

CHAPTER 4

ENGLISH VOWEL SOUNDS

As mentioned in chapter 2, it is the study of how English vowel sounds are described and classified. In this chapter it will be the study of how English vowel sounds are produced and how they are described. In English vowel sounds consist of monophthongs (pure vowels) and diphthongs (compound vowels). Such description and production will be assigned to a term label for each vowel sound, such as the label a *high front unrounded long vowel* for the vowel sound in English word *see*,

Vowel sounds

There are 20 vowel sounds in English. These are listed below along with the examples that show their occurrence in the initial, medial, and final positions. A blank space in the table indicates the non-occurrence of a vowel sound in that position.

No.	Monophthongs			
	Phonetic Symbols	Position		
		Initial	Medial	Final
1.	i:	eat	seat	sea
2.	ɪ	it	sit	city
3.	e	end	lend	-
4.	æ	and	sand	-
5.	ɑ:	art	farm	far
6.	ɒ (ɑ:)AmE	on	hot	-
7.	ɔ:	all	caught	saw
8.	ʊ	-	put	-
9.	u:	ooze	choose	shoe
10.	ʌ	up	cup	-
11.	ɜ:	earn	turn	fur
12.	ə	about	police	actor

Diphthongs				
13.	eɪ	age	base	stay
14.	əʊ(ou) <i>AmE</i>	oak	joke	slow
15.	aɪ	ice	mice	my
16.	aʊ	out	shout	now
17.	ɔɪ	oil	boil	boy
18.	ɪə	ear	beard	Clear*
19.	eə	air	shared	hair
20.	ʊə	-	cured	poor

Figure 4.1 Phonetic symbols of English vowel sounds

Source: adapted from Sethi & Dhamija, (1999)

*It is noted that /r/ is not pronounced in British Accent as in *clear* /kɪrə/ but in American Accent /r/ is pronounced as in *clear* /kɪər/.

1. Monophthongs

Monophthongs are simply single pure vowels. There are 12 monophthongs classified into four front vowel sounds: /i:, ɪ, e, æ/; three central vowel sounds: /ʌ, ə, ɜ:/; and five back vowel sounds: /ɑ:, ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:/. These are now described and discussed in terms of 1) the tongue height, 2) the part of the tongue raised, and 3) the lip-position.

1.1 Front vowel sounds: /i:, ɪ, e, æ/

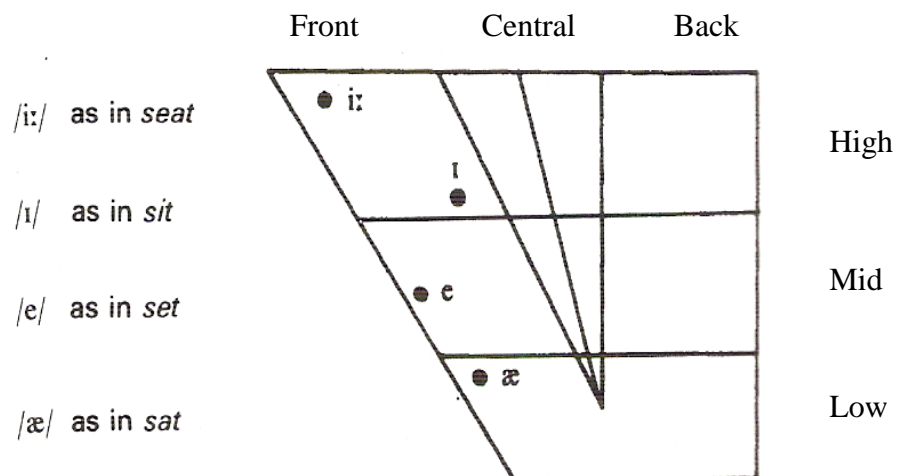


Figure 4.2 Front vowel sounds (Sethi and Dhamija, 1999: 66)

1.1.1 High front unrounded long vowel sound /i:/. • seat

In producing the sounds /i:/, the front of the tongue is raised to a height just below the high position (Figure 4.2); the lips are spread. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /i:/.



Open your mouth very little to make the sound /i:/.

Spread your lips into a smile.

Push your tongue forward in your mouth.

/i:/ is a long sound.

Move your tongue up a little as you say it.

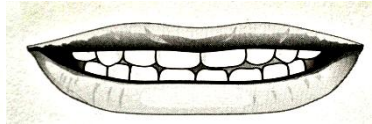


Figure 4.3 The diagram for making the sound /i:/

/i:/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/i: -/	/- i: -/	/- i:/
eel	feel	see
each	meat	free
even	receive	key
eat	these	tea

“Steve keeps the cheese in the freezer.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /i:/.

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Please to meet you.

2.2) I agree with you.

2.3) Can I speak to Lee, please?

2.4) Unbelievable!.

2.5) Could you repeat that, please?

2.6) Good evening.

3) Spelling

The sound /i:/ is usually spelled with the letter *e*:

ee = see, feel, three, cheese
 ea = eat, tea, please, cheap
 e = me, we, be, equal
 e...e = (the second *e* is silent) evening, these,

complete

ie = piece, field, relief, siege
 ei = receive, either, either,
 eo = people
 ay = quay
 ey = key
 i = visa, police, machine, ski

1.1.2 High front unrounded short vowel sound /ɪ/ • sit

To produce the sound /ɪ/, the rear part of the front of the tongue is raised to a height just lower than the position of the sound /i:/ (Figure 4.2); the lips are loosely spread; and it is a short vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ɪ/



First practice to make the sound /i:/

Then open your mouth a little more for the sound /ɪ/.

Do not spread your lips into a smile.

Pull your tongue down a little in your mouth.

/ɪ/ is a shorter, more relaxed sound than /i:/.

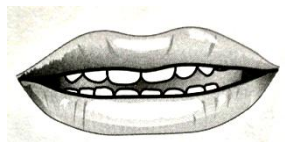


Figure 4.4 The diagram for making the sound /ɪ/

/ɪ/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/ɪ-/	/-ɪ-/	/-ɪ/
it	fit	marry
ill	fill	holy
if	still	lady
enjoy	engine	simile

“Tim bit a bit of Kitty’s biscuit.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ɪ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) What time is it?

2.4) May I come in?

2.2) I think it’s interesting.

