

Vowel Sounds of American English

These are the 17 most common vowels in Standard American English:

Alphabet Vowels

These vowel sounds get their names from the 5 English vowel letters: **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, and **u**

1 **a** /eɪ/

mail
sane
raid
save
place

2 **e** /iː/

meal
scene
read
neat
sleep

3 **i** /aɪ/

mile
sign
ride
twice
climb

4 **o** /oʊ/

mole
sewn
road
boat
close

5 **u** /ʊuː/

mule
soon
rude
fume
blue

Relative Vowels

These vowels are related to Alphabet Vowels but have unique sounds and no off-glide

6 /æ/

pan
gnat
had
bat
man

7 /ɛ/

pen
net
head
bet
men

8 /ɪ/

pin
knit
hid
sin
slip

9 /ɑ/

pawn
not
hot
law
bought

10 /ʌ/

pun
nut
hut
sun
love

Additional Vowels

11 /ʊ/

book
put
could
woman
cookie

12 /aʊ/

house
clown
pound
owl
scout

13 /ɔ/

court
folk
bored
pour
wool

14 /ɔɪ/

oil
boy
coin
foil
noise

15 /ə/

about
comply
jacket
second
banana

16 /ɜr/

early
serve
bird
learn
third

17 /ər/

father
sugar
mirror
surprise
liberty

* The /ɔ/ sound is more common in the Eastern U.S. than in the Western U.S., where it is often replaced by 9

** The /ə/ "schwa" sound is found in unstressed syllables when an alphabet or relative vowel is reduced

*** This sound is found in unstressed syllables when /ə/ and /r/ combine



Scan here to listen to all 17 vowel sounds