'f', 'e' and 'r'. Care, 'k', 'e', 'a' and 'r', care.

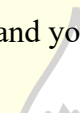
So, likewise, I suggest you do the phonetic the transcription of these words and more to find this 8 sounds, important part, 8 diphthongs and 12 monophthongs, this is the classification of vowels, vowel sounds in English that is further classification. So, at one level to conclude this part at one level we have seen, all sounds being classified in two parts, consonants and vowels, 20 vowels. When we look further, we see 12 monophthongs, 8 diphthongs, this is are the 8 diphthongs, this is how they sound, this is how they appear in words.


At this stage, one suggestion for you for your exercises to understand it further. Please find these sounds in more words that we speak. You can take help online you can take, you can read a word and identify sounds in them and you will get to see the sounds as well.

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- Diphthongs are sounds which consist of a movement or a glide from one vowel to the other.
- In other words, diphthongs are produced by combining two vowels.
Eg. /ei/ is a diphthong that combines the two vowels /e/ and /i/.
- The first sound in the combination is articulated longer and stronger than the second one.
- In terms of length, they are like the long vowels.






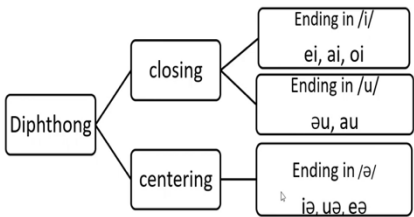

So, diphthongs are sounds, this is what we conclude with, which consists of movement of a glide from one vowel to another. That is, starts as one ends with the other. This process is known as glide. In other words, is pronounced by combining two vowel sound, sounds that we when we speak it but they are one gliding from one to the other. The first sound in the


combination is articulated longer and stronger than the second one. And in terms of length, they are like long vowels.

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There are eight diphthongs and they can be understood through the diagram given below.






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Examples

| ei | ai | oi | əu | au | iə | uə | eə |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| <u>t</u> ake | h <u>i</u> gh | b <u>o</u> y | s <u>l</u> ow | b <u>o</u> wl | p <u>ee</u> rs | j <u>u</u> ry | p <u>a</u> ir |
| <u>a</u> im | ic <u>e</u> | o <u>i</u> l | ow <u>e</u> | ow <u>l</u> | ear | ---- | air |
| pr <u>e</u> y | fl <u>y</u> | all <u>o</u> y | g <u>o</u> | c <u>o</u> w | cl <u>ea</u> r | c <u>u</u> re | care |
| br <u>e</u> ak | typ <u>e</u> | voic <u>e</u> | fl <u>o</u> at | br <u>o</u> w | f <u>ea</u> r | po <u>o</u> r | bear |
| l <u>a</u> te | rig <u>h</u> t | to <u>y</u> | lon <u>e</u> | all <u>o</u> w | re <u>a</u> l | fu <u>e</u> l | the <u>i</u> r |


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So, you have seen 8 diphthongs and this is what they are and see more examples of them. So, take you have already seen, high, boy, you have seen slow, bowl, peers, jury, pair, all these words when you practice further, take more words and practice them, you will get to see these vowel sounds, you will also need to practice the distinction between monophthongs and diphthongs for better understanding of syllabification and your pronunciation.

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Semi-vowels



- The sounds w and y in English are called semi-vowels.
- There is no blockage of air in the articulation of w and y, thus giving it a vowel-like quality.
- However, w and y are non-syllabic in nature. This means that unlike vowels they do not form syllables.
- Owing to the above reason, they are referred to as consonants.



Now, we move to semi vowels in this class. There are two sounds, there 'w' and 'y' they are called semi-vowels in English. There is no block as of an air in articulation of 'w' and 'y', remember. We discussed in the beginning why are they called semi-vowels, one more reason why they are called semi-vowels and why they appear like a vowel. If you look at places of articulations and the way we articulate a consonant sound, consonant sounds are always produced with obstruction in the vocal tract.

As you understand, exhaling flow of air is responsible for producing speech sounds, and at different places in our oral cavity, in the entire vocal tract, the flow is stopped and modified in various ways, which give us different consonant sounds. This obstruction is important for consonant sounds, for a semi-vowel, which is known as a consonant, there is no obstruction, they are produced like vowel, that is without or very little obstruction.

This is what we mean when we say there is no block is of air in articulation of 'w' and 'y', thus giving a vowel-like quality. However, 'w' and 'y' are non-syllabic. We discussed they, they can be part of a word, but for that word to be a syllable, we need another vowel sound in that mere presence of either one of the two will not constitute a syllable.

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Examples



| /w/ | /y/ /j/ |
|-----------------------|------------------------|
| <u>w</u> ell | yesterday |
| <u>w</u> orld | intr <u>u</u> sion /j/ |
| t <u>w</u> in | be <u>a</u> uty /j/ |
| s <u>u</u> ite /w/ | steward /j/ |
| acq <u>u</u> ire /kw/ | <u>f</u> ew /j/ |

question /kw/



Now, when we try to see some words with 'w', let us look at this well, world, twin, suite acquire with 'w', with 'y' sound you have words like yesterday, intrusion, intrusion, beauty, steward, few. Now, important point to note here, these, remember these are sounds. So, and they are written this way with these symbols. But, these sounds appear in words not always when we spell a word with these symbols.

So, in some words they do like well, you see being spell with 'w', world, you see the same thing happening, twin, you see 'w' coming in the middle of the word not in the initial position, but look at this suite, you do have a 'w' sound here in this word. But there is no 't', acquire, here you see 'k' and 'w' sound in this word. But there is no 't' there are more words like questions, question here also, you have 'k' and 'w'.

