

# American English

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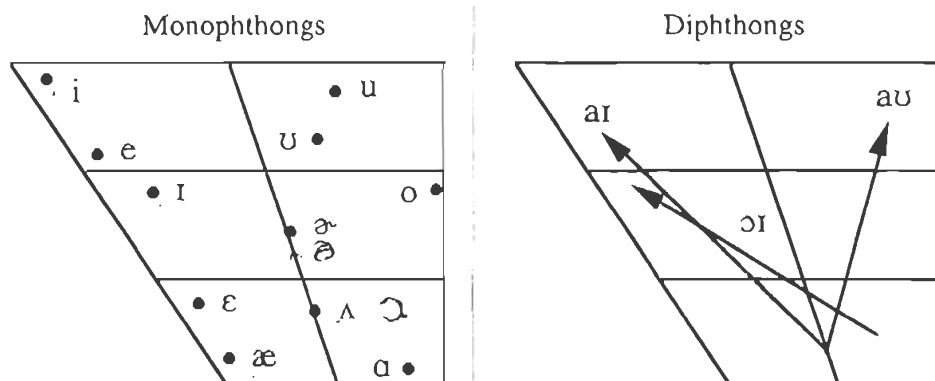
There are many different dialects of English spoken in North America, so it is somewhat improper to refer to any one of them simply as 'American English'. The style of speech illustrated here is that of younger educated Americans in the Far-Western and some of the Mid-Western parts of the United States. The speech in the recording on which the transcription is based is that of a 21-year-old speaker who has lived all her life in Southern California. Speakers from other parts of the United States, such as the East coast and the Northern cities of the Mid-West have different dialects, nearly all of them being more conservative, with a greater number of vowels.

## Consonants

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Post-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d			k g	
Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
Nasal	m			n			ŋ	
Fricative		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h
Approximant				r		j	w	
Lateral Approximant				l				


p	'pie'	t	'tie'	k	'kite'
b	'buy'	d	'die'	g	'guy'
m	'my'	n	'nigh'	ŋ	'hang'
f	'fie'	θ	'thigh'	h	'high'
v	'vie'	ð	'thy'	tʃ	'chin'
		s	'sigh'	dʒ	'gin'
		z	'zoo'	ʃ	'shy'
w	'why'	r	'rye'	ʒ	'azure'
		l	'lie'	j	'you'

## Vowels



The qualities of the vowels shown in the charts are based on observations of nine speakers of the dialect being described. The unstressed vowel [ə] is not shown on the chart as its quality varies considerably. Four different forms of transcription of the vowels are given in the list of key words. In (1), which is the style of transcription used in the first illustrative passage that follows, the differences in quality are explicit, the length and other differences among vowels being regarded as a matter of the conventions required for interpreting these particular symbols; in (2) the length differences are made explicit, with the quality differences being regarded as a matter of interpretation conventions; in (3) both length and quality differences are shown; and in (4) diphthongs are treated as consisting of a nucleus and an offglide. If only a single style of transcription had been given it would have been necessary to make all these aspects of vowel quality clear by means of additional conventions for interpreting the symbols. All of these (and several other) styles of transcription are properly regarded as IPA transcriptions of Californian English, provided that they are accompanied by suitable conventions. The vowel symbols in (1) are similar to those used in the 1949 *Principles*, the differences being that the 1949 version used [a] in words such as 'bad', [ə] in 'bud' and [ɪ] in 'bird'.

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	
<i>i</i>	<i>i:</i>	<i>i:</i>	<i>i</i> <sup>j</sup>	'bead'
<i>ɪ</i>	<i>ɪ</i>	<i>ɪ</i>	<i>ɪ</i>	'bid'
<i>e</i>	<i>e:</i>	<i>e:</i>	<i>e</i> <sup>j</sup>	'bayed'
<i>ε</i>	<i>e</i>	<i>ε</i>	<i>ε</i>	'bed'
<i>æ</i>	<i>æ</i>	<i>æ</i>	<i>æ</i>	'bad'
<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	<i>a</i>	'pod'
<i>o</i>	<i>o:</i>	<i>o:</i>	<i>o</i> <sup>w</sup>	'bode'
<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i>	<i>u</i> <sup>ə</sup>	'good'
<i>u</i>	<i>u:</i>	<i>u:</i>	<i>u</i> <sup>w</sup>	'bood'
<i>ʌ</i>	<i>ʌ</i>	<i>ʌ</i>	<i>ʌ</i>	'bud'
<i>ə</i>	<i>ə:</i>	<i>ə:</i>	<i>ə</i>	'bird'



	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	
	aɪ	aɪ	aɪ	a <sup>ɪ</sup>	'buy'
	aʊ	aʊ	aʊ	a <sup>w</sup>	'bough'
	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	ɔɪ	'boy'
	ə	ə̃	ə	ə̀	'a(bove)'
	oʊ				

**Stress**

English has a very strong distinction between stressed and unstressed syllables, with stressed syllables being longer, louder, and often marked by a pitch excursion. Although stress placement is partially predictable, there are many instances where it is not, such as in noun/verb pairs like [ˈɛksport/ɛkˈspɔrt] in contrast to [səˈpɔrt/səˈpɔrt]. Longer words frequently have one or more syllables with a secondary stress. Stress is transcribed using the marks ' (primary stress) and , (secondary stress), as in [ˌfɒnəˈtɪʃən] 'phonetician'.

