

## The Complicated 'A' Sounds

### 1) The /æ/ sound

Let's kick things off by examining the most iconic "A" sound in English: /æ/. You'll recognize this sound in words like "cat", "hat", and "bat". It's a short, front vowel produced with the tongue relatively low and forward in the mouth. Try saying it with me: /æ/.

E.g. fabric, trap, stand, hammock, traffic, hand

- The **cat sat** on the **mat**. - *El gato se sentó en la alfombra*
- **Can** you pass me that **black hat**? - *¿Puedes pasarme ese sombrero negro?*
- **Max packed** his **backpack** for the **camping** trip. - *Max empacó su mochila para el viaje de campamento.*
- **Daniel has** a **plan** to **catch** the train. - *Daniel tiene un plan para tomar el tren.*
- The **badger had** a **nap** under the oak tree. - *El tejón durmió la siesta bajo el roble.*

[Sound Effect: /æ/]

### 2) The /eɪ/ sound

Now, let's move on to another common "A" sound, which is the long "A" represented by /eɪ/. This sound can be heard in words like "cake", "lake", and "make". It's a diphthong, meaning it's a combination of two vowel sounds. Try it out: /eɪ/. More on diphthongs in a later podcast.

E.g. **Eight**, **face**, **reindeer**, **steak**, **crayon**, **tame**, **brain**

- **Jane made** a **cake** for her friend's **birthday**. - *Jane hizo un pastel para el cumpleaños de su amiga.*
- **Jake takes** his dog for a walk every morning. - *Jake saca a pasear a su perro todas las mañanas.*
- **They played** a **game** by the **lake**. - *Ellos jugaron un juego junto al lago.*
- **Kate's favorite place** is by the **fireplace**. - *El lugar favorito de Kate es junto a la chimenea.*
- **Dave waved** to the **plane** as it flew **away**. - *Dave saludó al avión mientras se alejaba.*

[Sound Effect: /eɪ/]

### 3) The /ɑː/ Sound

Next up, we have the "ah" sound, represented by /ɑː/. You'll find this sound in words like "car", "bar", and "star". It's a long, back vowel produced with the tongue lowered and drawn towards the back of the mouth. It has two dots that show it's a long sound. Let's give it a try: /ɑː/.

E.g. Laugh, heart, after, garden, father, example, rather

- The **car** drove down the **dark** road. - *El coche avanzó por la carretera oscura.*
- **Mark parked** his **car** in the **garage**. - *Mark estacionó su coche en el garaje.*
- **Start** the day with a **hearty** breakfast. - *Empiece el día con un buen desayuno.*
- The **stars** shine brightly in the night sky. - *Las estrellas brillan intensamente en el cielo nocturno.*
- **Bartholomew** and his dad went to the **park**. - *Bartolomé y su papá fueron al parque.*

[Sound Effect: /ɑ:/]

#### 4) The /ʌ/ Sound

Moving along, we encounter the "uh" sound, symbolized by /ʌ/. You'll hear this sound in words like "cup", "fun", and "love". It's a mid-central vowel produced with the tongue relaxed in the middle of the mouth. Students often pronounce this sound as 'o' but it sounds like the Spanish 'a'. Give it a shot: /ʌ/.

E.g. mother, London, son/sun, money, flood, monkey, something

- The **sun** is shining **above** the clouds. - *El sol brilla por encima de las nubes.*
- The **ducklings huddle under** the bush. - *Los patitos se acurrucan bajo el arbusto.*
- I **love** to **run** in the park during **lunch**. - *Me encanta correr en el parque durante el almuerzo.*
- The **sudden gust** of wind knocked over the **cup**. - *La repentina ráfaga de viento derribó la copa.*
- **Mum cuts** the **crust** off my sandwich. - *Mamá me corta la corteza del sándwich.*

[Sound Effect: /ʌ/]

#### 5) The /ɔ:/ Sounds

Now, let's not forget the "aw" sound, represented by /ɔ:/. You'll come across this sound in words like "saw", "law", and "paw". It's a rounded, back vowel produced with the tongue lowered and drawn towards the back of the mouth. Try it out: /ɔ:/.

E.g. all, water, auto, taught, always, walk

- The dog **saw** a squirrel in the yard. - *El perro vio una ardilla en el jardín.*
- **Paul bought** a new **lawnmower** **for** his garden. - *Paul compró un cortacesped nueva para su jardín.*
- The **ball** rolled across the **lawn towards** the pond. - *La pelota rodó por el césped hacia el estanque.*
- She **wore** a **shawl** to keep **warm** in the chilly evening. - *Llevaba un chal para mantenerse abrigada en la fría noche.*

- Tom **taught** his **daughter** to **draw** a swan. - *Tom le enseñó a su hija a dibujar un cisne.*

[Sound Effect: /ɔ:/]

## 6) The /ə/ Sound

Lastly, we have the schwa sound, /ə/. This sound is found in unstressed syllables and is incredibly common in English. You'll hear it in words like "sofa", "banana", and "ago". It's a neutral, mid-central vowel that's often described as the "lazy" or "reduced" vowel. We've seen this sound in an earlier podcast. Let's give it a go: /ə/.

E.g. adopt, soda, mineral, government, around, available

- The **sofa** in **the** living room is very **comfortable**. - *El sofá del salón es muy cómodo.*
- Can you pass me **the** banana from **the** fruit bowl? - *¿Puedes pasarme el plátano del frutero?*
- I'll meet you at **the** cafe **after** work. - *Te veré en el cafeteria después del trabajo.*
- Sarah is going to **the** cinema to watch a movie. - *Sarah va al cine a ver una película.*
- There's an **umbrella** by the door in case it rains. - *Hay un paraguas junto a la puerta por si llueve.*

[Sound Effect: /ə/]

/æ/	/eɪ/	/ɑ:/	/ʌ/	/ɔ:/	/ə/
apple	shade	start	brush	trauma	capital
narrow	pay	spa	butter	also	awake
language	May	palm	blood	court	octopus
catch	dangerous	large	bubble	warm	zebra

Host: And there you have it! A comprehensive exploration of the various "A" sounds in the phonemic chart. From the short /æ/ to the schwa /ə/, each sound adds its own unique flavor to the English language. Thanks for tuning in to "Pronunciation Clinic". Until next time, and remember that practice makes perfect!