

Letter-Sound Correspondences in English

The symbols between forward slashes // are used in the UK Government's Letters and Sounds phonics programme*. The green symbols in round brackets are used in the International Phonetic Alphabet.

Letter or Combination of Letters (Graphemes)	Corresponding Sounds (Phonemes) and Example Words	Notes
a	/a/ (æ) at, alligator, can, bag	The most common correspondence for letter 'a'. Sometimes called 'short a'.
	/ai/ (eɪ) apron, alien, angel, baby, cradle, lady	Sometimes called 'long a'. This is the most common correspondence for the /ai/ sound.
	/ɒ/ (ɒ) was*, wand, what, swan, squash	Uncommon – mostly after 'w'. *Pronounced as 'wuz' in some accents.
	/ɑ:/ (ɑː) father, lather, rather, bath*, grass*, last*	Uncommon. Examples with asterisk are mainly found in the accents of people in the south of England.
	/e/ (e) any, many	Rare correspondence.
	/ɔ:/ (ɔː) water	Rare correspondence.
	/ə/ (ə) ago, about, banana, gorilla	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
ae	/ai/ (eɪ) Gaelic, Israel, reggae, vertebrae	Uncommon.
	/e/ (e) haemorrhage, haemorrhoids	UK spelling. Rare.
	/ee/ (iː) Aeon, algae, haemophilia, paediatrician	Mostly UK spellings.
	/igh/ (aɪ) maestro, taekwondo, curriculum vitae	Rare correspondence.
a-e	/ai/ (eɪ) ape, bake, cave, snake, tale	Split digraph, sometimes called 'magic e'.
	/i/ (ɪ) baggage, cabbage, damage, language	
	/a/ (æ) have	Rare.
ai	/ai/ (eɪ) aim, brain, faint, snail, waist	Most common sound for this digraph.
	/i/ (ɪ) or /ə/ (ə) captain, mountain, fountain	The actual sound spoken depends on individual accents.
	/e/ (e) again, said	Rare sound for this digraph.
	/a/ (æ) plaid, plait	Rare sound for this digraph.



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air	/air/ (eə)	chair, fair, hair, stair	Trigraph.
al	/a/ (æ) + /l/ (l)	Alps, scalp, talc, Val	
	/l/ (l)	animal, capital, hospital	
	/or/ (ɔ:)	talk, walk, chalk, stalk	Acting as a digraph - usually before 'k'.
	/or/ (ɔ:) + /l/ (l)	also, always, alright, already	
	/ar/ (ɑ:)	half, calm, calve, palm	Also acting as a digraph, but less common.
	/a/ (æ)	salmon	Very rare.
	/a/ (æ) + /l/ (l)	shall	Rare correspondence.
all	/or/ (ɔ:) + /l/ (l)	all, ball, call, fall	Quite common.
	/ar/ (ɑ:)	arm, car, dark, farm	Most common sound for this digraph
ar	/or/ (ɔ:)	dwarf, war, wardrobe, wart	Uncommon – usually after 'w'.
	/air/ (eə)	area, Mary, vary	Uncommon.
	/ə/ (ə) (British and Australian accents) (ə) (American accents)	cellar, dollar, nectar, vinegar	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
	/air/ (eə)	bare, care, glare hare	Trigraph
are	/ar/ (ɑ:)	are	Very rare sound for this trigraph.
	/or/ (ɔ:)	August, caught, haunt, pause	
au	/o/ (ɒ)	Australia, because, fault, vault	Uncommon.
	/ar/ (ɑ:)	aunt, draught, laugh	Rare - can be pronounced as /a/ for ant in the north of England.
augh	/or/ (ɔ:)	caught, daughter, naughty, taught	Rare correspondence.
	/a/ (æ) + /f/ (f)	draught, laugh	Rare correspondence.
aw	/or/ (ɔ:)	awful, crawl, draw, saw	
ay	/ai/ (eɪ)	day, play, say, tray	
b	/b/ (b)	boy, big, ability, crab	
bb	/b/ (b)	Abbot, gibbon, rabbit, wobble	
bt	/t/ (t)	debt, doubt, subtle	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 'b'. Very rare correspondence.
bu	/b/ (b)	building, built, buoy	Very rare correspondence.
c	/k/ (k)	cat, cub, cornflakes, cotton	
	/s/ (s)	cell, city, cycle, cent, icy	Usually before 'e', 'i' or 'y'



