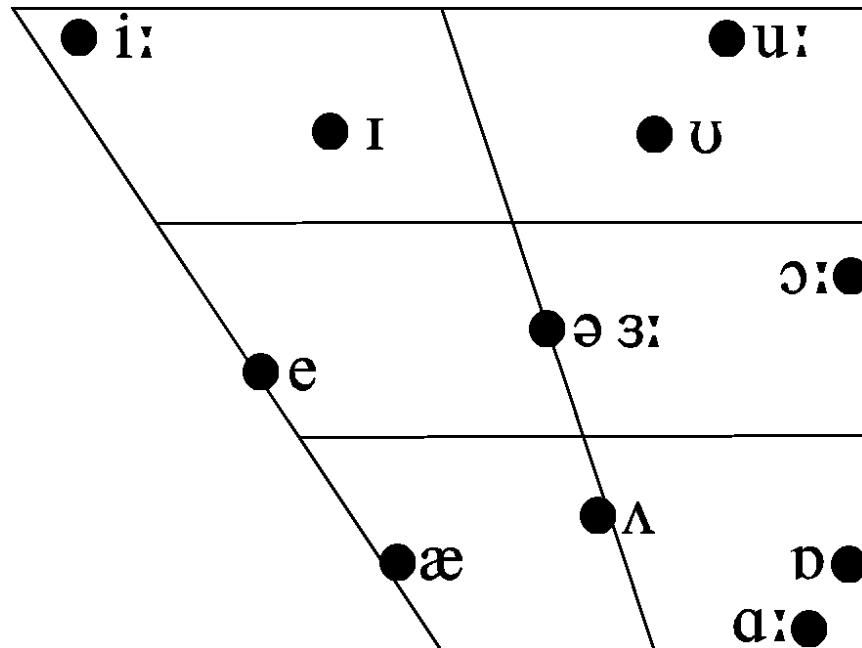


English Vowels

“The most common view is that vowels are sounds in which there is no obstruction to the flow of air as it passes from the larynx to the lips. A doctor who wants to look at the back of a patient's mouth often asks them to say “ah”; making this vowel sound is the best way of presenting an unobstructed view. But if we make a sound like s, d it can be clearly felt that we are making it difficult or impossible for the air to pass through the mouth. Most people would have no doubt that sounds like s, d should be called consonants.” (Roach, 2009). There are three types of English vowels, namely: monophthongs, diphthongs, and triphthongs. In English, these vowels are represented by the RP vowel chart. A vowel chart is a visual representation of where your tongue is while articulating a vowel.

1. Monophthongs

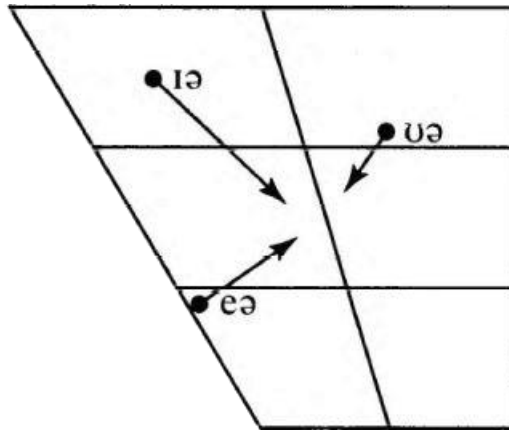
Monophthongs are vowels that have a single perceived auditory quality. They are represented in the English vowel chart as follows:



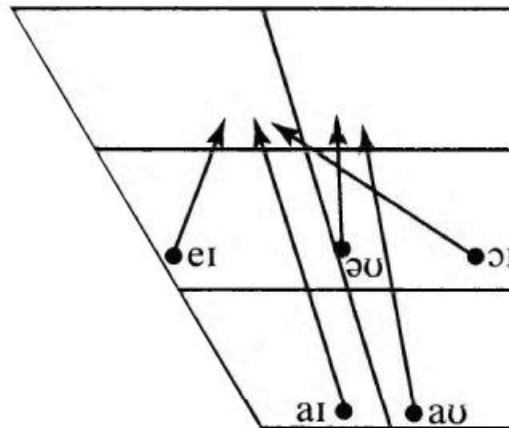
2. Diphthongs

Diphthongs are sounds formed by the combination of two vowels in a single syllable, in which the sound begins as one vowel and moves towards another (as in coin, loud, and side). They are represented in the English vowel chart as follows:

2.1. Centering diphthongs:



2.2. Closing diphthongs



3. Triphthongs

A union of three vowels (letters or sounds) pronounced in one syllable (as in fire). The triphthongs can be looked on as being composed of the five closing diphthongs described in the last section, with ə added on the end. Thus, we get: eɪ + ə = eɪə (e.g. 'layer', 'player'). aɪ + ə = aɪə (e.g. 'liar', 'fire'). ɔɪ + ə = ɔɪə (e.g., 'loyal', 'royal'). əʊ + ə = əʊə (e.g. 'lower', 'mower'). aʊ + ə = aʊə (e.g. 'power', 'hour')