

LESSON 2

Vowel Sounds

(i) Types of Vowel Sounds

You have read in the previous lesson that there are essentially two kinds of vowel sounds: pure or single vowels and diphthongs or double vowels. The pure vowel sounds are further divided into short and long vowels. This classification along with an example of each is given below.

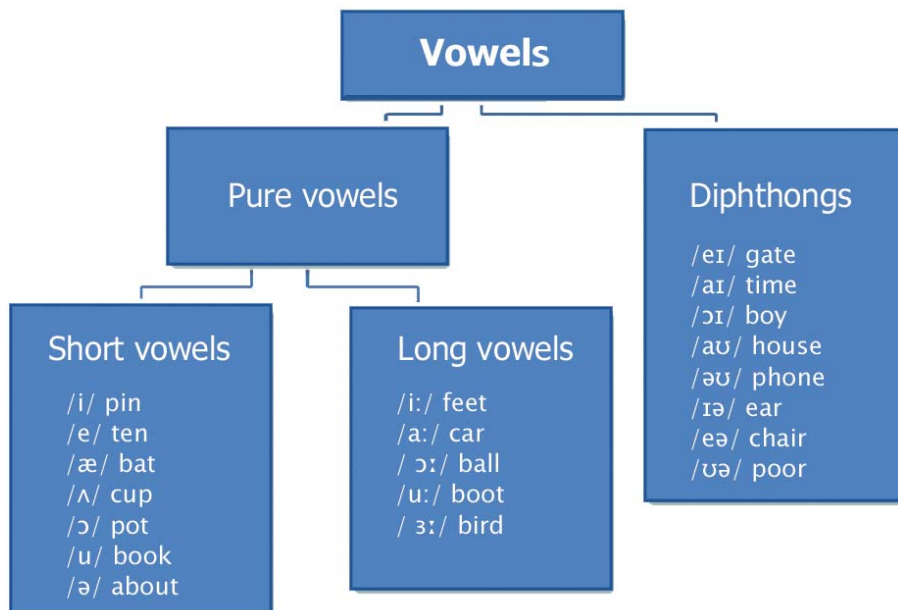


Figure 2.1: Types of vowel sounds

(ii) Production of vowel sounds

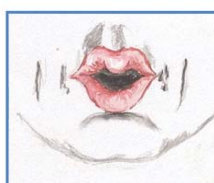
For producing the vowel sounds you have to keep two things in mind:

- (a) The shape of the lips and
- (b) The part of the tongue raised

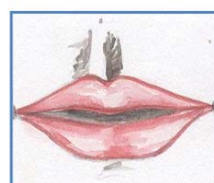
(a) The shape of the lips: The shape of the lips changes while producing different vowels. The basic shapes are: spread, rounded and neutral. These are shown below.



Spread as in /i:/ (sheep)



Rounded as in /ɒ/ (pot)



Neutral as in /ə/ (aloud)

Figure 2.2: Shape of lips while producing vowel sounds

(b) The parts of the tongue:

The different parts of the tongue are shown below.

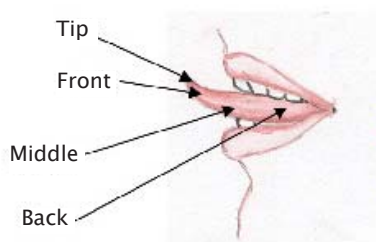


Figure 2.3: Parts of the tongue

For producing different vowel sounds, the front, centre and back of the tongue move forward, backward, up or down. Some of these movements are shown in the figure below.

Exercise 2

Match each of the given pictures to the following descriptions of tongue movements:

1. Forward, 2. Backward, 3. Up, 4. Down, 5. Forward-Up, 6. Backward-Down

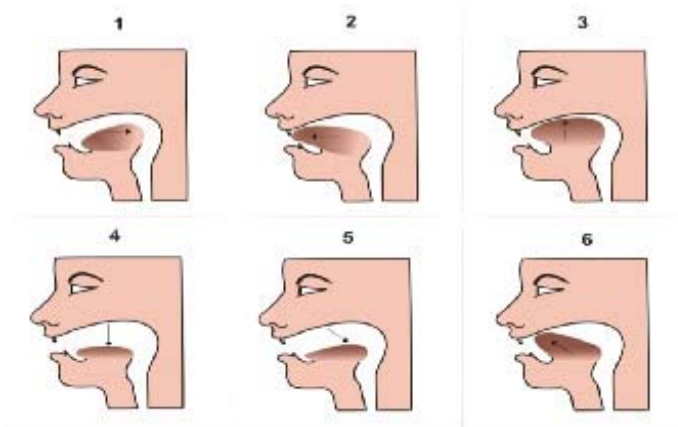


Figure 2.4: Positions of the tongue

Now practice these movements and try to discover the sounds produced in each case.

Therefore, to describe a vowel sound we should state the position of the tongue (height and part of the tongue raised) along with the shape of the lips.

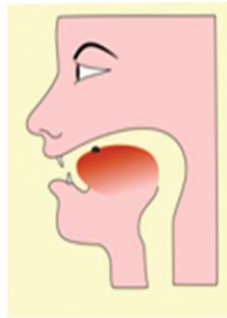
We will refer to both these things while describing vowel sounds that follow.