2.5) Wait for a minute.

2.3) Listen to this.

2.6) Where do you live

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /i:/ and /ɪ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /i:/

Sound 2: /ɪ/

sheep

ship

seat

sit

heel

hill

feel

fill

sleep

slip

4) Spelling

The sound /ɪ / is usually spelled with the letter *i*:

i = hit, sit, did, will

y = syllable, city, gym, symbol

ui = building, guilty

u = busy, minute (n)

ia = marriage, carriage

o = women

ey = monkey, money

1.1.3 Mid front unrounded short vowel sound /e/ • set

To produce the sound /e/, the front of the tongue is raised to a point about mid-way between the high and the low positions (Figure 4.2); the lips are loosely spread and a little wider than for /ɪ/. It is a short vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /e/



First practice to make the sound /ɪ/.

Then open your mouth a little more for the sound /e/.

/e/ is a short and relaxed sound.



Figure 4.5 The diagram for making the sound /e/

/e/ occurs in the two positions in a word only:

Initial

/e-/

any

egg

end

else

Medial

/-e-/

many

leg

lend

friend

“It’s best to rest, said the vet to the pet.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /e/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Are you ready?

2.2) Yes.

2.3) What’s the weather like?

2.4) It’s very expensive.

2.5) Help, please.

2.6) Let’s get ready.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /ɪ/ and /e/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɪ/

bill

pin

chicks

wrist

spill

Sound 2: /e/

bell

pen

checks

rest

spel

4) Spelling

The sound /e/ is usually spelled with the letter *e*:

e	=	let, send, yes, spell
a	=	any, many,
ea	=	head, ready, health, jealous
ai	=	said, again
ie	=	friend
ue	=	guess, guest
u	=	bury
ei	=	leisure

1.1.4 Low front unrounded short vowel sound /æ/ • sat

To produce the sound /æ/, the front of the tongue is raised to a low position (Figure 4.2); the lips are in the neutral position and the mouth is more open than for /æ/. It is a short vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /æ/



First practice to make the sound /e/.

Then open your mouth a little more for the sound /æ/.

/æ/ is a short sound.



Figure 4.6 The diagram for making the sound /æ/

/æ/ occurs in the two positions in a word only:

Initial	Medial
/æ-/	/-æ-/
and	man
ass	sand
axe	lax
ant	sat

“The fat cat sat on the man’s black hat.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /æ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Thank you for your help.

2.2) What's happening?

2.3) I have a sandwich for breakfast.

2.4) Do you understand?

2.5) What's the matter?

2.6) Who's that man?

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /e/ and /æ/ in contrast.

Sounds 1: /e/	Sound 2: /æ/
X	axe
pen	pan
men	man
left	laughed
said	sad

4) Spelling

The sound /æ/ is usually spelled with the letter *a*:

a = sat, hat, man, jacket

ai = plaid, plait

1.2 Central vowel sounds: /ʌ, ə, ɜ:/

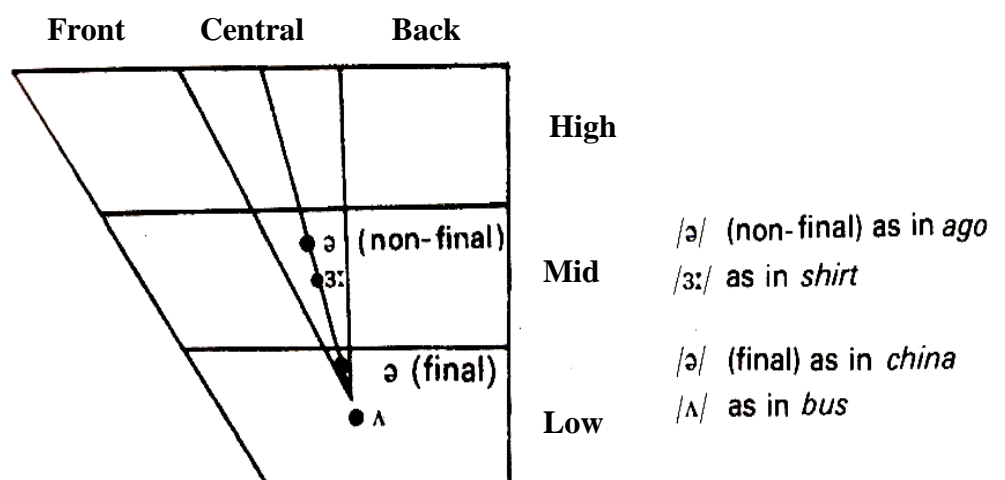


Figure 4.7 Central vowel sounds (Sethi and Dhamija, 1999:75)

1.2.1 Low central unrounded short vowel sound /ʌ/ • bus

During the production of the sound /ʌ/, the centre of the tongue is raised to a low position (Figure 4.6); the lips are neutrally open, with separation of the jaws. It is a short vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ʌ/



First practice to make the sound /æ/.

Then close your mouth a little for /ʌ/.

Put your tongue back a little.

/ʌ/ is a short sound.



Figure 4.8 The diagram for making the sound /ʌ/

/ʌ/ occurs in the initial and medial positions in a word:

Initial	Medial
/ʌ-/	/-ʌ-/
up	cup
other	supper
uncle	front
us	wonder
utter	blood

“My mother’s brother’s my uncle; my uncle’s son’s my cousin.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ʌ/.

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

1.2.1 What’s up?

1.2.2) Shut up!

1.2.3) How much is it?

1.2.4) Ouch! I cut myself.

1.2.5) What country are you from?

1.2.6) Do you have enough money?

1.3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /æ/ and /ʌ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /æ/	Sound 2: /ʌ/
cap	cup
bag	bug
cat	cut
rag	rug
ankle	uncle

1.4) Spelling

The sound /ʌ/ is usually spelled with the letter *u* or *o*:

u	=	sun, just, cut, funny
o	=	money, monkey, colour, onion
ou	=	country, young, cousin, enough
oo	=	blood, flood
oe	=	does

1.2.2 Mid central unrounded long vowel sound /ɜː/ ● shirt

During the production of the sound /ɜː/, the centre of the tongue is raised between high and low positions (Figure 4.6); the lips are closely rounded. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ɜː/

First practice to make the sound /ɔː/.

