



# International Phonetic Alphabet for American English - IPA Chart

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You can obtain the phonetic transcription of English words automatically with the [English phonetic translator](#).

On this page, you will find **charts with all American English consonant and vowel sounds**.

You can choose one of the two phonetic transcription systems - both use the symbols of International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA):

1. **Broad**, or **phonemic**, transcription, for example, /'wɒtə/
2. **Narrow** transcription, for example, ['wɒɾə]

To understand the difference, [read the footnotes and learn what allophones and phonemes are](#) and how they will help you improve your pronunciation in English.

Click on any word in the chart to watch a video with a native speaker pronouncing this word!

## Consonants in American English

### Transcription

narrow

broad (phonemic)

both

Allophone	Phoneme	At the beginning of a word	In the middle of a word	At the end of a word
[p]	/p/	<a href="#">place</a> /'pleɪs/	<a href="#">company</a> /'kʌmpəni/	<a href="#">group</a> /'gru:p/
[p <sup>h</sup> ]	/p/	<a href="#">part</a> /'pɑ:t/	<a href="#">support</a> /sə'pɔ:t/	-
[b]	/b/	<a href="#">be</a> /'bi/	<a href="#">number</a> /'nʌmbə/	<a href="#">job</a> /'dʒʌb/
[t]	/t/	<a href="#">today</a> /tə'deɪ/	<a href="#">still</a> /'stɪl/	<a href="#">get</a> /'ɡet/
[t <sup>h</sup> ]	/t/	<a href="#">two</a> /'tu/	<a href="#">attention</a> /ə'tenʃən/	-
[ɾ]	/t/ or /d/	-	<a href="#">water</a> /'wɔ:tə/	-
[ʔ]	/t/	-	<a href="#">certain</a> /'sɜ:tən/	-
[d]	/d/	<a href="#">day</a> /'deɪ/	<a href="#">words</a> /'wɜ:dz/	<a href="#">need</a> /'ni:d/

[k]	/k/	<a href="#">quite</a> /'kwaɪt/	<a href="#">next</a> /'nɛkst/	<a href="#">like</a> /'laɪk/
[kʰ]	/k/	<a href="#">come</a> /'kʌm/	<a href="#">account</a> /ə'kaʊnt/	-
[g]	/g/	<a href="#">go</a> /'gəʊ/	<a href="#">together</a> /tə'geðə/	<a href="#">big</a> /'bɪg/
[m]	/m/	<a href="#">me</a> /'mi/	<a href="#">women</a> /'wɪmən/	<a href="#">same</a> /'seɪm/
[ŋ]	/ŋ/	-	<a href="#">circumstances</a> /'sɜːkm ,stænsəz/	-
[n]	/n/	<a href="#">know</a> /'noʊ/	<a href="#">another</a> /ə'nʌðə/	<a href="#">then</a> /'ðen/
[ŋ]	/ŋ/	-	<a href="#">student</a> /'studnt/	<a href="#">person</a> /'pɜːsn/
[ŋ]	/ŋ/	-	<a href="#">think</a> /'θɪŋk/	<a href="#">thing</a> /'θɪŋ/
[f]	/f/	<a href="#">few</a> /'fju/	<a href="#">often</a> /'ɔfən/	<a href="#">life</a> /'laɪf/
[v]	/v/	<a href="#">voice</a> /'vɔɪs/	<a href="#">ever</a> /'evə/	<a href="#">give</a> /'gɪv/
[θ]	/θ/	<a href="#">three</a> /'θri/	<a href="#">nothing</a> /'nʌθɪŋ/	<a href="#">death</a> /'deθ/
[ð]	/ð/	<a href="#">there</a> /'ðer/	<a href="#">mother</a> /'mʌðə/	<a href="#">smooth</a> /'smuð/
[s]	/s/	<a href="#">say</a> /'seɪ/	<a href="#">also</a> /'ɔl,səʊ/	<a href="#">yes</a> /'jes/
[z]	/z/	<a href="#">zone</a> /'zəʊn/	<a href="#">music</a> /'mjuzɪk/	<a href="#">does</a> /'dʌz/