(iii) Pure vowel sounds

/i:/ Sheep

To say /i:/ :

1. Open your mouth very little and raise the front of the tongue close to the roof of the mouth.
2. Spread your lips as in the smiling position.
3. When we say the vowel sound /i:/ the front part of the tongue is raised very close to the hard palate and the lips are spread as is shown in the figure.
4. The black spot on the tongue indicates the place of production of the sound in the first figure and the next figure shows the position of the lips.



Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.5: Production of the sound /i:/

Read the words under the pictures and practise the vowel sound /i:/ as used in them.

 Seat	 Teeth	 Jeep
 Leaves	 Cheese	 Sheep

Exercise 3

Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /i:/. Then practise saying the sentences again paying attention to the target sound.

1. Deep breathing is good for health.
2. They will leave at three.
3. Cheese made from cow's milk is cheaper than cheese made of sheep's milk.
4. The fields are green in the rainy season.
5. Sneezes spread diseases.
6. Sandwiches are easier to eat.
7. Would you like tea or coffee?

Exercise 4

Have you ever noticed what we call the people of different nationalities? One way is to use the suffix '-ese' (/i: z/) which contains the target sound /i:/.

Match the countries to their nationalities.

No.	Country	Nationality
1	China	Portuguese
2	Japan	Lebanese
3	Portugal	Chinese
4	Lebanon	Japanese
5	Nepal	Vietnamese
6	Vietnam	Nepalese

The 'teen' numbers also have the sound /i:/.

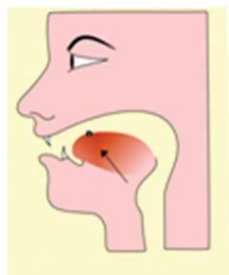
Read aloud and practise the following:

Thirteen, fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, nineteen.

/i/ Zip

To say /i/ :

1. First practise the sound /i:/.
2. Open your mouth slightly more (move your lower jaw) to say the sound /i/.
3. In producing the sound /i/ the centre of tongue is raised a little lower than in /i:/.
4. The lips are spread as is shown in the figures given below.



Position of tongue



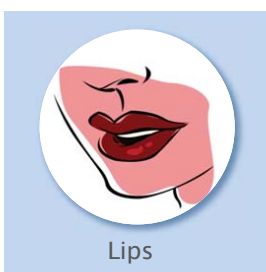
Shape of lips

Figure 2.6: Production of the sound /i/

Read the following words aloud and practise the vowel sound /i/ used in them.



Zip



Lips



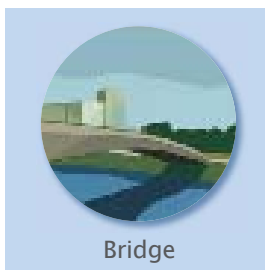
Fish



Ship



Pin



Bridge

Read the pairs of words written below. Note the difference in the vowel sounds.

Sit — seat, Hit — heat, Dip — deep, Lip — leap.

Exercise 5

Read the following sentences and identify the words which contain /i/ and /i:/ sounds. Write the words in the appropriate columns of the table given below.

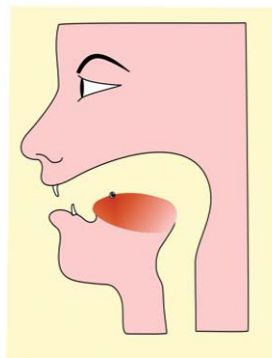
1. Sita, Meeta and Gita each got a prize for winning in different events in the annual meet.
2. It was not easy to get this reward.
3. Their friends were pleased to give them a treat.
4. They reached quickly and enjoyed the feast with Nita, Ishita and their little brother.

Words containing the vowel sound /i/	Words containing the vowel sound /i:/

/e/ Ten

To say /e/ :

1. First practise the sound /i/.
2. Open your mouth slightly more to say the sound /e/.
3. To produce this sound raise the front of the tongue a little less than you would to make the sound /i/.
4. The lips are loosely spread as is shown in the figures.



Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.7: Production of the sound /e/

Read the words given below and note the vowel sound.



Read the following pairs of words and note the difference in the vowel sounds.

Bill — bell

Big — beg

Pin — pen

Pick — peck

Exercise 6

Read the following sentences and underline the words which contain /i/ and /e/ sounds.

1. Send me ten tins of biscuits.
2. Get me a set of rings.
3. The men hid next door.
4. The eggs are eaten and finished.
5. Fill it and then send it.
6. It gets cold in North India in November and December.

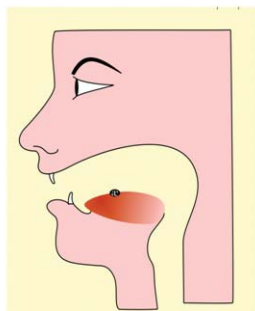
Now write the words in the appropriate columns of the table given below:

Words containing the vowel sound /i/	Words containing the vowel sound /e/

/æ/ Cat

To say /æ/ :

1. First practise the sound /e/.
2. Open your mouth slightly more to say the sound /æ/.
3. During the articulation of the vowel sound /æ/ the front of the tongue is slightly raised towards the hard palate and the lips are neutrally open as is shown in the figures.



