

ABC Pronunciary

American English
Pronunciation Dictionary

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Vocalis Ltd.

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Introduction

English is one of the most widely-spoken languages in the world today, necessary for international business, cultural and travel purposes. The English language has a rich vocabulary and flexible grammar use. However, its pronunciation can be challenging at times because of the many complexities.

ABC Pronunciary, an American English pronunciation dictionary, is set up to help students learn clear and effective pronunciation. It is aimed at beginning-to-intermediate English learners but can benefit all who wish to improve their speaking abilities. The approach used is the phonics method, in which all of the sounds of the alphabet are taught. Once the sounds and their symbols are familiar, students can “sound out” whole words from the various letters within.

There are 51 sounds described: vowels, consonants and digraphs (two consecutive letters forming a single sound when spoken together). Also included are silent letters, consonant blends, vowel contrasts, consonant contrasts and practice sentences.

For each sound, the following segments are presented. First, there is a step-by-step explanation of the mouth movements, highlighting the changing shape of the mouth, placement of the teeth, position of the tongue and air flow, if any. Next, a close-up photo of the mouth is shown for further demonstration. Then, three words containing the sound are displayed; their definitions and pictures are given to convey full meaning.

Many helpful hints are offered in **ABC Pronunciary**. Special attention should be paid to the vowels, each of which contains several sounds. For example, all of the vowels can have the “**schwa**” sound when appearing in unstressed syllables (such as the “**o**” in **command**). Some of the consonants also have more than one sound. For an overview of the 51 American English sounds, a simple pronunciation key* is listed at the back.

In order to speak English more clearly and improve communication skills, it is very worthwhile to study this **ABC Pronunciary**.

*The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) is included solely for reference.

vowel

short a (a)

The **short a (a)** sound is made by opening the mouth wide. The teeth are apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch the bottom back teeth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **short a (a)** sound is pronounced: æ



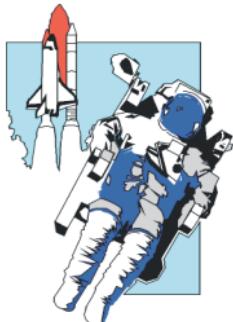


Africa (af'ri kə)

Africa is the large continent between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans. It is a land of deserts, safaris and jungles.

apple (ap'əl)

An apple is a round, edible fruit with red, yellow or green skin and firm, white flesh.



astronaut (as'trə nät)

An astronaut travels into space in a rocket to explore the solar system.

vowel

medium a (ä)

The **medium a (ä)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward to form an oval. The teeth are apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **Medium a (ä)** sounds like **short o (o)**. It is often written as **ah, au, or aw**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **medium a (ä)** sound is pronounced: *a*



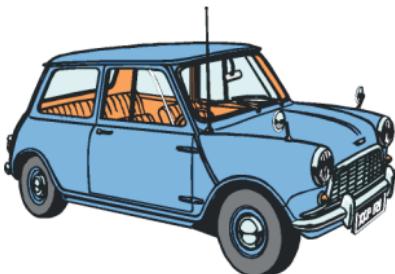


almanac (äl'mə nak)

An almanac is a yearly calendar containing information about the weather, astronomy, tides and other miscellaneous data.

almond (äl'mənd)

An almond is a brown nut shaped like a teardrop. It is the nut eaten most often throughout the world.



auto (ä'tō)

An auto, also called a car, is a vehicle with four wheels and an engine which can be driven long distances.

vowel

long a (ā)

The **long a (ā)** sound is made by opening the mouth and lowering the bottom lip. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch all of the back teeth.

Hint: **Long a (ā)** is often written as **ai** or **ay**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **long a (ā)** sound is pronounced: ei





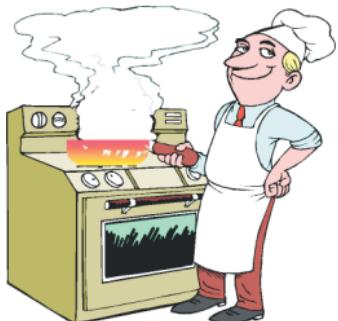
acorn (ā'korn)

An acorn is the nut of an oak tree. Squirrels gather acorns for food.



ape (āp)

An ape is a primate without a tail which can stand upright and walk on two legs.



apron (ā'prən)

An apron is a protective cloth covering for the clothes. It is smart to wear an apron while cooking.

consonant

b (b)

The **b (b)** sound is made by closing the mouth and pushing the lips apart (as in blowing a bubble). The teeth are apart, but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **B (b)** sounds like **p (p)**, but without air.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **b (b)** sound is pronounced: b



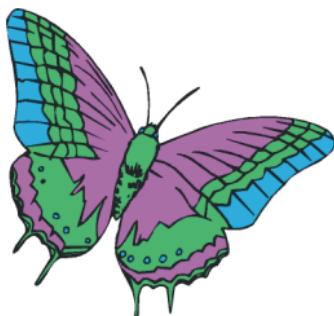


barn (bärn)

A barn is a house for farm animals, such as cows and horses, with hay on the ground.

bell (bel)

A bell is a chiming musical device. A school bell rings to begin and end classes.



butterfly (but'ər flī)

A butterfly is a beautiful insect with four brightly-colored wings and a slender body.

consonant

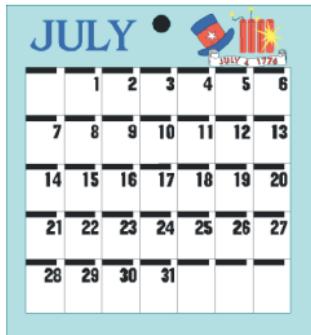
hard c (k)

The **hard c (k)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are slightly apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch the top back teeth. Air is blown through quickly.

Hint: **Hard c (k)** has the same sound as **k (k)**. **C** always has the hard sound when followed by the vowels: **a, o or u**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **hard c (k)** sound is pronounced: k



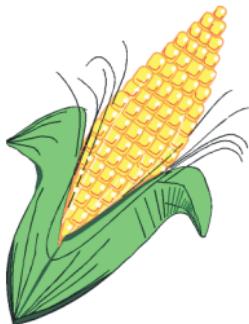


calendar (kal’ən dər)

A calendar shows the days, weeks and months of a year, sometimes listing major holidays.

clock (klok)

A clock is an instrument used to tell time. An alarm clock has a buzzer or bell which sounds off at a pre-set time.



corn (korn)

Corn is a vegetable which has yellow or white kernels and a green husk. It can be ground into cereal or eaten on the cob.

consonant

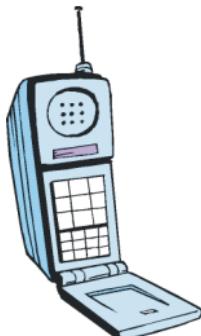
soft c (s)

The **soft c (s)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are shown clenched together. The tongue touches all of the bottom teeth. Air is blown through slowly.

