



English Pronunciation Guide

· 163 words · 2026-07-01

Word	IPA	Meaning	Example
A	/eɪ/	name of the letter A (ay)	A as in apple · ant · spell ant: A-N-T · grade A
B	/bi/	name of the letter B (bee)	B as in boy · BBQ · spell big: B-I-G
C	/si/	name of the letter C (see)	C as in cat · CD · spell cup: C-U-P
D	/di/	name of the letter D (dee)	D as in dog · DVD · spell dog: D-O-G
E	/i/	name of the letter E (ee)	E as in egg · email · spell egg: E-G-G
F	/ɛf/	name of the letter F (ef)	F as in fun · WiFi · spell fish: F-I-S-H
G	/dʒi/	name of the letter G (jee)	G as in go · GPS · spell go: G-O
H	/eɪtʃ/	name of the letter H (aitch)	H as in hat · HTML · spell hat: H-A-T
I	/aɪ/	name of the letter I (eye)	I as in ice · igloo · spell igloo: I-G-L-O-O
J	/dʒeɪ/	name of the letter J (jay)	J as in jump · JPEG · spell jam: J-A-M
K	/keɪ/	name of the letter K (kay)	K as in kite · OK · spell kite: K-I-T-E
L	/ɛl/	name of the letter L (el)	L as in leg · URL · spell leg: L-E-G
M	/ɛm/	name of the letter M (em)	M as in map · MP3 · spell map: M-A-P
N	/ɛn/	name of the letter N (en)	N as in net · NBA · spell net: N-E-T
O	/oʊ/	name of the letter O (oh)	O as in open · orange · spell open: O-P-E-N
P	/pi/	name of the letter P (pee)	P as in pen · PDF · spell pen: P-E-N
Q	/kju/	name of the letter Q (cue)	Q as in queen · FAQ · spell queen: Q-U-E-E-N
R	/ɑr/	name of the letter R (ar)	R as in red · URL · spell red: R-E-D
S	/ɛs/	name of the letter S (ess)	S as in sun · USA · spell sun: S-U-N
T	/ti/	name of the letter T (tee)	T as in top · TV · spell top: T-O-P
U	/ju/	name of the letter U (you)	U as in up · uncle · spell up: U-P
V	/vi/	name of the letter V (vee)	V as in van · VIP · spell van: V-A-N
W	/ˈdʌbəlju/	name of the letter W (double-u)	W as in wet · WWW · spell wet: W-E-T
X	/ɛks/	name of the letter X (ex)	X as in x-ray · xylophone · spell ox: O-X (x at the end)
Y	/waɪ/	name of the letter Y (why)	Y as in yes · YMCA · spell yes: Y-E-S
Z	/zi/	name of the letter Z (zee) — US	Z as in zoo · zip code · spell zoo: Z-O-O
sh	/ʃ/	letters sh make the sh sound	ship, fish, nation, special, sure
ch	/tʃ/	letters ch make the ch sound	chip, church, watch, nature, question
th (voiceless)	/θ/	th in think — tongue between teeth, no voice	think, three, bath, math, nothing
th (voiced)	/ð/	th in this — tongue between teeth, with voice	this, that, mother, brother, breathe
ph	/f/	ph sounds like f (from Greek)	phone, photo, graph, dolphin, pharmacy

