

In the English writing system, many of the **graphemes** (letters and letter groups) have more than one possible pronunciation.

Sometimes, specific **sequences of letters** can **alert** the reader to the **possible** pronunciation required; for example, note the letter sequences shown as ‘hollow letters’ in this guide as in ‘watch’, ‘salt’ and ‘city’ - indicating that, **in these words with these letter patterns**, letter **a** **is usually code for** the /o/ sound and letter **c** **is always code for** the /s/ sound. Slash marks around a letter or letters - for example, /o/, /s/ or /sh/ - indicate a **sound** - usually at the level of the **phoneme** - **the smallest unit of sound identifiable in speech**.

This **Pronunciation Guide** is not comprehensive as it **does not include all the graphemes and sounds** in the English language. The guide is based on letters, groups of letters, and **common spelling patterns**, which generally **have more than one pronunciation dependent on the words themselves**. This is **NOT** the same as an **Alphabetic Code Chart** based on **ALL** the **phonemes**.

Some of the word examples in the **Pronunciation Guide** below are words **used commonly** but they have **very unusual spellings**, for example: ‘any’, ‘said’, ‘pretty’, ‘women’ and ‘choir’.

The guide below cannot be definitive about how to pronounce each word because **pronunciations vary according to regional or national accents** in the English language. The complexity of the **Pronunciation Guide** demonstrates the advisability of teaching the English **alphabetic code** (the **grapheme-phoneme correspondences**) for **reading**, and for **spelling**, systematically and thoroughly. Some learners are able to **deduce** the alphabetic code for themselves through lots of book experience and writing experience as they mature (although they may not fully appreciate that they are ‘picking up’ what is known as the **alphabetic code** - or **alphabetic principle**). Other learners, however, only manage to ‘pick up’ **some** alphabetic code without explicit teaching - or they may fail to deduce the alphabetic principle at all - regardless of their book experience at home or in school.

Years of research and leading-edge practice has shown that the best way to teach reading and spelling in the English language is to teach the **English alphabetic code** and the **core phonics skills** of **decoding for reading and encoding for spelling very explicitly, systematically and comprehensively** - providing reading, spelling and writing activities **which match the code that has been taught to date**. This approach serves all learners of all ages and is **essential** for many learners whatever their age.

The **Phonics International** programme is designed and organised around the **free Alphabetic Code Charts** at www.alphabeticcodecharts.com . The notion of the **Alphabetic Code Chart** is based on the ‘**units of sound mainly at phoneme level**’ of the English language and the graphemes which **are code for** the sounds. This **Pronunciation Guide**, in contrast, is based on some **spelling patterns** shown in the **left column** and **provides examples of different pronunciation**. See www.phonicsinternational.com to learn more about the rationale of the **Phonics International** programme and the importance of the **Alphabetic Code Charts**.

Pronunciation Guide for English

graphemes and spelling patterns	example words including common and rare spellings	sounds phonemes and multiple phonemes
a	apple 	/a/
	table  apricot 	/ai/
	watch  qualify  salt 	/o/
	father  drama 	/ar/
	any many	/e/
	water  also always	/or/
	banana 	schwa /u/
	village  manage	/i/
ai	first aid 	/ai/
	said again  against	/e/
	bargain  mountain 	schwa /u/
al	palace 	/a/+/l/
	hospital  capital	/ul/
	salt  alternative	/o/+/l/
	chalk  walk talk	/or/
	palm  half  calves 	/ar/
	also almost altogether	/or/+/l/
ar	artist  start	/ar/
	wardrobe  quarter 	/or/
	collar  sugar 	schwa /er/ or /u/
are	hare  care dare	/air/
	You are funny. 	/ar/
aw	awkward  awful	/or/
	aware	/a/+/w/

grey background = common pronunciation

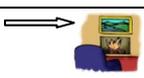
ay	tray 	/ai/
	She says that I am funny.	/e/
e	egg 	/e/
	emu  me he she we be	/ee/
	pretty 	/i/
	acne	between /i/ and /ee/
ea	eat  reach each	/ee/
	head  breakfast 	/e/
	break  great	/ai/
ear	ears  nearby	/eer/
	bear  wear	/air/
	earth  search	/er/
	heart  hearth	/ar/
-eau	plateau 	/oa/
	beautiful butterfly 	/y+oo/
-ed	It rained. 	/d/
	She skipped. 	/t/
	He acted. 	/u/+/d/
ei	either neither	/igh/
-ei	deceive receive receipt	/ee/
-eo	people 	/ee/
	leopard 	/e/
er	mermaid 	/er/
	mixer 	schwa /er/ or /u/
-ere	adhere  here	/eer/
	where  there	/air/
	you were	/er/

-ew	new  news 	/y+oo/
	crew 	long /oo/
-ey	key 	/ee/
	monkey 	between /i/ and /ee/
	bird of prey  they	/ai/
i	insect 	/i/
	I am behind the tree. 	/igh/
	piano  radio 	/ee/
-ie	chief  brief believe	/ee/
	movie 	between /i/ and /ee/
	tie  He cried. 	/igh/
	friends 	/e/
	fiesta	/ee/+/e/
o	octopus 	/o/
	yo-yo  no go so	/oa/
	son  mother  ←	/u/
	move  to do who	long /oo/
	women 	/i/
	wolf  wolves 	short /oo/
oi	ointment 	/oi/
	coincidence	/oa/+/i/
	choir 	/w/+/igh/
on	on board 	/o/+/n/
	Once upon a time.... one	/w+o/+/n/
oo	good book  look	short /oo/
	moon  balloon 	long /oo/
	flood blood	/u/