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cc	/k/ (k)	account, hiccup, occur, soccer	
	/k/ (k) + /s/ (s)	accent, access, success, vaccine	Uncommon.
ce	/s/ (s)	bounce, dance, juice, voice	
	/sh/ (ʃ)	ocean, crustacean, sebaceous	Rare correspondence.
ch	/ch/ (tʃ)	chick, child, church, much	Most common sound for this digraph.
	/k/ (k)	anchor, Christmas, chemistry, school	Mostly words borrowed from Greek.
	/sh/ (ʃ)	chalet, chef, machine, brochure	Mostly words borrowed from French.
	/k/ (k) + /w/ (w)	choir	Rare.
ci	/sh/ (ʃ)	delicious, racial, special, musician	Uncommon.
ck	/k/ (k)	clock, duck, kick, quack	
d	/d/ (d)	Dad, drink, dress, and	
dd	/d/ (d)	address, cuddle, ladder, odd	
de	/d/ (d)	aide, blonde, horde	Uncommon.
dg	/j/ (dʒ)	badger, budget, dodgy, fidget	
dge	/j/ (dʒ)	badge, fudge, fridge, porridge	Trigraph
e	/e/ (e)	bed, desk, egg, pen	
	/ee/ (i:)	be, demon, evil, he, me	
	/i/ (ɪ)	England, college, knowledge, pretty	
	/ə/ (ə)	effect, elephant, bulletin, the*	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'. *'The' is pronounced as 'thee' before a vowel.
ea	/ee/ (i:)	beach, clean, eat, meal	Most common sound for 'ea'.
	/e/ (e)	bread, dead, feather, head	
	/ai/ (eɪ)	break, great, steak, Reagan	Rare correspondence.
ear	/ear/ (ɪə)	beard, disappear, hear, spear	
	/ur/ (ɜ: Br. or ɜ US)	Earth, heard, learn, pearl	Uncommon.
	/air/ (eə)	Bear, pear, tear, wear	Rare correspondence.
	/ar/ (ɑ:)	heart, hearth	Very rare correspondence.
eau	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ)	chateau, gateau, plateau	Very rare correspondence. Mainly found in words borrowed from French.
ed	/d/ (d)	alarmed, baffled, behaved, camouflaged	
	/t/ (t)	chopped, hopped, jumped, walked	



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	/ə/ (ə) + /d/ (d) alerted, beard ed , land ed , want ed	/ə/ represents schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
ee	/ee/ (i:) bee, che ese , ge ese , she ep	
e-e	/ee/ (i:) ath lete , comp ete , phon e , the se	Split digraph, also known as 'magic e'.
eer	/ear/ (iə) be er , che er , de er , me er kat	
ei	/ee/ (i:) ce iling , prote in , rece ive , se ize	Rare correspondence.
	/ai/ (eɪ) be ige , fe int , re indeer , ve il	Rare correspondence.
	/e/ (e) he ifer , le isure (British accents)	Very rare correspondence.
eir	/air/ (eə) he ir , he ir loom, the ir	Very rare correspondence.
eigh	/ai/ (eɪ) e ight , fre ight , we igh , ne ighbour	Uncommon.
	/igh/ (aɪ) he ight , sle ight	Rare correspondence.
er	/ur/ (ɜ: Br. or ɝ US) fe rn , ge rm , he r , pe rson	
	/ear/ (iə) cafete ria , ce real , he ro , ze ro	
	/ə/ (ə) a fter , bu tter , co rne r, si ste r (British and Australian Accents)	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
	/ar/ (ɑ:) cl erk , De rby , se rg eant	
	/r/ (r) e very ca me ra (and di ffer ent in some accents)	'Silent e.'
ere	/ear/ (iə) atmo sphere , ca sh me re , he re , si nc ere	Uncommon.
	/ur/ (ɜ: Br. or ɝ US) we re	Very rare correspondence.
	/air/ (eə) co mp ere, the re , whe re , pre mi ere	Rare correspondence.
eu	/oo/ (u:) sle uth , leu ka emia, rheu ma tism	Rare
	/y/ (j) + /oo/ (u:) Eu rope , fe ud , neu ron , pneu mo nia	Uncommon.
ew	/oo/ (u:) ble w , che w , fle w , gre w	
	/y/ (j) + /oo/ (u:) de w , fe w , ne w , nep he w, ske w er	The /y/ sound isn't spoken in all these words in some accents.
	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ) se w	Very rare correspondence.
ey	/ee/ (i:) abb ey , don key , hone y , mon key	
	/ai/ (eɪ) he y , pre y , the y , obe y	Less common correspondence than /ee/ sound for 'ey'.
f	/f/ (f) fa n , fi t , fo x , de f use	
	/v/ (v) o f	Very rare correspondence but 'of' is a common word.
ff	/f/ (f) o ff , cl iff , da ff odil, mu ff in	



