

96 minimal pairs in English

Twelve sound contrasts, eight pairs each. Say each pair out loud: the two words must sound different. IPA is American English. From vocalimage.app/en/accent/minimal-pairs/.

/ɪ/ vs /i:/ ship and sheep

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
ship	/ʃɪp/	sheep	/ʃi:p/	☐ ☐ ☐
live	/lɪv/	leave	/li:v/	☐ ☐ ☐
fill	/fɪl/	feel	/fi:l/	☐ ☐ ☐
sit	/sɪt/	seat	/si:t/	☐ ☐ ☐
hit	/hɪt/	heat	/hi:t/	☐ ☐ ☐
bin	/bɪn/	bean	/bi:n/	☐ ☐ ☐
chip	/tʃɪp/	cheap	/tʃi:p/	☐ ☐ ☐
slip	/slɪp/	sleep	/sli:p/	☐ ☐ ☐

/ʊ/ vs /u:/ full and fool

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
full	/fʊl/	fool	/fu:l/	☐ ☐ ☐
pull	/pʊl/	pool	/pu:l/	☐ ☐ ☐
look	/lʊk/	Luke	/lu:k/	☐ ☐ ☐
could	/kʊd/	cooed	/ku:d/	☐ ☐ ☐
should	/ʃʊd/	shoed	/ʃu:d/	☐ ☐ ☐
wood	/wʊd/	wooded	/wu:d/	☐ ☐ ☐
soot	/sʊt/	suit	/su:t/	☐ ☐ ☐
hood	/hʊd/	who'd	/hu:d/	☐ ☐ ☐

/æ/ vs /e/ bad and bed

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
bad	/bæd/	bed	/bed/	☐ ☐ ☐
man	/mæn/	men	/men/	☐ ☐ ☐
sat	/sæt/	set	/set/	☐ ☐ ☐
had	/hæd/	head	/hed/	☐ ☐ ☐
pan	/pæn/	pen	/pen/	☐ ☐ ☐
bag	/bæg/	beg	/beg/	☐ ☐ ☐
track	/træk/	trek	/trek/	☐ ☐ ☐
land	/lænd/	lend	/lend/	☐ ☐ ☐

/æ/ vs /ʌ/ cat and cut

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
cat	/kæt/	cut	/kʌt/	☐ ☐ ☐
bag	/bæg/	bug	/bʌg/	☐ ☐ ☐
cap	/kæp/	cup	/kʌp/	☐ ☐ ☐
hat	/hæt/	hut	/hʌt/	☐ ☐ ☐
match	/mætʃ/	much	/mʌtʃ/	☐ ☐ ☐
ran	/ræn/	run	/rʌn/	☐ ☐ ☐
bat	/bæt/	but	/bʌt/	☐ ☐ ☐
fan	/fæn/	fun	/fʌn/	☐ ☐ ☐

/θ/ vs /s/ think and sink

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
think	/θɪŋk/	sink	/sɪŋk/	☐ ☐ ☐
thing	/θɪŋ/	sing	/sɪŋ/	☐ ☐ ☐
thick	/θɪk/	sick	/sɪk/	☐ ☐ ☐
mouth	/maʊθ/	mouse	/maʊs/	☐ ☐ ☐
path	/pæθ/	pass	/pæs/	☐ ☐ ☐
faith	/feɪθ/	face	/feɪs/	☐ ☐ ☐
theme	/θi:m/	seem	/si:m/	☐ ☐ ☐
worth	/wɜ:θ/	worse	/wɜ:rs/	☐ ☐ ☐

/θ/ vs /t/ three and tree

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
three	/θri:z/	tree	/tri:z/	☐ ☐ ☐
thin	/θɪn/	tin	/tɪn/	☐ ☐ ☐
thank	/θæŋk/	tank	/tæŋk/	☐ ☐ ☐
thought	/θɔ:t/	taught	/tɔ:t/	☐ ☐ ☐
both	/bəʊθ/	boat	/bəʊt/	☐ ☐ ☐
bath	/bæθ/	bat	/bæt/	☐ ☐ ☐
theme	/θi:m/	team	/ti:m/	☐ ☐ ☐
math	/mæθ/	mat	/mæt/	☐ ☐ ☐

