

Unit 6

Vowels (2)

The system of English vowels and diphthongs

Slides for the session of

Phonetics with Listening Practice (British)

held on

13 May 2025



Vowels (2)

Goals

The vowel quadrilateral and the IPA cardinal vowels

English short vowels

English long vowels and diphthongs

English reduced vowels in weak syllables

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{ English Department | LangSciTech }
Saarland University

/ˈɪŋ ɡlɪʃ fə ˈnet ɪks ˈjuːn ɪt ˈsɪks/ (phonemic)

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Will heißen:

Ist *Dis* identisch mit *Es*?

Ist [ɐ̯] identisch mit [ɛ̯]?

i.e. is this rocket science, or not??

The goals of today's session are:

- 1 To give an overview of the system of vowel and diphthong phonemes in English

φων

Vowels (2)

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The goals of today's session are:

- 1 To give an overview of the system of vowel and diphthong phonemes in English
- 2 To examine the typical phonetic realizations (phones, allophones) of the vowel and diphthong phonemes of English in the Received Pronunciation of British English



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- ② To examine the typical phonetic realizations (phones, allophones) of the vowel and diphthong phonemes of English in the Received Pronunciation of British English
- ③ To begin practising some of the English vowels and diphthongs that can be problematic to speakers of various other languages, especially German



Vowels (2)

Goals

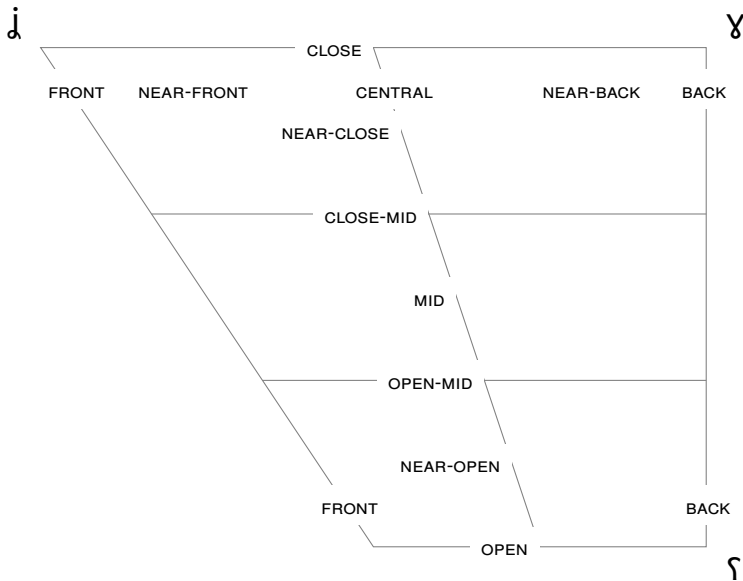
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Vowel Quadrilateral



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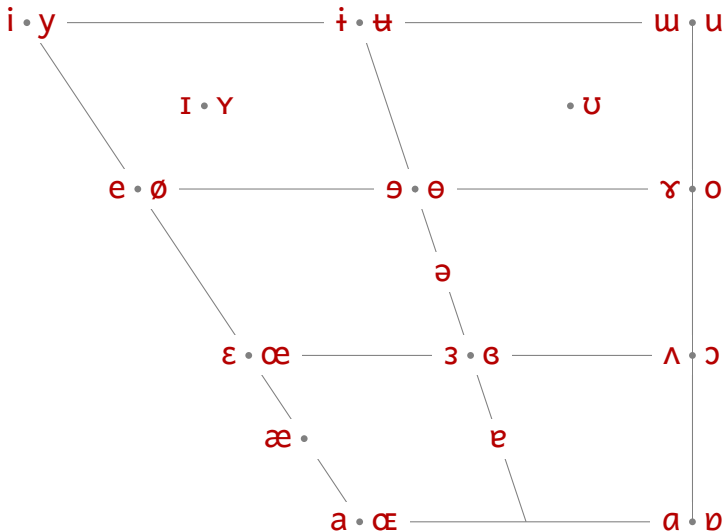
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English short vowels: lexical sets



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English short vowels: phonemes

