

My 'simply better' Pronunciation Method

Guide to Phonetics

Vowels



My 'simply better' Guide to Phonetics



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Introduction

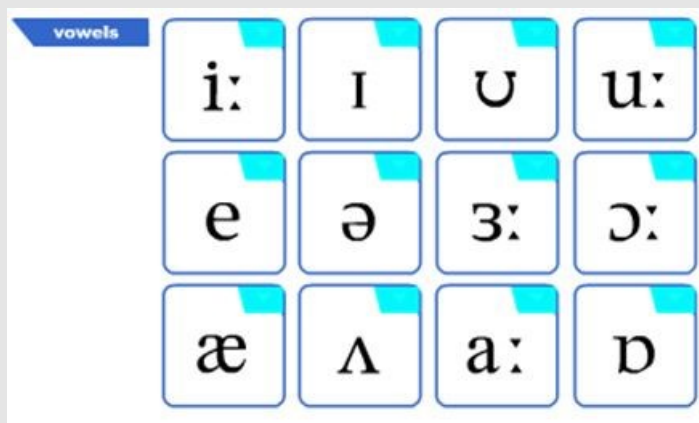
In this lesson, I will teach you the vowels as they are written in phonemic script.

In English there are 5 vowels: a, e, i, o and u.

But in phonetics there are 12 sounds (phonemes).

For example, 'a' can be used in words like 'hat' and 'are' and 'because'.

But each 'a' is sounded differently. So we need a phoneme for each different use of 'a'.



Let's start!

I'll begin with the phoneme in the top left corner /i:/ and move row by row to the bottom right.

Here is the first one.

/i:/

It's written as an 'i' with a colon (inside 2 forward slashes).

We use it to 'sound out' the long 'ee' sound in words such as:

beep, deep, beer, cheer, breeze, seem

For the word 'deep' we write the complete word as /di:p/ in phonetic script.

Exercise

Title: Vowels

Write the phoneme in your notebook.

Explain the sound (long E).

Example words: seem, bee, cease etc.

Do this exercise for each phoneme you will learn.

/ɪ/

This one looks like a small capital 'I' with little caps on the top and bottom /ɪ/.

The sound is a short 'i'

Here it is used in the word 'tip' : /tɪp/

Other words that use this phoneme are: 'dip', 'flip', 'rip', 'trip' but also 'impose', 'dispose', 'strip' etc.

/ʊ/

This one is used in this word: 'book' pronounced /bʊk/

Other words that use this phoneme are:
put, look, bull, pull, push, bush.

Notice that 'put' and 'look' although spelt differently, have the same sound.

/u:/

This phoneme is the middle sound of 'moon' pronounced 'oo'.

And here is that phoneme in /m u:n/

Other words are: too, soon, doom, room, boom, but also 'rumour'.

/e/

This phoneme looks like a regular 'e' and is used in words such as: egg, /eg/ beg, /beg/ etc. Also 'regular' 'red', 'bedroom', 'head' etc.

/ə/

It looks like an upside down and backwards 'e'.

You can see it used in the word 'award': /ə wɔ:(r)d/

Other words that use it are 'America' /əmerɪkə/ and 'align' /ə'laɪn/

/ɜ:/

It has an 'err' sound.

You will see it used in /bɜ:(r)d/ - 'bird'

Other words that use this phoneme include:

word /wɜ:(r)d/ third /θɜ:(r)d/ urge /ɜ:(r)dʒ/ murder /mɜ:(r)də(r)/

You will see other (new) phonemes in these words, so I hope you are learning to understand them as well.

/ɔ:/

It looks like a backward C with a colon (:)

How is it pronounced?

Here's a clue - 'or'.

You can see it in the word 'door': /dɔ:(r)/

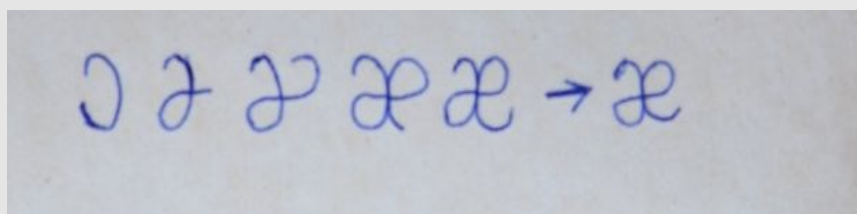
Other words: more, paw, saw, sore, remorse, resource, forget /fɔ:ɡet/.

/æ/

It is a short 'a' sound,

Used in words like: cat, ham, mass, ban, apple

In the picture you can see how it is written.



Take some time to practise writing it.

/ʌ/

This phoneme is one of the easiest to remember:

It's written as an upside down V.

Here it is used in this word: /pʌp/

It appears in other words such as: suppose, puppet, upwards, cup, sum, some etc.

/a:/

It is pronounced as a long 'aah' sound.

You can see it in these words:

/kɑ:(r) /	(car)
/p a: s/	(pass - the UK version),
/l a:st/	(again, the UK version of 'last'),
/a:(r)t/	(art),
/p a:(r)s(ə)l/	(parcel)

Note: Americans say 'pass' and 'last' to rhyme with 'mass' and 'massed' which is a different phoneme,

Notice also that adding a colon makes the sound a long one. Like /i:/

/ɒ/

This phoneme looks like a backwards capital D.

It appears in words like: hot /hɒt/

Also:

bottle /bɒt(ə)l/

rod /rɒd/

For practice, change the first letter to g, n, p, l, r etc. and all that changes is the first letter.

A short Test

Now that you have learned the phonemes for vowels, here's a short test of your understanding.

Try to do the test without looking back at the lessons.

Answers are on the next page.

Which phoneme is used in the word 'sheep'?

/i:/ or **/ɪ/**

Write the phonemes for the vowels in these words.

- 1 cap
- 2 bore
- 3 said
- 4 lot
- 5 mug
- 6 hurt
- 7 about
- 8 hook
- 9 doom
- 10 ship
- 11 freeze
- 12 start

Answers to the Test

The phoneme used in the word 'sheep' is **/i:/**

1. cap **/æ/**

2. bore **/ɔ:/**

3. said **/e/**

4. lot **/ɒ/**

5. mug **/ʌ/**

6. hurt **/ɜ:/**

7. about **/ə/**

8. hook **/ʊ/**

9. doom **/u:/**

10. ship **/ɪ/**

11. freeze **/i:/**

12. start **/ɑ:/**

How did you go?

The test is a good way to know which phonemes to revise.

Conclusion

In this lesson, you have learned the 12 vowel sounds.

You will have learned how to **write the phonemes** using forward slashes.

And understood that **complete words** also appear inside forward slashes when written in phonetic script.

Do practise writing the phonemes and saying the sounds as you write them.

That's a good way to remember them.

Gradually, as you continue learning the rest of the EPA they will become easier to recognise and say.

When you are ready...

[click or tap this link to take you to the next lesson.](#)

Look for the PDF

called **Diphthongs**

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