

Vowel sounds and diphthongs

In many English words, the spelling is different from the pronunciation. The same letters can sometimes represent different sounds, for example: *fun, fur, put, rude*. In many cases, different letters are used to represent the same sound, for example: *let, heavy, friend, bury, said*.

There are only twenty-six letters in the alphabet, but they represent over forty-four different sounds. Spoken English has a very high number of vowel sounds. There are twelve single vowels and eight diphthongs.

1 ① 74 Listen to the sounds. What is the difference between the sounds in A and the sounds in B?

A /ɪ/ /ʊ/ /ə/ /ʌ/ /ɒ/ /e/ /æ/

B /i:/ /u:/ /ɜ:/ /ɔ:/ /ɑ:/ /ɔ:/

2 ① 75 Listen to the sounds. Write the example words you hear. Then listen again and repeat.

1 /ɪ/	7 /a:/
2 /i:/	8 /ʌ/
3 /ɜ:/	9 /ɔ:/
4 /ə/	10 /ɒ/
5 /u:/	11 /e/
6 /ʊ/	12 /æ/

3 ① 76 Match the words in each pair to the correct pronunciation. Then listen and repeat.

1 hat	a /ha:t/	4 fit	a /fi:t/
heart	b /hæt/	feet	b /fɪt/
2 foot	a /fʊt/	5 head	a /hed/
food	b /fu:d/	heard	b /hɜ:d/
3 short	a /ʃɒt/	6 ugly	a /ə'geɪn/
shot	b /ʃɔ:t/	again	b /'ʌglɪ/

4 ① 77 A diphthong is a combination of two vowel sounds pronounced together. Listen and choose the diphthong that matches the sound of the underlined letters.

1 overweight	/eɪ/	/aɪ/
2 emotional	/əʊ/	/əʊ/
3 here	/ɪə/	/eə/
4 noisy	/ɔɪ/	/əʊ/
5 blonde-haired	/ɪə/	/eə/
6 foreground	/əʊ/	/əʊ/
7 stylish	/eɪ/	/aɪ/
8 tour	/əʊ/	/ʊə/

5 ① 78 Choose the odd one out. Then listen and repeat.

1 /eɪ/	have	shave	brave
2 /ʌ/	blood	touch	wool
3 /ɜ:/	girl	turn	worn
4 /aɪ/	eight	sight	shy
5 /əʊ/	brown	show	mouth
6 /i:/	great	mean	teeth
7 /ɒ/	front	top	want
8 /əʊ/	coat	town	snow

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