

# ENGLISH PHONETIC ALPHABET (EPA)

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Featured in Chapter One of the revolutionary new speaking guide *English is Stupid* is a sound alphabet for English, *The English Phonetic Alphabet*. EPA is fun and easy to use because it has only computer keyboard symbols and letters represent the sounds you expect them to make. It is smart, simple and long overdue. English teachers love it and students love it more!

There are **40** sounds in English including **24** consonant sounds and **16** vowel sounds. Here are their *English Phonetic Alphabet* symbols:

## 24 Consonant Sounds

18 familiar symbols that sound like they look

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z  
/b/ /d/ /f/ /g/ /h/ /j/ /k/ /l/ /m/ /n/ /p/ /r/ /s/ /t/ /v/ /w/ /y/ /z/

6 new symbols

/ch/, /sh/, /tʃ/, /th/, /ŋ/, /zh/

## 16 Vowel Sounds - a, e, i, o, u

/Ay/, /a/, /Ey/, /e/, /Iy/, /i/, /ow/, /o/, /Uw/, /u/, /ʌ/, /oy/, /Aw/, /Er/, /Ar/, /Or/

### Note:

There is no 'c', 'q' or 'x' in the phonetic alphabet because all the sounds they make are represented by other letters.

'c' usually makes the sound /s/ as in city or /k/ as in cat  
'q' usually makes the sound /kw/ as in queen  
'x' usually makes the sound /eks/ as in x-ray

## What happened before?

The Latin alphabet or ABC's have been used to represent the English language since 1476 when William Caxton opened his printing press in London, England. The problem is that the Latin alphabet has only **26 symbols**. English as a spoken language has been developing since 450 AD and commonly uses **40 sounds**. The Latin alphabet has never accurately represented the English *spoken* language.

In 1886, an international group developed an enormous bank of symbols to represent every sound in human speech. It was a great idea, and it was called the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). However, the first issue the English language has with IPA is that it is based on the French language. In French, the letter **e** is called **i** and the letter **i** is spelled **ay** and so on... so the IPA symbols represent French, not English sounds. It doesn't work. The other major problem with IPA is that IPA symbols are not available on standard computer keyboards. The International Phonetic Alphabet is computer hostile and therefore obsolete.

**In 2001, English got its own 40-symbol, computer-friendly phonetic alphabet!**

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## 24 Consonant Sounds

18 Symbols are familiar - they represent the sound you expect

EPA Symbol	Key Word	EPA Symbol	Key Word
/b/	<u>b</u> oy	/n/	<u>n</u> umber
/d/	<u>d</u> og	/p/	<u>p</u> eople
/f/	<u>f</u> ive	/r/	<u>r</u> ed
/g/	<u>g</u> oat	/s/	<u>s</u> ummer
/h/	<u>h</u> ouse	/t/	<u>t</u> ime
/j/	<u>J</u> uly	/v/	<u>v</u> isa
/k/	king	/w/	<u>w</u> ork
/l/	<u>l</u> emon	/y/	<u>y</u> ellow
/m/	<u>m</u> oney	/z/	<u>z</u> ebra

6 Symbols are new – but they logically represent their sounds

EPA Symbol	Key Word
/Sh/	<u>sh</u> oe
/Ch/	<u>ch</u> urch
/TH/	<u>th</u> ink (tongue between your teeth and <b>blow air out</b> )
/th/	<u>th</u> en (tongue between your teeth and <b>suck air in</b> )
/Ng/	H <u>ng</u> K <u>ng</u>
/Zh/	A <u>z</u> ia, be <u>z</u> e, telev <u>z</u> ion (there is no English letter for /Zh/)



= 24 consonant sounds

Beware of **Silent Consonants** – They make no sound. They are everywhere!



thumb, walk, knife, answer, write

∅ is the symbol when a letter is silent.













## 16 Vowel Sounds



a,e,i,o,u are the Latin vowels – but there are 16 *vowel sounds* in English and any *vowel sound* can be spelled with any vowel or combination of vowels at any time. Vowels are tricky.

English vowel sounds are simple with this color-coded chart.

### Thompson Vowel Chart

Color Word	Color	EPA	Phonetic Spelling	Example	Example with 'F'
gray		/Ay/	/grAY/	made	fail
black		/a/	/blak/	mad	fat
green		/Ey/	/grEyn/	Pete	feel
red		/e/	/red/	pet	fell
white		/Iy/	/wIyt/	bite	file
pink		/i/	/pInk/	bit	fill
yellow		/ow/	/yellow/	note	foal
olive		/o/	/oliv/	not	fall
blue		/Uw/	/blUw/	cute	fool
mustard		/u/	/mustErd/	cut	fun
wood		/w^d/	/w^d/	put	full
turquoise		/oy/	/tErkoyz/	boy	foil
brown		/Aw/	/brAWn/	now	fowl
purple		/Er/	/pErpel/	word	first
charcoal		/Ar/	/chArkow/	car	far
orange		/Or/	/Orenj/	door	four