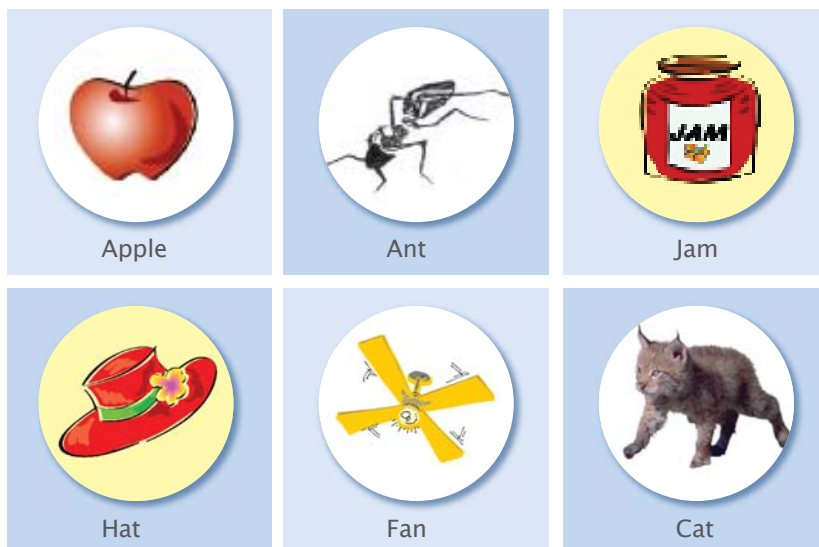
Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.8 Production of the sound /æ/

Read the following words aloud and note the way this sound is produced.



Exercise 7

Read the following sentences aloud and underline the words which contain /æ/ sound as described above.



Pat is a cat.



Pat sat on a mat.



Pat had a can. The can had jam.



The cat ate the jam.



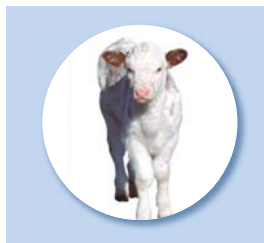
Pat saw a rat.
The cat chased the rat.
Away ran the rat.



The cat had a nap.

Exercise 8

Spot the objects which contain the /æ/ sound in these pictures. Write the words and say them aloud.



Exercise 9

Read the following conversation between Sam and Fanny and underline the words which contain /æ/ sound.

Sam: Fanny, I need some cash urgently. My bank balance is nil.

Fanny: I am sorry Sam. I had the cash, but I left my bag at home. By the way, how much do you need?

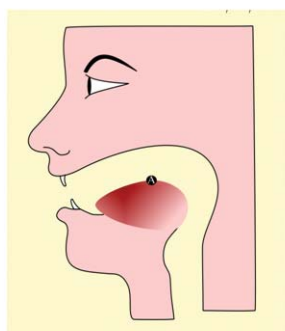
Sam: It's ten thousand. The amount is rather large; I need it for a charitable trust. I'll give it back to you within a week.

Fanny: That's alright. I'll go back home and bring it for you. Wait for me till I bring my bag.

/ʌ/ Sun

To produce the sound /ʌ/ :

1. First open your mouth as in saying /æ/.
2. Then put your tongue a little back to say the target sound /ʌ/.
3. In producing the sound /ʌ/ the centre of the tongue is raised toward the middle of the hard palate and soft palate. The jaws are open and the lips are neutrally open as is shown in the figures.



Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.9: Production of the sound /ʌ/

Read the following words and note the vowel sound used in these words:



Say the following words and note the vowel sound /ʌ/.

come, money, bus, butter, bun, cup, but, up, much, shut, couple, enough, trouble, country, hungry, must, touch.

Exercise 10

Read the following sentences aloud. Underline the words which contain the vowel sound used in the words given above:



Sunny is my little brother.



He is playing with our pup, Bun.



They are out in the sun.



Along comes a little bug.



Run, Sunny! Run, Run.

Exercise 11

Read the following conversation between Amar and Barun and underline the words which contain /ʌ/ sound.

Amar: Hello! Which country do you come from?

Barun: I used to live in Russia, but I've recently shifted to Lucknow.

Amar: I'm also from Lucknow. I hope you didn't have much trouble settling down.

Barun: Well, there were a couple of problems in the beginning. But now I'm comfortably settled, thanks.

Amar: How's your new school? How do you get there?

Barun: Oh, it's quite nice. Our school bus picks me up at 6.30 in the morning. Going by car costs a lot of money!

Amar: That's pretty early! How about breakfast?

Barun: I just have time for a cup of milk. If I'm hungry in school, I get some buns and butter from the canteen. That's enough for me. But the canteen shuts down in 20 minutes, so, we have to be quick.

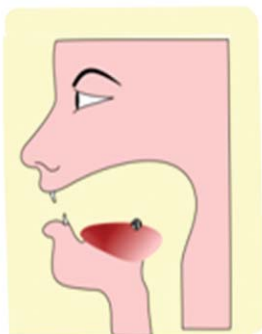
Amar: Well, I must leave now. It was nice meeting you.

Barun: Bye then. Do keep in touch!

/a:/ Car

To produce the sound /a:/ :

1. Open your mouth fully.
2. Lower the back part of your tongue to produce the long sound /a:/.
(This is the sound produced when a doctor examines the throat.)
3. During the articulation of the vowel sound /a:/ the part of the tongue which is between the centre and back is in fully open position. Lips are open as is shown in the figure.



Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.10: Production of the sound /a:/

Read aloud the following words and note the vowel sound used in them:



Read the following words using the vowel sound /a:/.

far, hour, are, drama, father, car, garage, after, can't, bath.

Note: The letter 'a' is used to produce two sounds /æ/and/a:/.

