

Basics 2. English sounds: symbols (IPA) to represent English vowels

Fundamental distinctions in the vowels of English:

	IPA	Examples	Remarks
1	[i]	seat, beat, heat, need, believe, leave, scene	Single vowel - tense 'i'
2	[ɪ]	sit, hit, bit, it, bin, begin, give, live	Single vowel - lax 'i'
3	[ɛ]	pet, met, set, pending, send, any, many	Single vowel ("epsilon")
4	[æ]	pat, mat, sat, pan, sand, apple, cat, land	Single vowel ("ash")
5	[ʌ]	cod, cop, pop, mop, father, option, olive	Single vowel (big A)
6	[u]	pool, fool, noon, moon, cool, food, news	Single vowel - tense 'u'
7	[ʊ]	pull, full, would, should, could, wood, wool	Single vowel - lax 'u'
8	[ʌ]	cut, but, come, love, sun, son, number	Single vowel ('wedge', 'caret', or turned 'v')
9	[ɔ]	caught, bought, taught, law, saw	Single vowel (open 'o')
10	[ə]	ago, again, condition, occur, reason, happen	Single vowel (schwa)
11	[eɪ]	game, name, great, mate, rate, late, gate	Double vowel
12	[aɪ]	pie, my, sigh, light, right, might	Double vowel
13	[aʊ]	cow, how, now, mountain	Double vowel
14	[oʊ]	radio, go, so, no, mow, toll, goal	Double vowel
15	[ɔɪ]	toy, boy, avoid, noise, choice, voice, oil, oyster	Double vowel
16	[ɜ]	turn, burn, herb, curl, perfect, service	vowel + 'r' when stressed
17	[ər]	baker, doctor, percent, teacher, color	vowel + 'r' when unstressed

* Important: Note that the pronunciation of English vowels can vary significantly depending on the region or dialect. In this course, we will focus on General American English pronunciation, which is prevalent in North America and often considered the standard.

➡ Examples showing regional differences in pronouncing vowels

[1] vowel [ɔ] 'daughter' 'coffee' 'law' 'mouse'

American English 1
 American English 2
 British English 1
 British English 2

[2] Stress and vowel pronunciation a. Ca'ribbean (AE) b. ,Carib'bean (BE)

Canadian English pronunciation: <https://public.oed.com/how-to-use-the-oed/key-to-pronunciation/pronunciations-for-world-englishes/key-to-pronunciation-canadian-english/>