Hint: **Soft c (s)** has the same sound as **s (s)**. **C** always has the soft sound when followed by the vowels: **e, i, or y**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **soft c (s)** sound is pronounced: **s**



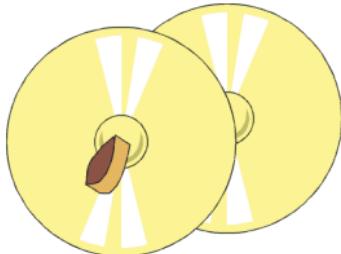


cellular (sel'ü lər)

A cellular telephone is a wireless mobile device for talking while outside, in the car, on the train or almost anywhere.

city (sit'ē)

A city is a large town in which many people live and work.



cymbals (sim'bəlz)

Cymbals are a pair of brass plates which are clashed together to make a loud, clanging sound.

consonant

d (d)

The **d (d)** sound is made by opening the mouth and lowering the bottom lip. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The tip of the tongue touches the top of the mouth.

Hint: **D (d)** sounds like **t (t)**, but without air.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **d (d)** sound is pronounced: d



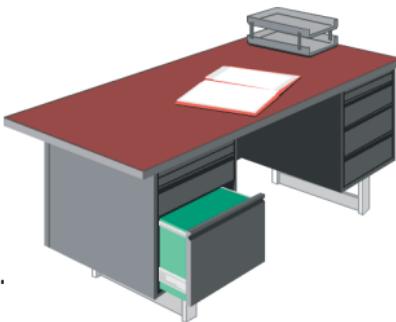


daisy (dā'zē)

A daisy is a flower which grows wild in sunny places. Common daises have white petals and a yellow center.

desk (desk)

A desk is a table, usually with drawers, which can be used for business or school work.



dog (dog)

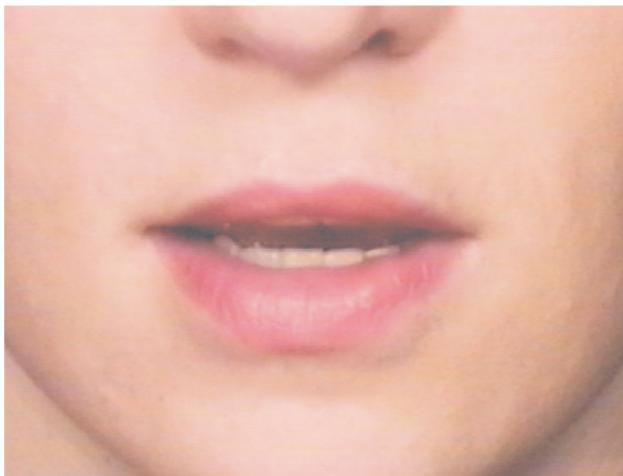
A dog is a furry, four-legged animal. There are many breeds of dogs, most of which make great pets.

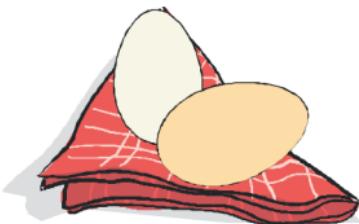
vowel

short e (e)

The **short e (e)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are slightly apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue barely touch the bottom back teeth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **short e (e)** sound is pronounced: e



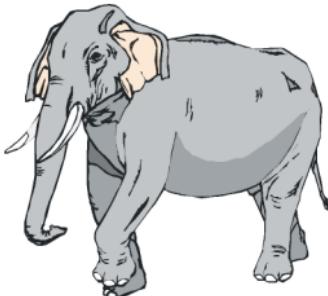


egg (eg)

An egg is an oval-shaped food. On the outside is a brown or white shell and on the inside is a yellow yolk.

elephant (el'ə fənt)

An elephant is the largest land animal. It is gray with big ears, two ivory tusks and a long, curled trunk.



envelope (en've lōp)

An envelope is a folded paper cover, inside which a letter can be sealed and sent by mail.

vowel

“schwa” e (ə)

The **schwa e (ə)** sound is made by opening the mouth and lowering the bottom lip a bit.

The teeth are just barely apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown.

The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **Schwa e (ə)**, the most common sound, sounds like **short u (u)**. It can be seen written as **a, e, i, o, u, y** or any combination thereof.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **schwa e (ə)** sound is pronounced: ə



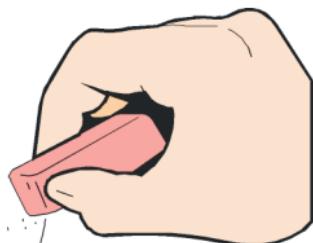
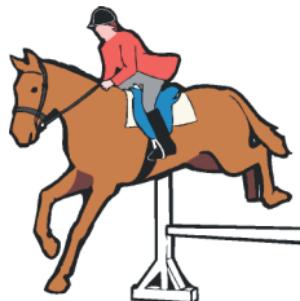
11

eleven (ə lev'ən)

Eleven is an odd prime number. It is one less than a dozen and one more than a decade.

equestrian
(ə kwes'trē ən)

Equestrian refers to horseback riding and the art thereof.



eraser (ə rā'sər)

An eraser is an implement for taking away pencil, ink or chalk marks.

vowel

long e (ē)

The **long e (ē)** sound is made by opening the mouth and lowering the bottom lip. The teeth are just barely apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch all of the back teeth.

Hint: **Long e (ē)** is often written as **ea**, **ee** or **ey**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **long e (ē)** sound is pronounced: i:





eagle (ē'gəl)

An eagle is a powerful bird of prey with sharp eyesight and strong wings. It is the symbol of courage.

e-mail (ē'māl)

E-mail is an electronic letter sent by one computer to another via the Internet.



equal (ē'kwəl)



Equal means of the same height, weight, shape, form, quantity or general quality.

consonant

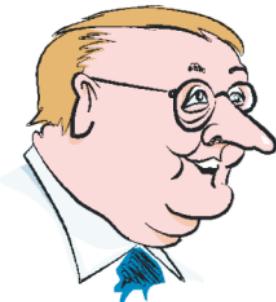
f (f)

The **f (f)** sound is made by closing the mouth almost all the way. The top teeth are shown biting down on the lower lip. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth. Air is blown through slowly.

Hint: **F (f)** sounds like **v (v)**, but with air.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **f (f)** sound is pronounced: f



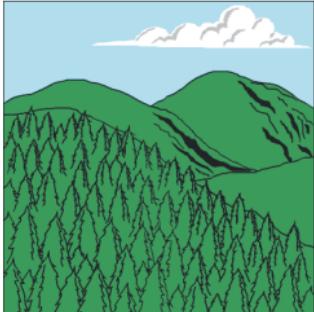


face (fās)

The face is the part of the body with two eyes, a nose and a mouth. It can express all of the different emotions.

flag (flāg)

A flag is a rectangular-shaped cloth of various colors used to symbolize a group. Every country has its own flag.



forest (for'əst)

A forest is a place of many trees and bushes with animals living therein.

consonant

hard g (g)

The **hard g (g)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips out a bit. The teeth are apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch the top back teeth.

