

ENGLISH HELPSHEET

ENGLISH SOUNDS

Silent letters

Silent B

The alphabet 'B' is not pronounced when it comes after 'M' in a word

- climb
- plumb / plumber
- tomb
- comb
- bomb

Silent C

'C' is not pronounced in words like

- muscle
- scissors
- acquire

Silent D

'D' is not pronounced in words like:

- sandwich
- Wednesday

Silent G

The alphabet is not pronounced when it comes before 'N' or 'M'

- gnaw
- diaphragm

Silent GH

'GH' is not pronounced before 'T' and at the end of many words

- tight
- right
- light
- taught
- thought
- borough
- through

Silent H

'H' is not pronounced when it comes after a consonant:

- why
- rhyme
- ghost

Sometimes the 'H' is silent for some words, even when it is the first letter of the word

- hour
- heir
- honour
- honest

Silent K

Whenever 'K' is followed by an 'N' at the beginning of a word, 'K' is not pronounced

- knot
- knight
- knock
- knowledge

Silent L

'L' stays silent in most words when it comes before 'D', 'F', 'M', 'K'.

- yolk
- half
- calm
- talk
- should

Silent N

'N' is not pronounced when it follows 'M' in a word

- autumn
- column

Silent P

'P' remains silent when it starts a word and is followed by 'sy' or 'ne'

- pneumonia
- psychotic

'P' is also not pronounced in certain words like

- psalm
- receipt

Silent S

We usually avoid pronouncing 'S' when it comes before 'L' in words like

- island
- aisle

Silent T

'T' is not pronounced in words like

- castle
- beret
- listen
- depot
- whistle
- gourmet

Silent U

'U' is not pronounced in words when it comes after 'G' and is followed by a vowel

- guess
- colleague
- guitar
- tongue

Silent W

We avoid pronouncing 'W' when it begins a word and is followed by 'R'

- wrist
- write
- wrong

'W' is not pronounced in these three pronouns

- who
- whose
- whom

It is also avoided in words like

- two
- sword
- answer

Silent X

'X' is not pronounced in most words that have come from the French language

- faux Pas
- Bordeaux

Consonants

B

Usually pronounced like the 'b' in 'big'.

However, in words ending with '-mb', such as comb, bomb, etc, the 'b' is silent (see Silent letters above)

C

Usually pronounced like 'k', as in 'cat'.

However, 'c' takes on the sound of 's' when it precedes 'e', 'i' or 'y', as in ceiling, cistern, cynic, etc.

-dge

Usually pronounced like 'j', as in 'bridge'.

G

Usually pronounced as in 'go'.

However, before 'e', 'i' or 'y', 'g' is often pronounced like 'j', as in germ, ginger, gyrate, etc.

-gh

In some words, '-gh' is pronounced like 'f', as in laugh, tough, draught.

However, in some words it is silent, as in high (see Silent letters above).

H

For example, 'head'.

However, in a few words, the 'h' is silent, as in hour, honour, etc. (see Silent letters above)

K

Generally pronounced like the 'c' in 'cat'.

However, when followed by 'n', it is usually silent, as in knife, knave, etc. (see Silent letters above)

L

Generally pronounced as in 'leaf'.

However, in a few words, the 'l' is silent, especially when followed by 'k' and 'f', as in talk, walk, etc. (see Silent letters above)

S

Generally pronounced as in 'sun'.

However, in some words 's' is pronounced like 'z', as in nose, president, etc.

In a few words, such as television and azure, 's' takes on a sound generally represented phonetically as 'zh'.

th

Generally aspirated, ie, let out with a puff of air, as in think, third, etc.

However, in some words, such as this, 'th' is not aspirated.

X

Usually pronounced like in box (the sound is-ks).

However, when it is the first letter of a word, x is pronounced like 'z'.

Y

Generally pronounced as in yesterday.

In some words, it takes on the sound 'ee', as in city.

In yet other words, it takes on the sound 'ai', as in fly.

Vowels

A

Before two consonants, 'a' is pronounced as in sand. This also applies when it appears before a single consonant at the end of a word, as in fan.

Before a single consonant followed by a vowel, 'a' is usually pronounced as in ate (the sound is ey).

Before 'l' and after 'q' and 'w', 'a' is usually pronounced as in call (the sound is like 'aw'). Other examples are squash and wall.

E

Before two consonants and before a single consonant at the end of a word, 'e' is usually pronounced as in desk or ten. This also applies when 'e' appears before a single consonant followed by a vowel (ever), although sometimes 'e' is pronounced 'ee' in such cases, as in even.

At the end of a word, 'e' is usually silent, as in ate, fate, etc.

However, at the end of very short words, 'e' usually takes on the sound 'ee', as in be.

I

Before two consonants and before a single consonant at the end of a word, 'i' is usually pronounced as in fit or fill.

However, in some cases, before two consonants, 'i' takes on the 'ai' sound (rhymes with eye). For example, wild.

Before a single consonant followed by a vowel, 'i' generally takes on the 'ai' sound, as in eye and tire.

O

Before two consonants in some words and before a single consonant at the end of a word, 'o' takes on the sound 'aw', as in rock and not.

In other words, it is pronounced 'oh' when it appears before two consonants, as in bolt.

The same applies when it precedes a single consonant followed by a vowel.

U

Before two consonants and before a consonant at the end of a word, 'u' usually takes on either the short 'oo' sound, as in pull and put, or the blunt 'uh', as in duck and jut.

Before a single consonant followed by a vowel, 'u' takes on the long 'oo' sound, as in June.

Vowel followed by an "r" in the same syllable

That vowel is "r-controlled". It is not long nor short. "R-controlled" "er, ir, and ur" often sound the same (like "er"). Examples: "term, sir, fir, fur, far, for, su/gar, or/der".