Word	IPA	Meaning	Example
wh	/w/ or /hw/	wh usually sounds like w in American English	what, when, where, why, white
ck	/k/	ck after short vowel = /k/	back, pick, duck, clock, snack
ng	/ŋ/	ng at end of syllable = ng sound	sing, long, ring, finger, think
qu	/kw/	qu almost always = kw	queen, quick, quit, equal, mosquito
silent e (magic e)		final e is silent but makes the vowel long	cake (not /kæk/) · bike · hope · cute · made
kn- (silent k)		k is silent before n at the start	know, knife, knee, knock, knit
wr- (silent w)		w is silent before r at the start	write, wrong, wrist, wrap, wreck
gn- (silent g)		g is silent before n at the start	gnome, gnat, gnu, gnash, align
-mb (silent b)		b is silent after m at end of word	lamb, climb, thumb, comb, bomb
soft c	/s/	c sounds like s before e, i, y	city, cent, face, cycle, pencil
soft g	/dʒ/	g sounds like j before e, i, y (often)	gem, giant, age, gym, bridge
-tion / -sion	/ʃən/	-tion and -sion sound like shun	nation, action, vision, decision, television
-ed (past tense)	/t/, /d/, or /ɪd/	-ed has three pronunciations	/t/ walked, /d/ played, /ɪd/ wanted, needed, landed
-s / -es (plural & verbs)	/s/, /z/, or /ɪz/	plural s and third-person s have three sounds	/s/ cats, /z/ dogs, /ɪz/ buses, watches, rises
oo (two sounds)	/u/ or /ʊ/	oo can be long or short	long /u/: food, school · short /ʊ/: book, good, foot
ea (two sounds)	/i/ or /ɛ/	ea can be long e or short e	long /i/: eat, read (present) · short /ɛ/: head, bread, read (past)
ough (many sounds)	varies	-ough is famously inconsistent	though /oʊ/ · through /u/ · cough /ɔ/ · rough /ʌ/ · thought /ɔ/
igh	/aɪ/	igh usually sounds like long i	night, light, high, sigh, fight
ow (two sounds)	/aʊ/ or /oʊ/	ow can be ow or oh	/aʊ/: cow, now · /oʊ/: snow, grow, low
air / are / ear	varies	vowel + r spellings change the sound	air: fair · are: care · ear: bear vs hear
/p/	/p/	voiceless lip pop, as in pen	pen, pat, open, cup, stop
/b/	/b/	voiced lip pop, as in bad	bad, baby, rub, cab
/t/	/t/	voiceless tongue tap, as in tea	tea, time, city, cat, letter
/d/	/d/	voiced tongue tap, as in did	did, dog, ladder, bed
/k/	/k/	voiceless back stop, as in cat	cat, kite, school, back, queen
/g/	/g/	voiced back stop, as in go	go, game, egg, bigger
/f/	/f/	voiceless lip-teeth friction, as in fan	fan, phone, laugh, off, graph
/v/	/v/	voiced lip-teeth friction, as in van	van, voice, of, live, seven
/θ/	/θ/	voiceless th, tongue between teeth, as in think	think, three, bath, math, nothing
/ð/	/ð/	voiced th, as in this	this, that, mother, breathe, smooth
/s/	/s/	voiceless hiss, as in sun	sun, city, class, voice, science
/z/	/z/	voiced hiss, as in zoo	zoo, zero, dogs, is, buzz
/ʃ/	/ʃ/	sh sound, as in she	she, ship, nation, special, sure

Word	IPA	Meaning	Example
/ʒ/	/ʒ/	zh sound, as in vision	vision, measure, pleasure, beige, garage
/tʃ/	/tʃ/	ch sound, as in chin	chin, church, nature, question, watch
/dʒ/	/dʒ/	j sound, as in jump	jump, job, age, bridge, giant
/m/	/m/	lip hum, as in man	man, mom, summer, climb, lamb
/n/	/n/	tongue-tip hum, as in no	no, name, dinner, know, sign
/ŋ/	/ŋ/	back-of-throat hum, as in sing	sing, long, think, finger, bank
/l/	/l/	tongue-side flow, as in leg	leg, light, yellow, feel, bottle
/r/	/r/	American r, tongue pulled back, as in red	red, run, very, around, bread
/w/	/w/	rounded lip glide, as in wet	wet, we, queen, quick, language
/j/	/j/	y glide, as in yes	yes, you, yellow, onion, view
/h/	/h/	breath sound, as in how	how, he, who, ahead, behind
/ɪ/	/ɪ/	short i, relaxed, as in sit	sit, ship, busy, women, village
/i/	/i/	long ee, as in see	see, sheep, eat, key, city (happy vowel)
/ɛ/	/ɛ/	short e, as in bed	bed, head, said, any, friend
/æ/	/æ/	short a, open mouth, as in cat	cat, map, laugh, plaid, half (varies)
/ɑ/	/ɑ/	open ah, as in hot	hot, father, calm, spa, drama
/ɔ/	/ɔ/	aw sound, as in saw	saw, law, caught, thought, all
/ʊ/	/ʊ/	short oo, as in put	put, book, good, woman, could
/u/	/u/	long oo, as in too	too, food, group, blue, fruit
/ʌ/	/ʌ/	stressed uh, as in cup	cup, love, son, touch, country
/ə/	/ə/	schwa, unstressed uh, as in about	about, banana, sofa, circus, photograph
/eɪ/	/eɪ/	ay glide, as in say	say, day, rain, weigh, break
/aɪ/	/aɪ/	eye glide, as in five	five, time, night, buy, height
/ɔɪ/	/ɔɪ/	oy glide, as in boy	boy, coin, noise, join, choice
/aʊ/	/aʊ/	ow glide, as in now	now, house, out, cow, flower
/oʊ/	/oʊ/	oh glide, as in go	go, boat, know, toe, though
/ə/	/ə/	r-colored schwa, as in mother	mother, butter, doctor, paper, never
/ɜ/	/ɜ/	stressed er, as in bird	bird, word, nurse, early, learn
/ɛr/	/ɛr/	air sound, as in hair	hair, care, there, fair, wear
/ɪr/	/ɪr/	ear sound, as in near	near, here, fear, beer, clear
/ɑr/	/ɑr/	ar sound, as in car	car, farm, heart, start, hard
/ɔr/	/ɔr/	or sound, as in north	north, fork, more, door, four
/ʊr/	/ʊr/	oor sound, as in tour	tour, pure, cure, sure, tourist
ship · sheep	/ɪ/ vs /i/	short i vs long ee — very common learner mistake	ship / sheep · sit / seat · live / leave · fill / feel
bit · beat	/ɪ/ vs /i/	short i vs long ee	bit / beat · hit / heat · rid / read (present)
full · fool	/ʊ/ vs /u/	short oo vs long oo	full / fool · pull / pool · look / Luke
cat · cut	/æ/ vs /ʌ/	open a vs stressed uh	cat / cut · hat / hut · cap / cup · bad / bud