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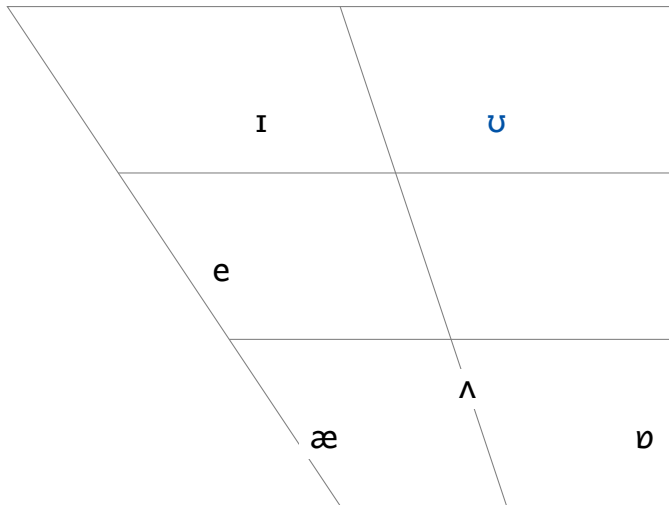
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English short vowels: phonemes compared with cardinal vowels

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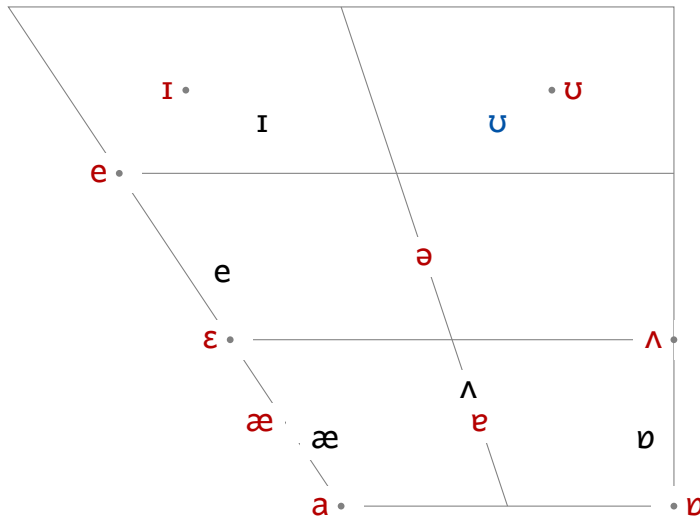
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English short vowels: examples

pit	pet	pat	pot	putt	put
/pɪt/	/pet/	/pæt/	/pɒt/	/pʌt/	/pʊt/
[p ^h ɪt]	[p ^h ɛt]	[p ^h æt]	[p ^h ɒt]	[p ^h et]	[p ^h ʊt]

bit	bid	wick	wig	nip	nib	hiss	his
[bɪt]	[brɪd]	[wɪk]	[wɪg]	[nɪp]	[nɪb]	[hɪs]	[hrɪz]

set	said	debt	dead	etch	edge	cess	says
[sɛt]	[sɛɪd]	[dɛt]	[dɛɪd]	[ɛtʃ]	[ɛɪdʒ]	[sɛs]	[sɛɪz]

fat	fad	back	bag	batch	badge	slap	slab
[fæt]	[fæɪd]	[bæk]	[bæɪg]	[bætʃ]	[bæɪdʒ]	[slæp]	[slæb]

cop	cob	knot	nod	lock	log	hops	Hobbes
[kɒp]	[kɒb]	[nɒt]	[nɒd]	[lɒk]	[lɒg]	[hɒps]	[hɒbz]

cup	cub	duck	dug	fuss	fuzz	once	ones
[kʌp]	[kʌb]	[dek]	[dʌg]	[fɜs]	[fɜz]	[wɛns]	[wɛnz]

put	bush	soot	foot	wool	stood	hood	good
[pʊt]	[bʊʃ]	[sʊt]	[fʊt]	[wʊl]	[stʊd]	[hʊd]	[gʊd]