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g	/g/ (g)	got, Gran, argue, began	
	/j/ (dʒ)	gel, gym, giraffe, angel	Usually before 'e', 'i' or 'y'.
ge	/j/ (dʒ)	barge, large, sponge, pigeon	
	/zh/ (ʒ)	beige, camouflage, massage, prestige	
gg	/g/ (g)	egg, beggar, giggle, wagging	
gh	/g/ (g)	ghee, ghost, ghastly, gherkin	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 'h'.
	/f/ (f)	cough, laugh, rough, enough	Digraph.
gn	/n/ (n)	gnaw, gnome, reign, sign	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 'g'.
	/g/ (g) + /n/ (n)	gnu, magnet, cygnet, ignite	Consonant blend.
gu	/g/ (g)	guard, guest, guide, disguise	Digraph (or silent 'u').
h	/h/ (h)	hat, hug, happy, behind	
i	/i/ (ɪ)	it, bin, chip, digger	Very common correspondence.
	/igh/ (aɪ)	blind, child, giant, lion	
	/ee/ (i:)	happier, pizza, ski, taxi	
	/y/ (j)	onion, preview, Spaniard, union	Rare correspondence.
	/ə/ (ə)	cavity, delicate, horrible, president	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
ie	/igh/ (aɪ)	cried, flies, pie, satisfied	Uncommon.
	/ee/ (i:)	achieve, belief, chief, field	
	/e/ (e)	friend	Very rare correspondence.
i-e	/igh/ (aɪ)	bike, dice, hide, kite	Split digraph, sometimes called 'magic e' – quite a common correspondence.
	/i/ (ɪ)	give, lived, engine, evasive	Relatively uncommon.
	/ee/ (i:)	elite, machine, police, sardine	Relatively uncommon.
ier	/ear/ (ɪə)	cashier, fierce, pier, tier	
igh	/igh/ (aɪ)	bright, high, light, right	
ir	/ur/ (ɜ: Br. or ɜ US)	bird, chirp, dirt, girl	
j	/j/ (dʒ)	jam, jet, jump, enjoy	
k	/k/ (k)	kangaroo, kid, sketch, bike	
kk	/k/ (k)	bookkeeping, trekking, yakking	Uncommon.



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kn	/n/ (n)	knee, knew, knife, know	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 'k'.
l	/l/ (l)	leg, lip, black, camel	
le	/l/ (l) or /θ/ (ə) + /l/ (l)	apple, beetle, candle, giggle	
ll	/l/ (l)	bell, doll, chill, bully	
m	/m/ (m)	mad, mix, gum, chimp	
mb	/m/ (m)	bomb, comb, lamb, climb	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 'b'.
mm	/m/ (m)	comma, dummy, hammer, summer	
mn	/m/ (m)	Autumn, column, damn, hymn	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 'n' - rare
n	/n/ (n)	nap, nettle, pan, hand	
	/ng/ (ŋ)	blank, junk, pink, jungle, single	
ng	/ng/ (ŋ)	bang, bring, king, running	
nn	/n/ (n)	annoy, bunny, dinner, tennis	
ngue	/ng/ (ŋ)	tongue, meringue	Rare correspondence.
o	/o/ (ɒ)	dog, God, hot, on	
	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ)	cold, echo, go, oval, so	
	/u/ (ʌ)	front, monkey, month, won	
	/oo/ (u:)	do, who, to, tomb	Rare correspondence.
	/or/ (ɔ:)	dog, job	Some American accents.
	/ə/ (ə)	carrot, observe, offend, parrot	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
	/i/ (ɪ)	women	Very rare correspondence.
oa	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ)	cloak, goat, loaf, soap	
	/or/ (ɔ:)	abroad, broad	Rare correspondence.
oar	/or/ (ɔ:)	boar, board, roar, soar	Rare correspondence.
oe	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ)	doe, goes, Joe, tomatoes	
	/ee/ (i:)	amoeba, diarrhoea, foetus, oestrogen	Mainly UK spellings.
	/oo/ (u:)	canoe, shoe	Rare correspondence.
o-e	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ)	alone, choke, home, nose	Split digraph, sometimes called 'magic e'.
	/u/ (ʌ)	come, done, love, some	
	/oo/ (u:)	lose, move, prove	Rare correspondence.



