

DIPHTHONGS AND TRIPHTHONGS

PHONETICS OF ENGLISH

/iə/	/əu/	/aʊ/	/aɪ/	/eɪ/	/eə/	/uə/	/ɔɪ/
fear	go	house	l	pain	pear	tour	toy
here	know	how	my	play	there	pour	voice
beer	home	down	either	cave	where		choice
hear	bone	loud	eye	reign	air		
clear	sew		sigh	made	heir		
dear	crow		Thai	maid	wear		
	Don't		tie	obey			
	foam			pay			
	foe						

Diphthongs

While the position of the tongue is more or less stable for a pure vowel...

... a diphthong is characterised by a **graceful movement from one point to another**, for this reason they are also sometimes known as **glides**.

- In English phonetics they are considered to be **ONE phoneme** (not two).

Diphthongs

- **Movement/glide** from one vowel to another
- From **constant/pure vowel to another vowel**
- **1st part longer and stronger**
- **2nd part shorter and quieter**
- 8 diphthongs; 2 groups: centring and closing

ending in /ə/ ending in /ɪ /ʊ/

Diphthongs

- English diphthongs may cause difficulty

Nowhere is the English spelling system more bizarre than in its representation of diphthongs

Diphthongs

Articulatory features:

Type of articulation: **VOWELS**

Manner of articulation: **DIPHTHONGS**

Diphthongs

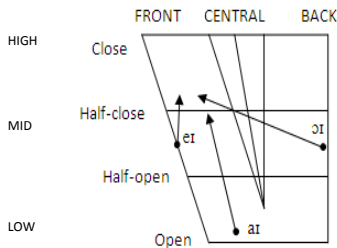
- **closing diphthongs** – the glide is made from a more open to a more close position /i, u/
- **centring diphthongs** – the glide is made from a more peripheral to a more central position /ə/

Diphthongs

- **Marked with an arrow**, where the dot marks the start of the diphthong (the first “vowel” within the diphthong) and the arrow-head marks the direction of tongue movement (the tongue moves towards the position of the second “vowel”, but doesn’t really make it there).

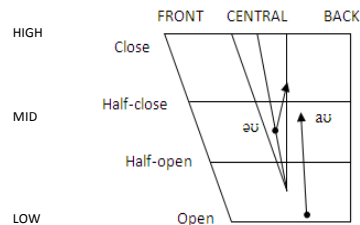
Closing diphthongs 1

Closing Diphthongs		
/eɪ/ /aɪ/ /ɔɪ/	The tongue moves to:	/ɪ/



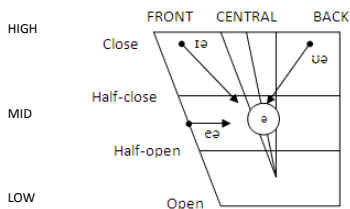
Closing diphthongs 2

Closing Diphthongs		
/əʊ/ /aʊ/	The tongue moves to:	/ʊ/



Centering diphthongs

Centring Diphthongs		
/ɪə/ /eə/ /ʊə/	The tongue moves to:	/ə/



American and British pronunciation - diphthongs

- The diphthongs /ei/, /ai/, /au/ and /oi/ are the same in the two pronunciations.

- **In BrE /əʊ/ is used – in AmE /ou/ is used.**

	cold	go	low
BrE:	/kəʊld/	/gəʊ/	/ləʊ/
AmE:	/koʊld/	/goʊ/	/loʊ/

American and British pronunciation - diphthongs

- The centring diphthongs /iə/, /eə/ and /uə/ do not occur in AmE - instead there is a vowel followed by /r/:

	RP	GA
near, here	nɪə, hɪə	nɪr, hɪr
square, there	skweə, ðeə	skwer, ðer
cure, jury	kjʊə, dʒʊəri	kjʊr, dʒʊr i

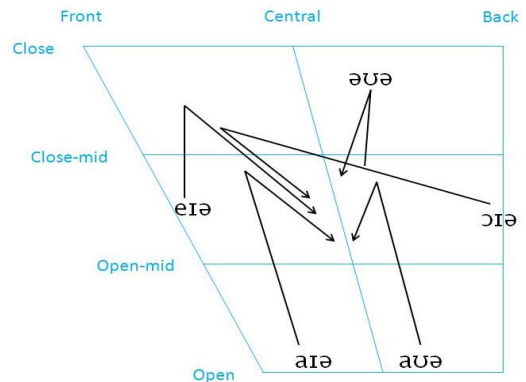
American and British pronunciation - diphthongs

- But note that many /uə/ words in both BrE and AmE are pronounced with /o:/. This is more common in BrE than in AmE.

	RP	GA
cure	usually: kjʊə, sometimes: kjo:	only: kjʊr
sure	usually: ʃʊ:, sometimes: ʃʊə	usually: ʃʊr sometimes: ʃɔr
poor	usually: pɔ:, sometimes: puə	usually: pʊr, sometimes: pɔr or pɔʊr

Triphthongs

- ei + ə = eɪə player /pleɪə/
- ai + ə = aɪə fire /faɪə/
- ɔi + ə = ɔɪə royal /rɔɪəl/
- əu + ə = əʊə lower /ləʊə/
- au + ə = aʊə hour /aʊə/



American and British pronunciation - triphthongs

- In BrE the final *r* of all triphthongs is not pronounced, but in AmE, the final *r* is typically pronounced:

'layer' /leɪr/, 'fire' /faɪr/, 'lawyer' /lɔɪr/, 'lower' /ləʊr/, 'hour' /aʊr/

- In AmE the quality of the first vowel is different in /ɔʊr/; it is a back mid vowel: /o/ (in BrE, instead, /əʊə/ is used).