Exercise 12

Read the words given below and put them in two columns according to their vowel sounds

had, dad, card, guard, add, large, sharp, lack, glad, mark, man, bark, fat, far.

Words containing the sound /æ/	Words containing the sound /a:/

Exercise 13

Now, read the following conversation between Mala and Apar and underline the words which contain /a:/ sound. Then practise the conversation with a friend.

Mala: We have a drama competition after school today. I need your father's car to carry some articles.

Apar: But, Mala my father's car has gone to the garage for repairs.

Mala: Can't we pick it up from the garage Apar? Is it very far?

Apar: Not too far. But the repairs will take an hour.

Mala: An hour is fine with me.

Apar: Fine then. In the meantime I'll have a bath and get ready.

Mala: Thanks Apar. You are a big help.

/ʌ/ and /ɑ:/ sounds

The vowel sound /ʌ/ should be distinguished from the sound /ɑ:/. The former is a short sound, whereas, the latter is a long one.

Read the words given in the following two columns and note the difference in the vowel sounds used in them:

/ʌ/	/ɑ:/
duck	dark
luck	lark
hum	harm
cut	cart
cup	carp
hut	heart

Exercise 14

Read the following sentences and identify the words which contain the /ʌ/ and /ɑ:/ sounds. Write the words in the appropriate columns of the table given below.

1. He hasn't enough money.
2. The armies marched on.
3. Father needs spare parts for his car.
4. Please put this bundle on this bus.
5. Get me a bun and a cup of tea.

Words with /ʌ/ sound	Words with /ɑ:/ sound

Read the following sentences aloud twice using the alternative word given and note the difference of the vowel sound. Also try to understand the difference in meanings of the sentences.

The { cup
cart } she bought was very expensive.

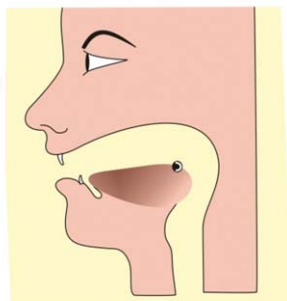
His { hut
heart } was filled with music.

The cat is near the { bun
barn } .

/ɔ/ Cot

To produce the sound /ɔ/ :

1. Move your tongue backward.
2. Then bring your lips forward in a rounded position to say this sound.
3. To produce this sound the back of the tongue is slightly raised and the lips are rounded as is shown in the figures.



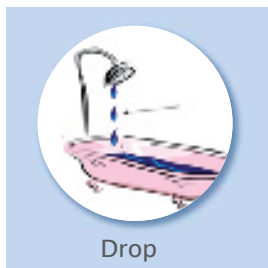
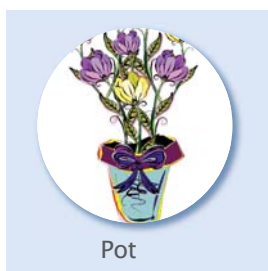
Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.11: Production of the sound /ɔ/

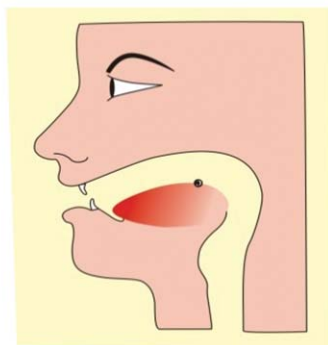
Read aloud the following words and note the vowel sound used in them:



/ɔ:/ Ball

To say /ɔ:/ :

1. First practise the sound /ɔ/.
2. Move your tongue up and a little more backward to produce the long sound /ɔ:/.
3. To produce this sound the back of the tongue is raised half way up in the mouth.
The lips are rounded.



Position of tongue



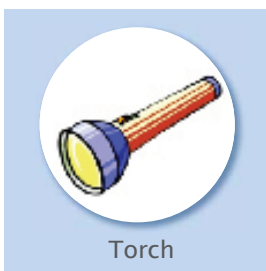
Shape of lips

Figure 2.12: Production of the sound /ɔ:/

Read the words given below and note the vowel sound.



Corn



Torch



Ball



Wall



Horse

Now read the following pairs of words and note the vowel sounds used in them.

Cot — caught

Cod — cord

Pot — port

Exercise 15

Read the sentences given below and classify the words with vowel sounds /ɔ/ and /ɔ:/ in the two columns given below.

1. Salt dissolves in water.
2. The hot weather has ended now and the monsoon has arrived.
3. They fought for the cause of freedom.
4. She has bought all the law books for her preparation.
5. I take cornflakes with milk every morning.
6. His office is in the north block of the building.

Words containing the vowel sound /ɔ/	Words containing the vowel sound /ɔ:/

Exercise 16

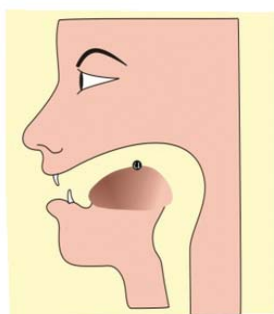
Read the following dialogues and note the words which contain the vowel sounds /ɔ/ & /ɔ:/.

- Rohit: Do you know if this train stops at Hong Kong North?
Dev: No, I don't think so. It goes straight to the City Mall.
Rohit: But they told me that it halts there.
Dev: Who told you this?
Rohit: An officer in that hall.
Dev: It would be better if you asked at the enquiry office.
Rohit: You're right. I'll do accordingly.