So, there are so many words where you do have a 'w' sound that is a semi-vowel. Same way in when 'y' sound appears in a word, it may appear with 'y' as a symbol, but it may not appear as well in the word like intrusion. Look at this here. In fact, in terms of a phonetic transcription, this is how 'y' sound is written. So, in this you will see a 'y' sound here. In Beauty also you see 'y' sound, in steward also you see 'y' sound and few of course there is 'y' sound. You can have more words of this type to check where you get 'y' sound with 'y' or not.

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Semi-vowels



- y and w
- These sounds do not occur at word final positions.
 - Window ɔɪ
 - Cow aɪ
 - Happy /ɪ/
 - Monday /eɪ/
- y and w sounds are not in the final positions.




Another important point about semi-vowels is that these semi-vowels that is 'y' and 'w' they may occur in a word, but they do not occur at a final position, that is these sounds will never come at the word final position. Somebody can come up with counter examples of this statement that semi-vowels do not occur in a final positions, somebody can say look at this word window, there is a 'w' at the end of this cow, there is a w at the end of it happy, there is your sound at the end of it, there is 'y', 'y' and Monday there are many words where you have a word ending with 'y'.

The question is not whether they end with 'w' or 'y' in their spelling, if you have understood, you do not need explanation further that we are not talking about spelling of a word, we are talking about sounds and in these words also there is no semi-vowel sound at the end of these words. So, in the word window, you have diphthongs, cow you have 'a' and 'o', 'o' and 'u' in window, happy you have 'e' sound, Monday you have this diphthong, not semi-vowels. So, they do not these two sounds are not in the final position of the these words. Then, so, this is the introduction of semi-vowel.

So, you know so many things about semi-vowels, you know what those sounds are, you know the distinction between sound and spelling, you know that they do not occur in the final position of your word. You know that they are not syllabic, because for making a syllable they need another vowel and therefore, they are called vowel sounds, semi vowel sounds, not full vowels. For their production, they can be produced without much obstruction in the oral


tract but, and therefore, they sound like a vowel and still because they are non-syllabic they are called semi-vowels.

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Functions of Semi-vowels

- Go away /w/
- I am late. /ɪ/
- Say it. /ɪ/
- Buy it. /ɪ/
- Put your shoe on /w/
- Blue is my favorite color. /ɪ/
- Three years /ɪ/



So, you know, so many things about what vowels. Now is the time for you to know where is it used and what is its function in the alignments, here I need your attention. When you say these, I have few phrases written here on this slide. When you say these words, pay attention to what is happening and I am referring to how these things will be spoken or how these things are spoken by speakers of English who grew up speaking English. So, look at this go away. Now, in all these words, I am going to underline some parts, I am late, say it, buy it, put your shoe on, blue is my favorite color, three years.

When you pay attention to these underlying parts of these phrases or sentences, you will be realize that these phrases in sentences one word ends with a vowel sound. And the following word begins with a vowel sound, check that. Go ends with a vowel sound and away begins with the vowel sound. So, when you have this situation I is a vowel sound and am also has a vowel sound in the beginning of it. Say has a vowel sound at the end of say, and it has a vowel sound in the beginning of it. Shoe on, shoe has a vowel sound at the end of the word and on has a vowel sound in the beginning of the word.

Blue is, blue has a vowel sound at the end of the word, and is as vowel sound in the beginning of the word. And three has a vowel sound at the end of it, and years has a vowel sound in the beginning of it. This is what we mean, when I am asking you to pay attention to these things. Now, in a normal regular spoken language there is a period of transition in these

two words. So, to help the transition from one vowel to the other, there is a semi-vowel inserted in each one of these instances. And when you point it out, you will see that this is the actual function of semi-vowels.

So, when we say go away, there between the two, there appears to be a w sound. I am late, I am I am late, so, see, when you when we hear this in regular speech, faster speech, there is a 'y' sound between I am, I am, I am, there is 'y' sound in between. Say it, say it, before a you have 'y' sound again, same thing buy it. Put your shoe on, so, it sounds like shoe one. So, there is a 'w', 'w' sound here. Blue is in this case 'y' sound and three years of course 'y' sound.

So, this is a function of a semi-vowel where in the first speech are normal regular speech for transition between two vowel sounds which belongs to two different words we see the appearance of a specific sound and they are either one of the two semi-vowels 'y' and 'w'. Now, if you go into further details, you will see the distribution of 'y' and 'w' is also not random.

When you have a rounded vowel, you have 'w's' and otherwise you have 'y's'. So, the distribution of 'y' and 'w' is also fully mattered, there is a rule for 'y' 'a' 'w' sound must come and 'y' 'a' 'y' sound must come. But the function is to help the transition between two vowel sounds belonging to two different words. This is one of the most important function of semicolons. This happens in other languages as well but here we are specifically discussing some examples of English.

Now again, I recommend you, I we did some examples, I recommend you to look at some more, some more words, phrases, sentences, and pay attention to that. When you listen to people who speak English, particularly speakers of English, those who grew up speaking English, you will notice these things and an understanding of semi vowels in this fashion will help you understand others make sense, faster and more carefully.

When you hear others, it would sound like you did not understand what they say. These are the things we need to pay attention to. Again, I stop it by telling you a careful understanding of these information. That is information about the diphthongs, types of vowels and semi-vowels will help you improve not only your pronunciation that is not only how you speak, but also understanding how others speak. With that, we stop here. See you next time with some other information. Thank you.