

VOWELS

DEFINITION:

"A vowel is a speech sound made by the vocal folds by unimpeded passage of breath through mouth".

- ❖ These letters are vowels in English:
A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y can be considered as a vowel.
- ❖ These five or six letters stand for many vowels sounds.

EXAMPLES:

- /ɪ/ as in police, feet, eat, and silly
- /ʊ/ as in it, sit, kick, and better
- /e/ as in end, bet, less, and letter
- /æ/ as in at, apple, fat, and matter
- /u/ as in cool, tune, soup, and kung Fu
- /ʊ/ as in cook, should, pudding, and foot
- /ʌ/ as in bus, blood, come, and up
- /ə/ as in kingdom, photography, philosophy, ketchup, and hundred
- /ɑ/ as in butter, collar, flavor, firm, and burst
- /ɔ/ as in all, fought, hot, and bot

PRODUCTION OF VOWELS:

A vowel sound comes from the lungs through the vocal cords with a relatively free flow of air. The air is not blocked so there is no friction. All vowel sounds are typically voiced. Vowel sounds are produced when the vocal cords are in vibrating position. During the articulation of a vowel sound, tongue does not touch any part of mouth.

NUMBER OF VOWEL SOUNDS:

Out of the 44 phonetic sounds of English language, there are 20 vowel sounds as;

/i:/, /ɪ/, /æ/, /a/, /ʌ/, /ʊ/,

/ɜ:/, /ɔ:/, /ɒ:/, /e:/, /ʌ/

/aɪ/, /aʊ/, /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /iə/, /eə/, /ʊə/, /ɪə/, /eə/, /ʊə/

CLASSIFICATION OF VOWELS:

Traditionally, vowels are classified on the following bases;

- Position of tongue
- Openness of mouth
- Shape of lips
- Length of vowel
- Height of tongue

❖ POSITION OF TONGUE:

Vowels are classified on the position of the tongue in the mouth as;

➤ FRONT VOWELS:

A front vowel is the one produced by holding the tongue towards the **front** of the mouth.

EXAMPLES:

For instance, the final sound in the first word and the middle sound in the second word are front vowels;

/i/ she
/a/ balm

➤ CENTRAL VOWELS:

Central vowels are those in which **half of resonating cavity** is in front and half in back.

EXAMPLES:

For example, the initial sound in the first one and the middle sound in the second one are central vowels;

/ə/ addiction
/ʌ/ bud

➤ BACK VOWELS:

A back vowel involves the **retraction of the tongue**. The tongue is in back while the resonating cavity is in front of the mouth.

EXAMPLES:

The middle sounds in the two words are fine examples of back vowels;

/ʊ/ moon

/ɑ/ harm

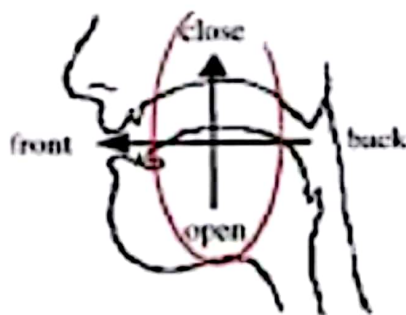


FIGURE: POSITION OF TONGUE DURING THE
ARTICULATION OF FRONT & BACK VOWELS

❖ OPENNESS OF MOUTH:

On the basis of the openness of mouth, vowels are of two types;

❖ CLOSED VOWELS:

A closed vowel is the one in the production of which the **jaws are held together** because the tongue is high in the mouth.

EXAMPLES:

The final phonetic sound in the first word and the middle sound in the last are examples of closed vowels;

/i/ see

/ʊ/ cool

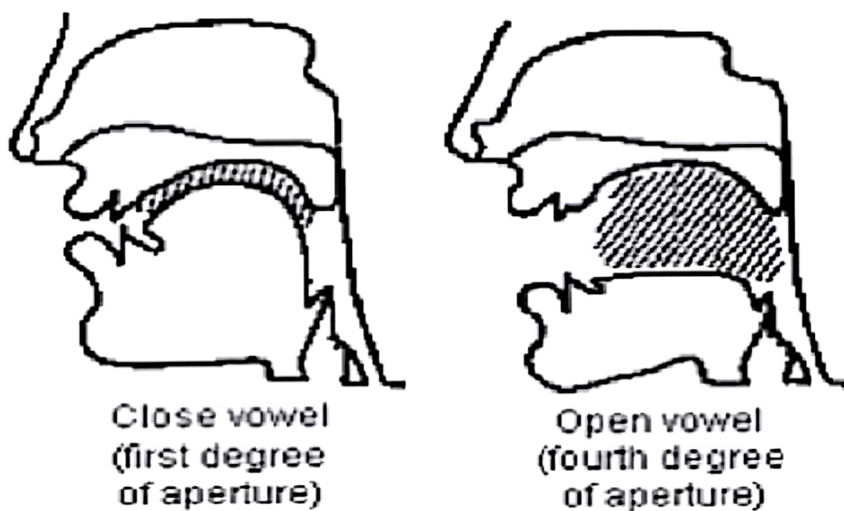
❖ OPEN VOWELS:

The production of an open vowel involves the **opening** of the mouth more **widely** because of the lowering of the tongue.