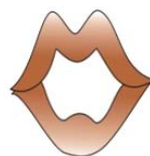
/u/ Book

To say /u/:

1. First practise the sound /ɔ:/.
2. Move your tongue up and a little more backward to produce the target sound /u/.
3. To produce this sound the back of the tongue is raised quite close to the roof of the mouth.



Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.13: Production of the sound /u/

Read the words given below and note the vowel sound.



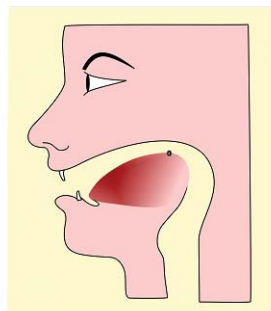
Read the following sentences containing the vowel sound /u/.

- Put your foot on this log of wood.
- He should get the book by hook or crook.
- We should wear woollen clothes in winter.
- They stood behind the bush.
- Push the door so that it opens fully.
- A good-looking woman pulled the door open.
- He could cook a good meal when he had visitors over for dinner.
- Have you understood the book now?

/u:/ Moon

To say /u: /:

1. First practise the sound /u/.
2. Move your tongue a little more up and backward to produce the long vowel sound /u:/ as is shown in the figures.



Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.14: Production of the sound /u:/

Read aloud the following words and note the vowel sound used in them:



Exercise 17

Read the following sentences and identify the words which contain /u/ and /u:/ sounds. Write the words in the correct columns of the table given below.

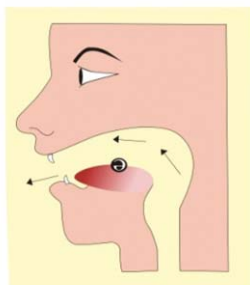
1. A fool can see a full moon at noon.
2. Too many cooks spoil the soup.
3. How much wood would a wood pecker peck, if a wood pecker pecked wood for two months?
4. He wanted the book by hook or by crook.
5. Why do you use rulers at school?

Words containing /u/ sound	Words containing /u:/ sound

/ ɜ: / Bird

To say /ɜ:/ or /ə/:

1. Raise the centre of the tongue half way up.
2. Keep the lips slightly spread to produce this sound as is shown in the following figure.
3. The vowel sound /ɜ:/ is produced by raising the centre of the tongue half way up to the roof of the mouth. The lips are neutral as in the words, 'bird' and 'first'.



Position of tongue







Shape of lips

Figure 2.15: Production of the sound /ɜ:/

Read the following words using the vowel sound /ɜ:/.

serve, burn, nurse, purple, surface, journey, search, first.

 Bird	 Circle	 Curly hair
 Girl	 Thirty	 First

Exercise 18

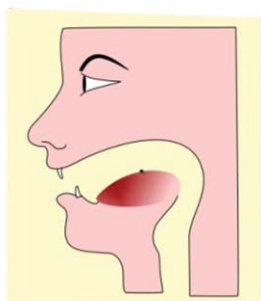
Read the following dialogues aloud and underline the words which contain the /ɜ:/ sound.

- Ravi: Mother, please serve my breakfast. I have to leave early today. We're going for a picnic.
Mother: I've heard that you are going to Mathura. That's thirty kilometres from here.
Ravi: That's right. What's for breakfast?
Mother: Vegetable burgers. The surface is slightly burnt but it tastes alright.
Ravi: It's perfect mother. I am thirsty. Please pass me the water.
Mother: Here you are. You can also have some sweetened curd.
Ravi: Thanks. I must leave now. I am taking your purple bag. Mine is a bit dirty.
Mother: That's OK.
Ravi: I'll be back by three thirty. See you then.

/ə/ Around

To say /ə/:

1. First practise the sound /ɜ:/ :
2. Now say this sound making it very short to produce the target sound /ə/.
3. This sound is produced by raising the centre of the tongue half way up in the mouth cavity.
e.g.:- about, around, famous, centre.



Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.16: Production of the sound /ə/

Read the words given below and note the vowel sound.



The most common spelling for the vowel sound /ə/ is 'a', the other letters used are 'e, o, u,' and some groups of letters such as 'ous', 'or', and 'ar,' etc.

Exercise 19

Read the following words and underline the spellings used for the vowel sound /ə/.

about, backward, problem, development, entertain, terrible, condition, produce, effort, famous, succeed, beggar, bigger, actor, doctor, colour, honour.

(iv) Double Vowel Sounds (Diphthongs)

Now we move on to the double vowel sounds.

These are called double vowel sounds or diphthongs because the tongue takes one position in the beginning when we say these sounds but it moves to another position when we end the sounds.

/eɪ/ Eight

To produce the sound /eɪ/ :

1. First practise the sound /e/ and then practise the sound /i/.
2. Now say the sounds together keeping the first sound longer and the second one shorter.
3. The figures showing production of all diphthongs which follow show the position of tongue at the initial and the final stages. The second figure shows the position of the lips at both the stages.

See the images carefully and practise this sound.

