

**Phonetics:**

The term Phonetics is defined as,

“It is a branch of linguistics that studies the sounds of human speech.”

Knowledge of phonetics of English is important for anyone who wants to acquire a correct pronunciation of this language.

**Organs of Speech**

Speech organs or articulators produce the sounds of language. They are:

* Lips
* Teeth
* Alveolar Ridge
* Hard palate
* Velum (soft palate)
* Uvula
* Glottis (vocal chords)
* Tongue
* Nose
* Wind
* Pharynx (wind pipe)

**IPA**

IPA is an acronym of International Phonetic Alphabets. There are 44 sounds in English and the symbols of these sounds are known as IPA. Out of 44 sounds, 20 are vowel sounds (12 mono-thongs and 8 diphthongs) and 24 consonants.

**Consonants:**

A consonant may be defined as a sound in which the movement of air from the lungs is obstructed as a result of a narrowing or a complete closure of the air passage. The obstruction may be caused sometimes by one and sometimes speech organ and the vocal chords may be vibrating or not vibrating during the production of the sound. Thus, the consonants are classified according to;

1. The place of obstruction.
2. The nature of obstruction (whether complete or partial)
3. The position of the vocal chords (whether vibrating or not vibrating)

**The place of obstructions:**

1. Bilabial: The sounds formed by the two lips. E.g., /p/, /b/, /w/, /m/
2. Labio-dental: The sounds formed by the lower lip and the upper teeth. E.g., /f/, /v/, /n/
3. Dental: The sounds formed by the tip of the tongue and the upper teeth. E.g., /ᶿ/, /ᶞ/, /n/
4. Alveolar: The sounds formed by the tip or blade of the tongue and the teeth ridge. E.g., /t/, /d/, /l/, /s/, /z/, /ᶴ/, /ᶾ/, /tᶴ/, /dᶾ/
5. Palatal: The sounds formed by the front of the tongue and hard palate. E.g., /j/
6. Velar: The sounds formed by the back of the tongue and the soft palate. E.g., /k/, /g/, /ᵑ/
7. Uvular: The sounds formed by the back of the tongue against or near the [uvula](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palatine_uvula), that is, further back in the mouth than [velar consonants](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Velar_consonant). E.g., /r/
8. Glottal: The sounds formed in the glottis. E.g., /h/

**The nature of obstructions:**

1. Plosives: The sounds formed by means of a complete closure of the air passage, which is afterwards released suddenly, are called plosives. E.g., /p/, /b/, /t/, /d/, /k/, /g/
2. Fricatives: The sounds formed by narrowing the air passage to such an extent that the air in escaping produces audible friction. E.g., /f/, /v/, /ᶿ/, /ᶞ/, /s/, /z/, /ᶴ/, /ᶾ/
3. Nassals: The sounds formed by a complete closure in the mouth while the nasal passage is open are called nasals. E.g., /m/, /n/, /ᵑ/
4. Affricates: The sounds formed by means of a complete closure of the air passage which is afterwards released slowly, are called affricates. E.g., /tᶴ/, /dᶾ/
5. Lateral: The sound formed by means of partial obstruction of the passage by the tongue at the centre of the mouth and allowing the air to pass freely on one or both sides of the tongue is called lateral. E., /l/
6. Approximants: These are the voiced gliding sounds in which the speech organs shift from one position to another. E.g., /w/, /j/, /h/

**The position of vocal chords:**

According to the position of the vocal chords we have two kinds of consonants; voiceless and voiced. The voiced consonants are those in the production of which the vocal chords vibrate. The voiceless consonants are those in the production of which the vocal chords do not vibrate.

Voiceless: /p/, /t/, /k/, /f/, /s/, /h/, /ᶿ/, /tᶴ/, /ᶴ/

Voiced: /b/, /d/, /g/, /v/, /z/, /w/, /j/, /l/, /m/, /n/, /ᵑ/, /tᶴ/, /dᶾ/, /ᶞ/, /ᶾ/

**Vowels:**

All vowels are voiced. There’s no obstruction, partial or complete, of the air passage. It is articulated by different positions of the tongue, the lips and the jaws that give rise to different vowels. There are pure vowels (mono-thongs) and impure vowels, called diphthongs. The difference between the two is that in the production of a pure vowel the position of the tongue remains the same, whereas in the production of a diphthong the tongue does not remain stationary. It changes from one position to another. There are long and short mono-thongs.

**Monothongs:**

Short Vowels: **/I/, /e/, /ᶸ/, / ᶛ/, /ᶺ/, /ₔ /**

Long Vowels: **/i: /, /a: /, /u: /, /ᵌ:/, /ᵓ:/, /ᵆ/**

**Diphthongs:**

A sound formed by the combination of two vowels in a single syllable, in which the sound begins as one vowel and moves towards another.

**/Iₔ /, /eI/, /ᶸₔ /, /ᵓ I/, /ₔᶸ/, /eₔ/, /aI/, /aᶸ/**