EXAMPLES:

For example, the middle sounds in the two words represent open vowels;

/ɑ/ car, cart



❖ SHAPE OF LIPS:

Vowels are also classified on the criterion of the roundness of the lips in the following way;

❖ ROUNDED VOWELS:

A rounded vowel is produced with the lips **rounded** in shape.

EXAMPLES:

The middle sounds in the two words are rounded vowels as;

/ʊ/ fool

/ɔ/ floral

❖ UNROUNDED VOWELS:

An unrounded vowel is articulated **without lip rounding**.

EXAMPLES:

For instance, the middle sounds in the two words are unrounded vowels;

/i/ seed
/e/ bench



u:	ʊ	ɔ:	ɒ
----	---	----	---

ROUNDED
VOWELS



i:	ɪ	e	æ
----	---	---	---

UNROUNDED
VOWELS

❖ LENGTH OF VOWELS:

The length of vowels is another basis of classification of vowels as;

❖ LONG VOWELS:

When a vowel sounds **like its name**, it is known as a long vowel.

There are 5 long vowels in English language.

EXAMPLES:

/i:/ three
/ɑ:/ far
/u:/ soon
/ɜ:/ blur
/ɔ:/ shorts

❖ SHORT VOWELS:

The short vowel sound **cannot occur** at the end of a syllable. It must be followed by a consonant. They are also called 'checked vowels'.

English language has 7 short vowels.

EXAMPLES:

/ɒ/ plot

/ə/ account

/ʌ/ shut

❖ HEIGHT OF TONGUE:

On the basis of the height of tongue, vowels are classified as;

➤ HIGH VOWELS:

High vowels are articulated with the bulk of tongue **raised high** to the roof of the mouth.

EXAMPLES:

/i/ peep

/u/ pool

➤ MID VOWELS:

Mid vowels are articulated with **neither high nor low** position of the tongue.

EXAMPLES:

/ə/ addict

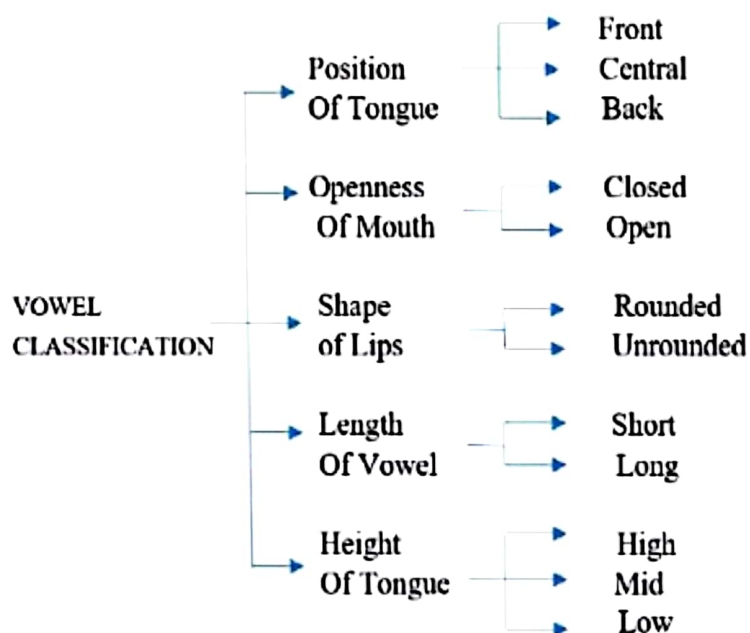
/ɜ/ murky

➤ LOW VOWELS:

These are produced with the bulk of the tongue in **low position** in the mouth.