Word	IPA	Meaning	Example
cat · cot	/æ/ vs /ɑ/	a in cat vs o in hot	cat / cot · hat / hot · lack / lock
bed · bad	/ɛ/ vs /æ/	short e vs short a	bed / bad · head / had · men / man · pen / pan
bet · bat	/ɛ/ vs /æ/	e vs a in one-syllable words	bet / bat · set / sat · met / mat
pin · pen	/ɪ/ vs /ɛ/	i vs e before n	pin / pen · sit / set · din / den · fill / fell
think · sink	/θ/ vs /s/	th vs s at the start	think / sink · thick / sick · thank / sank
think · this	/θ/ vs /ð/	voiceless th vs voiced th	think / this · bath / bathe · mouth (n) / mouth (v)
very · berry	/v/ vs /b/	v vs b at the start	very / berry · vest / best · van / ban
west · vest	/w/ vs /v/	w vs v	west / vest · wine / vine · wake / vake (wake vs fake vowel)
rice · lice	/r/ vs /l/	r vs l at the start	rice / lice · right / light · road / load · grow / glow
fan · van	/f/ vs /v/	f vs v	fan / van · fine / vine · leaf / leave
cheap · jeep	/tʃ/ vs /dʒ/	ch vs j	cheap / jeep · choke / joke · choice / Joyce
seat · sheet	/s/ vs /ʃ/	s vs sh	seat / sheet · see / she · sip / ship
see · she	/s/ vs /ʃ/	s vs sh at start	see / she · sort / short · mess / mesh
sin · shin	/s/ vs /ʃ/	s vs sh before i	sin / shin · sip / ship · ass / ash
zoo · Sue	/z/ vs /s/	z vs s at start	zoo / Sue · zip / sip · plays / place
sing · sin	/ŋ/ vs /n/	ng vs n at end	sing / sin · rang / ran · hung / hun
late · rate	/l/ vs /r/	l vs r before vowel	late / rate · light / right · alive / arrive
collect · correct	/l/ vs /r/	l vs r in middle of word	collect / correct · fly / fry · clue / crew
hat · heart	/æ/ vs /ɑr/	short a vs ar	hat / heart · cat / cart · lad / lard
pool · pull	/u/ vs /ʊ/	long oo vs short oo	pool / pull · fool / full · Luke / look
coat · caught	/oʊ/ vs /ɔ/	oh vs aw (may merge in some accents)	coat / caught · note / naught · boat / bought
bay · boy	/eɪ/ vs /ɔɪ/	ay vs oy diphthong	bay / boy · pain / point · laid / Lloyd
buy · boy	/aɪ/ vs /ɔɪ/	eye vs oy diphthong	buy / boy · tie / toy · height / hoist
how · hay	/aʊ/ vs /eɪ/	ow vs ay diphthong	how / hay · loud / laid · town / ten
pen · pan	/ɛ/ vs /æ/	e vs a before n	pen / pan · men / man · send / sand
work · walk	/ɜ/ vs /ɔ/	er vs aw	work / walk · bird / board · hurt / hawt
live · leave	/ɪ/ vs /i/	short i vs long ee (verb forms)	I live here. / I leave now.
PREsent vs preSENT		Noun stress on first syllable; verb stress on second	a PREsent (gift) · to preSENT (show) · REcord (noun) · reCORD (verb)
CONtract vs conTRACT		Noun on first syllable; verb on second	a CONtract (paper) · to conTRACT (shrink) · INsult vs inSULT
PERmit vs perMIT		Noun on first; verb on second	a PERmit (license) · to perMIT (allow) · PROduce vs proDUCE
-tion / -sion suffix		Stress usually falls on the syllable before -tion/-sion	inforMation · deciSION · eduCation · teleVIsion
-ic / -ical suffix		Stress on syllable before -ic; -ical shifts stress earlier	ecoNOMic · ecoNOMical · phoTOgraph · phoTOgraphic

