

Hello students! Stay with me Roxana, as I take you today through the vowels of Spoken English.

The outline of the module is - the vowels of the English language: Monophthongs diphthongs and triphthongs.

By the end of this module should be able to differentiate between the different vowel sounds of English; Learn to shape your vowels. We will explore a few problem vowel sounds and hopefully at the end of that we will build confidence to speak English.

So let's look at Vowels. What are the different kinds of vowels in the English language?

We have monophthongs, Diphthongs and triphthongs.

You don't need to learn the theory for an exam or anything but the reason why it is important I take you through these different sounds is so that when you pronounce them you do it correctly.

Right, let's take a look at the screen. These are the long single vowel sounds. They're called long monophthongs.

**OO, AW, AH, EE , ER (UH)**

As in fool, talk, dark, feet, girl.

The 'r' in 'girl' is not rolled - It's 'guhrl' not 'gerrrrl'.

The last line has some gibberish in purple color. That is the phonetic script. You don't need to learn it, it is just for you to know. It is the way in which you encounter pronunciation in the dictionary.

Let's look at these monophthongs in detail -  
**oo, as in fool, two, do, blue, grew.**

Look at the spelling of blue. Look at the spelling of grew. Whatever the spelling, the sound is 'oo'. English is a weird language and we shall see in the next few moments how weird it actually is. No matter what the spelling, the sound is the long monophthong **OO**.

Let us look at **AW** - as in talk, walk, fork.

**AW** - as in call, court, talk, walk.

Next - **AH** - as in dark. Oh again, I've chosen a word deliberately because the 'r' is not rolled. It's just 'dahk'. It's a deep down in the chest sound - **AH** as in Psalm, palm, calm.

Let's look at **EE** as in feet. It's a simple sound, easy. But you must differentiate between the long and the short E - **EE** as in feet, beat, beet; beat/beet both are the same sound. You also have EE in between a word like receive, deceive. **EE**. long, single sound.

Let's look at the **ER**. It is written as ER but it's actually pronounced in

Now, **UH**. Again, it's at the back of the throat. The thing is that to be able to pronounce your vowels correctly you must have a lot of breath. But that's a topic for another module. But you got to have good breathing, right? And you got to have the power of all of this breath in your mouth. So,

**UH**, as in nurse, turn, word, whirl, twirl.

Oh There is this in between words too - like birds, girls, mirth, earth

In 'river' it's at the end. What do the Americans do? They roll the R when it comes the 'er/uh' sound when it comes at the end of a word. They might say - 'riverrrr'. We tend to avoid that rolled 'r' at the end of the word.

What is the problematic monophthong? What're the problematic sounds?  
Generally, we are little lazy about shaping some of our vowels.

I said earlier **AH** - as in talk is a problem sound - as in talk, call.

But also in door. It's not..... let's not say the wrong thing; let's just say the right thing.

It's door, floor, more, core, sore, lore, fore.

All right? Practice the words that I've given you and find similar ones and try and work on the **AW** sound.

Now let's now look at the short single vowel sounds.

They're short - once again you don't need to 'learn' any theory, you just have to be able to apply it correctly, and the short monophthongs are :

**u, aw, uh, æ, eh, e** as in  
book, box but, bat, bet, bit.

These sounds are short - very short - and its important you keep them short. Again, the last line you see is the phonetic script - The IPA - International Phonetic alphabet. You may not want to bother you head about it, but if you want it - it's there. If you were doing a Spelling Bee, you might want to explore the IPA a little further.

Let's look at the short sounds again. I said,

Book, box, but, bat bet, bit  
look at it now closely;

There are **two Os**, but it's short - book, took, look, bush.

The **short AW** as in - box, fox, lock, dock, sock.....

**UH** as in but, hut; it should remain short; It should not become a longish uh; it should not become huuht. But let's not say the wrong thing.

Let's just say the right thing - but, hut, cut; and the last syllable of 'banana' are all exactly the same sound - so it is 'red banana', not bananaaa ; **bun ah nuh**.

Next is :

**Æ** - aaah ! Sometimes a little lazy about this too and I'll deal with the problem short sounds later. For now, it is : the **short Æ** as in bat, cat, gas, hat, has, jazz

Ah, now the next is also a bit of a troublesome one ;

The **short EH** - as in bed, head, said; look at the spelling. It's S A I D but it said in a way that rhymes with 'red' ; **red, read, said, dead**. It is 'eh'.

Now,

**Short 'i'** - as in big, hit, fit, begin, minutes. The short 'i' is a simple sound.

This next is a very important sound; the **neutral vowel**.