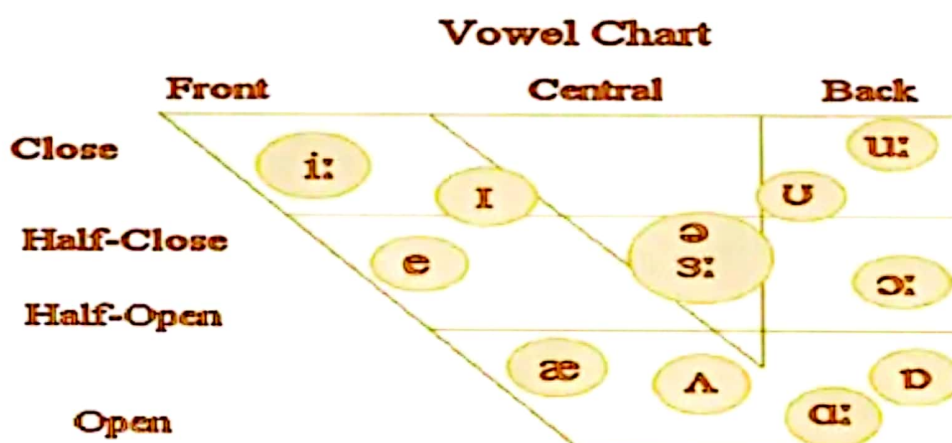
/ʌ/ but

FLOW CHART OF CLASSIFICATION OF VOWELS:



VOWEL CHART:

The vowel chart is a diagram to understand vowel sounds. It tries to represent where the tongue lies in relation to the openness of the mouth. The vowel chart indicates the different heights of tongue during the articulation of various vowels.



TYPES OF VOWELS:

On the basis of number of vowel sounds present in a syllable, there are **three** main types of vowels as described below;

- Monophthongs
- Diphthongs
- Triphthongs

MONOPHTHONGS:

A monophthong is one where there is **one** vowel sound in a syllable. These are also called as 'pure vowel sounds'. Out of twenty vowel sounds, twelve are monophthongs e.g.;

/i/ feel
/ʊ/ food

DIPHTHONGS:

A diphthong is one where there are **two** vowel sounds in a syllable. There are eight diphthongs in English language e.g.;

/aɪ-/ time
/aʊ/ now
/eə/ there

TRIPHTHONG:

A triphthong is a monosyllabic vowel combination involving a quick movement of the articulator from one vowel quality to another that passes over a **third** e.g.;

/aʊə/ hour
/ɔɪə/ Loir



Vowels Classification

According to the position of the tongue, some vowels , on the one hand, are articulated in a relatively stable tongue position during articulation. These vowels are called monophthongs . There are two types of monophthongs in English. First, short monophthongs are /ɪ/, /ʊ/, /ɛ/, /ə/, /æ/, and /ʌ/. Second, long monophthongs are /ɑ:/, /u:/, /i:/, /ɔ:/and /ɜ:/. On the other hand, some vowels are produced with two articulations in which the position of the tongue in the beginning differs from the position of the tongue at the end of the vowels. These are called diphthongs. Diphthongs are similar to long vowels in terms of duration as they can be considered as long. They are different from long vowels in terms of quality in the sense that long vowels have one quality of production with respect to tongue position, whereas diphthongs have two qualities. In English, there are eight diphthongs: [eɪ], [aɪ], [ɔɪ], [aʊ], [əʊ], [eə], [ʊə] and [ɪə] .

Single vowel sounds (Monophthongs)

Close

i: **ɪ** **ʊ** **u:**

need with put you

❖ What's the position of your tongue?

Mid

ɛ **ə** **ɜ:** **ɔ:**

get about her sword

❖ What shape are your lips?

