

THE PHONEMIC ALPHABET

Introduction

In this unit you will learn the phonemic symbols used in English. You will practise problem sounds in Units 1–14, not here.

It is important to learn the phonemic alphabet because the relationship between spelling and pronunciation is so irregular in English. So, with the phonemic alphabet, you can work out pronunciation for yourself, using a dictionary. It is also essential for using this book.

The phonemic symbols (and spellings) used in this book are the same as those used in the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* (AS Hornby, Oxford University Press.) More or less the same symbols are used in most other modern dictionaries and textbooks.

It is not difficult to learn the phonemic alphabet. However, it is probably best *not* to try to learn all of it together. We advise you to do these five exercises on separate days. When you go on to the next exercise, it is a good idea to revise the symbols you have already learned.

1 Vowels (1)

- 1 **T.0.1.A.** Listen to these pairs of sounds. Can you hear the difference between each pair?

/i:/	see	/ɪ/	big
/u:/	you	/ʊ/	book
/ɔ:/	four	/ɒ/	not

Listen again and try to learn the symbol for each sound.

- 2 Cover the symbols above and write in the symbol for the words you have just heard.

/ /	see	/ /	big
/ /	you	/ /	book
/ /	four	/ /	not

- 3 **T.0.1.B.** Listen and write in the correct symbol for the word that you hear.

/ɒ/	/ /	/ /
a. hot	h. wool	o. feel
/ /	/ /	/ /
b. hit	i. pull	p. fill
/ /	/ /	/ /
c. rude	j. pill	q. boot
/ /	/ /	/ /
d. read	k. sit	r. bought
/ /	/ /	/ /
e. good	l. seat	s. beat
/ /	/ /	/ /
f. God	m. fall	t. bit
/ /	/ /	
g. wall	n. fool	

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2 Vowels (2)

- 1 **T.0.2.A.** Listen to these pairs of sounds. Can you hear the difference between each pair?

/e/ bed	/æ/ cat
/ɜ:/ bird	/ə/ mother
/ɑ:/ car	/ʌ/ up

Listen again and try to learn the symbol for each sound.

- 2 Cover the symbols above and write in the correct symbol for the words that you have just heard.

/ / bed	/ / cat
/ / bird	/ / mother
/ / car	/ / up

- 3 **T.0.2.B.** Listen to the words on the left and circle the correct symbol for the vowel sound on the left.

- man /ʌ/ /e/ /æ/
- men /ʌ/ /e/ /æ/
- fast /ʌ/ /æ/ /a:/
- first /ʌ/ /ɜ:/ /a:/
- head /ɜ:/ /ə/ /e/
- had /æ/ /ʌ/ /a:/
- heard /ɜ:/ /ə/ /a:/
- hard /æ/ /ʌ/ /a:/
- pass /a:/ /e/ /æ/
- purse /ɜ:/ /ʌ/ /ə/
- run /ɜ:/ /ʌ/ /æ/
- ran /ɜ:/ /ʌ/ /æ/

- 4 **T.0.2.C.** Now listen to these two-syllable words and write in both vowel sounds. They may also come from the previous exercise.

/// / f <u>a</u> ther	/// / b <u>ut</u> ter
/// / m <u>o</u> ther	/// / ch <u>oc</u> olate
/// / s <u>i</u> s <u>te</u> r	/// / s <u>i</u> ng <u>er</u>
/// / br <u>o</u> ther	/// / a <u>ct</u> ress
/// / or <u>an</u> ge	/// / t <u>ea</u> cher
/// / su <u>ga</u> r	/// / do <u>ct</u> or



3 Consonants

- 1 **T.0.3.A.** Many of the symbols for consonants are easy to recognize. This is how they sound in English:

/p/ pen	/s/ sit
/b/ big	/z/ zoo
/t/ two	/h/ hot
/d/ door	/m/ man
/k/ cup	/n/ no
/g/ good	/l/ live
/f/ fat	/r/ red
/v/ love	/w/ what

Listen again and mark with a * any of these consonants that sound very different in your language. (Most of them will sound a little different.) Try to memorize the consonants that you have marked.