Then put your tongue forward and up a little.

/ɜː/ is a long sound.

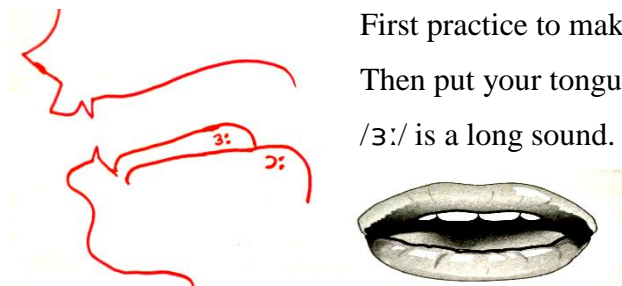


Figure 4.9 The diagram for making the sound /ɜː/

/ɜː/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/ɜː-/	/-ɜː-/	/-ɜː/
earn	first	fur
earth	burn	occur
early	curl	prefer
err	turn	blur

“The girl heard the nurse work.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ɜː/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Hurry up!

2.2) Happy birthday.

2.3) My father is hard-working.

2.4) I was the first person in here.

2.5) I walk to work.

2.6) Do you prefer hot or cold weather?

3) Word pairs 1

Practice saying the sounds: /ɔː/ and /ɜː/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɔː/	Sound 2: /ɜː/
four	fur
store	stir
torn	turn
shorts	shirts
ward	word

4) Word pairs 2

Practice saying the sounds: /ʌ/ and /ɜː/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ʌ/	Sound 2: /ɜː/
shut	shirt
huts	hurts
bun	burn
bud	bird
gull	girl

5) Spelling

The sound /ɜː/ is spelled many different ways:

er	=	person, term, prefer, certain
ir	=	bird, shirt, firm, girl
ur	=	turn, burn, hurt, surface
ear	=	earth, learn, heard, early
or (after w)	=	word, work, world, worship
our	=	journey, adjourn

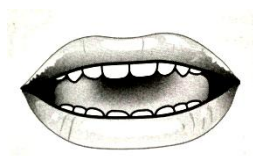
1.2.3 Mid/Low central unrounded short vowel sound /ə/ • ago

In producing the sound /ə/, there are at least two positions—the *non-final* and the *final*. The non-final /ə/ is pronounced exactly the same way and at more or less the same place as the sound /ɜː/. In that position, the sound /ə/ differs from the sound /ɜː/ mainly in respect of length, /ə/ being a short vowel. The final /ə/, however, is made with the centre of the tongue raised just below the mid position (Figure 4.6). In both cases, the lips are neutrally positioned.

1) Practice the sound /ə/



First practice to make the sound /ɜː/



This is a long sound.

Then make it very short for /ə/.

/ə/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.10 The diagram for making the sound /ə/

/ə/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Medial	Medial	Final
/ə-/	/-ə-/	/-ə/
about	police	doctor
away	correct	sofa
allow	compare	theatre
ago	backward	favour

“I ate an apple and a banana in a cinema in Canada.

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ə/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) What's the problem?

2.2) Can you say that again?

2.3) What about you?

2.4) That's excellent!

2.5) You're welcome.

2.6) I was hungry.

3) Practice using the sound /ə/ in words and syllables that are not important or unstressed.

Practice saying the sound: /ə/ in the following words or phrases:

3.1) a glass of water /ə 'glɑ:s əv 'wɔ:tə(r)/

3.2) mother and father /'mʌðər ənd 'fɑ:ðə(r)/

3.3) a cup of coffee /ə 'kʌp əv 'kɒfɪ/

3.4) at six o'clock /ət 'sɪksə'klɒk/

3.5) a book about China /ə 'bʊk ə'baut 'tʃaɪnə/

3.6) her sister's camera /hə(r)'sɪstə(r)z'kæmə(r)ə/

4) Spelling

The sound /ə/ can be spelled with any vowel letter:

a	=	again, about, banana, woman
e	=	open, problem, excellent, reference
i	=	possible, terrible
o	=	today, obtain, prolong
u	=	suggest, success, suspect (v), careful
ou	=	jealous, famous, dangerous
er	=	better, mother, singer, other, center
or	=	doctor, effort, governor, comfort
ur	=	surprise, surpass
ure	=	treasure, measure, feature
ia	=	special, musician, partial
ar	=	dollar, particular, beggar
re	=	centre, metre

1.3 Back vowel sounds: /ɑ:/ , ɒ , ɔ:/ , ʊ , u:/

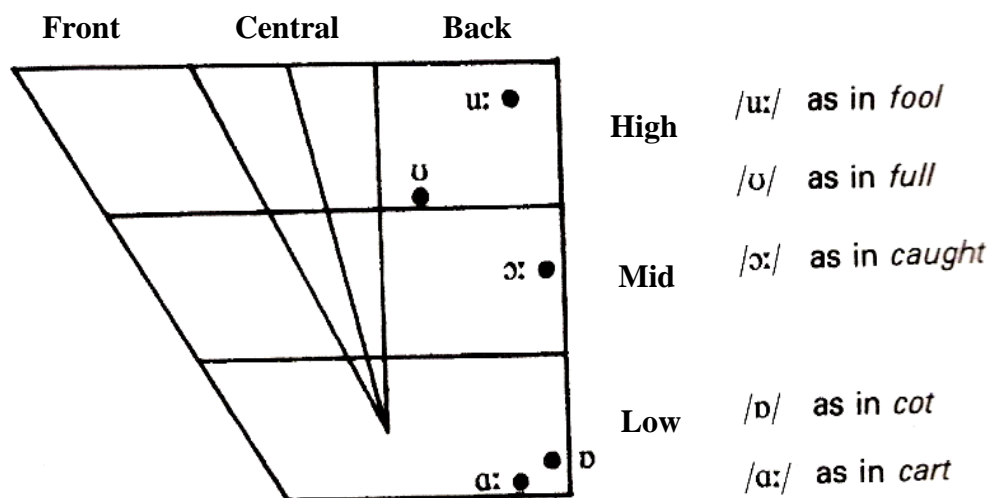


Figure 4.11 Back vowel sounds (Sethi and Dhamija, 1999:70)

1.3.1 Low back unrounded long vowel sound /ɑ:/ ● cart

To produce the sound /ɑ:/, the jaws are kept considerably separated; the lips are neutrally open; and a part of the tongue moving down and back is in the fully low position (Figure 4.10). It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ɑ:/



First practice to make the sound /æ/.