Hint: **G** always has the hard sound (**g**) when followed by the vowels: **a, o or u.**

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **hard g (g)** sound is pronounced: **g**



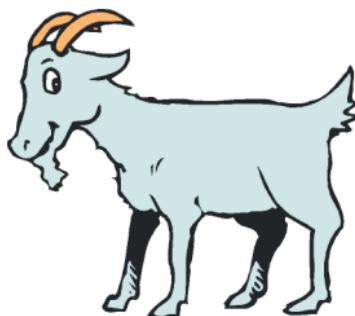


garden (gär'dən)

A garden is a piece of land on which flowers or vegetables are grown.

goat (gōt)

A goat is a lively farm animal with horns, a beard and a tail. Many people drink goat milk.



guitar (gə tär')

A guitar is a musical instrument with six strings which are plucked with the fingers or a pick.

consonant

soft g (j)

The **soft g (j)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward. The teeth are shown clenched together. The tip of the tongue touches the top of the mouth.

Hint: **Soft g (j)** has the same sound as **j (j)**.
G often has the soft sound when followed by the vowels: **e, i or y**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **soft g (j)** sound is pronounced: $dʒ$



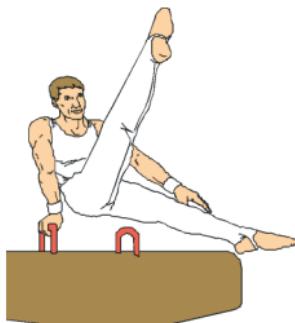
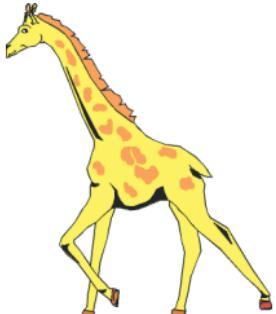


gem (jem)

A gem is a precious, valuable stone that is cut and polished for beauty.

giraffe (jə raf')

A giraffe is the tallest animal in the world. It has a long neck and legs, helpful for eating the leaves from treetops.



gymnastics (jim nas'tiks)

Gymnastics are physical exercises that strengthen and tone the muscles of the body.

consonant

h (h)

The **h (h)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth. Air is blown through quickly.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **h (h)** sound is pronounced: h





handshake (hand'shāk)

A handshake is the clasping of hands by two people in greeting, congratulations or agreement.

helicopter (hel'ə kōp tər)

A helicopter is an aircraft which stays up in the air because of its rotating propellers.



house (hous)

A house is a place where a person or family lives and keeps their belongings.

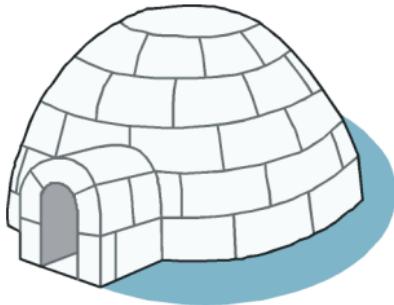
vowel

short i (i)

The **short i (i)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The tongue touches all of the bottom teeth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **short i (i)** sound is pronounced: i





igloo (ig'lü)

An igloo is a dome-shaped Eskimo hut made of snow blocks.

infant (in'fənt)

An infant is a baby or very young child who can't walk or talk yet.



Italy (it'ə lē)

Italy is a southern European country on the Mediterranean Sea which is shaped like a boot.

vowel

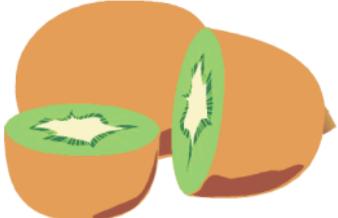
medium i (ē)

The **medium i (ē)** sound is made by opening the mouth and lowering the bottom lip. The teeth are just barely apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch all of the back teeth.

Hint: **Medium i (ē)** has the same sound as **long e (ē)**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **medium i (ē)** sound is pronounced: i:





kiwi (kē'wē)

A kiwi is an oval-shaped fruit with rough, brown skin and sweet, green pulp.



police (pə lēs')

A police officer enforces laws, maintains order and keeps citizens safe.



ski (skē)

A ski is one of a pair of long, narrow strips of wood or other material fastened to boots for gliding over snow.

vowel

long i (ī)

The **long i (ī)** sound is made by opening the mouth wide. The teeth are apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch the top back teeth.

Hint: **Long i (ī)** is sometimes written as **ie**, **uy** or **y**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **long i (ī)** sound is pronounced: **ai**





ice cream (īs'krēm)

Ice cream is a dessert made of frozen cream and sugar. It can be served in a dish or a cone.

island (ī'lənd)

An island is a piece of land which is completely surrounded by water.



ivy (ī've)

Ivy is a green-leaved vine which climbs walls and fences. Sometimes it is used for decoration.

consonant

j (j)

The **j (j)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward. The teeth are shown clenched together. The tip of the tongue touches the top of the mouth.

Hint: **J (j)** sounds like **ch (ch)**, but without air.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **j (j)** sound is pronounced: $dʒ$



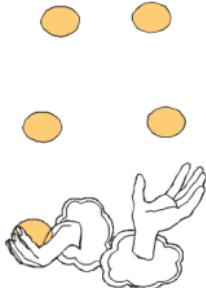
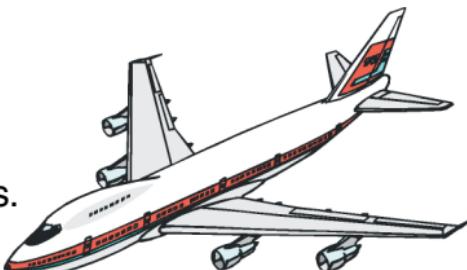


jacket (jak'ət)

A jacket is a short coat worn outside in chilly weather to keep warm.

jet (jet)

A jet is a very fast airplane which can travel long distances.



juggle (jug'əl)

To juggle is to throw several objects into the air at once and keep them bouncing off the hands.

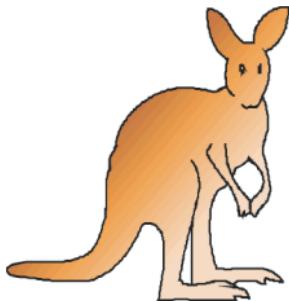
consonant

k (k)

The **k (k)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are slightly apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch the top back teeth. Air is blown through quickly.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **k (k)** sound is pronounced: k



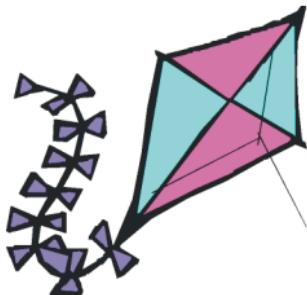


kangaroo (kan gə rü')

A kangaroo is a large, leaping animal from Australia. The female kangaroo has a pouch in which to carry her young.

key (kē)

A key is a shaped metal instrument for locking and unlocking a door or a box.



kite (kīt)

A kite is a toy made from paper or cloth which can fly high in the wind.

consonant

I (I)

The I (I) sound is made by opening the mouth a bit. The teeth are slightly apart, with only the bottom front teeth shown. The tip of the tongue touches the top front teeth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the I (I) sound is pronounced: I





ladder (lad'ər)

A ladder is a wooden or metal frame with rungs for climbing to high places.

lemon (lem'ən)

A lemon is an oval-shaped, yellow citrus fruit with tart juice.



lighthouse (līt'hous)

A lighthouse is a tall tower with a very strong light for warning boats that land is nearby.