Open

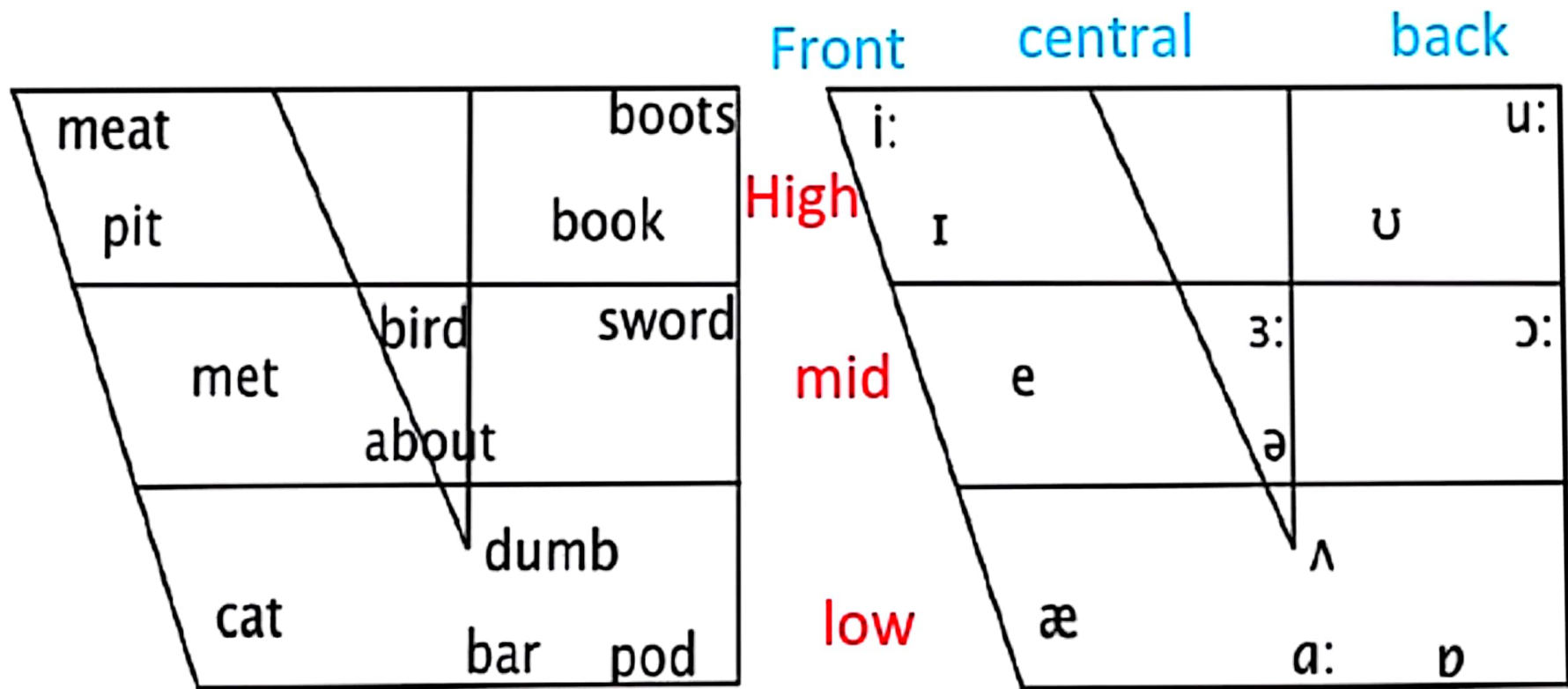
æ **ʌ** **ɑ:** **ɒ**

have but part not

Front

Back

Classification of sounds (vowels)



Vowels Classification

- /ɪ/ : short high front unrounded vowel**
- /ʊ/ : short high back round vowel**
- /ɛ/ : short mid front unrounded vowel**
- /æ/ : short low front unround**
- /ə/ : short mid central unrounded vowel**
- /ʌ/ : short central unrounded vowel**
- /ɑ:/ : long low back unrounded vowel**
- /u:/ : long high back round vowel**
- /i:/ : long high front unrounded vowel**
- /ɔ:/ : long mid back round vowel**
- /ɜ:/ : long mid central unrounded vowel**

Diphthongs



- A complex speech sound that begins with one vowel and gradually changes to another vowel within the same syllable, as [ɔɪ] in *boil* or [aɪ] in *fine*.
- A diphthong is a single-syllable vowel sound in which the beginning of the sound is different from the end of the articulation of the sound.
- In English, there are eight diphthongs: [eɪ], [aɪ], [ɔɪ], [aʊ], [əʊ], [eə], [ʊə] and [ɪə] .

ENGLISH VOWELS AND CONSONANTS

e	ɪ	ʊ	ɪɪ	ɪə	eɪ	
æ	ɒ	ɔ	ɔɪ	ɔə	ɔɪ	ɔə
æ	ʌ	ɔɪ	ɒ	ɔə	ɔɪ	ɔə
p	b	t	d	f	θ	k
g	v	ɒ	ɔ	s	z	ʃ
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w

Exerc 1: Write
34/05/2015
Durango
6A

Diphthongs in English words

[eɪ] can be found in such words as fake /feɪk/, play /pleɪ/ or bay /beɪ/

[aɪ] can be found in such words as fine /faɪn/, sigh /saɪ/, die /daɪ/ and why /waɪ/

[ɔɪ] can be found in such words as boy /bɔɪ/, toy /tɔɪ/, soil /sɔɪl/ and join /dʒɔɪn/

[aʊ] can be found in such words as bound /baʊnd/, foul /faʊl/ and mouse /n. maʊs; v. maʊz/

[əʊ] can be found in such words as boat /bəʊt/, goat /gəʊt/, go /gəʊ/ and low /ləʊ/.

[eə] can be found in such words as fair /feə(r)/ and bear /beə(r)/

[ʊə] can be found in such words as cure /kjʊə/, fuel /fjʊəl/ and pure /pjʊə/.

[ɪə] can be found in such words as near /nɪə(r)/ and fear (fiə(r)/