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English short vowels: more examples

kit	dress	strap	lot	strut	foot
/kɪt/	/dres/	/stræp/	/lɒt/	/strʌt/	/fʊt/
[k ^h ɪt]	[dɹɛs]	[stræp]	[lɒt]	[strʌt]	[fʊt]

it fits him | big business stinks | Tim hit his shins |
/ɪt fɪts hɪm/ /bɪɡ 'bɪznɪs stɪŋks/ /*tɪm hɪt hɪz ʃɪnz/

let's get set | lead's heavy | a gem sale isn't the same as a jam sale |
/lets get set/ /ledz 'hevi/ /ə dʒem seɪl ɪz.nɪt ðə seɪm əz ə dʒæm seɪl/

the black cat tried to catch a rat | the back hatstand is for caps |
/ðə blæk kæt traɪd tu kætʃ ə ræt/ /ðə bæk 'hætstænd ɪz fə kæps/

I want to wander in the tropics | Don Johnson is on top |
/aɪ wʌnt tu 'wʌndəɪ ɪn ðə 'trɒpɪks/ /*dʌn *'dʒɒnsən ɪz ʌn tɒp/

cut up the tough stuff | it's lovely honey and butter |
/kʌt ʌp ðə tʌf stʌf/ /ɪts 'lʌvli 'hʌni ən 'bʌtə/

look, full of books | Cook took a look | Cook took Brook's rook |
/lʊk | fʊl əv buks/ /*kʊk tʊk ə lʊk/ /*kʊk tʊk *bruks rʊk/

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English long vowels and diphthongs (1): lexical sets

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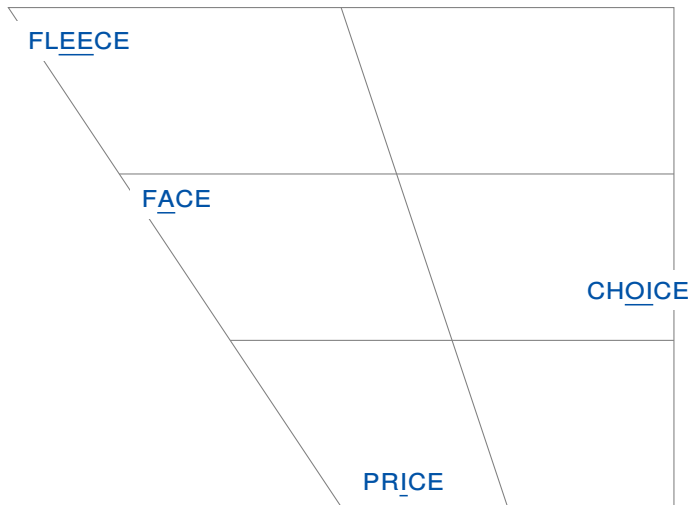
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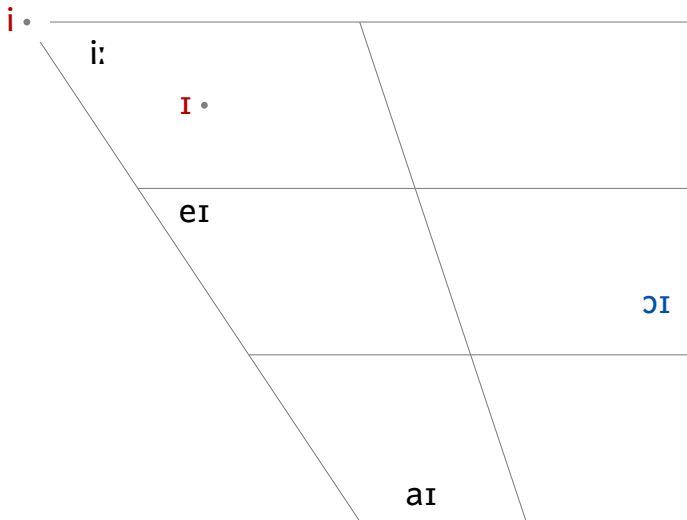
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English long vowels and diphthongs (1): phonemes