[ʃ]	/ʃ/	<a href="#">she</a> /'ʃi/	<a href="#">social</a> /'soʊʃəl/	<a href="#">fish</a> /'fɪʃ/
[ʒ]	/ʒ/	<a href="#">genre</a> /'ʒɑnʒə/	<a href="#">decision</a> /dɪ'sɪʒən/	<a href="#">garage</a> /gə'ʒɑʒ/
[h]	/h/	<a href="#">how</a> /'haʊ/	<a href="#">perhaps</a> /pə'hæps/	-
[tʃ]	/tʃ/	<a href="#">child</a> /'tʃaɪld/	<a href="#">teacher</a> /'titʃə/	<a href="#">much</a> /'mʌtʃ/
[dʒ]	/dʒ/	<a href="#">just</a> /'dʒʌst/	<a href="#">major</a> /'meɪdʒə/	<a href="#">age</a> /'eɪdʒ/
[j]	/j/	<a href="#">yet</a> /'jɛt/	<a href="#">million</a> /'mɪljən/	-
[w]	/w/	<a href="#">when</a> /'wɛn/	<a href="#">away</a> /ə'weɪ/	-
[ɹ]	/ɹ/	<a href="#">right</a> /'raɪt/	<a href="#">through</a> /'θru/	-
[l]	/l/	<a href="#">last</a> /'læst/	<a href="#">believe</a> /bə'liv/	-
[ɔ]	/ɔ/	-	<a href="#">old</a> /'oʊld/	<a href="#">well</a> /'wel/
[ɪ]	/ɪ/	-	<a href="#">models</a> /'mɒdlz/	<a href="#">little</a> /'lɪtl/

## Vowels in American English

Transcription

narrow

broad (phonemic)

both

Allophone	Phoneme	At the beginning of a word	In the middle of a word	At the end of a word
[i]	/i/	<a href="#">even</a> /i'ven/	<a href="#">these</a> /'ðiz/	<a href="#">we</a> /'wi/
[ɪ]	/ɪ/	<a href="#">if</a> /'ɪf/	<a href="#">which</a> /'wɪtʃ/	<a href="#">many</a> /'meni/
[e]	/e/	-	<a href="#">vacation</a> /ve'keɪʃən/	-
[ɛ]	/ɛ/	<a href="#">any</a> /'ɛni/	<a href="#">said</a> /'sed/	-
[æ]	/æ/	<a href="#">ask</a> /'æsk/	<a href="#">back</a> /'bæk/	-
[u]	/u/	<a href="#">oozing</a> /'uziŋ/	<a href="#">school</a> /'skul/	<a href="#">who</a> /'hu/
[ʊ]	/ʊ/	-	<a href="#">good</a> /'gʊd/	-
[o]	/o/	<a href="#">okay</a> /o'keɪ/	<a href="#">November</a> /no'vembə/	-
[ɔ]	/ɔ/	<a href="#">all</a> /'ɔl/	<a href="#">want</a> /'wɒnt/	<a href="#">saw</a> /'sɔ/
[ɑ]	/ɑ/	<a href="#">October</a> /ək'təʊbə/	<a href="#">not</a> /'nat/	<a href="#">grandma</a> /'grænd ,mɑ/
[ə]	/ə/	<a href="#">about</a> /ə'baʊt/	<a href="#">people</a> /'pipl̩/	<a href="#">idea</a> /aɪ'diə/
[ʌ]	/ʌ/	<a href="#">other</a> /'ʌðə/	<a href="#">one</a> /'wʌn/	-

## R-colored vowels in American English

## Transcription

narrow

broad (phonemic)

both

Allophone	Phoneme	At the beginning of a word	In the middle of a word	At the end of a word
[ə]	/ə/	<a href="#">around</a> /ə'ʌʊnd/	<a href="#">percent</a> /pə'sent/	<a href="#">never</a> /'nevə/
[ɜ]	/ɜ/	<a href="#">early</a> /'ɜːli/	<a href="#">first</a> /'fɜːst/	<a href="#">sir</a> /'sɜ/
[ɪr]	/ɪr/	<a href="#">ears</a> /'ɪrz/	<a href="#">years</a> /'jɪrz/	<a href="#">here</a> /'hɪr/
[ɛr]	/ɛr/	<a href="#">airport</a> /'ɛr,pɔrt/	<a href="#">therefore</a> /'ðɛr,fɔr/	<a href="#">where</a> /'wɛr/
[ʊr]	/ʊr/	-	<a href="#">insurance</a> /ɪn'ʃʊərəns/	<a href="#">sure</a> /'ʃʊr/
[ɔr]	/ɔr/	<a href="#">order</a> /'ɔrdə/	<a href="#">morning</a> /'mɔːnɪŋ/	<a href="#">more</a> /'mɔːr/
[ɑr]	/ɑr/	<a href="#">art</a> /'ɑrt/	<a href="#">large</a> /'lɑːdʒ/	<a href="#">far</a> /'fɑr/

## Diphthongs in American English

### Transcription

narrow

broad (phonemic)

both

Allophone	Phoneme	At the beginning of a word	In the middle of a word	At the end of a word
[aɪ]	/aɪ/	<a href="#">eyes</a> /'aɪz/	<a href="#">time</a> /'taɪm/	<a href="#">why</a> /'waɪ/

