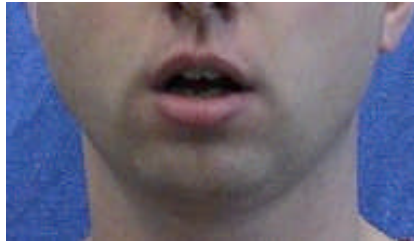




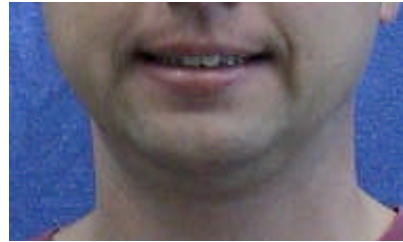
The Articulation of Vowels

Vowels are produced when the air stream is voiced through the vibration of the vocal cords in larynx, and then shaped using the tongue and the lips to modify the overall shape of the mouth. The position of the tongue is a useful reference point for describing the difference between the vowel sounds.

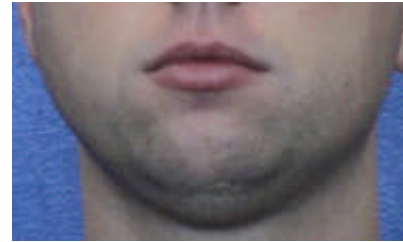
Lips Positions



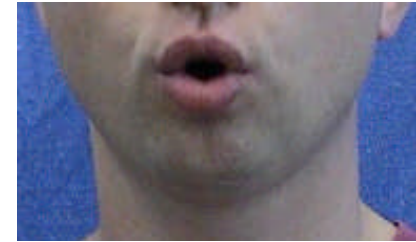
Open



Spread



Neutral



Round

Open: the jaw is fully open, and the tongue is low in the mouth

Spread: the corners of the lips are moved away from each other, As when smiling. Example sound /i:/.

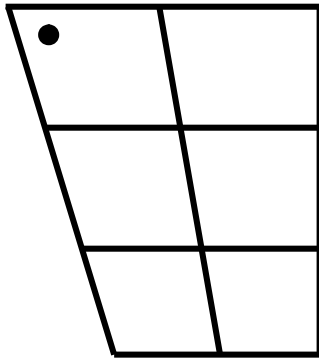
Neutral: the lips are not noticeably rounded or spread. Example Sound: /ə/.

Round: the lips are pushed forward into the shape of a circle. Example sound: /ʊ/.

Close vowels

For close vowels the tongue is quite high in the mouth. Moving from /i:/ through to /u:/, we also notice the different positions of the tongue; /i:/ is a front vowel, and /u:/ is a back vowel.

i:

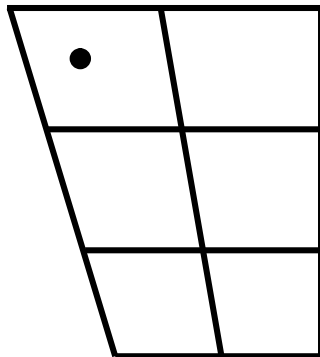


Characteristics

The front of the tongue is slightly behind and below the close front position. (The “close” position is where the tongue is closest to roof of the mouth). Lips are spread. The tongue is tense, and the sides of the tongue touch the upper molars.

As in.. bead, key, cheese, scene, police, people, quay....

I



Characteristics

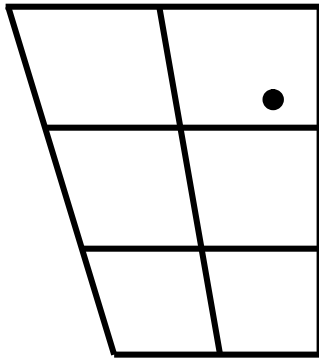
The part of the tongue slightly nearer the center is raised to just above the half-close position. (not as high as in /i:/). Lips are spread loosely, and the tongue is more relaxed. The sides of the tongue may touch the upper molars.

As in.. hit, sausage, biggest, rhythm, mountain, busy, women.

Close vowels

For close vowels the tongue is quite high in the mouth. Moving from /i:/ through to /u:/, we also notice the different positions of the tongue; /i:/ is a front vowel, and /u:/ is a back vowel.