Then put your tongue down and back for the sound /ɑ:/.

Make your lips open neutrally.

/ɑ:/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.12 The diagram for making the sound /ɑ:/

/ɑ:/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/ɑ: -/	/-ɑ: -/	/-ɑ:/
arm	calm	star
art	laugh	far
aunt	heart	bar
ask	starve	aha

“It’s hard to park a car in a dark car park.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ɑ:/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) What a fast car!

2.2) She broke my heart.

2.3) We started in March.

2.4) Where's the bar?

2.5) It's getting dark.

2.6) Let's start.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /æ/ and /ɑ:/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /æ/	Sound 2: /ɑ:/
cap	carp
hat	heart
cat	cart
ban	barn
match	march

4) Spelling

The sound /ɑ:/ is usually spelled with the letter *ar* or *al*:

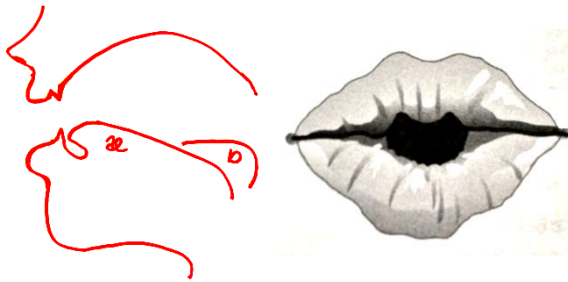
ar	=	arm, harm, art, farm
al	=	calm, half, balm, palm
a	=	ask, dance, bath, after*
au	=	aunt, laugh
ear	=	heart, hearth
er	=	clerk, sergeant
ah	=	ah

*It is noted that the words: *ask*, *dance*, *bath*, *after* are pronounced as /æ/ in American accent but as /ɑ:/ in British accent.

1.3.2 Low back rounded short vowel sound /ɒ/ ● cot

During the production of the sound /ɒ/, the back of the tongue is raised slightly above the low position (Figure 4.10); the jaws are widely open and the lips are slightly rounded. It is a short vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ɒ/



First practice to make the sound /æ/.

Then put your tongue slightly back and bring your lips slightly forward.

Make your lips rounded slightly.

/ɒ/ is a short sound.

Figure 4.13 The diagram for making the sound /ɒ/

/ɒ/ occurs in the two positions in a word only :

Initial	Medial
/ɒ-/	/-ɒ-/
ox	fox
often	soft
October	quality
office	promise

“John wants to watch Walter wash the dog.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ɒ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Let's go shopping.

2.2) No problem!

2.3) Stop!

2.4) What do you want?

2.5) What's wrong with you?

2.6) We've got what we want.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /æ/ and /ɒ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /æ/	Sound 2: /ɒ/
hat	hot
cat	cot
cap	cop
sack	sock
ran	Ron

4) Spelling

The sound /ɒ/ is usually spelled with the letter *o* :

o	=	stop, job, clock, box
a (after /w/)	=	want, watch, wallet, wash
au	=	because, sausage, Australia
ou	=	cough, trough
ow	=	knowledge

1.3.3 Mid back rounded long vowel sound /ɔ:/. • caught

During the production of the sound /ɔ:/, the back of the tongue is raised between the high and the low positions (Figure 4.10); the lips are considerably more rounded than for /ɒ/. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ɔ:/.



First practice to make the sound /ɒ/.

Then put the back of your tongue up a little.

Make your lips more rounded than for /ɒ/.

/ɔ:/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.14 The diagram for making the sound /ɔ:/.

/ɔ:/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/ɔ:-/	/-ɔ:-/	/-ɔ:-/
all	stall	law
ought	thought	jaw
organ	dawn	floor
awful	story	store

“Laura’s daughter bought a horse and called it Laura.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ɔ:/'

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Good morning.

2.2) One more, please.

2.3) Are you a reporter?

2.4) It was awful.

2.5) I've put the ball in the drawer

2.6) It's too warm to go walking.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /ɒ/ and /ɔ:/' in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɒ/'

Sound 2: /ɔ:/'

cod

cord

cot

caught

pot

port

fox

forks

spots

sports

4) Spelling

The sound /ɔ:/' is usually spelled with the letter *a* :

a = all, tall, wall, talk

ar = warm, towards, war

au = cause, daughter, caught, caution

aw = saw, law, straw, yawn,

oa = broad

oar = board

or = or, nor, cord, born

ore = more, store, before

ou = ought, fought, thought, nought

our = four, court, pour

1.3.4 High back rounded short vowel sound /ʊ/ • full

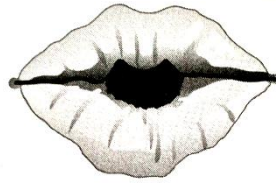
During the production of the sound /ʊ/, a part of the tongue is raised nearer to centre than to back just above the high position (Figure 4.10); the lips are closely but loosely rounded. It is a short vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ʊ/



First practice to make the sound /ʊ/.

Then put the back of your tongue forward and up a little.



Make your lips rounded closely but loosely.

/ʊ/ is a short sound.

Figure 4.15 The diagram for making the sound /ʊ/

/ʊ/ occurs in the medial positions in a word only:

Medial	Medial
/-ʊ-/	/-ʊ-/
put	wood
push	should
wolf	woman
book	look

“That cook couldn’t cook if he didn’t look at a cook book.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ʊ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

4.2.1) What are you looking for?

4.2.2) I couldn’t do it.

4.2.3) Look!

4.2.4) That’s a good book.

4.2.5) Who’s that woman?

4.2.6) Push it but don’t pull it.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /ɒ/ and /ʊ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɒ/	Sound 2: /ʊ/
pot	put
cock	cook
god	good
lock	look
rock	rook

4) Spelling

The sound /ʊ/ is usually spelled with the letter *oo* or *u* :

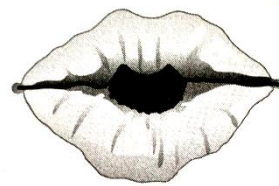
oo	=	book, look, good, foot
u	=	pull, push, put, sugar
ou	=	could, should, would,
o	=	woman

1.3.5 High back rounded long vowel sound /u:/ ● fool

During the production of the sound /u:/, the back of the tongue is raised to the high position (Figure 4.10); the lips are closely rounded. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /u:/

First practice to make the sound /ʊ/ again.



