



8. Vowels & Vowel Sounds Practice

BVPT-104: English & Communication

Unit 2: Fundamentals of English Communication

Chapter: Vowels & Vowel Sounds Practice

Topic: Pronunciation and Differentiation of Vowel Sounds

□ What Are Vowel Sounds?

Vowel sounds are produced when air flows freely through the vocal tract **without any obstruction** by the tongue, lips, or teeth.

In English, there are **5 main vowel letters** (A, E, I, O, U), but they produce **20+ distinct vowel sounds** depending on:

- Mouth shape
- Tongue position
- Length of the sound
- Lip rounding

□ Why Vowel Sounds Matter in Communication

- **Mispronouncing vowel sounds can change word meaning.**
E.g., “ship” vs “sheep”, “bat” vs “bet”
- In clinical settings, **clear pronunciation** ensures correct instructions and trust.
Saying “sit” instead of “seat” could confuse or frustrate a patient.

□ Classification of Vowel Sounds

1. Monophthongs (Pure Vowels)

Single sound throughout pronunciation. E.g., /i:/, /ɪ/, /ʌ/

Sound	Example Words	Tongue Position	Lip Shape
/i:/	sheep , beat	High front	Spread
/ɪ/	ship , bit	High front	Relaxed
/e/	bed , head	Mid front	Neutral
/ʌ/	cup , luck	Mid central	Neutral
/a:/	calm , arm	Low back	Open
/ɒ/	hot , clock	Low back	Rounded
/ɔ:/	call , saw	Mid back	Rounded
/u:/	food , blue	High back	Rounded
/ʊ/	good , put	High back	Less rounded



2. Diphthongs (Gliding Vowels)

A vowel sound that **slides from one sound to another** within a single syllable.

E.g., /aɪ/, /eɪ/, /ɔɪ/

Sound Example Words Description

/aɪ/	my, ride	From /a/ to /ɪ/
/eɪ/	day, say	From /e/ to /ɪ/
/ɔɪ/	boy, toy	From /ɔ/ to /ɪ/
/aʊ/	now, cow	From /a/ to /ʊ/
/əʊ/	go, no	From /ə/ to /ʊ/
/ɪə/	ear, idea	From /ɪ/ to /ə/
/eə/	care, where	From /e/ to /ə/
/ʊə/	pure, tour	From /ʊ/ to /ə/

□ Minimal Pairs for Practice

These are pairs of words that **differ by only one vowel sound**. Practicing them improves both **listening and speaking**.

Word 1 Word 2 Sound Difference

ship	sheep	/ɪ/ vs /i:/
full	fool	/ʊ/ vs /u:/
bad	bed	/æ/ vs /e/
cut	cart	/ʌ/ vs /a:/
pull	pool	/ʊ/ vs /u:/

□ Practice Techniques for Students

1. Mirror Practice:

Say each vowel sound while watching your lips and tongue in the mirror.

2. Recording & Playback:

Record yourself reading minimal pairs. Listen back to notice differences.

3. Word Chains:

Say a chain like: *bit - bet - bat - but - bought - boot - beat*.

4. Tongue Position Awareness:

Visualize where your tongue sits: front, central, or back.

5. Use IPA Symbols:

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) helps you connect letters with exact sounds.

□ Printable Quick Reference (Mini Chart)

Symbol Sound Description Example Word

/i:/	Long E	seat
/ɪ/	Short I	sit
/e/	Short E	set
/æ/	Short A	sat
/ʌ/	Short U	sun
/a:/	Long Aah	car



Symbol Sound Description Example Word

/o/	Short O	hot
/ɔ:/	Long Aw	saw
/u:/	Long U	food
/ʊ/	Short U	book

Let me know if you'd like this as a **PDF handout** or **wall poster** for classroom use.

□ Take-Home Summary

- Vowel **letters ≠ vowel sounds** – English has over 20 vowel sounds.
- Focus on **mouth shape, tongue position, and sound length** to master pronunciation.
- Practise with **minimal pairs** to fine-tune your ear and speech clarity.
- Correct vowel use leads to **clear communication**, essential for effective interaction with patients and peers.