Letter-Sound Correspondences in English

oi	/oi/ (ɔɪ)	avoid, boil, coin, oink	
oo	/oo/ (u:)	balloon, food, room, too	
	/oo/ (ʊ)	book, foot, good, look	
	/u/ (ʌ)	blood, flood	Rare correspondence.
oor	/or/ (ɔ:)	door, floor, moor	Very rare correspondence.
	/ure/ (ʊə)	poor, poorly	Very rare correspondence. Can be pronounced as /oer/ or /or/ depending on different accents.
or	/or/ (ɔ:)	born, cork, for, horse	Most common correspondence for 'or'.
	/ur/(ɜ: Br. or ɜ US)	attorney, word, work, world	Uncommon.
	/ə/ (ə)	doctor, mirror, sailor, tractor (British and Australian Accents)	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
ore	/or/ (ɔ:)	chore, more, store, wore	
ou	/ow/ (aʊ)	bounce, cloud, fountain, house	Most common correspondence for 'ou'.
	/u/ (ʌ)	cousin, touch, rough, young	Less common correspondence for 'ou'.
	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ)	boulder, mould (UK), shoulder, soul	Rare correspondence.
	/oo/ (u:)	group, soup, you, toucan	Rare correspondence.
	/ə/ (ə)	anxious, enormous, hideous, serious	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
ough	/or/ (ɔ:)	bought, fought, thought	Rare correspondence.
	/ow/ (aʊ)	bough, drought, plough	Very rare correspondence.
	/ə/ (ə)	Borough, thorough	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'. Rare correspondence.
	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ)	although, dough, furlough, though	Rare correspondence.
	/oo/ (u:)	through	Very rare correspondence.
oul	/oo/ (ʊ)	could, should, would	Very rare correspondence.
our	/ow/ (aʊ) + /ə/ (ə)	flour, hour, scour, sour	/ə/ represents the schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
	/or/ (ɔ:)	course, four, mourn, your	
	/ur/(ɜ: Br. or ɜ US)	adjourn, courtesy, glamour, journey	Rare correspondence.
	/ure/ (ʊə)	tour, Lourdes	Rare. Can be pronounced as /oer/ or /or/ depending on different accents.
	/ə/ (ə)	armour, flavour, humour, neighbour (UK)	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.



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ow	/ow/ (əʊ)	allow, cow, flower, how	Both sound correspondences for 'ow' have a similar frequency in words.
	/oa/ (əʊ or oʊ)	arrow, blow, grow, thrown	
oy	/oi/ (ɔɪ)	annoy, boy, enjoy, toy	
p	/p/ (p)	pan, pet, cup, spell	
pb	/b/ (b)	Campbell, cupboard, raspberry	Rare. Usually represents 2 separate sounds as in 'upbeat'.
ph	/f/ (f)	alphabet, dolphin, elephant, phonics	
pp	/p/ (p)	apple, clapping, dropped, flipper	
ps	/s/ (s)	psalm, psychiatrist, psychic, psychology	Very rare correspondence. Mainly found in words borrowed from Greek.
q	/k/ (k)	Qatar, Iraq, Iqra	Usually names of places or people.
qu	/k/ (k) + /w/ (w)	quack, Queen, quick, liquid	The letter q is almost always paired up with the letter u in English words.
	/k/ (k)	conquer, etiquette, quiche, mosquito	Acting as a digraph.
r	/r/ (r)	rat, red, brush, coral	
re	/ə/ (ə)	acre, centre (UK), mediocre, ogre	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
rh	/r/ (r)	rhea, rhino, rhythm, rhetorical	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 'h'.
rr	/r/ (r)	barrel, carry, hurry, parrot	
s	/s/ (s)	sad, snake, desk, ducks	
	/z/ (z)	has, is, beans, frogs	Quite common.
	/sh/ (ʃ)	sugar, sure, capsule	Rare correspondence.
	/zh/ (ʒ)	casual, measure, pleasure, leisure	Mostly when 's' is before -ion or -ure but there are other examples such as usual.
sc	/s/ (s) + /k/ (k)	scab, scar, scoop, scheme	'Sc' as 2 blended sounds.
	/s/ (s)	descend, scent, scissors, science	'Sc' as a digraph. Often referred to as silent 'c'.
se	/s/ (s)	goose, horse, mouse, collapse	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 'e'.
	/z/ (z)	browse, cheese, please, noise	Digraph.
sh	/sh/ (ʃ)	sheep, shrimp, brush, fish	Digraph.
si	/zh/ (ʒ)	Asia, division, invasion, television	