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English long vowels and diphthongs (1): examples

fleece	face	price	choice
/fli:s/	/feɪs/	/praɪs/	/tʃɔɪs/
[fliːs]	[fɛɪs]	[pɹaɪs]	[tʃɔɪs]

fleece	fleas	heat	heed	belief	believe	cease	seize
[fli:s]	[fli:z]	[hi:t]	[hi:d]	[bi.'li:f]	[bi.'li:v]	[si:s]	[si:z]

face	phase	pace	pay	wait	wade	fate	fade
[feɪs]	[feɪz]	[peɪs]	[peɪ]	[weɪt]	[weɪd]	[feɪt]	[feɪd]

price	prize	ice	eyes	wright	ride	dice	die
[praɪs]	[praɪz]	[aɪs]	[aɪz]	[raɪt]	[raɪd]	[daɪs]	[daɪ]

choice	Choy's	Joyce	joys	quoit	coy	Boyce	boys
[tʃɔɪs]	[tʃɔɪz]	[dʒɔɪs]	[dʒɔɪz]	[kɔɪt]	[kɔɪ]	[bɔɪs]	[bɔɪz]

It's the bee's knees! Peachy keen! Squeaky clean! Lean and mean!
The rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain. (K)no(w) pain, (k)no(w)
gain.

Try it – you'll like it! “I like Ike!” (“I like Pike!”) Mike's on Skype.
Noisy toys point to boys. (This one's been reported to the gender
police.)

φωv

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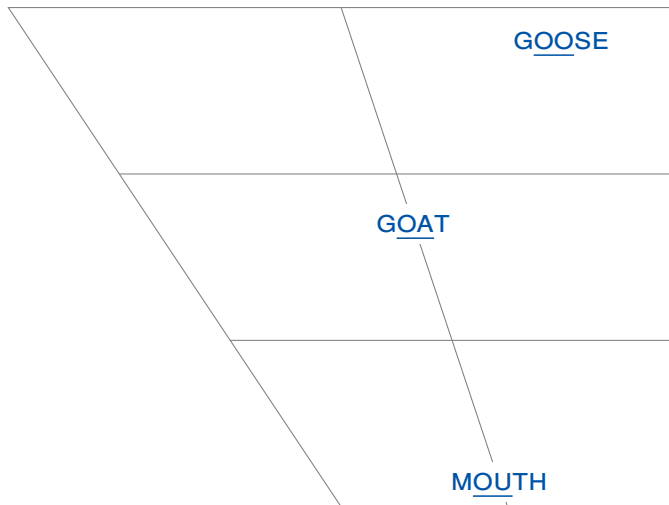
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English long vowels and diphthongs (2): lexical sets



φωv

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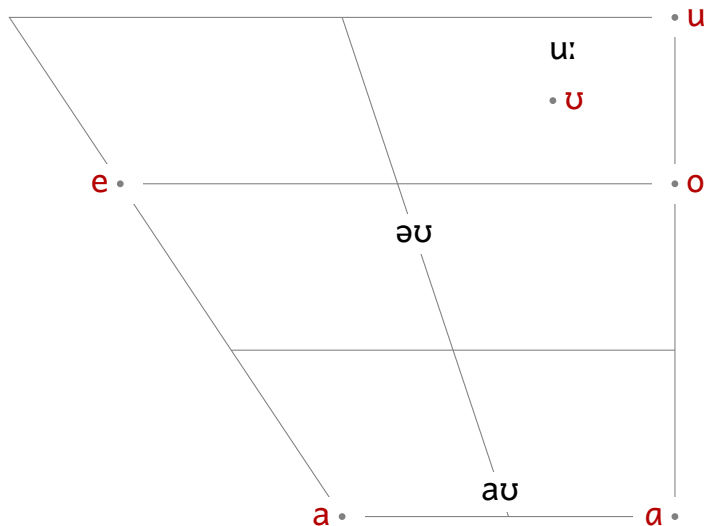
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goose goat mouth

/guːs/ /gəʊt/ /maʊθ/

[gʊːs] [gəʊt] [maʊθ] [mɛʊθ] [mɑʊθ]

moot mood use (n.) use (v.) proof prove

[mʊːt] [mʊːd] [jʊːs] [jʊːz] [pɹʊːf] [pɹʊːv]

goat goad dose doze close (n.) close (v.)