Study questions

- How are diphthongs different from monophthongs?
- Provide a list of the English diphthongs.
- How can we classify diphthongs? What is the classification based on?
- Draw the chart(s) representing the closing diphthongs.
- Draw the chart representing the centering diphthongs.
- Explain the differences in the pronunciation of diphthongs in the British and the American pronunciation.
- Provide a list of the English triphthongs. Give examples of the words containing them.
- Explain the differences in the pronunciation of triphthongs in the British and the American pronunciation.
- What are homophones? Provide three pairs for illustration.

Exercises

Write words for the things in the picture in the correct part of the table.

/ɔɪ/	/æ/
cake	apple

14.2 Complete this conversation using the words in the box. Then listen and check.

cars cares stars stairs

SID: This is a great life, with no worries or cares !

JOE: It would be nice if we had _____ though, Sid.

SID: I didn't say _____, I said _____!

JOE: Oh, I see. Not _____, as in traffic, but _____ with an ES at the end!

SID: That's right. I've always loved sleeping under the _____.

JOE: But why? There's hardly any space under the _____!

SID: No, not _____, _____! You know, little lights in the sky.

JOE: Oh, _____! I thought you said _____, that people walk up!

A75a Listen to the sound /ɔʊ/. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make this long vowel sound.

A75b Listen to the target sound /ɔʊ/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

target /ɔʊ/		
bought	boat	boot
blouse	blows	blues
cost	coast	cast
ball	bowl	bull

A75c Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

toe toes toast
comb code coar
roll rose rope

"Rose knows Joe phones Sophie, but Sophie and Joe don't know Rose knows."

Listen to this text. Find words from it which have an /ɔɪ/ or /aʊ/ sound and write them in the correct part of the table.

I enjoy living down town. Well, it's very noisy, of course. The traffic is loud, and the young people often shout when they come out of the clubs. But there are lots of good points too. There's a big choice of shops, and it's easy to get around.

/ɔɪ/ (4 words)	/aʊ/ (6 words)
enjoy	

Find a way from Start to Finish. You may pass a square only if the word in it has the sound /aʊ/. You can move horizontally (↔) or vertically (↕) only.

START

house	sound	group	about	mouth	cow
soup	cut	brown	mouse	bought	south
could	couple	grow	low	would	cloud
know	snow	touch	ought	down	count
thought	should	slow	blow	pound	young
soul	country	though	throw	town	round

FINISH

IDENTIFY THE DIPHTHONGS AND TRIPHTHONGS USED IN THE FOLLOWING EXAMPLES:

/aɪə/ 1. I am tired of being called a liar!

/oɪ/ 2. I don't know how to cook but I can boil water.

/aʊə/ 3. My favorite thing to do is to smell by lovely flower.

/əʊə/ 4. I don't like to cut the grass, but its fun to use to mower.

/eɪə/ 5. I love cake that has more than one layer.

new (not old)	knew (remembered)	gnu (animal)
night (evening)	knight (warrior)	
no (negative)	know (familiar with)	
oh (exclamation)	owe (be indebted)	
one (the number 1)	won (triumphed)	
or (conjunction)	oar (of a boat)	ore (mineral deposit)
our (possessive pronoun)	hour (sixty minutes)	
pair (two of a kind)	pare (peel)	pear (fruit)
peace (tranquility)	piece (part)	
plane (flat surface)	plain (simple)	

principal (chief)	principle (rule)	
rain (precipitation)	reign (royal authority)	rein (harness)
read (peruse)	reed (plant)	
real (genuine)	reel (spool)	
red (color)	read (perused)	
right (correct)	write (inscribe)	
road (street)	rode (transport)	rowed (used oars)
sale (bargain)	sail (travel by boat)	
see (visualize)	sea (ocean)	
seem (appear to be)	seam (joining mark)	

sell (exchange for money)	cell (prison room or a very tiny living thing)	
sent (did send)	cent (penny)	scent (odor)
shoe (foot covering)	shoo (drive away)	
side (flank)	sighed (audible breath)	
so (in that order)	sew (mend)	sow (plant)
some (portion)	sum (total)	
son (male offspring)	sun (star)	
steal (rob)	steel (metal)	
tail (animal's appendage)	tale (story)	
their (possessive pronoun)	there (at that place)	they're (they are)

through (finished)	threw (tossed)	
to (toward)	two (the number 2)	too (also)
toe (on foot)	tow (pull)	
told (informed)	tolled (rang)	
way (road)	weigh (measure)	
we (pronoun)	wee (small)	
weather (climate)	whether (if)	
week (seven days)	weak (not strong)	
where (what place)	wear (have on)	ware (pottery)
who's (who is)	whose (possessive of who)	
wood (of a tree)	would (willing to)	
your (possessive pronoun)	you're (you are)	