

Introduction:

English does not have the same sounds as French – some are similar, but some **do not exist in French**, which means you need to **learn to produce** these sounds correctly.

In addition, **English spelling is not reliably linked to pronunciation**: you cannot always know how to pronounce a word just by looking at it (unlike Spanish, for instance). That's why we use the **IPA** (*International Phonetic Alphabet*) to transcribe those sounds. You do not need to learn the alphabet by heart, but you do need to **be able to read it**, knowing what symbol corresponds to which sound.

To make this easier, the sounds are described by **category** below. *In the next chapter (chapter 3), you will find some tips on the common links that do exist between **spelling and sound** and the link between word stress and sounds; so make sure to study it as well!*

To **hear the sounds**, use this website:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/sounds/index.shtml>

or this application:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.macmillan.app.soundsfree>

Consonants – easy

Some consonants are roughly similar to French ones – they are represented with ‘transparent’ symbols and are mostly **similar to the sound these consonants make in French**. They are:

p	t	k	f	s
b	d	g	v	z
m	n	l	w	j

One of these symbols is confusing: /j/ represents the sound “y” in “yes” or “you”.

Consonants – harder

These sounds should not be difficult to pronounce; you just need to **memorize the symbols** and make sure you **do not mix up sounds** – for ex, “**sheet**” and “**cheat**” are two very different words!

ʃ	“sh” as in “shoe” Usually written “sh”; not to be confused with “ch” as in “chair”;
ʒ	“j” as in “garage” or “leisure” (the French sound in “je”, “jardin”) Not very common in English; memorize the symbol
dʒ	“dj” as in “Jack” or “jail” This is the standard pronunciation of the letter “j” in English
tʃ	“tch” as in “chair” or “check” This is the standard pronunciation of the letters “ch” in English

The following sounds are harder to pronounce because **they do not exist in French**. However, with just a little practice, **you can learn to pronounce them correctly quite rapidly**.

h	“h” as in “hair” or “hello” This consonant is voiced, NOT silent in English – you need to pronounce it! http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/sounds/con_other_4.shtml
r	“r” as in “right” or “red” You need to learn to pronounce this sound properly. You cannot pronounce a French “R” in English, this is not acceptable at your level and it is very disagreeable to hear! http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/sounds/con_other_6.shtml
ŋ	“ng” as in “bring” or “long” You should NOT pronounce an aggressive “g” sound at the end. Practice! http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/sounds/con_other_3.shtml
θ	“th” as in “thank you” or “think” You need to learn to pronounce this sound properly. It is not hard. Practice! NB: as a temporary solution, it is better to say “f” rather than “s” to replace “th” http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/sounds/con_voiceless_6.shtml
ð	“th” as in “there” or “that” You need to learn to pronounce this sound properly. It is not hard. Practice! NB: as a temporary solution, it is better to say “v” rather than “z” to replace “th” http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/sounds/con_voiced_6.shtml

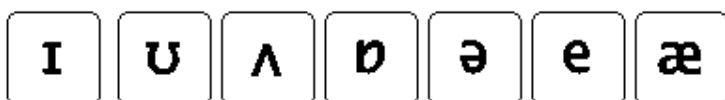
⇒ **By making efforts on these sounds, your English will sound a lot more natural and pleasant!**

Vowels

Listen to all of the vowels sounds online to hear them and practice them:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/grammar/pron/sounds/>

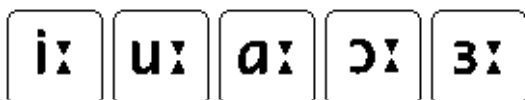
Vowels – short



As in, for example: sit / foot/ cup / not/ about / bet / cat

This is the first type of vowels you’ll find. **They do not exist or are not entirely similar to French sounds**, even though most French vowels are also short. This means you’ll need to **listen** to all of these sounds, and **practice repeating** them until you get them right!

Vowels – long

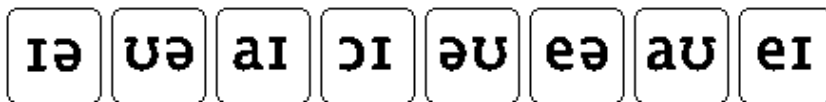


As in, for example: feet / shoe/ car / more/her

This is the second type of vowels you’ll find. **They do not exist in French**, so most French people tend to pronounce a short vowel instead of a long one. This can be a big problem, as “beach” is definitely not the same as “bitch”, or “sheet” as “shit” ... *A bad pronunciation can be deeply embarrassing!!!*

This means you need to **listen** to all of these sounds, and **practice repeating** them, and then **make the effort** to pronounce long vowels instead of short ones from now on!

Vowels – diphthongs



As in, for example: hear/sure/fight/boy/no/hair/out/gray

This is the third type of vowels you'll find. They are “double vowel” sounds. They are **not hard to make**, it's just **hard to know which one** is used in a word. *Again, using the wrong one will lead to confusions: “no” and “now” are very different words!*

⇒ You will find help with this in chapter 3, in “links between spelling and pronunciation”.

Differences British English – American English

Some sounds are **different** between the various **varieties of English spoken in different countries**, for historical reasons (separate evolution) or cultural reasons (influence of regional languages).

We will focus here on the **differences between English and American English**. *(To be even more precise, there are even more differences between regional varieties – a Scottish person has a very different accent from an Welsh person! But we won't go into detail here...)*

The explanations below are adapted from:

http://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/about/english/pronunciation_english

Consonants:

a) Pronunciation of / r /:

The symbol (r) indicates that **British** pronunciation will have /r/ **only if a vowel sound follows directly** at the beginning of the next word, as in *far away*; otherwise **the /r/ is omitted**.

For **American** English, **all the /r/ sounds** should be pronounced.

b) Tapping of / t /:

In **American** English, if a /t/ sound is between two vowels, and the second vowel is not stressed, the /t/ can be **pronounced very quickly**, and made voiced so that it is **like a brief /d/**. Technically, the sound is a “tap”, and can be symbolised by /t̬/. So Americans can pronounce potato as /pə'tet̬toʊ/, tapping the second /t/ in the word (but not the first, because of the stress).

British speakers don't generally do this (⇒ *they pronounce both “t” in potato the same way*).

Vowels:

a) Short vowels: ɒ

The sound /ɒ/ does not occur in **American** English, and words which have this vowel in **British** pronunciation will instead have /ɑ:/ or /ɔ:/ in American English. For instance, **got** is /gɒt/ in **British** English, but /gɑ:t/ in **American** English, while **dog** is British /dɒg/, American /dɑ:g/.

b) Diphthongs : /ɪə eə ʊə/ and /əʊ ʊə/

The three diphthongs /ɪə eə ʊə/ are found only in **British** English. In corresponding places, **American** English has a simple vowel followed by /r/, so **near** is /nɪr/, **hair** is /her/, and **pure** is /pjʊr/.

Many **British** speakers use /ɔ:/ instead of the diphthong /ʊə/, especially in common words, so that **sure** becomes /ʃʊ:(r)/, etc.

In **American** English, /əʊ/ is replaced by /oʊ/: so “go” is pronounced /goʊ/ (American English), not /gəʊ/ (British English).