Word	IPA	Meaning	Example
-ity suffix		Stress on syllable before -ity	familiarITY · possibilTY · realTY · electricITy
-ee suffix		Stress on -ee ending (person who receives action)	employEE · trainEE · refugEE · attendEE
compound nouns		First word usually gets stronger stress	BLACKboard · GREENhouse · HAIRcut · BUS stop · HOT dog (sausage)
phrasal verbs		Particle often stressed for literal meaning; verb stressed when idiomatic	turn OFF the light · look UP the word · I'm GIVING up
numbers and compounds		Teens stress second syllable; tens stress first	thirTEEN vs THIRty · fourTEEN vs FORty · sevenTEEN vs SEVenty
word families shift		Stress can move when suffix is added	PHOtograph · phoTOgraphy · photoGRAPHic · MUsic · muSICian
two-syllable nouns vs verbs		Many nouns: first syllable; many verbs: second	IMport (n) · imPORT (v) · OBject · obJECT · CONflict · conFLICT
content vs function words		Stress content words (nouns, main verbs, adjectives, adverbs); weaken function words	I went to the STORE yesterday. · She LIKES fresh COFFEE. · the, to, a = usually weak
stressed rhythm		English is stress-timed — stressed beats come at fairly even intervals	ONE two THREE four · WANT a CUP of TEA? · da-DA-da-DA rhythm
focus / emphasis stress		Extra stress shows what is new or contrasted	I saw JOHN (not Mary). · I SAW John (I didn't hear him). · I saw John YESTERDAY.
weak forms		Function words often reduce: to → /tə/, and → /ən/, for → /fər/	want to → wanna (informal) · cup of tea · kind of → kinda
end focus		New information often gets late stress in the sentence	She bought a CAR. · She bought a RED car. · She bought a red CAR yesterday.
contrast pairs		Contrastive stress on the word that changes	Not the red one — the BLUE one. · I didn't say he STOLE it. (stress shifts meaning)
falling intonation ↘		Voice falls at the end — statements and wh-questions	I'm going home. ↘ · Where do you live? ↘ · That's a good idea. ↘
rising intonation ↗		Voice rises at the end — yes/no questions	Are you coming? ↗ · Do you like it? ↗ · Ready? ↗
fall-rise ↘↗		Fall then small rise — politeness, doubt, or more to say	It's okay, I guess. ↘↗ · I could help... ↘↗ · Not bad. ↘↗
listing intonation		Rise on each item; fall on the last item	Eggs ↗ milk ↗ and bread ↘ · Monday ↗ Tuesday ↗ and Wednesday ↘
tag questions		Real question rises; checking something you think is true falls	You're coming, aren't you? ↘ (sure) · You're coming, aren't you? ↗ (asking)
echo / surprise		High rise shows surprise or checking what you heard	You quit your job? ↗↗ · She did WHAT? ↗
unfinished thought		Rise mid-sentence shows you are not finished	If you need help ↗ just call me. ↘ · When I arrived ↗ everyone was there. ↘
linking consonant to vowel		Final consonant links to next vowel — sounds like one phrase	an apple · turn off · pick it up · kind of · got it
linking vowel to vowel		Insert /w/, /j/, or /r/ glide between vowels	go on → go_w_on · see it → see_y_it · law and order

Word	IPA	Meaning	Example
flap T / quick D	/r/	/t/ or /d/ between vowels sounds like quick /d/ in American English	butter · water · city · better · ladder · thirty
stop T		/t/ often disappears before consonants or at end in casual speech	left turn · most people · not really · what time?
reduction: gonna / wanna		going to → gonna; want to → wanna (informal spoken)	I'm gonna call you. · I wanna try. · gotta = got to
reduction: shoulda / coulda		Modal + have reduces in fast speech	shoulda · coulda · woulda · might've · must've
assimilation		Sounds change to match neighbors	in bed → imbed · good boy → goob boy · ten minutes → tem minutes
elision		Sounds drop in fast casual speech	comfortable → comftable · different → diffrent · probably → proolly
intrusion /r/		Some accents add /r/ between vowels (less in GA)	idea of · law and order (varies by speaker)
blending in phrases		Common chunks blend into one rhythm unit	What do you → whaddaya · Did you → didja · Don't you → doncha