

## Classification of Vowel [English]

In the classification of vowel sounds four points are taken into consideration. The first is the height of the tongue. It can be high, low or mid in the mouth, during the articulation of a vowel sound. That is high, low or mid vowels are formed. The second is the activity of the lips that may be rounded or unrounded, producing rounded or unrounded vowels. The third is the action of the tongue that may remain braced and hard or soft and slack. The first condition results in the production of the tense vowels and the second condition results in the articulation of slack vowels (example [u:] in school is tense and [a:] in father is slack vowel). The fourth point is whether the front part or the back part of tongue is into play. If the back part is active, back vowels are produced and if the front part is active the front vowels are produced. But, if the tongue lies flat in the mouth central or flat vowels are produced.

There are twelve English vowels. Among them vowels - i:, e, and æ - are front because in the articulation of these vowels the front of the tongue is raised. Six of them - a:, ɔ:, ɒ:, u, ʊ: and ɪ - are back vowels because in their production the back of the tongue is raised. ə and ɜ: are the central vowels for tongue remains flat during their articulation.

From the length points of view five of them - i:, a:, ɔ:, u: and ɜ: - are long and seven - i, e, æ, ɔ, ɪ, ʊ and ə are short vowels.

i: and i, u, ʊ: are close vowels because mouth remains about close during their production. e, ɛ: and ɜ are half close because lips are parted to some degree. ɔ: is half open whereas æ, a: and ɔ are open because lips are fully parted. In the articulation of i:, i, e, a:, æ, ɜ:, ə and ɪ lips remain unrounded. They are not pursed. So, these vowels are called unrounded vowels. But in the articulation of u, ʊ:, ɔ and ɔ: lips are pursed and protruded. So, these vowels are called rounded.

When English vowels are articulated the soft palate is raised and the nasal resonator is shut off. So, the air stream passes only through mouth cavity and not through the nasal cavity. Therefore, all English vowels are oral.

