44 Sounds of English

Every sound in English (General American), with a keyword and the main spellings.

Consonant Sounds — 24

Stops — popping sounds

p /p/ pig (p) · b /b/ bat (b) · t /t/ tiger (t) · d /d/ dog (d) · k /k/ kite (k · c · ck) · g /g/ goat (g)

Nasals — humming sounds

m /m/ map (m) · n /n/ nest (n) · ng /ŋ/ king (ng)

Fricatives — hissing and buzzing sounds

f /f/ fi sh (f · ph) · v /v/ van (v) · th /θ/ thumb (th) · th /ð/ this (th) · s /s/ sun (s · c) · z /z/ zoo (z · s) · sh /ʃ/ sheep (sh) · zh /ʒ/ measure (s · g) · h /h/ hat (h)

Affricates

ch /tʃ/ chip (ch · tch) · j /dʒ/ juice (j · g · dge)

Glides and a liquid

w /w/ web (w) · y /j/ yes (y) · l /l/ leg (l) · r /r/ red (r)

Vowel Sounds — 15

Short vowels

short a /æ/ apple (a) · short e /ɛ/ egg (e) · short i /ɪ/ insect (i) · short o /ɑ/ hot (o) · short u /ʌ/ up (u)

Long vowels

long a /eɪ/ cake (a_e · ai · ay) · long e /i/ bee (ee · ea · e) · long i /aɪ/ bike (i_e · ie · igh) · long o /oʊ/ boat (o_e · oa · ow) · long u /u/ blue (u_e · ue · ew · oo · ui) · aw /ɔ/ ball (aw · au · all)

Gliding vowels (diphthongs)

ow /aʊ/ cow (ow · ou) · oy /ɔɪ/ boy (oy · oi)

Two special vowels

oo (book) /ʊ/ book (oo) · schwa /ə/ about (a · any vowel)

R-Controlled Vowels — 5

Vowel + r

ar /ɑr/ car (ar) · or /ɔr/ fork (or · ore) · er · ir · ur /ɝ/ bird (er · ir · ur) · air /ɛr/ chair (air · are) · ear /ɪr/ deer (eer · ear)

Sounds are not letters: 26 letters spell 44 sounds. Two letters can make one sound (sh, ng), and one sound can have several spellings (er, ir, ur). The symbol between slashes is the sound’s IPA sign.