



20 Read the pairs of words 1–4. Then listen and underline the word you hear.

1 skid
skied

2 pitch
peach

3 full
fool

4 wok
walk

Work with an English-speaking friend. Say one of the words from each pair above. Your friend must guess whether it is a word with a long or short vowel sound. Then swap roles.

21 English spelling is far from phonetic, but certain letters are often used to represent certain sounds, and this can help you to guess whether a word has a long or short vowel sound. Look at the table below. Add at least one more example word for each vowel spelling.

Vowel sounds	Common spellings	Example words
/ɪ/	i	igloo _____
/i:/	ee	tree _____
	ea	beach _____
	e	he _____
/æ/	a	bat _____
/ɑ:/	ar	far _____
	a	plant _____
/ɒ/	o	dog _____
/ɔ:/	or	tortoise _____
	a	fall _____
	aw	paw _____

Vowel sounds	Common spellings	Example words
/ʌ/	u	sun _____
/e/	e	nest _____
/ɜ:/	er	person _____
	ir	girl _____
	ur	hurt _____
/u:/	oo	moon _____
	u	computer _____
/ʊ/	u	put _____
	oo	foot _____
	ou	could _____

Exam tip: In the IELTS Speaking exam, the examiner will listen for accurate pronunciation of short and long vowel sounds.

Which vowel sounds do you find it difficult to pronounce, maybe because they do not exist in your language? Find words with these sounds, find a 'talking' dictionary (electronic or online) so you can hear the words being pronounced, and practise saying them.

Which vowel sounds do you find it difficult to differentiate? Find minimal pairs, where the only difference between two words is the vowel sound. You can find examples of minimal pairs online or in pronunciation books. Practise pronouncing the minimal pairs accurately.

22 Ask an English-speaking friend to listen to your recorded answer to the Part 2 questions in Exercise 12. What do they think of your pronunciation of vowel sounds? Are any of your vowel sounds unclear or inaccurate? Practise those sounds and then re-record your answer, focusing on your pronunciation.