- 2 **T.0.3.B.** These symbols are more difficult:

/θ/ thin	/ð/ this
/ʃ/ she	/ʒ/ television
/tʃ/ chair	/dʒ/ job
/ŋ/ sing	/j/ yes

Listen again and try to learn them.

- 3 Here are some words in phonemic script. Write in what the word is.

- /dʒʌmp/
- /jɔ:/
- /tʃi:p/
- /θru:/
- /'brɪndʒ/
- /jʌŋ/
- /ðæt/
- /bæŋk/
- /θɪŋk/
- /ləntʃ/
- /ði:z/
- /tʃɜ:tʃ/



4 Diphthongs (1)

- 1 **T.0.4.A.** Diphthongs are made from two vowel sounds put together. The first of these two sounds is longer and the second is shorter. Some diphthongs are easy to recognize. What do you think these sounds are?

/eɪ/ day	/aɪ/ my
/ɔɪ/ boy	/au/ now

Listen and check your answers.

Listen again and try to memorize the symbols for these diphthongs.

- 2 **T.0.4.B.** Now listen to the words on the left and say if it is diphthong 1, 2, 3 or 4.

	1 /eɪ/	2 /aɪ/	3 /ɔɪ/	4 /au/
a. pay	✓			
b. voice			✓	
c. loud				
d. grey				
e. die				
f. noise				
g. house				
h. Wales				
i. case				
j. try				
k. coin				
l. high				
m. flower				
n. weigh				



5 Diphthongs (2)

- 1 **T.0.5.A.** These diphthongs are more difficult to guess. Try making the two separate vowel sounds and putting them together – what do you think the sounds are?

/ɪə/ near	/eə/ where
/əʊ/ go	/ʊə/ tour*

* This diphthong is very rare – some English speakers never use it. They use /ɔ:/ instead.

Listen and see if you guessed correctly.

Listen again and try to memorize the sounds.

- 2 Cover the symbols above and write them in next to the words you have just heard.

/ / near	/ / where
/ / go	/ / tour

- 3 **T.0.5.B.** Listen to the words on the left and match them to the correct transcription on the right, like this:

a. bear	/beɪ/	e. they	/ðeɪ/
beer	✗/brə/	though	/ðəʊ/
bay	✗/beə/	there	/ðəʊ/
b. toy	/tɔɪ/	f. I'll	/ɔɪl/
tie	/təʊ/	oil	/aɪl/
toe	/taʊ/	owl	/aʊl/
c. roll	/reɪl/	g. dear	/daɪ/
real	/riəl/	day	/diə/
rail	/rəʊl/	die	/deɪ/
d. how	/heə/	h. show	/ʃeə/
hair	/haʊ/	share	/ʃaɪ/
high	/haɪ/	shy	/ʃeʊ/



Los feministas no dicen "histony" dicen "horstony"

2 → schwa

(como en catalán "probable" → /ə/)

KEY

THE PHONEMIC ALPHABET

1 Vowels (1)

3 T.0.1.B.

- | | | |
|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| a. /ɒ/ | h. /ʊ/ | o. /i:/ |
| <u>hot</u> | <u>wool</u> | <u>feel</u> |
| b. /ɪ/ | i. /ʊ/ | p. /ɪ/ |
| <u>hit</u> | <u>pull</u> | <u>fill</u> |
| c. /u:/ | j. /ɪ/ | /u:/ |
| <u>rude</u> | <u>pill</u> | <u>boot</u> |
| d. /i:/ | k. /ɪ/ | r. /ə:/ |
| <u>read</u> | <u>sit</u> | <u>bought</u> |
| e. /ʊ/ | l. /i:/ | s. /i:/ |
| <u>good</u> | <u>seat</u> | <u>beat</u> |
| f. /ɒ/ | m. /ə:/ | t. /ɪ/ |
| <u>God</u> | <u>fall</u> | <u>bit</u> |
| g. /ɔ:/ | n. /u:/ | |
| wall | fool | |

