

UNIT 3: THE 44 PHONEMES IN ENGLISH

A Comprehensive Guide to English Speech Sounds & Structural Text Types

Introduction: Despite there being just 26 letters in the English language, there are approximately **44 unique sounds**, also known as *phonemes*. These 44 sounds help distinguish one word or meaning from another. Various letters and letter combinations known as *graphemes* are used to represent the sounds.

Note: The 44 English sounds fall into two main categories: consonants and vowels. There is no definitive single list due to accents, dialects, and linguistic evolution.

CONSONANTS (24 PHONEMES)

#	PHONEME	IPA SYMBOL	GRAPHEMES	EXAMPLES
1	b	b	b, bb	bug, bubble
2	d	d	d, dd, ed	dad, add, milled
3	f	f	f, ff, ph, gh, lf, ft	fat, cliff, phone, enough, half, often
4	g	g	g, gg, gh, gu, gue	gun, egg, ghost, guest, prologue
5	h	h	h, wh	hop, who
6	j	dʒ	j, ge, g, dge, di, gg	jam, wage, giraffe, edge, soldier, exaggerate
7	k	k	k, c, ch, cc, lk, qu, q(u), ck, x	kit, cat, chris, accent, folk, bouquet, queen, rack, box
8	l	l	l, ll	live, well
9	m	m	m, mm, mb, mn, lm	man, summer, comb, column, palm
10	n	n	n, nn, kn, gn, pn, mn	net, funny, know, gnat, mnemonic
11	p	p	p, pp	pin, dippy
12	r	r	r, rr, wr, rh	run, carrot, wrench, rhyme
13	s	s	s, ss, c, sc, ps, st, ce, se	sit, less, circle, scene, psycho, listen, pace, course
14	t	t	t, tt, th, ed	tip, matter, thomas, ripped
15	v	v	v, f, ph, ve	vine, of, stephen, five
16	w	w	w, wh, u, o	wit, why, quick, choir
17	z	z	z, zz, s, ss, x, ze, se	zed, buzz, his, scissors, xylophone, craze
18	zh	ʒ	s, si, z	treasure, division, azure
19	ch	tʃ	ch, tch, tu, ti, te	chip, watch, future, action, righteous
20	sh	ʃ	sh, ce, s, ci, si, ch, sci, ti	sham, ocean, sure, special, pension, machine, conscience, station
21	th (unvoiced)	θ	th	thongs
22	th (voiced)	ð	th	leather

#	PHONEME	IPA SYMBOL	GRAPHEMES	EXAMPLES
23	ng	ŋ	ng, n, ngue	ring, pink, tongue
24	y	j	y, i, j	you, onion, hallelujah

VOWELS (20 PHONEMES)

#	PHONEME	IPA SYMBOL	GRAPHEMES	EXAMPLES
25	a	æ	a, ai, au	cat, plaid, laugh
26	ay	eɪ	a, ai, eigh, aigh, ay, er, et, ei, au, a_e, ea, ey	bay, maid, weigh, straight, pay, foyer, filet, eight, gauge, mate, break, they
27	e	e	e, ea, u, ie, ai, a, eo, ei, ae	end, bread, bury, friend, said, many, leopard, heifer, aesthetic
28	ee	i:	e, ee, ea, y, ey, oe, ie, i, ei, eo, ay	be, bee, meat, lady, key, phoenix, grief, ski, deceive, people, quay
29	i	ɪ	i, e, o, u, ui, y, ie	it, england, women, busy, guild, gym, sieve
30	eye	aɪ	i, y, igh, ie, uy, ye, ai, is, eigh, i_e	spider, sky, night, pie, guy, stye, aisle, island, height, kite
31	o	ɒ	a, ho, au, aw, ough	swan, honest, maul, slaw, fought
32	ow	oʊ	o, oa, o_e, oe, ow, ough, eau, oo, ew	open, moat, bone, toe, sow, dough, beau, brooch, sew
33	oo (short)	ʊ	o, oo, u, ou	wolf, look, bush, would
34	u	ʌ	u, o, oo, ou	lug, monkey, blood, double
35	oo (long)	u:	o, oo, ew, ue, u_e, oe, ough, ui, oew, ou	who, loon, dew, blue, flute, shoe, through, fruit, manoeuvre, group
36	oy	ɔɪ	oi, oy, uoy	join, boy, buoy
37	ow (out)	aʊ	ow, ou, ough	now, shout, bough
38	schwa	ə	a, er, i, ar, our, ur	about, ladder, pencil, dollar, honour, augur
39	air	eəʳ	air, are, ear, ere, eir, ayer	chair, dare, pear, where, their, prayer
40	ar	ɑ:	a	arm
41	ur	ɜ:r	ir, er, ur, ear, or, our, yr	bird, term, burn, pearl, word, journey, myrtle
42	or	ɔ:	aw, a, or, oor, ore, oar, our, augh, ar, ough, au	paw, ball, fork, poor, fore, board, four, taught, war, bought, sauce
43	ear	ɪəʳ	ear, eer, ere, ier	ear, steer, here, tier
44	ure	ʊəʳ	ure, our	cure, tourist

TYPES OF TEXT

1. Narrative Text

A narrative text tells a story or describes a sequence of events. It may be based on real or imaginary events. Narrative writing usually has characters, a setting, and a sequence of events.

Examples:

- Short stories
- Novels
- Biographies
- Autobiographies
- Personal experiences

2. Explorative Text

An explorative text explores a topic, idea, issue or subject in detail. It may examine different viewpoints, possibilities, causes or effects of a particular subject.

Examples:

- Research-based writing
- Essays exploring an issue
- Discussions of different viewpoints
- Analytical articles

3. Descriptive Text

A descriptive text gives detailed information about a person, place, object, situation or experience. It uses words to create a clear picture in the reader's mind.

Examples:

- Description of a person
- Description of a place
- Description of an object
- Description of an event
- Travel descriptions

QUICK REVISION SUMMARY

44 Phonemes: 24 Consonants + 20 Vowels

Three Types of Text:

- **Narrative:** Tells a story or sequence of events.
- **Explorative:** Explores a topic, idea, or issue in depth.
- **Descriptive:** Describes a person, place, object, situation, or experience in detail.