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	/sh/ (ʃ)	extension, mansion, pension tension	
	/z/ (z)	business	Very rare
ss	/s/ (s)	boss, fuss, hiss, blossom	
	/z/ (z)	dessert, dissolve, possess, scissors	
	/sh/ (ʃ)	assure, fissure, issue, tissue	
st	/s/ (s) + /t/ (t)	start, stop, fast, last	Represents 2 blended sounds.
	/s/ (s)	bristle, castle, fasten, listen	Digraph. Often referred to as silent 't'.
t	/t/ (t)	top, it, rat, pointed	
	/ch/ (tʃ)	culture, mixture, punctual, statue	
tch	/ch/ (tʃ)	catch, fetch, match, witch	
th	/th/ (θ)	thank, thin, bath, sloth	
	/th/ (ð)	this, then, with, feather	
	/t/ (t)	Esther, Thomas, thyme, Thailand	Rare. Mostly names of people or places.
ti	/sh/ (ʃ)	action, initial, station, mention	
tt	/t/ (t)	attend, butter, kitten, twitter	
u	/u/ (ʌ)	up, under, duck, butter	This sound isn't spoken in some parts of the north of England. 'U' represents the same sound as 'oo' in 'foot' or 'took' there.
	/oo/ (ʊ)	bull, full, put, push	
	/oo/ (u:)	brutal, flu, super, truant	Quite common correspondence.
	/y/ (j) + /oo/ (u:)	cucumber, emu, human, music	Quite common correspondence.
	/w/ (w)	penguin, language	Very rare correspondence.
ue	/oo/ (u:)	blue, clue, glue, true	
	/y/ (j) + /oo/ (u:)	argue, cue, rescue, venue	
u-e	/oo/ (u:)	fluke, June, rude, salute	Split digraph, sometimes called 'magic e'.
	/y/ (j) + /oo/ (u:)	amuse, costume, cute, mule	
ui	/i/ (ɪ)	build, biscuit, circuit	Rare correspondence.
	/oo/ (u:)	bruise, cruise, fruit, juice	Rare correspondence.
ur	/ur/ (ɜ: Br. or ɜ US)	burn, fur, hurt, nurse	



Letter-Sound Correspondences in English

	/ə/ (ə)	Arthur, lemur, murmur, sulfur (British and Australian Accents)	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
ure	/ure/ (ʊə)	cure, sure, lure, endure	Can be pronounced as /ooer/ or /yooer/ or /or/ depending on the individual words and different accents.
	/ə/ (ə)	capture, creature, picture, vulture	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
uy	/igh/ (aɪ)	buy, guy	Very rare correspondence.
v	/v/ (v)	van, avenue, beaver, heaven	
ve	/v/ (v)	carve, deserve, groove, leave	English words don't usually end with the letter v on its own.
w	/w/ (w)	wag, wet, swim, reward	
wh	/w/ (w) or /h/ (h) + /w/ (w) in some accents.	why, when, whale, where, wheel	Digraph. Often described as silent 'h'.
	/h/ (h)	who, whose, whole, whoever	Digraph. Often described as silent 'w'. Rare correspondence.
wr	/r/ (r)	wrap, wren, wrist, write	Digraph. Often described as silent 'w'.
x	/k/ (k) + /s/ (s)	box, fox, mix, oxygen	
	/z/ (z)	xenon, xenophobia, xylophone	Rare correspondence.
	/g/ (g) + /z/ (z)	exact, exam, example, exist	
y	/y/ (j)	yak, yes, yellow, Kenya	
	/i/ (ɪ)	crystal, gym, myth, system	
	/ee/ (i:)	baby, Daddy, funny, very	Most common correspondence for 'y'.
	/igh/ (aɪ)	by, cyclone, dry, my	
	/ə/ (ə)	bicycle, mysterious, pyjamas, syringe	Schwa sound. Similar to 'uh'.
ye	/igh/ (aɪ)	dye, goodbye, rye	Rare correspondence.
y-e	/igh/ (aɪ)	analyse, style, type, tyre	Split digraph. Rare correspondence.
z	/z/ (z)	zip, zebra, doze, lizard	
ze	/z/ (z)	breeze, freeze, ooze, squeeze	
zz	/z/ (z)	buzz, dizzy, frizzy, grizzly	



Letter-Sound Correspondences in English

*Letters and Sounds: Principles and Practice of High Quality Phonics: Notes of Guidance for Practitioners and Teachers, Primary National Strategy. Department for Education and Skills, 2007.

For an even more comprehensive list see Spelfabet: <https://www.spelfabet.com.au/spelling-lists/sorted-by-spelling/>

To listen to the phonemes represented with the International Phonetic Alphabet Chart, you can download a [phonemic chart with audio](#) from the British Council.

You can listen to the phonemes represented by ordinary letters on [Oxford Owls Phonics Audio Guide](#).