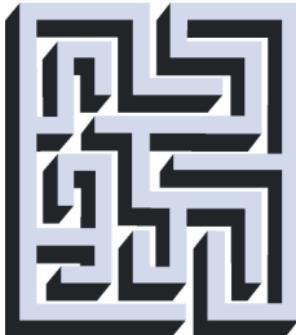
consonant

m (m)

The **m (m)** sound is made by tightly closing the mouth. The teeth, gently biting down on the lips, are not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **m (m)** sound is pronounced: m





maze (māz)

A maze is a complex set-up of paths. It may take a while to go through a maze.

money (mun'ē)

Money is cash and coins used to buy services or goods. Each country uses its own money, such as dollars and cents in the U.S.A.



music (mū'zik)

Music is a sound made by a voice or an instrument. It can be heard as a song, symphony, opera, etc.

consonant

n (n)

The **n (n)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The tip of the tongue touches the top of the mouth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **n (n)** sound is pronounced: n





necktie (nek'tī)

A necktie is a thin band of cloth worn around the neck and tied in the front with a knot. It is often worn by professional men at work.

notepad (nōt'pad)

A notepad is a tablet of paper on which to take notes, write letters or draw sketches.



nurse (nərs)

A nurse is a person trained to care for sick people, usually in the hospital.

vowel

short o (o)

The **short o (o)** sound is made by opening the mouth wide. The teeth are apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **Short o (o)** sounds like **medium a (ä)**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **short o (o)** sound is pronounced: o





octopus (ok'tə pəs)

An octopus is a sea animal which has a big head and eight arms with suckers on them.

office (of'is)

An office is a room where paperwork is done and meetings take place.



opera (op'rə ə)

An opera is a stage drama set to music, with all of the performers singing their lines.

vowel

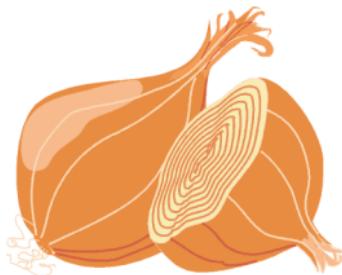
medium o (u)

The **medium o (u)** sound is made by opening the mouth and lowering the bottom lip a bit. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **Medium o (u)** has the same sound as **short u (u).**

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **medium o (u)** sound is pronounced: Λ





onion (un'yən)

An onion is a vegetable which grows as a bulb in the ground. Its smell and taste are very strong.

oregano (u reg'ə nō)

Oregano is an herb which is often used to flavor Italian and Spanish cooking.



oven (uv'ən)

An oven is an enclosed heating space for cooking or just warming up foods.

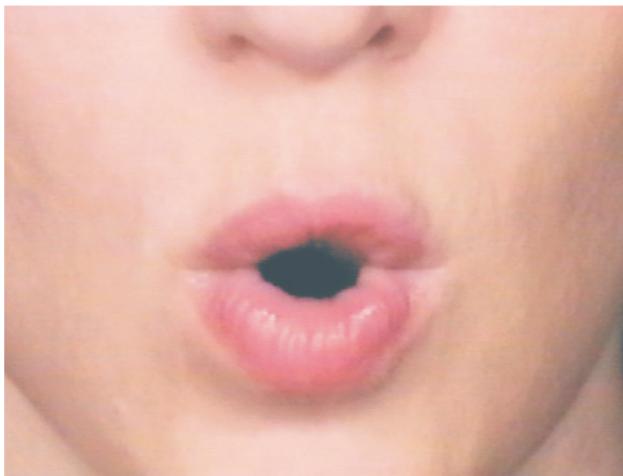
vowel

long o (ō)

The **long o (ō)** sound is made by puckering the mouth to form a circle with the lips. The teeth are apart, but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **Long o (ō)** is often written as **oa**, **oe**, **oh** or **ow**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **long o (ō)** sound is pronounced: ou





oatmeal (ōt'mēl)

Oatmeal is a cereal made from rolled or ground oats. It is often cooked for breakfast on cold days.

ocean (ō'shēn)

An ocean is a body of salt water. The oceans make up 70% of the earth's surface.



overalls (ō'ver älz)

Overalls are trousers with bibs made from denim or other strong material. They are usually worn for heavy work.

consonant

p (p)

The **p (p)** sound is made by closing the mouth and pushing the lips apart. The teeth are apart but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth. Air is blown through quickly.

Hint: **P (p)** sounds like **b (b)**, but with air.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **p (p)** sound is pronounced: p





parrot (pār'ət)

A parrot is a tropical bird with brightly-colored feathers and a hooked beak. Some parrots can mimic human speech.

pencil (pen'səl)

A pencil is a writing tool made of wood with a graphite center.



piano (pē yan'ō)

A piano is a large, wooden musical instrument with black and white keys in the front connected to strings in the back.

consonant

q[u] (kw)

The **q[u] (kw)** sound is made by briefly puckering the lips to form a small circle, then letting the mouth open a bit. The teeth are slightly apart, but not shown. The sides of the tongue touch the top back teeth. Air is blown through quickly.

Hint: **Q** is always followed by **u** (except in some names), which is why it has the **(kw)** sound.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **q[u] (kw)** sound is pronounced: kw





quail (kwāl)

A quail is a speckled game bird with a plume on its head. When eaten, it tastes like chicken.

quartet (kwor tet')

A quartet is a group of four, usually referring to musicians.



queen (kwēn)

A queen is the wife of a king and the royal female head of a monarchy.

consonant

r (r)

The **r (r)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward to form an oval, while gently biting their edges. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the top than the bottom front teeth shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **r (r)** sound is pronounced: r



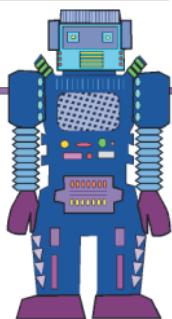
rainbow (rān'bō)



A rainbow is an arch of brilliant colors formed when the sun shines through light rain.

robot (rō'bot)

A robot is a machine made to look and act like a person. It is programmed to do tasks.



rose (rōz)

A rose is a sweet-smelling flower which grows on a bush with thorny stems.

consonant

s (s)

The **s (s)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are shown clenched together. The tongue touches all of the bottom teeth. Air is blown through slowly.

Hint: **S (s)** sounds like **z (z)**, but with air. Although sometimes **s (s)** *doesn't* have air, as in most plural words, such as “apples”.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **s (s)** sound is pronounced: s



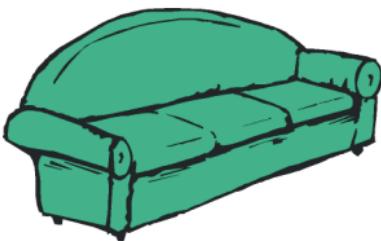


sailboat (sāl'bōt)

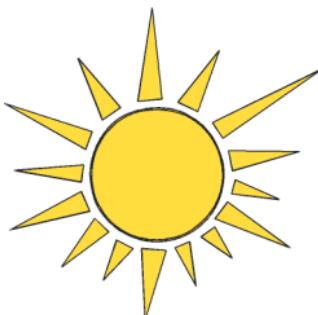
A sailboat is a boat which skims over the water when the wind blows against its cloth or nylon sails.

sofa (sō'fə)

A sofa, also called a couch, is a long seat with a back and arms.



sun (sun)



The sun is the bright, shining center of the solar system. It lights and warms the planets as they revolve around it.

consonant

t (t)

The **t (t)** sound is made by opening the mouth and lowering the bottom lip. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The tip of the tongue touches the top of the mouth. Air is blown through quickly.