Then put your tongue up and back.

Make your lips rounded closely.

/u:/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.16 The diagram for making the sound /u:/

/u:/: occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Medial	Medial	Final
/u:-/	/-u:-/	/-u:/:
ooze	truth	shoe
oop!	student	true
-	rude	two
-	routine	blue

“Sue knew too few new tunes on the flute.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /u:/:

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Whose shoe is it?

2.2) What’s new?

2.3) See you soon.

2.4) Let me introduce you.

2.5) Excuse me.

2.6) I want to see a movie. Me, too.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /u:/: and /ʊ/: in contrast.

Sound 1: /u:/:	Sound 2: /ʊ/:
Luke	look
pool	pull
fool	full
suit	soot
stewed	stood

4) Spelling

The sound /u:/: is usually spelled with the letter *oo* or *u* :

oo	=	too, soon, school, choose
u	=	truth, music, usually, student
u...e	=	introduce, use, true
o	=	do, who, two, movie
o....e	=	move, shoe, lose, whose

ou	=	you, group, soup
ew	=	new, knew, grew, few
ough	=	through
ui	=	juice, fruit, suit
eau	=	beautiful

2. Diphthongs

As mentioned above the vowel sounds are single pure vowel sounds.

“Diphthongs (also called gliding vowel sounds) are (Andriyani, 2013) single vowel sounds when two vowel sounds are paired together in sequence.” In English there are eight diphthongs consisting of 1) three gliding vowel sounds towards [ɪ]: /eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ/; 2) two towards [ʊ]: /aʊ, əʊ/, and 3) three towards [ə]: /ɪə, eə, ʊə/. These are now discussed below.

2.1 Gliding vowel sounds towards [ɪ]: /eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ/

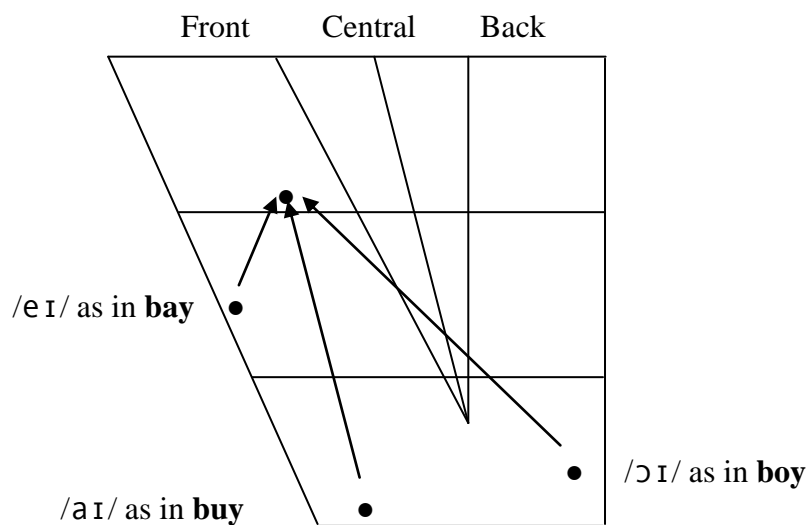


Figure 4.17 Gliding vowel sounds towards [ɪ]: /eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ/

2.1.1 The gliding vowel sound /eɪ/ ● bay

In producing the sound /eɪ/, the glide starts from a point of the mid front short vowel sound position and moves in the direction of /ɪ/ (Figure 4.16). The movement of the tongue goes with a slight high movement of the lower jaw. The lips are spread. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /eɪ/

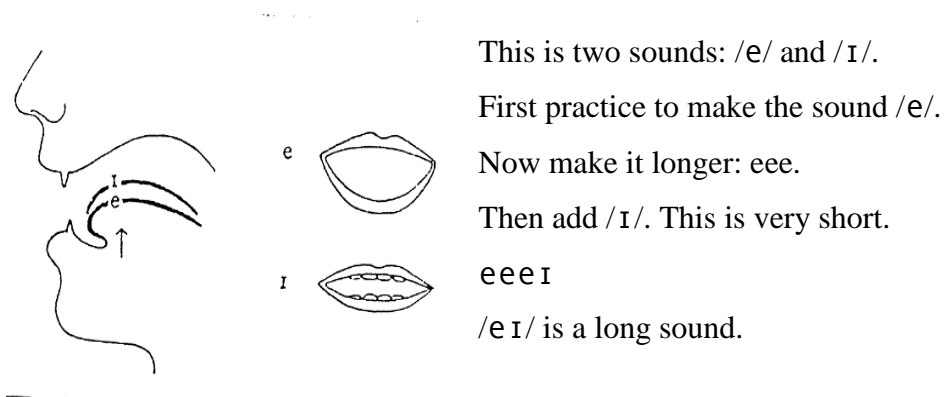


Figure 4.18 The diagram for making the sound /eɪ/ (Baker, 1977: 47)

/eɪ/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Medial	Medial	Final
/eɪ-/	/-eɪ-/	/-eɪ/
age	race	may
aim	brain	play
eight	take	weigh
acre	main	convey

“The rain in Spain falls mainly on the plain.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /eɪ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 2.1) Sorry! I'm late. | 2.4) Wait a minute. |
| 2.2) What did you say? | 2.5) Have a great day! |
| 2.3) OK. | 2.6) That's a great name. |

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /e/ and /eɪ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /e/	Sound 2: /eɪ/
pen	pain
wet	wait
test	taste
pepper	paper
shed	shade

4) Spelling

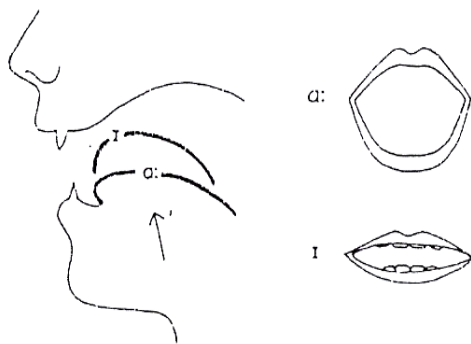
The sound /eɪ/ is usually spelled with the letter *a* :

a...e	=	name, take, page, lake
a	=	station, nation, bass (in music)
ai	=	aim, brain, train, wait
ay	=	say, way, pay, away
eigh	=	eight, weigh, neighbor
ea	=	great, break, steak
ey	=	they, grey, obey

2.1.2 The gliding vowel sound /aɪ/ • buy

In producing the sound /aɪ/, the glide starts from a point slightly behind the low front position and moves in the direction of /ɪ/ (Figure 4.16). The movement of the tongue goes with an appreciable high movement of the lower jaw. The lips are in a neutral position at the beginning, but they gradually change to a loosely spread position. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /aɪ/



This is two sounds: /a:/ and /ɪ/.

