

Four main phoneme categories



Table 1: Alphabet and relative sounds of vowels

Vowel	Alphabet sound	Examples	Tongue & lips movement	Relative sound	Examples	Tongue & lips movement
A	/eɪ/	aid	Tongue starts mid, moves up towards front; lips spread slightly	/æ/	add	Tongue low-front, mouth open wide; lips relaxed
E	/iː/	seat	Tongue highfront, close to roof of mouth; lips spread	/ɛ/	set	Tongue mid-front, mouth slightly open; lips relaxed
I	/aɪ/	mice	Tongue starts low-centre, glides up to high-front; lips move from neutral to slightly spread	/ɪ/	miss	Tongue high-front but relaxed; lips slightly spread
O	/Ow/	soak	Tongue midback, glides up; lips rounded and tense	/ɑ/	sock	Tongue low-back; lips open and relaxed, slightly rounded in BrE
U	/Uw/	cute	Tongue highback, lips rounded; starts with /j/ glide (tongue highfront)	/ʌ/	cut	Tongue mid-central, mouth open; lips neutral, not rounded

Table 2: Hard and soft sounds of consonants

Letter	Hard sound with example and IPA symbol	Soft sound with example and IPA symbol	Rules
C	/k/ → cat /kæt/	/s/ → city /sti/	'C' is soft before e, i, y; otherwise hard
G	/g/ → go /gou/	/dʒ/ → giant /'dʒaɪənt/	'G' is soft before e, i, y; hard otherwise
S	/s/ → sun /sʌn/	/z/ → rose /rouz/	It has voiceless /s/ sound if followed by voiceless consonant, and voiced /z/ sound if followed by voiced consonant.
X	/ks/ → box /bɒks/	/gz/ → exam /ɪg'zæm/ hard	Hard sound when 'x' comes at the end, after consonant and stressed vowel; soft sound in case of opposite of above and with ex-prefix

Table 3: Some common digraph phonemes

Diagrams	IPA symbol	Examples
ch	/tʃ/	machine, chef, echo (Greek origin word where 'ch' gives a /k/ sound)
ph	/f/	phone, typhoon, phrase
th	/ð/ and /θ/	breathe, further, gather
sh	/ʃ/	shark, sunshine, fresh
wh	/w/	when, where, whale
ng	/ŋ/	sing, long, song
zh	/ʒ/	measure, vision

Table 4: Consonant blends and their sounds

Beginning of the word	End of the word	Two-letter L-blends	Two-letter R-blends	Three-Letter consonant blends	Two-letter S-blends & T-blends
st in stick → /st/	sk in risk → /sk/	bl – blog	br – brain	scr – scrunch	sc – scale
fr in fried → /fr/	st in fast → /st/	cl – click	cr – crab	spl – splash	sk – skir, skate, skin, ask
cr in credit → /kr/	nd in found	pl – plead	gr – grade	str – strict	sm – smack
	nt in rent → /nt/	sl – slim	fr – from	thr – three	sn – snack
		fl – flat	dr – draw	spr – spree	st – stop