ʊ

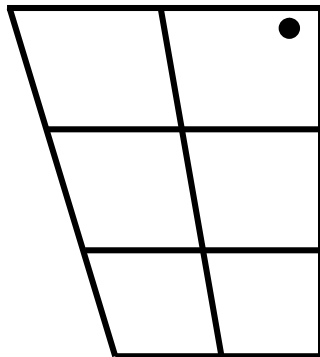


Characteristics

The part of the tongue just behind the center is raised, just above the half-close position. Lips are rounded, but loosely so. The tongue is relatively relaxed.

As in.. book, good, woman, push, pull....

u:



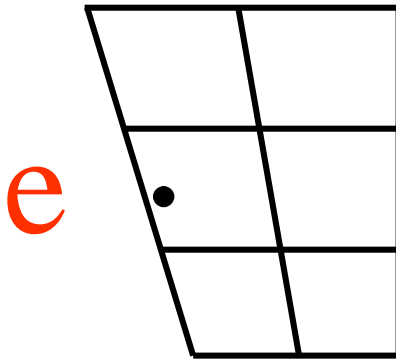
Characteristics

The back of the tongue is raised just below the close position. Lips are rounded. The tongue is tense.

As in.. food, rude, true, who, fruit, soup....

Mid vowels

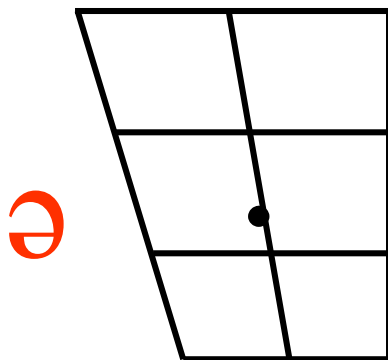
For mid vowels the tongue is neither high nor low in the mouth. Moving from /e/ through to /ɔ:/, we also notice the different positions of the tongue; /e/ is a front vowel, and /ɔ:/ is a back vowel.



Characteristics

The front of the tongue is between the half-open and half-close position. the half-close positions. Lips are loosely spread. The tongue is tenser than for /I/ and the sides of the tongue may touch the upper molars.

As in.. egg, left, said, head, read (past), instead, any, leisure .



Characteristics

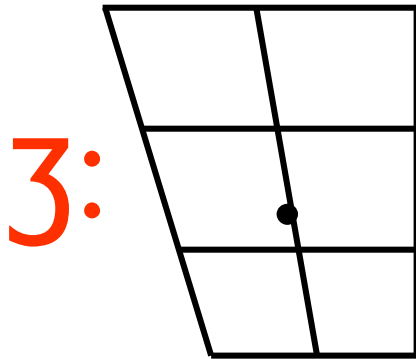
The center of the tongue is between the half-close and half-open position. the half-close positions. Lips are relaxed, and neutrally spread.

As in.. about, paper, banana, nation, the (before consonant).

Commonest vowel sound in English never stressed, and many un stressed vowels tend towards this sound. Differs from other phonemes, in that its contrast with similarly articulated long sound /ɜ:/ does not involve a change of meaning. Gets its name from Hebrew /ʃəwɑ:/, meaning “emptiness”, or “nothing”.

Mid vowels

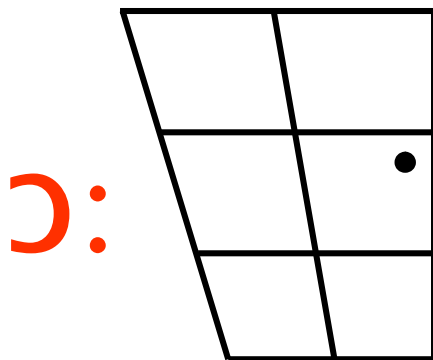
For mid vowels the tongue is neither high nor low in the mouth. Moving from /e/ through to /ɔ:/, we also notice the different positions of the tongue; /e/ is a front vowel, and /ɔ:/ is a back vowel.



Characteristics

The center of the tongue is between the half-close and half-open position. the half-close positions. Lips are relaxed, and neutrally spread.

As in.. shirt, her, word, further, pearl, serve, myrtle.