Sometimes we neutralise vowels. This specially happens with conjunctions and prepositions. I won't always say , " Get me the book **frawm** the table."

I'll say, "Get me the book '**frm**' the table. I neutralise it. I make very short, as if there is no vowel at all. You don't really say Jack AND Jill; you say Jack 'und' Jill. You neutralise the 'and' to 'und'. This is done in good English to keep the smooth flow of speech.

Right, look at 'as' - You don't say,

'The ghost blows up the kitchen fire

As (Æz) bold as (æz) bold can be !            You say 'uz bold uz bold can be !'

Or from as I already gave an example - to '**frm**'.

So - as, from, and - these are very often neutralized. They generally, as

I said, are prepositions and conjunctions. They keep the flow of speech.

Let's look at a few more neutral vowels : **often, taken**, take care (very short, like **takn**) not 'take - en' - let's not say the wrong thing; pencil, memory, supply, Sibyl. See all the different alphabets that could be neutral - that could be and can be an should be neutralized. It's called the **neutral vowel**.

Oh OK, there's also an unwritten sound, like in **rhythm**. There is no vowel there - rhythm, the rhythm, right?

Sometimes in poetry you don't say towards it -

'Twas; twas : '**Tw**as battered and scarred'; or untrim**m'd**. In a lot of old poetry you will get words like this - untrimmd, the poet has missed out the vowel actually, but basically it is neutralised. Dimm'd; fleet'st; toil'd; Right!

Now the problem short Monophthongs : the short 'e' - written in the phonetic script as an upside down 'e' facing the opposite side.

So its the 'ə' as in bed, get, dead, head, Beth, said, red, wed,  
This one could be a problem for some of us and we should be aware of it.

Now let's look at the double vowel sounds. They're called Diphthongs. Double. OK, you don't need to learn the theory, but you need to be able to pronounce them correctly. OK, so....

**ei** - bake; **aɪ** - bike; **ɔɪ** - boil ; **aʊ** - cow; **ʊə** - few; **əʊ** - boat

'oi' as in boy, 'ow' as in cow, 'u' as in few are easy.

The 'gliding into the 'e'in cake and the 'o'in boat are tricky. We'll look at them later.

We also have murmur diphthongs. Well they're very, very light:

air - as in fair, their, there; oor as in poor; ear as in fear.

Now here's a big problem: THEIR & THERE are **both** the murmur diphthong **air**. There is no difference in the way you pronounce them. THEIR & THERE are exactly the same sound. Their books are there - exactly the **same sound. Not** .... Let's not say the wrong thing. It's T H E I R & T H E R E - exactly the same sound; **air**.

The problem diphthongs are ai as in - take, fake, make, lake, steak, bake, wake  
OK? We do tend to say the wrong thing. We tend to be lazy. We don't tend not to  
give that double sound

Its the same with the sound 'o' as in - goat, go, tone, low, sow/sew  
Right ! Remember! It's a double sound ! s - e - w is also 'sow/so'

it's not anything else s-e-w to stitch is pronounced exactly like s - o - w; 'sow'.

The female of a pig - 's - o - w' is different. That rhymes with 'cow'

Examples of diphthongs - differentiated from single sounds :

Taste - test, late - let; gate - get; date - debt; mate - met;

raid - red; pate - pet; bait - bet ; came - Ken;

....and the very famous line from My Fair Lady :

The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain .....and you can work with the  
rest of the lines. Just remember it's an 'ei' and an 'ai' combined.

The other problem diphthong I said was the 'o'.

And there are sentences I have put down for you which you could practice.

Won't you go home? ; Joe has sold the old boat; the roses still grow over the  
gate post; alone, alone, all all alone, alone on a wide wide sea; the tones of the  
choir floated through the open meadows into the grove;

Now now say these ; cot - caught - coat ; lah - law - low ; not - naught - note ;

are - or - oar ; pa - paw - Poe ; rah - raw - roe ; sad - sawed - sewed ;

chock - chalk - choke ; tot - taught - tote ; ah - awe - oh ; lon - lawn - loan ;

hocks - hawks - hoax.

Now left are Triphthongs, the triple vowel sound which can also be described as a diphthong together with a neutral vowel, so they are -

ow - er ; i - er ; ay - er ;

So it is - tower , fire , mayor; also, shower , choir , layer.

(It's **kwai - er** not anything else for c-h-o-i-r . if it has been something else that you've heard, it's wrong).

Thank you students.

Keep practicing your vowels ! All the Best till we meet again !

Bye bye.