First practice to make the sound /a:/.

Make this sound long. aaa

Then add /ɪ/. This is very short.

/aɪ/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.19 The diagram for making the sound /aɪ/ (Baker, 1977: 50)

/aɪ/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Medial	Medial	Final
/aɪ-/	/-aɪ-/	/-aɪ/
ice	rice	fly
eyes	knight	high
item	fight	hi
idle	five	deny

“Nile crocodiles have the widest smile

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /aɪ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) This is my bike. 2.4) I'm going for a drive with Nigel.

2.2) I had a nice time. 2.5) Hi. My name's Brian.

2.3) Goodnight. 2.6) Would you like some ice-cream

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /ɑː/ and /aɪ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɑː/	Sound 2: /aɪ/
bar	buy
star	sty
darn	dine
lark	like
cart	kite

4) Spelling

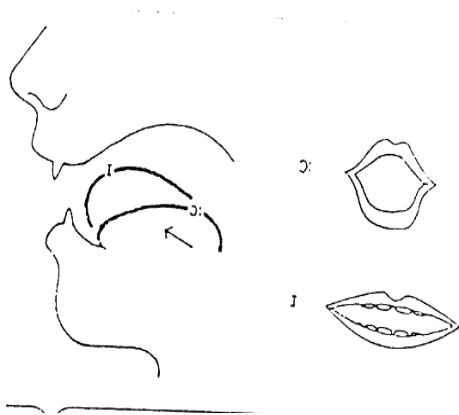
The sound /aɪ/ is usually spelled with the letter *i* and *y*:

i.....e	=	fine, file, time, ice
i	=	find, hi, item, Friday
igh	=	high, light, right, tonight
y	=	try, fly, my, why
ie	=	lie, die, tried,
ai	=	aisle
ei	=	height, neither, either
eye	=	eye
uy	=	buy, guy
ye	=	bye, dye

2.1.3 The gliding vowel sound /ɔɪ/ • boy

In producing the sound /ɔɪ/, the glide starts from a point of the low back positions and moves in the direction of /ɪ/ (Figure 4.16). The jaw movement is not as considerable as for the sound /aɪ/. The lips are open rounded at the beginning, changing to the neutral towards the end. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ɔɪ/



This is two sounds: /ɔ:/ and /ɪ/.

First practice to make the sound /ɔ:/.

Now make it longer: ɔɔɔ.

Then add /ɪ/. This is very short.

ɔɔɔɪ

/ɔɪ/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.20 The diagram for making the sound /ɔɪ/ (Baker, 1977: 53)

/ɔɪ/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Media	Medial	Final
/ɔɪ-/	/-ɔɪ-/	/-ɔɪ/
oil	boil	boy
ointment	appointment	enjoy
oyster	poison	employ
-	coin	annoy

“Roy enjoys noisy toys.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ɔɪ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Don't make a noise.

2.2) Do you enjoy it?

2.3) That noise is very annoying.

2.4) Please keep your voice down!

2.5) Do you have an appointment? -

2.6) Look! The water's boiling.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /aɪ/ and /ɔɪ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /aɪ/	Sound 2: /ɔɪ/
buy	boy
ties	toys
pint	point
aisle	oil
file	foil

4) Spelling

The sound /ɔɪ/ is spelled with the letters *oi* and *oy*:

oi	=	voice, point, oil, noise
oy	=	joy, boy, toy, enjoy
uo	=	buoy

2.2 Gliding vowel sounds towards [ʊ]: /aʊ, əʊ/

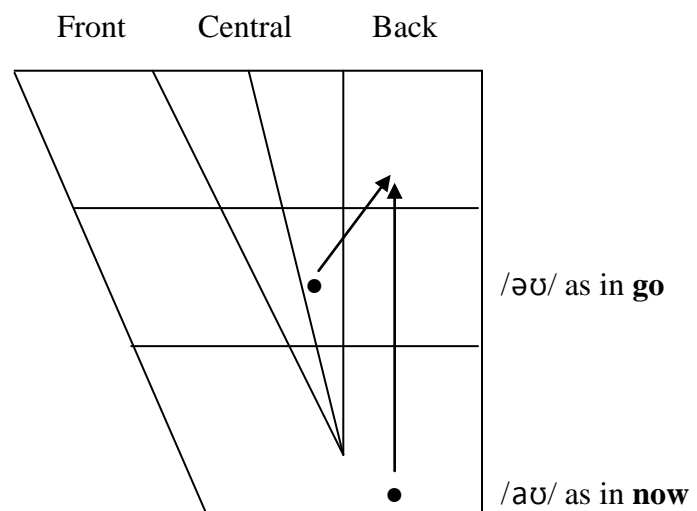
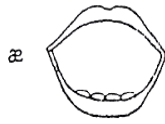


Figure 4.21 Gliding vowel sounds towards [ʊ]: /aʊ, əʊ/

2.2.1 The gliding vowel sound /aʊ/ ● now

In producing the sound /aʊ/, the glide starts from a point between the back and front low positions and moves in the direction of /ʊ/ (Figure 4.20). The jaw movement is as extensive as for the sound /aʊ/. The lips are neutral at the beginning of the glide, but become rounded towards the end. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /aʊ/



This is two sounds: /æ/ and /ʊ/.

First practice to make the sound /æ/.

Now make it longer: æææ.

Then add /ʊ/. This is very short.