Hint: **T (t)** sounds like **d (d)**, but with air.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **t (t)** sound is pronounced: t



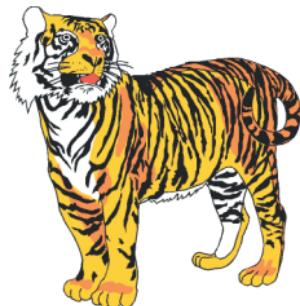


telescope (tel'ə skōp)

A telescope is a tube-like instrument with lenses or mirrors for viewing distant objects.

tiger (tī'gər)

A tiger is a fierce, wild animal of the cat family which has orange fur with black stripes.



truck (truk)

A truck is a large automotive vehicle for transporting heavy loads on the road.

vowel

short u (u)

The **short u (u)** sound is made by opening the mouth and lowering the bottom lip a bit. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the bottom than the top front teeth shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **Short u (u)** sounds like “schwa” e (ə), but with more emphasis.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **short u (u)** sound is pronounced: Α





umbrella (um brel'ə)

An umbrella, usually made of cloth or plastic, is a shield against raindrops or even sunshine.

umpire (um'pīr)

An umpire is an official who oversees a sports game to make sure that the rules are followed.



unhappy (un hap'ē)

Unhappy is a feeling of anger, sadness or discomfort. A baby is unhappy when hungry, for example.

vowel

medium u (ü)

The **medium u (ü)** sound is made by puckering the mouth to form a small circle with the lips. The teeth are slightly apart, but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **Medium u (ü)** is often written as **eu**, **ew**, **oo**, **ue**, or **ui**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **medium u (ü)** sound is pronounced: **u:**





flute (flüt)

A flute is a long, thin and hollow musical instrument played by blowing through a hole near one end.

Peru (pə rü')

Peru is a mountainous country located on the west coast of South America. It was the home of the Incan empire.



sushi (sü'shē)

Sushi is a Japanese food dish made up of cold rice and raw fish wrapped in seaweed.

vowel

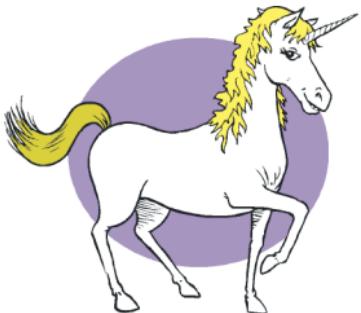
long u (ū)

The **long u (ū)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward, while gently biting their edges. The teeth are apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The tongue is curled against the bottom teeth.

Hint: **Long u (ū)** is sometimes written as **eu**, **ew** or **ue**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **long u (ū)** sound is pronounced: ju:



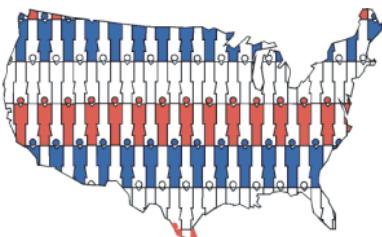


unicorn (ū'nə korn)

A unicorn is a mythical white horse with a spiral horn in the middle of its forehead.

U.S.A. (ū es ā')

The United States of America is a country of 50 states filled with people of many religions, races and backgrounds.



utensil (ū ten'səl)

A utensil is a tool used for a practical purpose. Forks, knives and spoons are eating utensils.

consonant

v (v)

The **v (v)** sound is made by closing the mouth almost all the way. The top teeth are shown biting down on the lower lip. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: **V (v)** sounds like **f (f)**, but without air.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **v (v)** sound is pronounced: v





vase (vās)

A vase is a container which is usually made of glass or pottery. Its main use is to hold flowers.

violin (vī ə lin')

A violin is a musical instrument with four strings played by a bow. Most orchestras have a large violin section.



volcano (vol kā' nō)

A volcano is a cone-shaped mountain with a crater at the top. When it erupts, hot lava comes shooting out.

consonant

w (w)

The **w (w)** sound is made by briefly puckering the lips to form a small circle, then letting the mouth open a bit. The teeth are slightly apart, but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: The **w (w)** sound is made by saying **medium u (ü)** then **short u (u)** in rapid order (which is why it is called “double u”).

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **w (w)** sound is pronounced: w





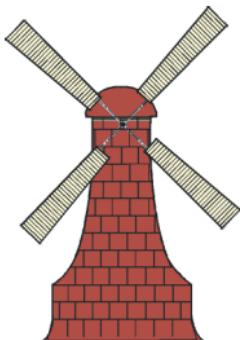
watch (wäch)

A watch is a timepiece worn on the wrist as useful jewelry.



web (web)

A web is a delicate network of silky threads spun by a silkworm or a spider.



windmill (wind'mil)

A windmill is a tower with “arms” that revolve in the wind. This action is used to pump water or generate electricity.

consonant

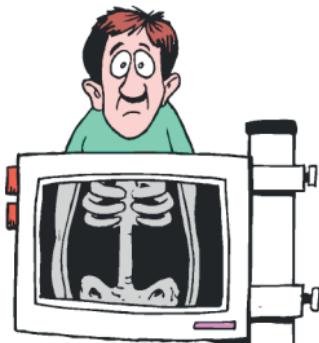
x (ks)

The **x (ks)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are shown closing together. The tongue touches the bottom front and all of the back teeth. Air is blown through slowly.

Hint: The **x (ks)** sound is made by saying **k (k)** then **s (s)** in rapid order.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **x (ks)** sound is pronounced: ks





x-ray (eks' rā)

An x-ray is an intense ray of light used to photograph the inside of the body for medical reasons.

fox (foks)

A fox is a wild animal closely resembling a reddish brown dog with a bushy tail.



saxophone (saks'ə fōn)

A saxophone is a musical instrument of the woodwind family. It is played mainly in jazz and pop bands.

consonant

y (y)

The **y (y)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are slightly apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The sides of the tongue touch the top back teeth.

Hint: When **y** is at the beginning of a word, it is a consonant (**y**).

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **y (y)** sound is pronounced: **j**



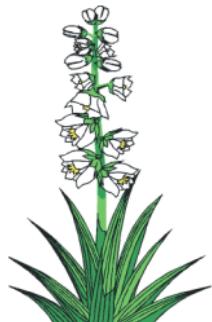
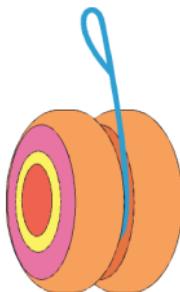


yacht (yät)

A yacht is a boat used for pleasure sailing or racing on the high seas.

yo-yo (yō'yō)

A yo-yo is a small toy with a grooved disk that winds up and down from an attached string.



yucca (yuk'ə)

A yucca is a plant with sword-shaped leaves and white flowers that grows in very dry areas.

vowel

y (i / ē / ī)

As a vowel, **y** has three sounds: **short y (i)**, **medium y (ē)** and **long y (ī)**, each corresponding to its own **i** sound.