[gəʊt] [gəːʊd] [dəʊs] [dəːʊz] [kləʊs] [kləːʊz]

mouth (n.) mouth (v.) house (n.) house (v.) bout bough

[maʊθ] [maːʊð] [haʊs] [hɑːʊz] [baʊt] [baːʊ]

Whose shoe's loose? Sue knew. Hugh's tune is due in June.

I suppose so. It's Flo's go. Oh no, don't go home alone.

How now, brown cow? Out out, town mouse! Clouds and showers.

English long vowels and diphthongs (3): lexical sets

φων

Vowels (2)

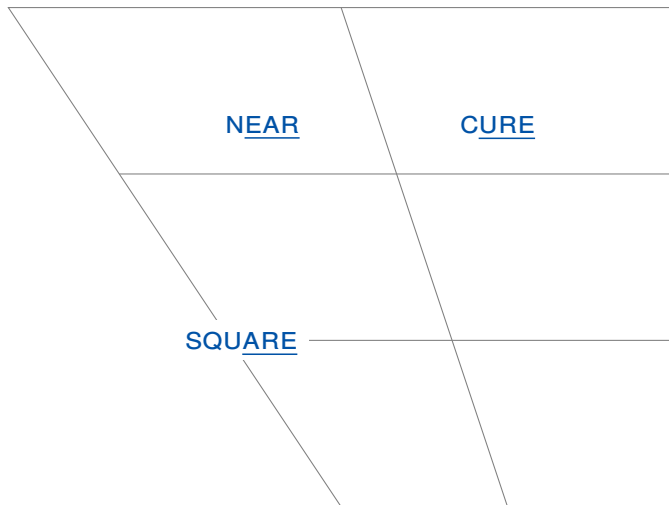
Goals

The vowel quadrilateral and the IPA cardinal vowels

English short vowels

English long vowels and diphthongs

English reduced vowels in weak syllables



English long vowels and diphthongs (3): phonemes

φων

Vowels (2)

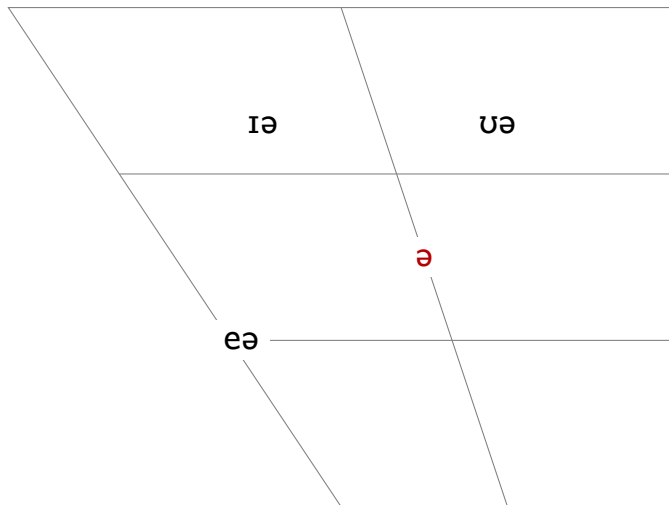
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English long vowels and diphthongs (3): examples

near	square	cure	
/nɪə/	/skweə/	/kjʊə/	
[nɪ̯ə]	[skwɛ̯ə]	[kjʊ̯ə]	[kjɔ:]

pierce	peers	fierce	fear	weird	beard
[pʰɪəs]	[pʰɪ̯əz]	[fɪəs]	[fɪ̯ə]	[wɪəd]	[brəd]

scarce	scares	there	their	they're	mayor	prayer
[skeəs]	[ske̯əz]	[ðɛ̯ə]	[ðɛ̯ə]	[ðɛ̯ə]	[me̯ə]	[pɹɛ̯ə]

your	you're	sure	pure	poor	Europe
[jʊ̯ə]	[jʊ̯ə]	[ʃʊ̯ə]	[pjʊ̯ə]	[pʰʊ̯ə]	['jʊ̯əɪ.əp]

Here and there, we're aware of Peter Pears paring a pair of pears.

Here they're all ours; there they're all theirs.

This is your big “But you're Jean Ure, aren't you?” moment!

