



Pronunciation

The Pronunciation of Vowels in American English

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Grammar Points

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Grammar Points

The Focus of This Lesson Is the Pronunciation of Vowels in American English.

In these five lessons, we will explain American pronunciation in detail so that you have a better understanding of how the language works. As you know, different languages have different sounds, and sometimes it is difficult to imitate the sound of another language when learning it. Here, we will try to break down General American English pronunciation so that you can see why you may have difficulty hearing certain words or why the pronunciation of some words is so odd.

In this first lesson, we will be looking at the vowels of American English. The twenty-six letter English alphabet has twenty-six sounds divided into two groups: vowel sounds and consonant sounds. In this lesson, the first part of our five-part pronunciation series, you'll learn how to pronounce vowels as we pronounce them in American English. Unlike consonants, which are "closed" sounds for which we stop the flow of air in some way, vowels are "open" sounds. When we form vowel sounds, the air is not stopped; rather, it flows freely from the mouth. Every English word has at least one vowel sound.

The English Alphabet Has Five Vowels: "-a," "-e," "-i," "-o," and "-u"

While there are only five vowels, there are eighteen to twenty-three vowel sounds depending on the researcher. We'll take a look at these a little bit further into the lesson.

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Vowels generally fall into two categories: "long vowels" and "short vowels." We make vowel sounds in our mouths by positioning our tongue and the lips. We make front vowels with the tongue positioned in the front of our mouths. We make back vowels in the back of our mouths, and we make central vowels in the center. A diphthong is when the tongue changes its position and glides from one vowel sound to another. Instead of getting too technical with the names, we will explain the different sounds using different words.

Front Vowels

For Example:

1. Vowel sound in "heat" and "leap"
2. Vowel sound in "hit" and "tip"
3. Vowel sound in "met" and "kept"

Vowel sound in "map" and "bat"

Central Vowels

For Example:

1. Vowel sound in "the"
2. Vowel sound in "but" and "tough"

Back Vowels

For Example:

1. Vowel sound in "loop" and "boot"
2. Vowel sound in "hook" and "put"
3. Vowel sound in "thought"
4. Vowel sound in "lot"

Diphthongs

For Example:

1. Vowel sound in "tow"
2. Vowel sound in "crowd"
3. Vowel sound in "light"
4. Vowel sound in "main"
5. Vowel sound in "coin"
6. Vowel sound in "peer"
7. Vowel sound in "pair"
8. Vowel sound in "lure"

All of these vowel sounds are different and are represented by the five vowels or a combination of the vowels. So, as you can see, the differences may be slight, but there are many vowel sounds in English. Sometimes it doesn't matter if you pronounce a vowel differently, but sometimes it does matter in that



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it could be an entirely different word. The more you practice your pronunciation, the more you will be able to hear the different vowels, and the more you'll understand. Good luck with these!