2 Vowels (2)

3 T.0.2.B.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------|
| a. man /æ/ | g. heard /ɜ:/ |
| b. men /e/ | h. hard /ɑ:/ |
| c. fast /a:/ | i. pass /ə:/ |
| d. first /ɜ:/ | j. purse /ɜ:/ |
| e. head /e/ | k. run /ʌ/ |
| f. had /æ/ | l. ran /æ/ |

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| 4 a. /ɑ:/ /ə/ | g. /ʌ/ /ə/ |
| father | butter |
| b. /ʌ/ /ə/ | h. /ɒ/ /ə/ |
| mother | chocolate |
| c. /ɪ/ /ə/ | i. /ɪ/ /ə/ |
| sister | singer |
| d. /ʌ/ /ə/ | j. /æ/ /ə/ |
| brother | actress |
| e. /ɒ/ /ɪ/ | k. /i:/ /ə/ |
| orange | teacher |
| f. /ʊ/ /ə/ | l. /ɒ/ /ə/ |
| sugar | doctor |

3 Consonants

- | | |
|------------|----------|
| 3 a. jump | g. that |
| b. your | h. bank |
| c. cheap | i. think |
| d. through | j. lunch |

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| e. orange | k. these |
| f. young | l. church |

- | | |
|------------|--------|
| /s/ | /s/ |
| pets | sports |
| /z/ | /z/ |
| children's | miles |

4 Diphthongs (1)

2 T.0.4.B.

- | | |
|---------------|----------------|
| a. pay /eɪ/ | h. Wales /eɪ/ |
| b. voice /ɔɪ/ | i. case /eɪ/ |
| c. loud /aʊ/ | j. try /aɪ/ |
| d. grey /eɪ/ | k. coin /ɔɪ/ |
| e. die /aɪ/ | l. high /aɪ/ |
| f. noise /ɔɪ/ | m. flower /aʊ/ |
| g. house /aʊ/ | n. weigh /eɪ/ |

2

T.1.2.A.

The *s* at the *beginning* of words is always pronounced /s/ not /z/ (except *sh*).

5 Diphthongs (2)

3 T.1.2.B.

- | | |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. bear /beə/ | e. they /ðeɪ/ |
| beer /brə/ | though /ðəʊ/ |
| bay /beɪ/ | there /ðeə/ |
| b. toy /tɔɪ/ | f. I'll /aɪl/ |
| tie /taɪ/ | oil /ɔɪl/ |
| toe /təʊ/ | owl /aʊl/ |
| c. roll /rəʊl/ | g. dear /dɪə/ |
| real /rɪəl/ | day /deɪ/ |
| rail /reɪl/ | die /daɪ/ |
| d. how /hau/ | h. show /ʃəʊ/ |
| hair /heə/ | share /ʃeə/ |
| high /haɪ/ | shy /faɪ/ |

3

T.1.2.B.

- a. I speak Spanish, but unfortunately, I don't speak Swedish.
- b. Steve speaks very slowly, doesn't he?
- c. On Sunday, it was snowing in Scandinavia, Switzerland and Spain.
- d. He has stopped playing sports and started smoking.
- e. In her spare time, Stephanie plays squash and goes swimming.

UNIT 1

1

2 T.1.1.B.

- | | | |
|--------|-----------|---------|
| /s/ | /z/ | /iz/ |
| likes | owns | watches |
| works | goes | kisses |
| takes | remembers | rises |
| visits | comes | washes |
| picks | | closes |

3

T.1.3.C.

- | | |
|--|--|
| a. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | f. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| b. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | g. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| c. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | h. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| d. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | i. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| e. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | j. <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

3 RULES

- | | | |
|---------|--------|--------|
| a. /iz/ | b. /s/ | c. /z/ |
|---------|--------|--------|

4 suburbs

- | | |
|--------|---------|
| /z/ | /iz/ |
| houses | chances |

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| /z/ | /z/ |
| gardens | bedrooms |

- | | |
|-------|-------|
| /s/ | /z/ |
| weeks | hours |

- | | |
|-----|-------|
| /s/ | /iz/ |
| | buses |

T.1.3.D.

- a. I'm studying at a language school in London.
- b. I'm staying with a very nice woman with two children.
- c. Her husband's working abroad.
- d. He's earning a lot of money, I think.
- e. He's not enjoying himself very much.