

Short Vowel Sound Chart

Five common short vowel sounds in a North American pronunciation model.

How to read the chart

The breve symbols *ă*, *ĕ*, *ĭ*, *ŏ*, *ŭ* are phonics teaching labels. IPA symbols describe the speech sounds more precisely. Anchor words help beginning readers hear the sound in a familiar word.

Vowel	Phonics	IPA	Anchor words	Simple mouth cue
A	ă	/æ/	cat, map, fan, bag	Jaw open; tongue low and forward.
E	ĕ	/ɛ/	bed, hen, pen, red	Mouth slightly open; keep it short.
I	ĭ	/ɪ/	pig, sit, lip, fin	Lips and tongue relaxed; not long E.
O	ŏ	/ɑ/ in hot	dog, hot, log, pot	Jaw open; lip shape varies by accent.
U	ŭ	/ʊ/	sun, cup, bug, run	Mouth relaxed; sound is short and central.

Pronunciation note for Short O

In common North American speech, hot often uses /ɑ/. In dog, speakers may use /ɑ/ or /ɔ/, depending on region and accent. These are normal accent differences. Aim for a clear, consistent model rather than treating one regional form as the only correct form.

Short Vowel Listening Practice

Keep the consonants the same and listen for the change in the middle vowel.

Compare easily confused sounds

Contrast	Word 1	Word 2	Listen for
Short E and Short I	pen	pin	/ɛ/ changes to /i/.
Short A and Short O	map	mop	The middle sound changes.
Short O and Short U	hot	hut	Both are short; only the vowel changes.
Short A and Short U	cap	cup	/æ/ changes to /ʌ/.

Five-minute routine

1. Listen Hear one anchor word.	2. Notice Name the middle sound.	3. Blend Read two more words.
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Quick reading check

Read each row aloud. Circle the word with the vowel sound named at the left.

Short A: cat bed sun

Short E: pig hen dog

Short I: map sit cup

Short O: hot fin red

Short U: bag pen bug

Short Vowel Words - Listen online for word audio and focused lessons.