æææʊ

/aʊ/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.22 The diagram for making the sound /aʊ/ (Baker, 1977: 57)

/aʊ/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/aʊ-/	/-aʊ-/	/-aʊ/
out	count	now
owl	bounce	how
ounce	round	plough
oust	mouth	cow

“Mrs. Brown counted cows coming down the mountain.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /aʊ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Please sit down.

2.4) Ouch! You hit me.

2.2) Sit down and don't shout.

2.5) Put it down.

2.3) I'm going to downtown.

2.6) I found a mouse in
the house.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /ɑ:/ and /aʊ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɑ:/

Sound 2: /aʊ/

car

cow

bar

bow

bra

brow

grass

grouse

arch

ouch

4) Spelling

The sound /aʊ/ is spelled with the letters *ou* and *ow*:

ou = round, out, sound about, house

ow = now, down, how, town

2.2.2 The gliding vowel sound /əʊ/ • go

In producing the sound /əʊ/, the glide starts from a point at a central position almost midway between the high and the low positions and moves in the direction of /ʊ/ (Figure 4.20). The jaw movement is slight; the lips, which are neutral at the beginning of the glide, become rounded towards the end. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /əʊ/

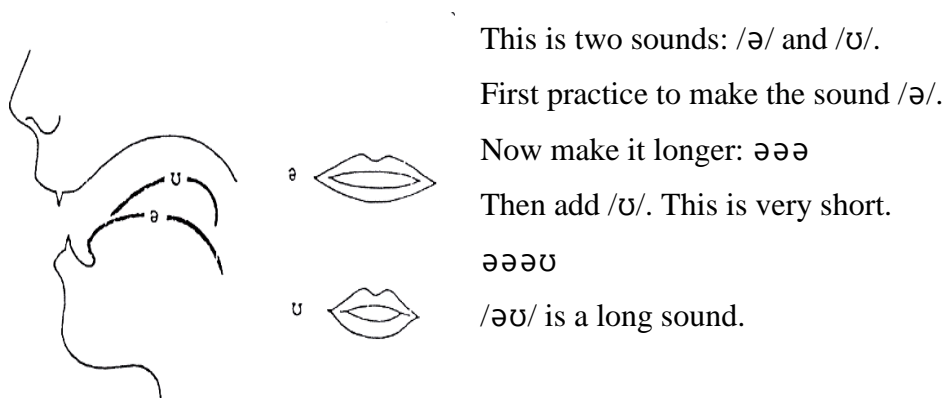


Figure 4.23 The diagram for making the sound /əʊ/ (Baker, 1977: 61)

/əʊ/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/əʊ-/	/-əʊ-/	/-əʊ/
over	boat	go
open	fold	sorrow
oval	coat	know
own	ghost	so
owe	phone	though

“Rose knows Joe phones Sophie, but Sophie and Joe don’t know Rose knows.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /əʊ/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Let's go home.

2.2) No.

2.3) How's it going?

2.4) OK.

2.5) Could you open the window?

2.6) Hello. My name's Joe

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /ɔ:/ and /əʊ/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɔ:/

Sound 2: /əʊ/

saw

sew

caught

coat

hall

hole

ball

bowl

walk

woke

4) Spelling

The sound /əʊ/ is usually spelled with the letter *o*:

o = go, told, open, so

o...e = home, joke, phone, those

oa = boat, road, goat, coast

ow = show, know, window, slow

oe = toe, Joe

2.3 Gliding vowel sounds towards [ə]: /ɪə. eə. ʊə/

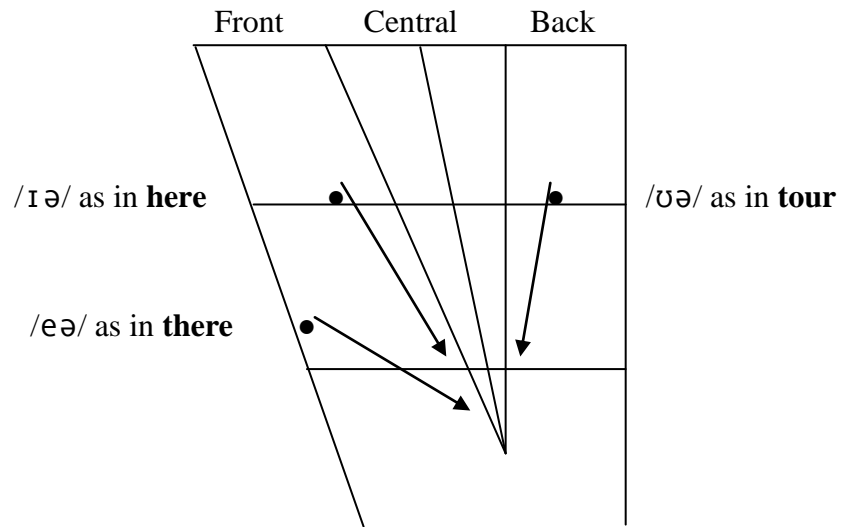


Figure 4.24 Gliding vowel sounds towards [ə]: /ɪə, eə, ʊə/

2.3.1 The gliding vowel sound /ɪə/ ● here

In producing the sound /ɪə/, the glide starts from a point just below the high front position and moves in the direction of /ə/ (Figure 4.23). The movement of the tongue goes with a slight closing movement of the lower jaw. The lips are spread. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ɪə/



This is two sounds: /ɪ/ and /ə/.

First practice to make the sound /ɪ/.

Now make it longer: ɪ ɪ ɪ .

Then add /ə/. This is very short.

ɪ ɪ ɪ ə

/ɪə/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.25 The diagram for making the sound /əʊ/ (Baker, 1977: 66)

/ɪə/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/ɪə-/	/-ɪə-/	/-ɪə/
era	serious	dear
ear	beard	appear
	theory	clear
	cheerful	here

“His beard has nearly disappeared into his beer.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ɪə/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

- 2.1) Can you hear me? 2.4) Let's have a beer here.
 2.2) That's a good idea. 2.5) Here you are.
 2.3) He came here last year. 2.6) It's not clear.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /i:/ and /ɪə/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /i:/	Sound 2: /ɪə/
E	ear
bee	beer
tea	tear
pea	pier
bead	beard

4) Spelling

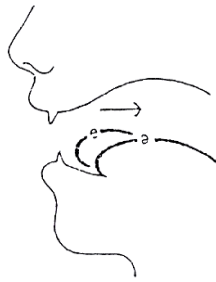
The sound /ɪə/ is spelled many different ways:

e	=	period, serious, zero, hero
ea	=	real, idea, theatre
ear	=	dear, clear, fear
ere	=	here, mere, severe
eer	=	deer, cheer, beer, sheer
eo	=	theory, theorem
eu	=	museum
io	=	period
iou	=	serious, impious

2.3.2 The gliding vowel sound /eə/ • there

In producing the sound /eə/, the glide starts from a point in the front, above the high position, and moves in the direction of /ə/ (Figure 4.23). The lips are neutrally open throughout. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /eə/



This is two sounds: /e/ and /ə/.