**Conventions**

[p, t, k] are aspirated in word-initial position, and elsewhere when initial in a stressed syllable, but they are always unaspirated when following [s] in the same syllable, as in 'spy, sty, sky'. [b, d, g] have little or no voicing during the stop closure, except when between voiced sounds. When intervocalic and before an unstressed vowel, as in 'city, vicinity', [t] is a voiced flap, resembling [ɾ]. [d, n] are also flaps in similar circumstances. [l] is velarized except before [j].

The vowel symbols in column (1) have the qualities shown in the accompanying charts when pronounced in the key words. Vowels are raised before [ŋ] in the same syllable, so that the vowel in 'sing' is nearer that in 'seen' than that in 'sin', the vowel in 'sang' is close to that in 'sane', and the vowel in 'length' is intermediate between that in 'sing' and 'sang'. Vowels are lowered and centralized before [ɹ], and many contrasts are lost, so that 'merry; Mary, marry' and 'Murray' are often all pronounced [ˈmæːri]. [e] and [o] are usually slightly diphthongized. [ʊ] and [u] are unrounded, [u] often being pronounced with spread lips. [u] is considerably fronted after [t, d, n, l], all of which are followed by a mid-high front glide when preceding [u], as in 'two, new', which are pronounced [tʰu, nʰu].

**Transcription of recorded passage**

Two transcriptions are given, the first being a broad phonemic transcription using the symbols in the charts above. This transcription should be interpreted with the aid of the conventions. The second transcription is a narrow phonetic transcription in which the conventions and other details have been incorporated. 'The' is often pronounced as [ðə] before words beginning with a vowel, but not on this recording. This speaker also has [h] in some words (e.g. 'he') where others might have omitted it.

**Broad transcription**

ðə 'nɔɪθ ,wɪnd ən (ð)ə 'sʌn wə dɪs'pjʊtɪŋ 'wɪtʃ wəz ðə 'strɒŋgə, wɛn ə 'trævələ ,kem ə'laŋ 'ɪæpt ɪn ə 'wɔɪm 'klok. ðe ə'grɪd ðæt ðə 'wʌn hu 'fə-st sək'sɪdəd ɪn 'mekɪŋ ðə 'trævələ 'tek ɪz 'klok ,af ʃʊd bi kən'sɪdəd 'strɒŋgə ðən ðɪ 'əðə. ðen ðə 'nɔɪθ ,wɪnd 'blu əz 'hɑɪd əz ɪ 'kʊd, bət ðə 'mɔɪ hi 'blu ðə 'mɔɪ 'klosli dɪd ðə 'trævələ 'fold hɪz 'klok ə'raʊnd ɪm; ,æn ət 'læst ðə 'nɔɪθ ,wɪnd ,gev 'ʌp ðɪ ə'tempt. 'ðen ðə 'sʌn 'ʃaɪnd ,aʊt 'wɔɪmli, ənd ɪ'mɪdiətli ðə 'trævələ ,tuk ,af ɪz 'klok. ən 'so ðə 'nɔɪθ ,wɪnd wəz ə'blaɪz tɪ kən'fes ðæt ðə 'sʌn wəz ðə 'strɒŋgə əv ðə 'tu.

**Narrow transcription**

ðə 'nɔɪθ ,wɪnd ən ə 'sʌn wə dɪs'pjʊtɪŋ 'wɪtʃ wəz ðə 'strɒŋgə, wɛn ə 'trævələ ,kem ə'laŋ 'ɪæpt ɪn ə 'wɔɪm 'klok. ðe ə'grɪd ðæt ðə 'wʌn hu 'fə-st sək'sɪdəd ɪn 'mekɪŋ ðə 'trævələ 'tek ɪz 'klok ,af ʃʊd bi kən'sɪdəd 'strɒŋgə ðən ðɪ 'ʌðə. 'ðen ðə 'nɔɪθ ,wɪnd 'blu əz 'hɑɪd əz hi 'kʊd, bət ðə 'mɔɪ hi 'blu ðə 'mɔɪ 'klosli dɪd ðə 'trævələ 'fold hɪz 'klok ə'raʊnd hɪm; ,æn ət 'læst ðə 'nɔɪθ ,wɪnd ,gev 'ʌp ðɪ ə'tempt. 'ðen ðə 'sʌn 'ʃaɪnd ,aʊt 'wɔɪmli, ən ɪ'mɪdiətli ðə 'trævələ ,tuk 'af ɪz 'klok. ən 'so ðə 'nɔɪθ ,wɪnd wəz ə'blaɪz tɪ kən'fes ðæt ðə 'sʌn wəz ðə 'strɒŋgə əv ðə 'tu.

**Orthographic version**

The North Wind and the Sun were disputing which was the stronger, when a traveler came along wrapped in a warm cloak. They agreed that the one who first succeeded in making the traveler take his cloak off should be considered stronger than the other. Then the North Wind blew as hard as he could, but the more he blew the more closely did the traveler fold his cloak around him; and at last the North Wind gave up the attempt. Then the Sun shined out warmly, and immediately the traveler took off his cloak. And so the North Wind was obliged to confess that the Sun was the stronger of the two.