

The alphabet

Aa Bb Cc Dd Ee Ff Gg Hh Ii Jj Kk Ll Mm Nn Oo Pp Qq Rr Ss Tt Uu Vv Ww Xx Yy Zz

What is a vowel sound?

There are only 5 vowel letters in English (**a,e,i,o,u**), but the sounds indicated by these 5 letters are 20. A vowel sound is produced when the air comes out of the mouth freely without any blockage or closure in the mouth cavity by the tongue, teeth, lips, etc. The vowel sounds are of two types:

Single vowel sounds: When these sounds are produced, the tongue remains in the same position even when the sound is prolonged. They consist of one sound only and are called pure vowels as in ‘sit’, ‘pot’, ‘heat’, etc. (the underlined letters indicate the single vowel sounds)

Double vowel sounds: These vowel sounds are a combination of two single vowel sounds and in pronouncing them the tongue moves from one position to another. For instance, in the word ‘light’ the sound of ‘i’ is a combination of the vowel sounds /a:/ as in ‘art’ and /i/ as in ‘it’. The words ‘hair’, ‘toy’ and ‘poor’ also contain double vowel sounds. You will find that sometimes two vowel letters may produce a single vowel sound as in ‘heat’, a single vowel letter may produce a double vowel sound as in ‘light’ explained above.

What is a consonant sound?

A consonant sound is one in which the air stream coming out of the lungs is modified in the mouth cavity by some blockage created by the tongue, lips, etc. When you say the sound of ‘p’ as in ‘pen’ a blockage is created in the outgoing breath by closing both the lips and thus, a consonant sound is produced. The charts on the following pages illustrate all the vowel and consonant sounds of English.

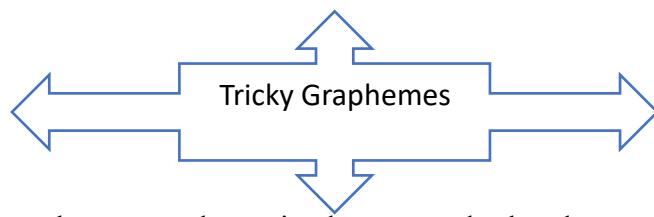
Table 1.1: Vowel sounds in English



Consonant sounds

TOPIC 1.7. CONSONANT SOUNDS

1. /p/ Pin	2. /b/ Ball	3. /t/ Ten	4. /d/ Deer
			
5. /k/ Kite	6. /g/ Girl	7. /tʃ/ Chair	8. /dʒ/ Jug
			
9. /f/ Fan	10. /v/ Van	11. /θ/ Teeth	12. /ð/ This box
			
13. /s/ Sofa	14. /z/ Zip	15. /ʃ/ Ship	16. /ʒ/ Treasure
			
17. /h/ Hat	18. /l/ Lamp	19. /r/ Rose	20. /m/ Monkey
			
21. /n/ Nine	22. /ŋ/ Ring	23. /w/ Wall	24. /j/ Yellow
			



There are some letters that are used to write down sounds already represented by other graphemes. For example, we use the letter c to represent the /k/ sound (already represented by the grapheme 'k') and the /s/ sound (already represented by the grapheme 's')