

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) uses a set of symbols and charts to standardize the representation of the sounds of spoken language. It is typically divided into charts for vowels and consonants.

### IPA Vowel Chart (Vowel Trapezoid)

The IPA Vowel Chart, often called the Vowel Trapezoid or Vowel Quadrilateral, organizes vowels based on two key articulatory dimensions:

- \* Tongue Height (Vertical Axis): How high or low the tongue is in the mouth.
  - \* Close (High): Tongue is close to the roof of the mouth (e.g., /i/ as in beet).
  - \* Open (Low): Mouth is relatively open (e.g., /a/ as in father in some accents).
- \* Tongue Backness (Horizontal Axis): How far forward or back the tongue is.
  - \* Front: Tongue is toward the front of the mouth (e.g., /e/ as in bed).
  - \* Back: Tongue is toward the back of the mouth (e.g., /u/ as in boot).

Symbols appear in pairs in some positions: the symbol on the left represents an unrounded vowel (lips spread), and the symbol on the right represents a rounded vowel (lips pursed).

### IPA Consonant Chart (Pulmonic Consonants)

The Consonant Chart organizes sounds based on where and how the air stream is obstructed, using a table format:

- \* Place of Articulation (Columns): Where in the vocal tract the obstruction occurs (e.g., Bilabial, Alveolar, Velar).
- \* Manner of Articulation (Rows): How the obstruction is made (e.g., Plosive, Fricative, Nasal, Approximant).

Within each cell, symbols typically appear in pairs: the symbol on the left is voiceless (vocal cords not vibrating), and the symbol on the right is voiced (vocal cords vibrating).

### IPA Transcription Practice Examples

To practice, try transcribing or sounding out these common English words. Note that transcription can vary slightly depending on the accent (e.g., General American vs. Received Pronunciation). Below are some common North American English transcriptions:

| Word | IPA Transcription | Description of Sounds |

|---|---|---|

| Cat | /kæt/ | k (voiceless velar plosive), æ (low front vowel), t (voiceless alveolar plosive) |

| Think | /θɪŋk/ | θ (voiceless dental fricative), ɪ (near-close near-front vowel), ŋ (voiced velar nasal), k (voiceless velar plosive) |

| Measure | /'mɛʒər/ | m (bilabial nasal), ɛ (open-mid front vowel), ʒ (voiced post-alveolar fricative), ə (schwa + r-colored vowel) |

| Hello | /hə'loʊ/ | h (glottal fricative), ə (schwa—mid-central vowel, unstressed), 'loʊ (primary stress, alveolar lateral approximant, closing diphthong) |

| Jump | /dʒʌmp/ | dʒ (voiced post-alveolar affricate), ʌ (open-mid back-central vowel), m (bilabial nasal), p (voiceless bilabial plosive) |

This video, "The IPA Consonant Chart Explained", offers a detailed explanation of the consonant chart, which is essential for IPA practice.