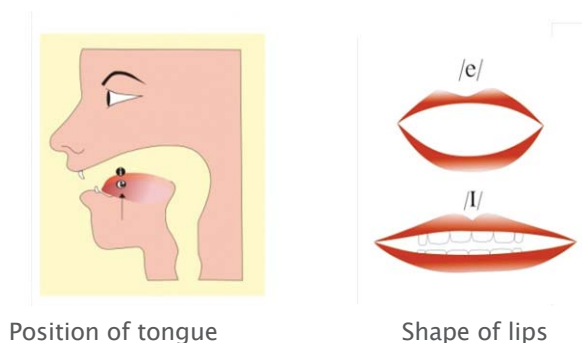
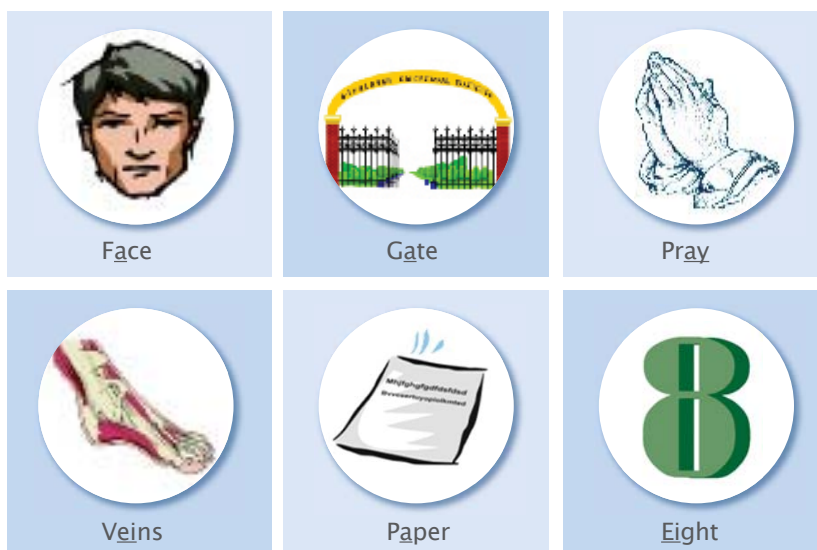


Fig 2.17: Production of the sound /eɪ/

Read aloud the following words and note the vowel sound used in them:



Read the words given below and note the letters used for the vowel sound /eɪ/.

vein, brain, spade, sailor, painter, flame, train, crane, blade, hail, rain, saint, place, save.

Read the following pairs and note the difference between the sounds /ei/ and /e/ in each pair.

Saint — sent	Fail — fell
Sail — sell	Wait — wet
Late — let	Spade — sped
Trade — tread	Nail — knell
Pain — pen	Fade — fed

Exercise 20

Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /ei/.

1. The train came eight hours late.
2. She sprayed the place with an air freshener and then laid the table.
3. She went in for the last time to claim her chance.
4. The rains are late which is damaging the crops.
5. She made place for the spade.
6. She baked a cake for me but ate it up all herself.
7. They played the game to earn a good name.
8. The waiter laid eight plates on the table.
9. He made a name plate for Mr. James.

/ai/ Kite

To produce the sound /ai/ :

1. First practise the sound /a:/ and then practise the sound /i/.
2. Now say the sounds together keeping the first sound longer and the second one shorter.

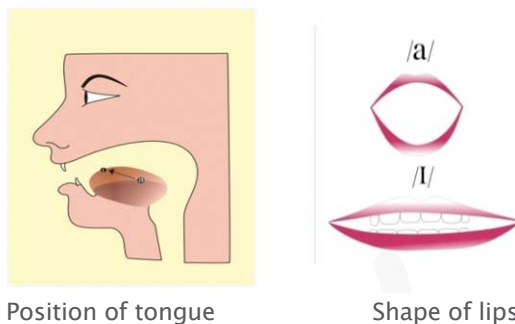
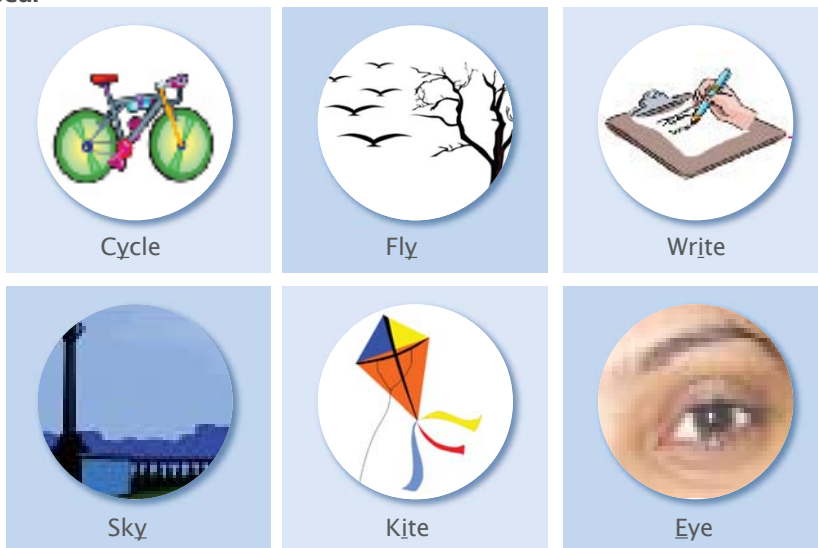


Figure 2.18: Production of the sound /ai/

Read the words given under the following pictures and note the vowel sound and the spelling used.



Exercise 21

Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /aɪ/.

1. They must sign nine times.
2. It is a fine design.
3. Buy him an ice-cream or he will start crying.
4. I am fine this time.
5. The plane flew high in the sky and the children started crying.
6. He gave a sigh of relief as the noise died out.

