

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.

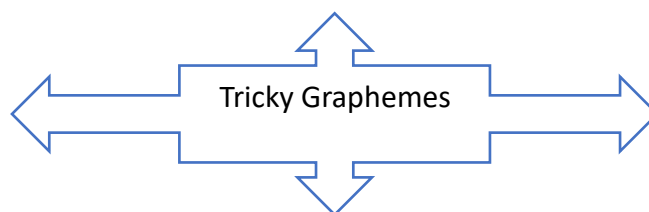
Table 1.1: Vowel sounds in English



Consonant sounds

TABLE 1.4. 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')