Are you sure (/ʃɔ:/ <Shaw>)? No, I'm Shakespeare!

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Vowels (2)

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English reduced vowels in weak syllables

English long vowels and diphthongs (4): lexical sets

φωv

Vowels (2)

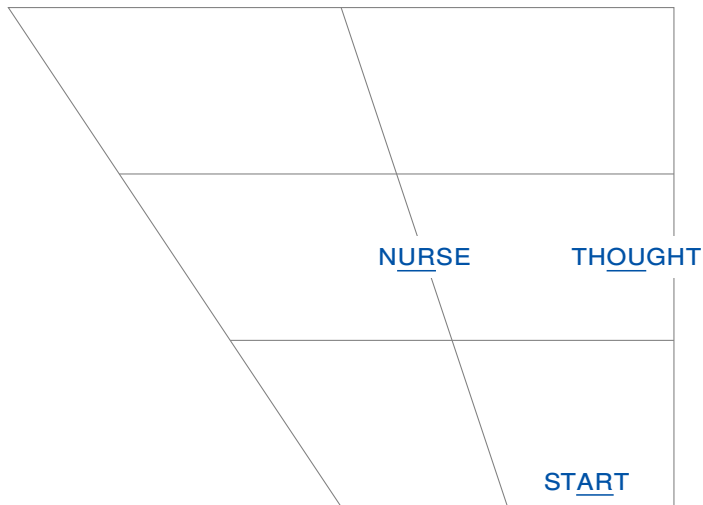
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English long vowels and diphthongs (4): phonemes

φων

Vowels (2)

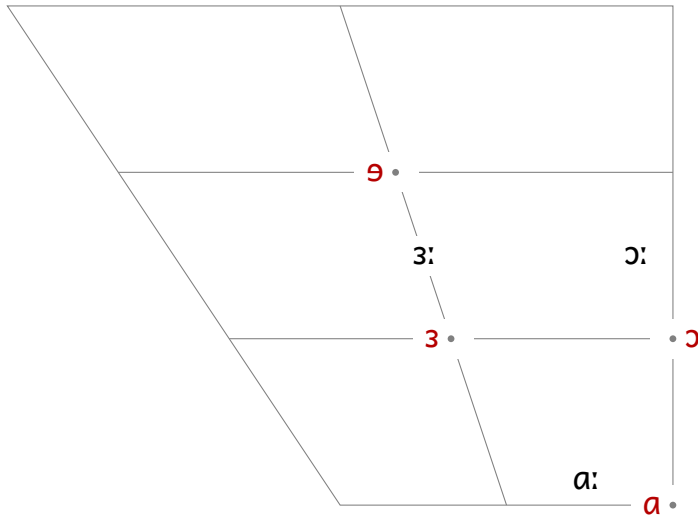
Goals

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English reduced vowels in weak syllables



English long vowels and diphthongs (4): examples

start	nurse	thought
/stɑ:t/	/nɜ:s/	/θɔ:t/
[stɑ̃ːt]	[nɜ̃ːs]	[θɔ̃ːt]

part	staff	starve	cars	bar	bra
[pʰɑ:t]	[stɑ:f]	[stɑ:v]	[kɑ:z]	[bɑ:]	[bɹɑ:]

search	surge	merch	merge	fir	prefer	fur
[sɜːtʃ]	[sɜ:dʒ]	[mɜːtʃ]	[mɜ:dʒ]	[fɜ:]	[pɹɪ.ˈfɜ:]	[fɜ:]

law	war	court	cord	course	cores	sauce	saws
[lɔ:]	[wɔ:]	[kɔ:t]	[kɔ:d]	[kɔ:s]	[kɔ:z]	[sɔ:s]	[sɔ:z]

Ma parks Pa's car | last dance, last chance | a large farmyard
Percy turned, when he heard the girl's words | birds searched the earth for
worms
you're four boards short | Lord Gordon caught naught | coarse gorse tore
your horse

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Vowels (2)

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and the IPA cardinal
vowels

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English long vowels and
diphthongs

English reduced vowels in
weak syllables

English reduced vowels in weak syllables: phonemes

φων

Vowels (2)

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