/ɔɪ/ Toy

To produce the sound /ɔɪ/ :

1. First practise the sound /ɔ/ and then practise the sound /i/.
 2. Now say the sounds together keeping the first sound longer and the second one shorter.
 3. The figure given below shows the place of tongue at the initial and the final positions.
- The other figure shows the position of the lips at both the points. See the images carefully and practise this sound.

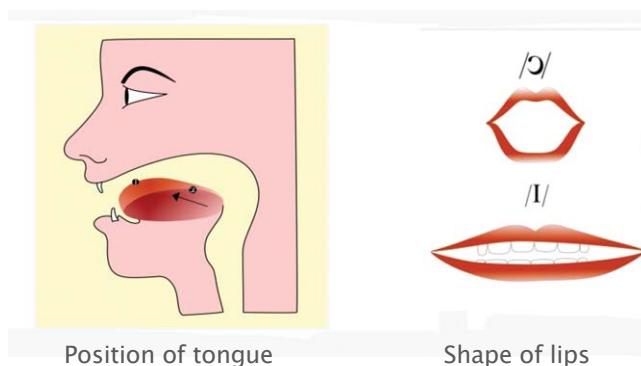


Figure 2.19: Production of the sound /ɔɪ/

Read aloud the following words and note the vowel sound used in them:



Exercise 22

Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /ɔɪ/.

1. He has joined work at the oil company.
2. The boys were noisy and were annoying the teacher.
3. He has boils on his neck and joints.
4. They have spoilt the joy by telling us the end of the story.
5. We should not exploit the poor.

/əʊ/ Four

To produce the sound /əʊ/:

1. First practise the sound /ə/ and then practise the sound /u/.
2. Now say the sounds together keeping the first sound longer and the second one shorter.
3. The figure given below shows the position of tongue at the initial and the final positions. The other figure shows the position of the lips at both the points. Look at the images carefully and practise this sound.

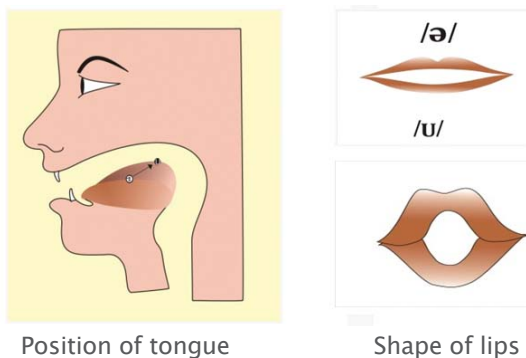


Figure 2.20: Production of the sound /əʊ/

Read the following words and note the vowel sound as well as the spellings used.



Exercise 23

Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /əʊ/.

1. This road is full of potholes.
2. They unloaded the boats and loaded the trucks with coal.
3. His coat was very old so he sold it.
4. Change your clothes before you go home.
5. He played a joke on the postman.

/au/ Cow

To produce the sound /au/ :

1. First practise the sound /a:/ and then practise the sound /u/.
2. Now say the sounds together making the first sound longer and the second one shorter.
3. The figure given below shows the position of tongue in the initial and the final positions. The other figure shows the position of the lips at both the points. See the images carefully and practise making this sound.

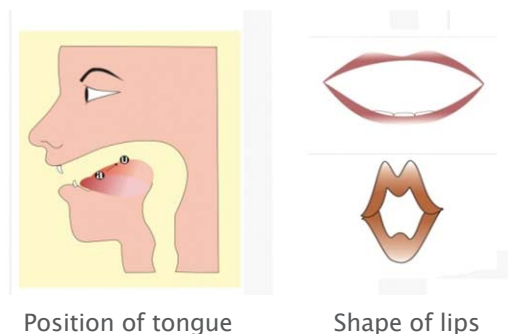


Figure 2.21: Production of the sound /au/

Read the following words and note the vowel sound as well as the spellings used.



Exercise 24

Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /au/.

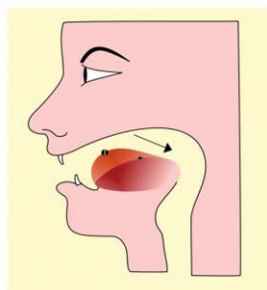
1. There are twenty vowel sounds in English.
2. The owl gazed down at the cow.
3. He had almost drowned when his father came around and saved him.
4. The dog growled and pounced upon the hunter.
5. The crowd howled loudly.

/iə/ Ear

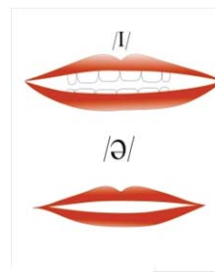
To produce the sound /iə/:

1. First practise the sound /i/ and then practise the sound /ə/.
2. Now say the sounds together.

The figure given below shows the position of tongue in the initial and the final positions. The other figure shows the position of the lips at both the points. Look at the images carefully and practise this sound.