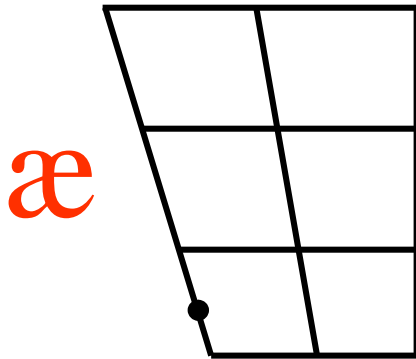
Characteristics

The back of the tongue is raised to between below the half-open and half-close positions. Lips are loosely rounded.

As in.. fork, call, snore, taught, bought, board, saw, pour, broad, all, law, horse, hoarse.....

Open vowels

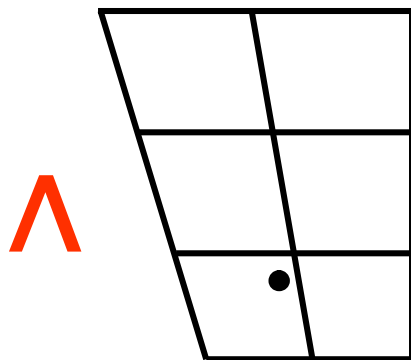
For open vowels the tongue is low in the mouth. Moving from /æ/ through to /ɒ/, we also notice the different positions of the tongue; /æ/ is a front vowel, and /ɒ/ is a back vowel.



Characteristics

The front of the tongue is raised to just below the half-open position. Lips are neutrally open.

As in.. hat, attack, antique, plait....



Characteristics

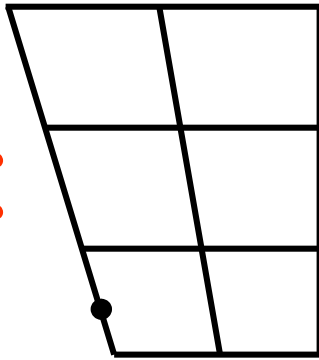
The center of the tongue is raised to just above the full open position. Lips are neutrally open.

As in.. run, uncle, front, nourish, does, come, flood....

Open vowels

For open vowels the tongue is low in the mouth. Moving from /æ/ through to /ɒ/, we also notice the different positions of the tongue; /æ/ is a front vowel, and /ɒ/ is a back vowel.

a:

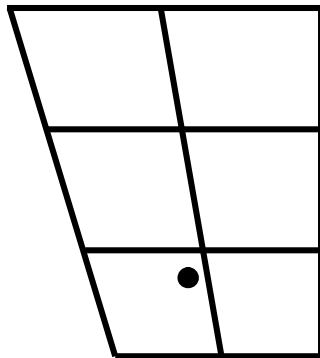


Characteristics

The tongue between the center and the back, is in the fully open position. Lips are neutrally open.

As in.. far, part, half, class, command, clerk, memoir, aunty .

ɒ



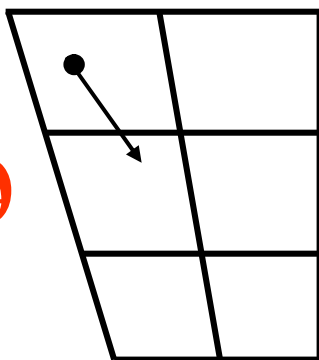
Characteristics

The tongue between the center and the back, is in the full open position. Lips are neutrally open.

As in.. dog, often, cough, want, because, knowledge, Australia.

Centering diphthongs

Iə

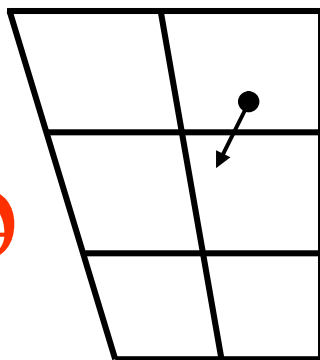


Characteristics

The glide begins in the position for /I/, moving down and back towards /ə/. The lips are neutral, but with a small movement from spread to open.

