Vowels: quality and quantity

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1 – Describing and classifying vowels

**Vowels**: No obstruction to escaping air.

Quality determined by the shape of inside cavity of the mouth.

Shape of mouth cavity determined by positions of jaw, lips and tongue.

Vocal chords vibrate.
1 – Describing and classifying vowels

Tongue:

Tongue (jaw):

Quantity of vowel:

long or short

/ i:/            /u:/

/ i:/            /e/
1 – Describing and classifying vowels

- **Front**
  - bead
  - bed
  - bad

- **Central**
  - bid
  - her
  - other
  - bud

- **Back**
  - could
  - cord
  - cod

- **Close**
  - cooed

- **Open**
  - card

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Assessing English language since 1938
1 – Describing and classifying vowels
2 – Problems with vowels for Spanish speakers of English

Fig. 1 BBC English pure vowels
2 – Problems with vowels for Spanish speakers of English

Fig. 1 BBC English pure vowels
2 – Problems with vowels for Spanish speakers of English

- sheep / ship – [ʃip] used for both
- fool / full – [ful] used for both
- hat / hut – [hat] used for both
- wet / weight – [wet] used for both
- not / note / nought – [not] used for all three
- her / fir – vowel + ‘r’ used
- beer / bear / tour – vowel + ‘r’ used
- schwa – full vowel used
- all vowels generally too short – no length variation
Problems for Spanish speakers of English

- **sheep / ship** – focus on length
- **fool / full** – focus on length (& full vowel not very frequent)
- **hat / hut** – focus on length
- **wet / weight** – focus on length (+ weight = diphthong)
- **not / note / nought** – focus on length (+ note = diphthong)
- **her / fir** – extra ‘r’ not important
- **beer / bear / tour** – extra ‘r’ not important
- **schwa** – full vowel not important
- **all vowels generally too short** – VERY important
Problems for Spanish speakers of English

- sheep / ship – focus on length
- hat / hut / heart – focus on length
- not / note / nought – length (+ note = diphthong)
- weight / wet – length (+ wet = diphthong)
- No length variation – VERY IMPORTANT
2 – Problems with vowels for Spanish speakers of English

Problems for Polish speakers of English!
3 – Vowel length: long and short sounds
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1. What can you see in each picture? Tell your partner.
3 – Vowel length: long and short sounds

Vowels and diphthongs change their length depending on the following consonant:

a) voiced consonant sound = normal length
   \( \text{(peas, cab, eyes, bag, felled, wade, etc.)} \)

b) voiceless consonant sound = shorter version
   \( \text{(peace, cap, ice, back, felt, wait, etc.)} \)

c) no consonant sound = longer version
   \( \text{(play, say, sea, see, fly, why, no, go, true, through, etc.)} \)
3 – Vowel length: long and short sounds

2. Listen then cover the squares for the words your hear.
3 – Vowel length: long and short sounds

4. Listen. Which word do you hear, 1 or 2?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>white</td>
<td>wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ice</td>
<td>eyes</td>
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<tr>
<td>cap</td>
<td>cab</td>
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<td>wade</td>
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<td>seat</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<tr>
<td>sent</td>
<td>send</td>
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<tr>
<td>felt</td>
<td>felled</td>
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<tr>
<td>back</td>
<td>bag</td>
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<tr>
<td>wait</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bus</td>
<td>buzz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3 – Vowel length: long and short sounds

6. Which word do you hear?
1. She had dust in her eyes / ice.
2. It’s on his back / bag.
3. I could hear a bus / buzz in the distance
4. Do you need a cab / cap?
5. I want peace / peas.
6. They felt / felled the trees.
7. We’ll have to wait / wade.
3 – Vowel length: long and short sounds
Vowels: quality and quantity

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