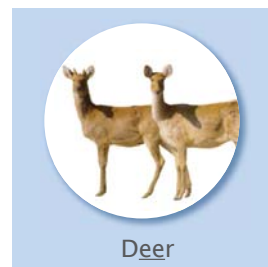
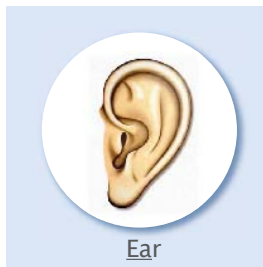
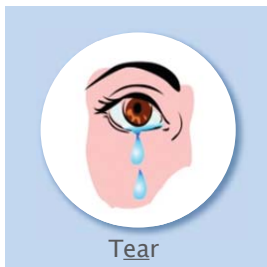
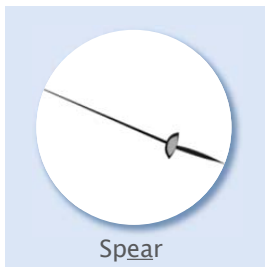
Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.22: Production of the sound /iə/

Read the following words and note the vowel sound contained in them. Also note the spellings used.



Note: There are several letter-combinations that represent the sound /iə/. The most common among them are: 'ea' (tear), 'ee' (peer), 'ere' as in (mere) and 'ie' as in (pierce).

Exercise 25

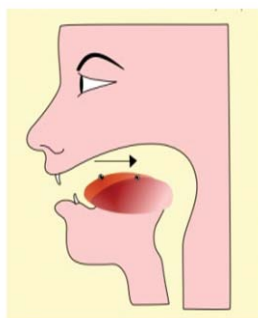
Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /iə/.

1. They cheered the leader.
2. Wipe away your tears and appear without any fear before the judge.
3. They pierced her ears with a needle.
4. Things get dearer and dearer every year.
5. A deer does not fear to go near the visitors.

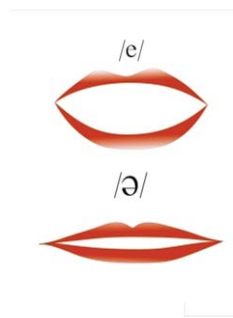
/eə/ Chair

To produce the sound /eə/:

1. First practise the sound /e/ and then practise the sound /ə/.
2. Now say the sounds together.
3. The figure given below shows the position of tongue at the initial and the final positions. The other figure shows the position of the lips at both the points. Look at the images carefully and practise this sound.



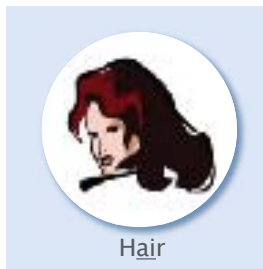
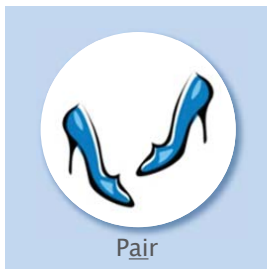
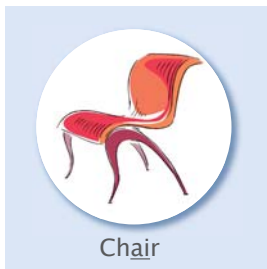
Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.23: Production of the sound /eə/

Read the following words and note the vowel sound contained in them.



Exercise 26

Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /eə/.

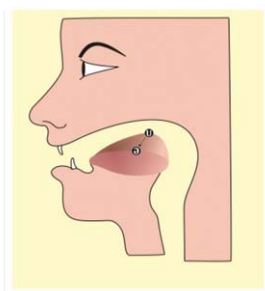
1. Don't you dare tear the paper.
2. He cannot spare the time to care for this pair of parrots.
3. There is a chair under the staircase.
4. The mare stared and the horseman stared back.
5. It is fair to share the award.

Note: The common letter combinations that stand for the /eə/ sound are : 'are' (dare), 'air' (chair), 'ear' (bear), 'ere' (where), and 'eir' (their).

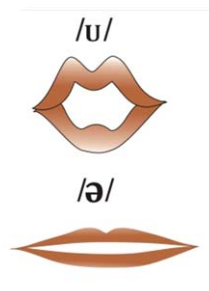
/uə/ Tourist

To produce the sound /uə/ or /ʊə/ :

1. First practise the sound /u/ and then practise the sound /ə/.
2. Now say the sounds together.
3. The figure given below shows the position of tongue at the initial and the final positions. The other figure shows the position of the lips at both the points. Look at the images carefully and practise this sound.



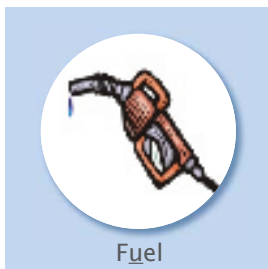
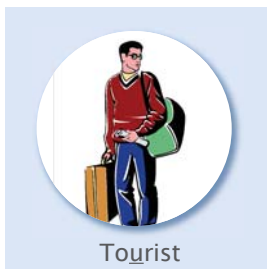
Position of tongue



Shape of lips

Figure 2.24: Production of the sound /uə/

Read the following words and note the vowel sound contained in them. Also note the spellings used to produce this sound.



Exercise 27

Read the sentences given below and underline the words which contain the vowel sound /ʊə/.

1. He is poor but he can afford to tour.
2. The reasons for this duel are fewer than you think.
3. The cure for cancer is sure.
4. There is no fuel in the car.
5. He was very cruel to the client.

You have now gone through the three diphthong sounds /iə/, /eə/ and /ʊə/. The following exercise will help you to further understand the difference among these.

Exercise 28

Read the words given below and identify the vowel sound produced by the underlined letters in these words and write the word in the correct column of the table given below.

engineer, farewell, fluent, square, wearey, ideal, tourist, theory, assure, hare, hear, poor, peer, sheer, stare.

/iə/	/eə/	/ʊə/