[aʊ]	/aʊ/	<a href="#">out</a> /'aʊt/	<a href="#">down</a> /'daʊn/	<a href="#">now</a> /'naʊ/
[ɔɪ]	/ɔɪ/	<a href="#">oil</a> /'ɔɪəl/	<a href="#">point</a> /'pɔɪnt/	<a href="#">boy</a> /'bɔɪ/
[eɪ]	/eɪ/	<a href="#">able</a> /'eɪbəl/	<a href="#">make</a> /'meɪk/	<a href="#">way</a> /'weɪ/
[oʊ]	/o/	<a href="#">over</a> /'oʊvə/	<a href="#">both</a> /'boʊθ/	<a href="#">so</a> /'soʊ/

## Footnotes for the IPA chart

### Phonemes and allophones – definitions

A **phoneme** is a speech sound that is capable of changing the meaning of a word. For example, substituting the last sound in the word *kiss* with the sound /l/ creates another word – *kill*. Therefore, /s/ and /l/ are phonemes.

**Phonemic transcription** uses phonemes to show the pronunciation of words. It is written between slashes, as in the examples below:

- kiss /'kɪs/
- kill /'kɪl/

This type of transcription is sometimes called **broad** since it doesn't show small differences between similar sounds. To show the exact pronunciation of a word, **narrow transcription** is needed. For the same two words, for example, we would write:

- kiss ['kʰɪs]
- kill ['kʰɪɫ]

Note that in narrow transcription, square brackets are used instead of slashes. In our example, narrow transcription also uses slightly different symbols. Why? Because each phoneme in a language may have several different pronunciations. These variant pronunciations of the same **phoneme** are called **allophones**.

Let's take the **phoneme** /k/, for example. In English there are two

## allophones of /k/:

- unaspirated [k], as in *quite* ['kwaɪt]
- aspirated [k<sup>h</sup>] with a strong burst of breath after the release, as in *kill* ['k<sup>h</sup>ɪl]

Now you may wonder – why do I need to know all this? It looks complicated! Well, at first sight, it is. But if you really want to improve your pronunciation and sound like a native speaker, we highly recommend familiarizing yourself with all the **allophones** (different variants) of each **phoneme** in English language.

Let's take the phoneme /t/, for example, in the following English words: *today*, *two*, *water*, *certain*. If you look up their pronunciation in a dictionary, most likely you will find something like this:

- today /tə'deɪ/
- two /'tuː/
- water /'wɔtə/ or /'wɔtər/
- certain /'sɜːt(ə)n/

All four words have the "same" phoneme /t/. But does it sound the same? No! In **narrow transcription** (which shows the exact pronunciation, remember?) the same words would be transcribed like this:

- today [tə'deɪ]
- two ['t<sup>h</sup>u]
- water ['wɔɾə]
- certain ['sɜːʔn]

That means that the phoneme /t/ has at least four allophones:

- unaspirated [t],
- aspirated [t<sup>h</sup>],
- alveolar tap [ɾ] which sounds almost like [d],
- glottal stop [ʔ] which is produced by obstructing airflow in the vocal tract (glottis).

When you use [English phonetic translator](#) on this site and want to



obtain **narrow transcription**, make sure to select the following options (the second option is only available for American English):

- Insert the symbol [h] after aspirated consonants
- Display allophones for phonemes /t/ and /l/

Conversely, if you want to obtain **broad transcription**, unselect these two options.

## International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) symbols used in this chart

The phonetic symbols used in this IPA chart may be slightly different from what you will find in other sources, including in [this comprehensive IPA chart for English dialects in Wikipedia](#).

It was difficult to decide which set of IPA symbols to use for [English phonetic translator](#) and the IPA chart on this page. We eventually decided to follow the recommendations from the book by Larry H. Small [Fundamentals of Phonetics](#), 4th Edition. The book provides a very good summary of all the content from other sources.

In the following table, you will find the features of the phonetic transcription used in this book.

Feature	Transcription in <i>Fundamentals of Phonetics</i>	Transcription in most American English dictionaries
Syllabic consonants /l/, /m/ and /n/ are displayed with a little vertical line below. Example words: little, student	/'lɪt̚l/ /'stud̚nt/	/'lɪt(ə)l/ /'stud(ə)nt/
Stressed /'əɹ/ is written as /ɜ̃/, unstressed /əɹ/ – as /ə̃/.	/'fɜ̃st/ /'ʌðɜ̃/	/'fəɹst/ /'ʌðəɹ/
Example words: first, other		

Unstressed /eɪ/ is written /ve'keɪʃən/ /veɪ'keɪʃən/  
as /e/, unstressed /oʊ/ – /'foʊtoz/ /'foʊtoʊz/  
as /o/. In the final /'foʊtoʊ/  
position they remain  
diphthongs /eɪ/ and /oʊ/  
even if unstressed.  
Example words: vacation,  
photos

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No elongation symbol [ː] /'it/ /'iːt/  
is used for the phonemes /'ɡrʊp/ /'ɡruːp/  
/u/ and /i/.  
Example words: eat,  
group

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