

English vowel phonemes and typical problems they pose

/i:/	[i:]	⟨beat⟩	slightly diphthongized, not as tense as in German
	[i]	⟨happy⟩	shorter (but not lax) in a word-final unstressed open syllable
/ɪ/	[ɪ]	⟨bin⟩	approximately as in German; never with lip-rounding (!)
		⟨before⟩	in General American and Australian English, more likely to be [bə'fɔ:] than [bɪ'fɔ:]
/e/	[e]	⟨bet⟩	more open than French /e/ (été) or German /e:/ (Mehl) but not as open as French or German /ɛ/ (bête) (Bäcker)
/æ/	[æ]	⟨bat⟩	more open than French or German /ɛ/, very much less central than German /a/ (backen)
/ɑ:/	[ɑ:]	⟨cart⟩	further back than standard German /a:/
	[ɑ]	⟨partake⟩	shortened in an unstressed syllable
/ɒ/	[ɒ]	⟨shop⟩	much more open than German /ɔ/ (Hocker); the 'plum-in-your-mouth' vowel
/ʌ/	[ʌ]	⟨shut⟩	varies considerably with dialect; in Southern British /ʌ/ is like an unrounded version of French /ɔ/ (Somme), i.e. almost central rather than back; in Australian English /ʌ/ is central and open; in General American the corresponding vowel is mid central and is therefore transcribed /ə/; in Northern British it is normally /ʊ/, so that the first syllable of ⟨butter⟩ sounds similar to the first syllable of German ⟨Butter⟩
/ɔ:/	[ɔ:]	⟨caught⟩	less open than German /ɔ:/; the 'banana' vowel
	[ɔ]	⟨portend⟩	shortened in an unstressed syllable
/ʊ/	[ʊ]	⟨put⟩	approximately as in German
/u:/	[u:]	⟨shoot⟩	slightly diphthongized, very much centralized compared with German
	[u]	⟨rubella⟩	shortened in an unstressed syllable
/ɜ:/	[ɜ:]	⟨shirt⟩	mid central unrounded and a monophthong; the corresponding German sound is a diphthong /œɐ/ (Bösdäi) whose first part is rounded
/ə/	[ə]	⟨about⟩	mid central unrounded; the corresponding German sound is mid-close central unrounded [ɐ], i.e. is like a very lax attempt at /e/ (at least for a Bavarian)
		⟨bitter⟩	mid-central unrounded; the corresponding German sound is near-open central unrounded [ɐ̯]; the English sound really is a neutral vowel, neither front nor back, neither close nor open, and unrounded.
/eɪ/	[eɪ]	⟨late⟩	the closest corresponding German vowel /e:/ is a long monophthong; such a monophthong occurs e.g. in Yorkshire English, but in Southern British it's a diphthong
/əʊ/	[əʊ]	⟨coat⟩	the starting point of this diphthong can vary anywhere between mid-open back rounded [ɔ], mid central [ə] and even (!) mid-open front (or front-central) unrounded [ɛ] (or [ɛ̃]); this is because its former opposite number /ɛʊ/ no longer exists and can no longer constrain it; if you pronounce a monophthong [o:] people will think you're from Yorkshire
/aɪ/	[aɪ]	⟨kite⟩	starts further back than the corresponding German diphthong, more like [aɪ]; often the end point is more like [e], so: [æ]
/aʊ/	[aʊ]	⟨shout⟩	starts further forward than the corresponding German diphthong, in an extreme case more like [æʊ] (!)
/ɔɪ/	[ɔɪ]	⟨coin⟩	starting point is mid, starting point of the corresponding German diphthong is mid-open
/ɪə/	[ɪə]	⟨fear⟩	starting point is lax compared to the starting point of the corresponding German diphthong, end point is not as open; may produce a "linking r"
/eə/	[eə]	⟨fair⟩	starting point is lax compared to the starting point of the corresponding German diphthong, end point is not as open; may produce a "linking r"
/ʊə/	[ʊə]	⟨tour⟩	starting point is lax compared to the starting point of the corresponding German diphthong, end point is not as open; often pronounced as a monophthong [ɔ:]; may produce a "linking r"