/θ/ vs /f/ three and free

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
three	/θriː/	free	/friː/	☐ ☐ ☐
thought	/θɔːt/	fought	/fɔːt/	☐ ☐ ☐
thirst	/θɜːrst/	first	/fɜːrst/	☐ ☐ ☐
death	/deθ/	deaf	/def/	☐ ☐ ☐
Ruth	/ruːθ/	roof	/ruːf/	☐ ☐ ☐
thin	/θɪn/	fin	/fɪn/	☐ ☐ ☐
oath	/ouθ/	oaf	/ouf/	☐ ☐ ☐
thrill	/θrɪl/	frill	/frɪl/	☐ ☐ ☐

/ð/ vs /d/ then and den

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
then	/ðen/	den	/den/	☐ ☐ ☐
they	/ðeɪ/	day	/deɪ/	☐ ☐ ☐
there	/ðer/	dare	/der/	☐ ☐ ☐
those	/ðoʊz/	doze	/doʊz/	☐ ☐ ☐
though	/ðoʊ/	dough	/doʊ/	☐ ☐ ☐
breathe	/briːð/	breed	/briːd/	☐ ☐ ☐
worthy	/ˈwɜːrði/	wordy	/ˈwɜːrdi/	☐ ☐ ☐
lather	/ˈlæðər/	ladder	/ˈlædər/	☐ ☐ ☐

/r/ vs /l/ right and light

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
right	/raɪt/	light	/laɪt/	☐ ☐ ☐
rock	/rɔːk/	lock	/lɔːk/	☐ ☐ ☐
road	/roud/	load	/loud/	☐ ☐ ☐
rice	/raɪs/	lice	/laɪs/	☐ ☐ ☐
fry	/fraɪ/	fly	/flaɪ/	☐ ☐ ☐
grass	/græs/	glass	/glæs/	☐ ☐ ☐
correct	/kəˈrekt/	collect	/kəˈlekt/	☐ ☐ ☐
pray	/preɪ/	play	/pleɪ/	☐ ☐ ☐

/v/ vs /b/ and /v/ vs /w/ very, berry and wine

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
very	/ˈveri/	berry	/ˈberi/	☐ ☐ ☐
vote	/vout/	boat	/bout/	☐ ☐ ☐
van	/væn/	ban	/bæn/	☐ ☐ ☐
curve	/kɜːrv/	curb	/kɜːrb/	☐ ☐ ☐
vine	/vaɪn/	wine	/waɪn/	☐ ☐ ☐
vest	/vest/	west	/west/	☐ ☐ ☐
vet	/vet/	wet	/wet/	☐ ☐ ☐
verse	/vɜːrs/	worse	/wɜːrs/	☐ ☐ ☐

/p/ vs /b/ pat and bat

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
pat	/pæt/	bat	/bæt/	☐ ☐ ☐
pin	/pɪn/	bin	/bɪn/	☐ ☐ ☐
pear	/per/	bear	/ber/	☐ ☐ ☐
pull	/pʊl/	bull	/bʊl/	☐ ☐ ☐
cap	/kæp/	cab	/kæb/	☐ ☐ ☐
rip	/rɪp/	rib	/rɪb/	☐ ☐ ☐
pig	/pɪg/	big	/bɪg/	☐ ☐ ☐
pack	/pæk/	back	/bæk/	☐ ☐ ☐

/s/ vs /ʃ/ sip and ship

WORD	IPA	WORD	IPA	BOTH CLEAR?
sip	/sɪp/	ship	/ʃɪp/	☐ ☐ ☐
sea	/siː/	she	/ʃiː/	☐ ☐ ☐
sock	/sɔːk/	shock	/ʃɔːk/	☐ ☐ ☐
sew	/sou/	show	/ʃou/	☐ ☐ ☐
save	/seɪv/	shave	/ʃeɪv/	☐ ☐ ☐
seat	/siːt/	sheet	/ʃiːt/	☐ ☐ ☐
mass	/mæs/	mash	/mæʃ/	☐ ☐ ☐
lease	/liːs/	leash	/liːʃ/	☐ ☐ ☐

Explanations and practice tips: vocalimage.app/en/accent/minimal-pairs/ · Check how your English sounds in 15 seconds, free: vocalimage.app/en/tests/4-accent/