As in.. beer, beard, fear, pierce, Ian, here, idea

ʊə



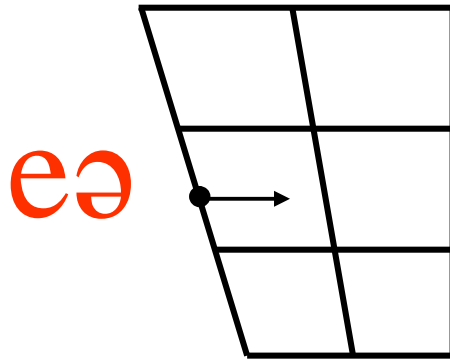
Characteristics

The glide begins in the position for /ʊ/, moving forwards and down to towards /ə/. The lips are loosely rounded, becoming neutrally spread.

*As in.. *sure, moor, tour, obscure*

*Quite a rare diphthong. Many speakers replace it with /ɔ:/. ..

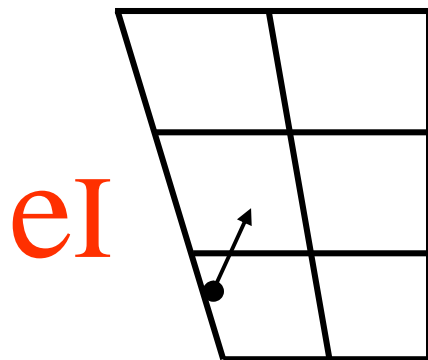
Centering diphthongs



Characteristics

The glide begins in the position for /e/, moving back towards /ə/.
The lips remain neutrally open.

As in.. where, were, chair, dare, stare, there



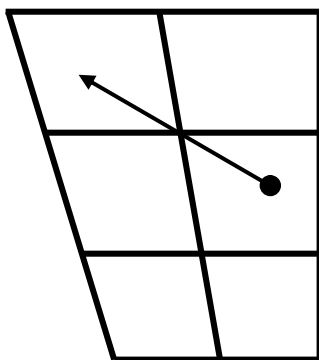
Characteristics

The glide begins in the position for /e/, moving forwards and down to towards /ɪ/. The lips are spread.

As in.. cake, why, weigh, say, pain, they, vein

Closing Diphthongs

ɔɪ

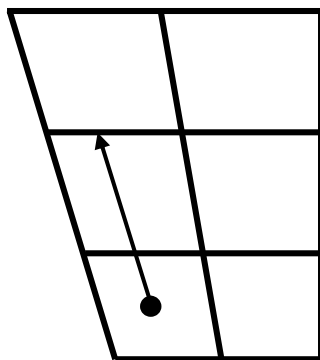


Characteristics

The glide begins in the position for /ɔ:/, moving up and forwards towards /ɪ/. The lips start open and rounded, and change to neutral.

As in.. toy, avoid, voice, enjoy, boy

aɪ



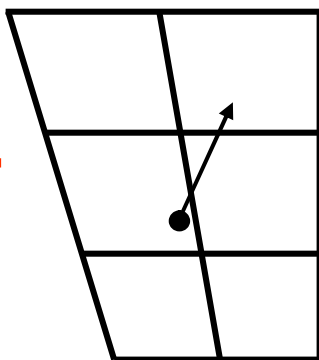
Characteristics

The glide begins in the position, between front and center, moving up and slightly forward towards /ɪ/. The lips move from neutral, to loosely spread.

As in.. high, tie, buy, kite, might, cry, eye

Closing Diphthongs

əʊ

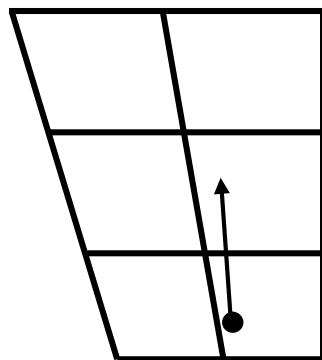


Characteristics

The glide begins in the position for / ə /, moving up and back towards / ʊ /. The lips are neutral, but change to loosely rounded.

As in.. go, snow, toast, home, hello, although

aʊ



Characteristics

The glide begins in the position quite similar to / a : /, moving up towards / ʊ /. The lips start neutral, with a movement to loosely rounded. The glide is not always completed, as the movement involved is extensive.

As in.. house, loud, down, how, bough