Hint: When **y** is in the middle or end of a word, it is almost always a vowel (**i**, **ē** or **ī**).

The vowel **y (i / ē / ī)** has the same sounds as **i (i / ē / ī)**. Refer to the various **i** pronunciation pages for descriptions:

short y = short i (i) see page 34

medium y = medium i (ē) see page 36

long y = long i (ī) see page 38

short y (i)



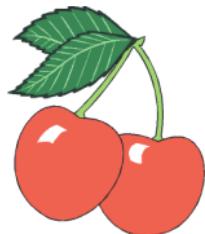
bicycle (bī'sik əl)

A bicycle, also called a bike, is a vehicle with two wheels, handlebars, pedals and a seat.

medium y (ē)

cherry (chār'ē)

A cherry is a small, round fruit that is red with a pit in the middle.



long y (ī)

fry (frī)



To fry is to cook food in very hot oil or grease, such as fried potatoes.

consonant

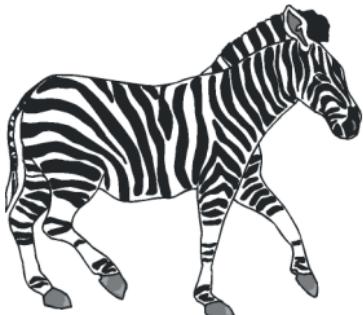
z (z)

The **z (z)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are shown clenched together. The tongue touches all of the top teeth.

Hint: **Z (z)** sounds like **s (s)**, but without air.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **z (z)** sound is pronounced: z





zebra (zē'brə)

A zebra is a wild horse from Africa which has black and white stripes.

zipper (zip'ər)

A zipper is a fastener made from two rows of metal or plastic teeth and a sliding tab for opening and closing it.



zoo (zü)

A zoo is a park where wild animals are on public display. A modern zoo shows the animals in a natural setting.

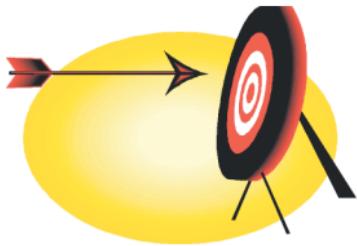
r-controlled
vowel

ar (är)

The **ar (är)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward to form an oval, while gently biting their edges. The teeth are apart, with some of the top and bottom front teeth shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **ar (är)** sound is pronounced: ar



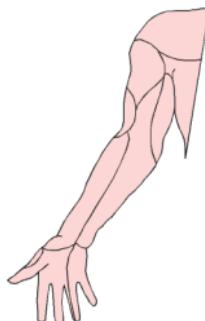


archery (är'chər ē)

The skill of archery is practiced by shooting an arrow from a bow to a target.

arm (ärm)

The arm is the part of the body which connects the shoulder to the hand, with the elbow in the middle.



artist (är'tist)

An artist is a person who creates objects of beauty, such as paintings or sculptures.

r-controlled
vowel

er / ir / ur (ər)

The **er / ir / ur (ər)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward to form an oval, while gently biting their edges. The teeth are slightly apart, with more of the top than the bottom front teeth shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **er / ir / ur (ər)** sound is pronounced: ər



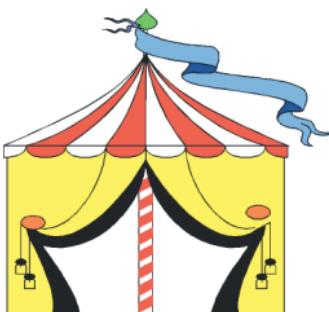


bugler (bū'gə lər)

A bugler plays a simple brass horn in military ceremonies.

circus (sər'kəs)

The circus is a fun show of clowns, acrobats and animal acts. It is usually held in a big tent.



purse (pərs)

A purse is a small bag for holding money, often coins, and can be carried in a pocket or handbag.

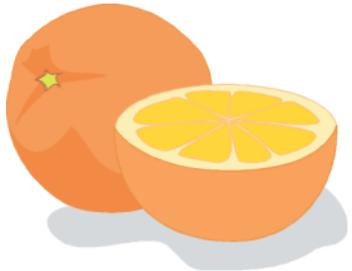
r-controlled
vowel

or (or)

The **or (or)** sound is made by puckering the mouth to form a small oval with the lips, while gently biting their edges. The teeth are apart, but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **or (or)** sound is pronounced: ɔr





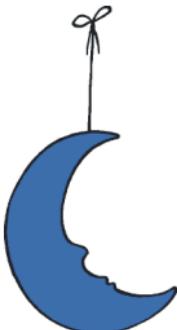
orange (or'ənj)

An orange is a sweet citrus fruit which has a round shape and reddish yellow (orange) rind.



oriole (or'ē əl)

An oriole is a colorful songbird with black and golden feathers.



ornament (or'nə mənt)

An ornament is an interesting (often hanging) object which adds a bit of decoration to a room or place.

vowel
digraph

oi / oy (oi)

The **oi / oy (oi)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward to form a small oval, while gently biting the edges (which curl up slightly). The teeth are apart, but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **oi / oy (oi)** sound is pronounced: ɔɪ



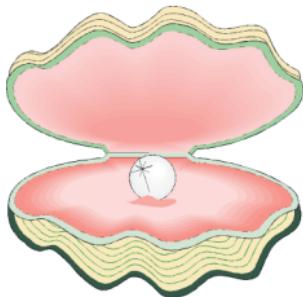


oil (oil)

Oil is a fatty liquid obtained from plants, animals or minerals and used as a lubricant.

ointment (oint'mənt)

Ointment is a medicinal or cosmetic cream for use on the skin.



oyster (oi'stər)

An oyster is a sea mollusk with a hard shell and edible body. Many oysters make pearls by grinding sand.

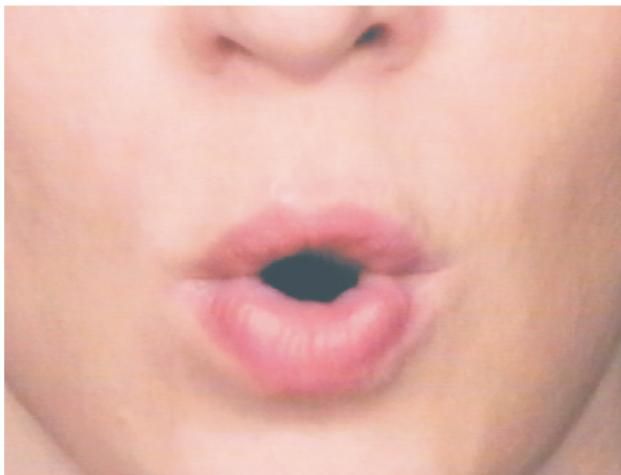
vowel
digraph

ou / ow (ou)

The **ou / ow (ou)** sound is made by briefly opening the mouth medium wide and then puckering the lips to form a small circle. The teeth are slightly apart, but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth.