-oor	door  floorboards	/or/
	poorly 	/long oo+er/or/or/
or	fork 	/or/
	world 	/er/
	sailor 	schwa /er/ or /u/
	historic building 	/o/+/r/
ou	“ouch”  shout out loud	/ou/
	soup  you	long /oo/
	touch 	/u/
ough	dough  though although	/oa/
	plough 	/ou/
	through 	long /oo/
	thought  bought ought	/or/
	no thoroughfare 	schwa /er/ or /u/
our	our house  flour 	/ou/+ schwa /u/
	your house four 	/or/
	savour the flavour 	schwa /er/ or /u/
ow	bow  tomorrow	/oa/
	owl  down town	/ou/
u	umbrella 	/u/
	unicorn  united 	/y+ oo/
	push  pull 	short /oo/
	penguin 	/w/
	superman 	long /oo/
-ue	barbecue 	/y+oo/
	blue  true clue glue	long /oo/
u-e	tube  cute cube	/y+oo/

	flute 	rule	long /oo/
-ui	fruit 		long /oo/
	building 		(bu=/b/)+/i/
	guitar 		(gu=/g/)+/i/
	intuition		/y+oo/+/i/
-ure	pure 	cure obscure	/y+oor/
	sure		/or/
	treasure 		schwa /er/ or /u/
be	beg 		/b/+/e/
	behind 		/b/+/i/
bt	debt 	doubt subtle	/t/
	subtract	subterranean	/b/+/t/
c	cat 		/k/
	bicycle 		/s/ soft c: ce ci cy
-cc	succumb		/k/
	accent	succeed	/k/+/s/ soft c
ch	chairs 		/ch/
	chameleon 	school 	/k/
	chef 		/sh/
ci	city 		/s/+/i/ soft c
-ci	magician 		/sh/
	pronunciation		/s/+/ee/ soft c
de	desk 		/d/+/e/
	demand		/d/+/i/
	detour 		/d/+/ee/
f	feathers 		/f/
	of		/v/

g	girl 	/g/
	giraffe 	/j/ soft g: ge gi gy
	courgette 	/zh/
ge	I get it! 	/g/+/e/
	gentle touch 	/j/+/e/ soft g
-ge	cabbage 	/j/
	collage 	/zh/
gh	ghost 	/g/
-gh	laugh 	/f/
gn	gnome 	/n/
	signal	/g/+/n/
gu	guitar 	/g/
	gust of wind 	/g/+/u/
le	leg 	/l/+/e/
-le	kettle 	/ul/
-mb	thumb  comb 	/m/
	number 3 remember	/m/+/b/
n	net 	/n/
-n	jungle 	/ng/
-ng	gong 	/ng/
	bangles 	/ng/+/g/
	danger 	/n/+/j/ soft g
pn	pneumatic drill 	/n/
	hypnotic	/p/+/n/
pt	pterodactyl 	/t/
	helicopter  deceptive	/p/+/t/
	reception deception	/p/+(ti=/sh/)

qu	queen  squeeze 	/k+w/
	bouquet 	/k/
que	question	/k+w/+/e/
	plaque  queue 	/k/
re	reggae 	/r/+/e/
	remind	/r/+/i/
-re	theatre 	schwa /er/ or /u/
	macabre	/r/+/u/
s	snake 	/s/
-s	fries 	/z/
	treasure 	/zh/
sc	scan the horizon 	/s/+/k/
	scissors 	/s/ soft c: ce ci cy
-se	house 	/s/
	cheese 	/z/
si	sit 	/s/+/i/
-si	television  division	/zh/
st	still running fast 	/s/+/t/
-st-	castle  listen 	/s/
sw	sweets 	/s/+/w/
	sword 	/s/
th	thistle  thin thick path	unvoiced /th/
	over there  the this that	voiced /th/
ti	tin 	/t/+/i/
-ti	station 	/sh/
-ture	mature  immature 	/t/+/y+oor/
	picture  adventure	/ch+u/

tw	twice twins 	/t/+/w/
	two 2	/t/
ve	vest 	/v/+/e/
-ve	dove  love  have	/v/
wa	watch  was swap	/w/+/o/
	wag 	/w/+/a/
wh	wheel  when what why	/w/ can be +‘breath’
	who is it?  whole one	/h/
wor	worm  work worth	/w/+/er/
	worn	/w/+/or/
x	fox 	/k+s/
	exam 	/g+z/
	xylophone 	/z/
	excellent	/k/
y	yawn  yesterday	/y/
	sunny  happy	between /i/ and /ee/
	fly  by my why try	/igh/
	cymbals  symbols 1 2 3	/i/

The complexities of the English **Alphabetic Code** include:

1) **one sound** (phoneme) can be represented by one, two, three or four letters:

e.g. /k/ c, /f/ ph, /igh/ igh, /ai/ eigh

2) **one sound** can be represented by different spellings (graphemes):

e.g. /oa/ is represented by: o, oa, ow, oe, o-e, eau, ough

3) **one spelling (grapheme) can represent multiple sounds:**

e.g. ‘ough’: /oa/ though, /or/ thought, /oo/ through, /ou/ plough, /u/ thorough

This **Pronunciation Guide** demonstrates that learning to read the English language is not straightforward. It is easier to teach and learn reading and spelling in English, however, when beginners are not expected to read and write **independently** with words that have complex and unusual code. The **Synthetic Phonics Teaching Principles** are based, therefore, on introducing the **alphabetic code systematically** and providing words, sentences, texts and reading books **which match**, more or less, the incremental introduction of the alphabetic code in the synthetic phonics programme.