First practise to make the sound /e/.

Now make it longer: eee.

Then add /ə/. This is very short.

eeeə

/eə/ is a long sound.

Figure 4.26 The diagram for making the sound /eə/ (Baker, 1977: 69)

/eə/ occurs in all the three positions in a word:

Initial	Medial	Final
/eə-/	/-eə-/	/-eə/
air	careless	compare
airport	shared	pear
heirs	scared	there
aeroplane	various	wear

“Sarah and Mary share their pears fairly.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /eə/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

2.1) Where are you from?

2.2) There's nowhere to go.

2.3) It's over there.

2.4) It's not fair.

2.5) I want to share this chair.

2.6) Be careful!

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /ɪə/ and /eə/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɪə/	Sound 2: /eə/
beer	bear
pier	pear
hear	hair
tear	tear
cheers!	chairs

4) Spelling

The sound /eə/ is spelled many different ways:

a	=	various, Mary
are	=	care, share, stare, beware
ear	=	bear, pear, wear, tear (v)
air	=	air, chair, fair, pair
eir	=	their, heir
ere	=	there, where, compere
ar	=	scarce

2.3.3 The gliding vowel sound /ʊə/ • tour

In producing the sound /ʊə/, the glide starts from the tongue position for /ʊ/ and moves in the direction of /ə/ (Figure 4.23). The lips are loosely rounded at the beginning of the glide and neutral at the end. It is a long vowel sound.

1) Practice the sound /ʊə/



This is two sounds: /ʊ/ and /ə/.

First practice to make the sound /ʊ/.

Now make it longer: ʊʊʊ.

Then add /ə/. This is very short.

ʊʊʊə

/ʊə/ is a long sound

Figure 4.27 The diagram for making the sound /eə/ (Baker, 1977: 70)

/ʊə/ occurs in the two positions in a word:

Medial	Final
/-ʊə-/	/-ʊə/
curious	poor
mural	sure
steward	casual
rural	manual

“You’re poor but I’m sure you’ll speak fluently.”

2) Phrases and sentences with the sound /ʊə/

Practice saying these phrases and sentences below.

- 2.1) Are you sure?
- 2.2) She can speak English fluently.
- 2.3) He’s very poor.
- 2.4) He is a tour guide.
- 2.5) Make sure you lock it.
- 2.6) This is an old manual typewriter.

3) Word pairs

Practice saying the sounds: /ɔ:/ and /ʊə/ in contrast.

Sound 1: /ɔ:/	Sound 2: /ʊə/
tore	tour
more	moor
Shaw	sure
moral	mural
pour	poor

4) Spelling

The sound /ʊə/ is spelled many different ways:

oor	=	poor, moor
our	=	tour
u	=	jury, rural, mural
ua	=	manual, casual
ue	=	fluent, influence, fuel
ure	=	sure, pure, cure

Summary

In English, there are 20 vowel sounds: 12 are monophthongs or pure vowels, and the remaining eight, diphthongs.

The monophthongs can be divided into four front vowel sounds: / i:, ɪ, e, æ/; five back vowel sounds: /ɑ:, ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:/, and three central vowel sounds: /ʌ, ɜ:, ə/. These /i:,ɑ: ɔ: u: ɜ:/ are long, and the rest short. Only four back vowels:/ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:/ are rounded; all the other monophthongs are unrounded.

The diphthongs or gliding vowel sounds are single vowel sounds when two vowel sounds are paired together in sequence. In English there are eight diphthongs consisting of 1) three gliding vowel sounds towards [ɪ]: /eɪ, aɪ, ɔɪ/; 2) two towards [ʊ]: /aʊ, əʊ/, and 3) three towards [ə]: /ɪə, eə, ʊə/.

Question reviews

- How many vowel sounds are there in English?
- What are monophthongs?
- Provide a four-term label: 1) high, mid, or low; 2) front, central, or back; 3) rounded or unrounded; and 4) short or long for each of the vowels contained in the following words:
 3.1 true 3.2 sad 3.3 pull 3.4 head 3.5 heart 3.6 food
- Give an appropriate vowel symbol for the vowel in each of the following words:
 4.1 blood 4.2 short 4.3 bet 4.4 look 4.5 bird
 4.6 hot 4.7 lose 4.8 play 4.9 home 4.10 hear
- How many of these vowel sounds are there in the words in each line?

The first line is done for you.

	/eɪ/	/aɪ/	/əʊ/	/aʊ/
5.1 snow face down coach slowly	1	0	3	1
5.2 neighbor delay age dry weigh				
5.3 road trousers mouth shave power				
5.4 drive polite type right brown				
5.5 although complaint round bowl main				

6. Give two pairs of words to distinguish between each of the following pairs of vowel sounds:

6.1 /e/, /æ/

6.2 /ɑ:/, /ʌ/

6.3 /ɒ/, /əʊ/

6.4 /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/

6.5 /ʌ/, /ɜ:/

7. Cite two words as examples for each of the following:

7.1 /ɔ:/ spelt with aw

7.2 /ɪ/ spelt with u

7.3 /e/ spelt with ea

7.4 /æ/ spelt with a

7.5 /ʌ/ spelt with o

8. Which word contains as **high back rounded long vowel** sound?

8.1 shut

8.2 shot

8.3 shoot

8.4 short

8.5 shop

9. Which word contains the **/ɒ/** sound?

9.1 soft

9.2 saw

9.3 caught

9.4 short

9.5 cope

10. Choose the word that contains the **/eɪ/** sound:

10.1 sat

10.2 base

10.3 small

10.4 get

10.5 head