Hint: The **ou / ow (ou)** sound is made by saying **short o (o)** then **medium u (ü)** in rapid order.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **ou / ow (ou)** sound is pronounced: au





cloud (kloud)

A cloud is a white or gray mass in the sky made up of tiny water drops. Some clouds look like puffy white pillows.

outlaw (out'lä)

An outlaw is a person who breaks the law and is wanted by the police.



owl (oul)

An owl is a night bird of prey with a big head, large eyes and a hooked beak.

consonant
digraph

ch (ch)

The **ch (ch)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward. The teeth are shown clenched together. The tip of the tongue touches the top of the mouth. Air is blown through quickly.

Hint: Sometimes **ch** has the **k (k)** sound, as when followed by **r (r)** and some r-controlled vowels.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **ch (ch)** sound is pronounced: *tʃ*



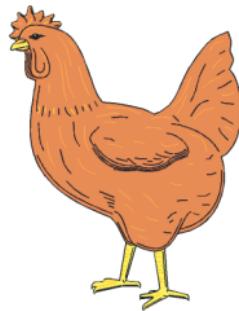


chair (chār)

A chair is a piece of furniture for sitting. It consists of a seat, a back, legs and sometimes arms.

chicken (chik'ən)

A chicken is a common farm bird which can be eaten or saved for the eggs it lays.



chopsticks (chop'stiks)

Chopsticks are a pair of thin, usually wooden, sticks used as eating utensils in Asian countries.

consonant
digraph

ph (f)

The **ph (f)** sound is made by closing the mouth almost all the way. The top teeth are shown biting down on the lower lip. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth. Air is blown through slowly.

Hint: **ph (f)** has the same sound as **f (f)**.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **ph (f)** sound is pronounced: f





phone (fōn)

A phone (short for telephone) is an electronic device for talking with someone at a distance.

photograph (fō'tə graf)

A photograph is a picture taken by a camera of a person, place or thing and can be saved as a memory.



pheasant (fez'ənt)

A pheasant is a large, long-tailed game bird. The male has multi-colored feathers, like the related peacock.

consonant
digraph

sh (sh)

The **sh (sh)** sound is made by opening the mouth and pushing the lips outward. The teeth are shown clenched together. The sides of the tongue touch the top back teeth. Air is blown through slowly.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **sh (sh)** sound is pronounced: /ʃ/



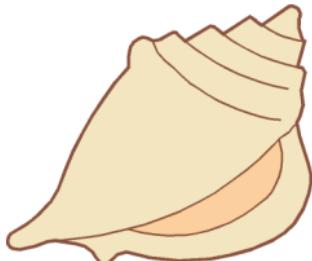


shamrock (sham'rok)

A shamrock, an emblem of Ireland, is a green clover with three leaves.

shovel (shuv'əl)

A shovel is a large tool with a handle and scoop for picking up dirt, snow or other loose material.



shell (shel)

A shell is a hard covering which protects an inside object. Shells that once covered sea creatures can be found on beaches.

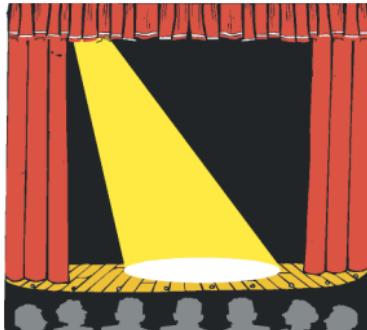
consonant
digraph

th (th)

The **th (th)** sound is made by opening the mouth medium wide. The teeth are apart, with only some of the top front teeth shown. The tongue sticks out of the mouth between the front teeth. Air is blown through slowly (except in some common **th** words, such as “**the**”, “**that**” and “**then**”).

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **th (th)** sound is pronounced: θ (or ð in **th** words without air, cited above)



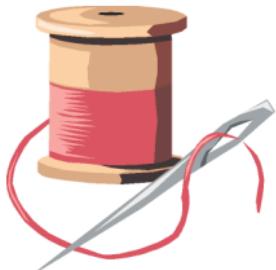
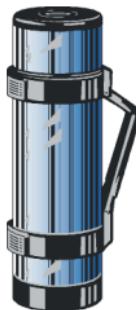


theater (thē'ə tər)

A theater is a place where plays or other shows are performed on a stage.

thermos (thər'məs)

A thermos is an insulated container for keeping beverages (and sometimes food) hot or cold.



thread (thred)

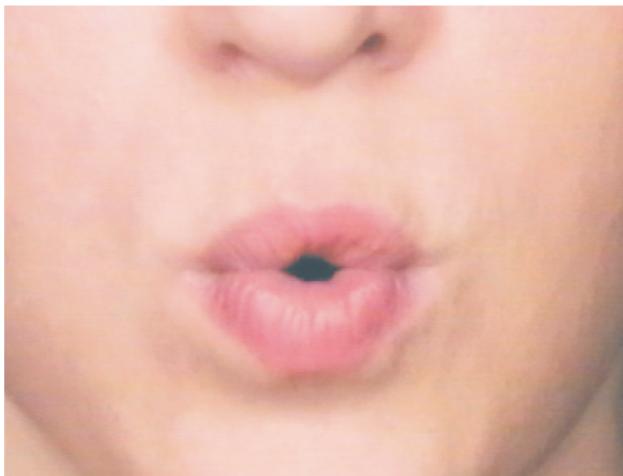
Thread is long strands of spun fiber used for making and sewing cloth.

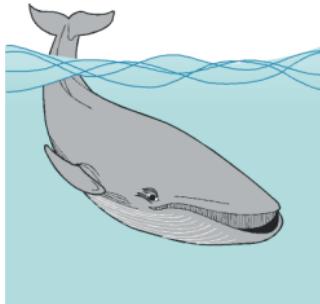
consonant
digraph

wh (hw)

The **wh (hw)** sound is made by briefly puckering the lips to form a small circle, then letting the mouth open a bit. The teeth are slightly apart, but not shown. The tongue is in the middle of the mouth. Air is blown through quickly.

Note: In the International Phonetic Alphabet, the **wh (hw)** sound is pronounced: hw



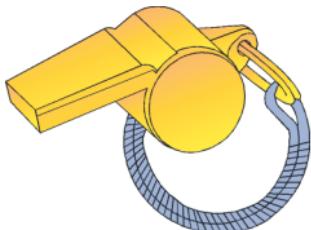


whale (hwāl)

A whale is the largest animal in the world. It lives in the sea and looks like a fish, but it is a mammal.

wheelchair (hwēl'chār)

A wheelchair is a seat with large wheels made for the mobility of sick or disabled people.



whistle (hwis'əl)

A whistle is a device into which air is blown, making a shrill, high-pitched sound. It is used to call attention.

consonant blend

**bl / br / cl / cr / dr / fl / fr
gl / gr / pl / pr / sc / scr / sk
sl / sm / sn / sp / spl / spr
squ / st / str / sw / tr / tw**

A consonant blend is a group of two or three consonants, each of which is pronounced.

