# The 44 sounds of English

A key word for every sound, with the letters that spell it marked: consonants in black, *sh, ch* and *th* in green, vowels in red. A bar under two or more letters marks a single sound. The symbols are from the International Phonetic Alphabet, so /j/ is the *y* in *yes*, and the *j* in *jam* is /dʒ/.

## *24 consonants*

The mouth closes or narrows somewhere. Each label says how.

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***stops***<br>the mouth closes, then lets go | **p**ig<br>/p/ | **b**at<br>/b/ | **t**op<br>/t/ | **d**og<br>/d/ | **k**it<br>/k/ | **g**um<br>/g/ |
| ***fricatives***<br>the air squeezes through a narrow gap | **f**ish<br>/f/ | **v**an<br>/v/ | **th**in<br>/θ/ | **th**is<br>/ð/ | **s**un<br>/s/ | **z**ip<br>/z/ |
| | **h**at<br>/h/ | **sh**ip<br>/ʃ/ | vi**si**on<br>/ʒ/ | | | |
| ***affricates***<br>a stop that slides into a squeeze | **ch**in<br>/tʃ/ | **j**am<br>/dʒ/ | Each begins as a stop and ends as a squeeze: *t* into *sh* in *chin*, *d* into *zh* in *jam*. | | | |
| ***nasals***<br>the mouth closes and the air goes out the nose | **m**ap<br>/m/ | **n**et<br>/n/ | ri**ng**<br>/ŋ/ | | | |
| ***liquids and glides***<br>the mouth barely closes | **l**eg<br>/l/ | **r**ed<br>/r/ | **w**eb<br>/w/ | **y**es<br>/j/ | | |

## *20 vowels*

The mouth stays open, and the tongue and lips shape the sound.

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***short vowels*** | c**a**t<br>/æ/ | b**e**d<br>/ɛ/ | s**i**t<br>/ɪ/ | h**o**t<br>/ɑ/ | c**u**p<br>/ʌ/ |
| ***long vowels***<br>long u often sounds like the oo in moon | d**ay**<br>/eɪ/ | s**ee**<br>/i/ | m**y**<br>/aɪ/ | g**o**<br>/oʊ/ | m**oo**n<br>/u/ |
| ***other vowels*** | b**oo**k<br>/ʊ/ | s**aw**<br>/ɔ/ | **a**bout<br>/ə/ | | |
| ***diphthongs*** | b**oy**<br>/ɔɪ/ | c**ow**<br>/aʊ/ | The vowel slides from one shape to another. The long vowels in *day, my* and *go* slide too. | | |
| ***r-controlled vowels*** | c**ar**<br>/ɑr/ | f**or**<br>/ɔr/ | h**er**<br>/ɝ/ | h**air**<br>/ɛr/ | **ear**<br>/ɪr/ |

**About the count.** Forty-four is a teaching count, and it shifts with accent. Many Canadians say *hot* and *saw* with the same vowel, which takes one away. Count *car, for, hair* and *ear* as a vowel followed by *r*, and four more go, which leaves 39. Check this sheet against your program's sound wall.



Over: marking a word

# Marking a word

Vowels are red, consonants black, and *sh, th* and *ch* green. Say the word slowly, count its sounds, then mark it by hand. Use the colours and marks selectively: choose the ones that show a pattern or how two marks interact, especially in a new word.



### Sound circle

A circle under each sound: red for a vowel, black for a consonant, green for *sh, th, ch*.



### Syllable swoop

A swoop under each syllable.



### Short mark

A cup over a vowel that keeps its short sound.



### Long mark

A bar over a vowel that says its name.



### No mark

A lone vowel with no cup and no bar borrows another vowel's sound, or is said weakly.



### Bond bar

A bar under the letters of a single sound. All the letters of a vowel sound are red.



### R-controlled unit

A red bar under a vowel and its *r*. The *r* stays black, and they share a circle.



### Cone of silence

A dotted ring around a silent *e*.



### Vowel vault

An arc from a silent *e*, or from a vowel one consonant later, back to the vowel it makes long.



### Morpheme seam

A dotted line between the parts of a word that carry meaning.



### Block box

A box around a pair that stops a vowel after it from reaching back, such as *ll, nn, ck, tch* or *dg*. *Block* has a bar: nothing reaches yet. *Blocked* keeps it, and the box stops the *e*'s vault, so the *o* stays short.



### Nice-nudge

A small arc from *e, i* or *y* to a *c* it softens, or from a final *e* to a *g*. In *nice* the *e* also makes the *i* long. In *nudge* a box stops that vault, so the *u* stays short.



### Blocked vault

The arc ends in a red X where a box stops it, so the vowel stays short.

## *Contrasts*



The same letter three ways: short, long, and borrowing another vowel's sound.



The same two sounds, spelled with four letters and with two.



In *gave* the silent *e* makes the *a* long. In *give* it only keeps *v* off the end.



After a single *n* the *y* reaches back and the *u* is long. A doubled *n* in a box stops it.



Over: the 44 sounds of English