Examples

blaze / brink / class / crest / draft /
flip / frog / glitz / grab / plum / prim /
scold / scrub / skin / sled / smile /
snap / space / split / spruce / squint /
stop / strip / swat / trunk / twig

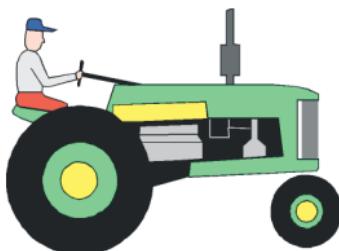


flamingo (flə min'gō)

A flamingo is a tropical water bird with pink feathers, tall legs and a long neck.

pretzel (pret'səl)

A pretzel is a piece of hard bread which has a glazed, salted outside and is usually twisted in shape.



tractor (trak'tər)

A tractor is a motor-powered vehicle used for pulling farm equipment, such as a plow.

silent
letter

**gn / kn / rh / wr /
mb (at the end of a word) /
mn (at the end of a word)**

Certain letters, when paired with other letters, are silent and not pronounced. Above, the underlined letter is silent.

Examples

gnat gnome gnu sign /
knack knee knit knock /
rhapsody rhombus rhubarb rhyme /
wrap wreck write wrong /
climb lamb numb thumb /
autumn column hymn solemn

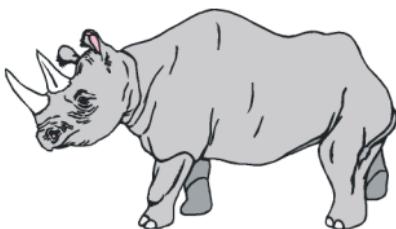


comb (kōm)

A comb is a thin plastic or metal strip with teeth used to style hair.

rhino (rī'nō)

A rhino (short for rhinoceros) is a big, tough-skinned animal with one or two horns on its snout.



wrench (rench)

A wrench is a hand tool used to turn a nut, bolt or pipe.

vowel
contrasts

ā - e

bait - bet
lace - less
pain - pen
rake - wreck
sale - sell

ē - i

deep - dip
feet - fit
peel - pill
seat - sit
teen - tin

i - u

dill - dull
fizz - fuzz
knit - nut
lick - luck
pin - pun

o - u

box - bucks
doll - dull
lock - luck
long - lung
not - nut

ō - ü

coal - cool
float - flute
rode - rude
sow - sue
tone - tune

ä - ou

all - owl
brawn - brown
haul - howl
laud - loud
tall - towel

consonant
contrasts

b - p

ban - pan
bee - pea
beg - peg
bowl - pole
buy - pie

c - g

cap - gap
cave - gave
class - glass
cot - got
curl - girl

d - t

dab - tab
den - ten
dip - tip
dot - tot
duck - tuck

f - v

fast - vast
fault - vault
ferry - very
fine - vine
folly - volley

l - n

lap - nap
let - net
light - night
low - no
lull - null

s - z

sap - zap
seal - zeal
sink - zinc
sip - zip
sue - zoo

Practice Sentences

- short a (a) **AI had the answer in Math class.**
medium a (ä) **Wanda always talks with her Aunt.**
long a (ā) **May I take the latest train today?**
b (b) **A big ball bounced on the beach.**
hard c (k) **Can Colleen cut the carrot cake?**
soft c (s) **The city is certainly exciting!**
d (d) **Dan drank diet soda yesterday.**
short e (e) **Every egg has a yellow center.**
"schwa" e (ə) **The forest was beautiful in April.**
long e (ē) **We can eat turkey and cheese.**
f (f) **First, focus on the firm facts.**
hard g (g) **The girl gave the dog a big bone.**
soft g (j) **George is a generous gentleman.**
h (h) **How happy I am to have a horse!**
short i (i) **It is a bit chilly during the winter.**
medium i (ē) **Tina skied in the Austrian Alps.**
long i (ī) **I'd like to get ice cream tonight.**
j (j) **Jim took a jet to Japan in January.**
k (k) **Ken took his kite to the park.**
l (l) **A little luck will help Larry a lot.**
m (m) **My mother will make lemonade.**
n (n) **Nell is in need of a new nurse.**
short o (o) **The doctor got a job in a hospital.**
medium o (u) **Sonny's brother has some onions.**
long o (ō) **The only boat goes at six o'clock.**
p (p) **Pass a piece of apple pie, please.**

- q[u] (kw) The **queen** quietly asked a **question**.
r (r) **Railroad** trains **run** rapidly.
s (s) **Snacks** were **sold** at the **bus stop**.
t (t) **Tell Tom** to turn the light on.
short u (u) Uncle **Gus** traveled to **Russia**.
medium u (ü) The **blue lagoon** was truly **scenic**.
long u (ü) Is a **university** education **valuable**?
v (v) Val was brave to **visit** the **volcano**.
w (w) The **weather** was **warm** **Wednesday**.
x (ks) Max was excited to visit **Texas**.
consonant y (y) .. Did **you** eat **yogurt** **yesterday**?
short y (i) Sylvia's **symptoms** are **mysterious**.
medium y (ē) Mary didn't have any **candy** left.
long y (ī) My house will be built by **July**.
z (z) Brazilian **zinnias** are **amazing**!
ar (är) The **large** dog **started** **barking**.
er / ir / ur (ər) Shirley **burned** **her** **finger**.
or (or) Nora bought **oranges** at the **store**.
oi / oy (oi) The **boy's** **toys** were **noisy**!
ou / ow (ou) A **loud** **crowd** is **outside** my **house**.
ch (ch) I **chatted** with the **Chinese** **teacher**.
ph (f) Ralph **phoned** the **pharmacy**.
sh (sh) She wished to see the **show**.
th (th) Thank you for the **birthday** gift!
wh (hw) When was the **wheel** invented?

Pronunciation Key

Sound	Symbol	IPA	Example
short a	a	æ	apple
medium a	ä	a	almond
long a	ā	ei	ape
b	b	b	bell
hard c	k	k	corn
soft c	s	s	city
d	d	d	dog
short e	e	e	egg
"schwa" e	ə	ə	eleven
long e	ē	i:	equal
f	f	f	flag
hard g	g	g	goat
soft g	j	dʒ	gem
h	h	h	house
short i	i	i	igloo
medium i	ē	i:	ski
long i	ī	ai	ivy
j	j	dʒ	jet
k	k	k	key
l	l	l	lemon
m	m	m	maze
n	n	n	nurse
short o	o	o	opera
medium o	u	ʌ	oven
long o	ō	ou	ocean

Sound	Symbol	IPA	Example
p	p	p	piano
q[u]	kw	kw	queen
r	r	r	rose
s	s	s	sun
t	t	t	tiger
short u	u	ʌ	umpire
medium u	ü	u:	flute
long u	ū	ju:	unicorn
v	v	v	vase
w	w	w	web
x	ks	ks	fox
consonant y	y	j	yacht
short y	i	i	bicycle
medium y	ē	i:	cherry
long y	ī	ai	fly
z	z	z	zoo
ar	är	ar	artist
er / ir / ur	ər	ər	purse
or	ɔr	ɔr	orange
oi / oy	ɔi	ɔi	oil
ou / ow	ou	au	cloud
ch	ch	tʃ	chair
ph	f	f	pheasant
sh	sh	ʃ	shell
th	th	θ	theater
wh	hw	hw	whale