

English Diphthongs

A diphthong is a combination of two vowel sounds pronounced together, for example, /eɪ/ as in *play* /pleɪ/ and /əʊ/ as in *cold* /kəʊld/.

The first vowel sound is always longer than the second. There are eight diphthongs in English, but one of them is hardly ever used. Many native speakers use /ɔ:/ instead of /ʊə/. For example, *poor* is usually pronounced /pɔ:/ instead of /pʊə/.

Here you have the 8 English diphthongs and two examples of each so that you can recognize and remember how they sound:

/ɪə/ real, clear

/eɪ/ say, table

/ʊə/ tour, cure

/ɔɪ/ boy, noise

/əʊ/ coat, zero

/eə/ where, bear

/aɪ/ five, ride

/aʊ/ how, sound

1. Track 60 Listen and write the example word for each diphthong. Then listen again and repeat.

1 /eɪ/

2 /aɪ/

3 /ɔɪ/

4 /ɪə/

5 /eə/

6 /ʊə/

7 /əʊ/

8 /aʊ/

2. Read words 1–7 aloud and write the correct diphthong for each word. Then match words 1–7 to a rhyming word a–g.

1 / / crowd

2 / / phone

3 / / try

4 / / day

5 / / noise

6 / / wear

7 / / year

a grey

b hair

c here

d high

e loud

f shown

g toys

3. Track 61 Listen and check your answers to exercise 2. Then listen again and repeat.

4. Track 62 Complete the sentences with a rhyming pair of words in exercise 2. Then listen and check.

1 The child hadsome that made a lot of

2 It was a cloudy....., and the sky was

3 My grandparents have..... that they hate their new

4 The boys wanted to..... to jump very

5 There was a big ,..... so the party was

6 It's been a..... since we moved.....

7 I'll do my..... and find something nice to

4. Track 77 . Listen and choose the diphthong that matches the sound of the underlined letters.

- 1 overweight /eɪ/ /aɪ/
- 2 emotional /aʊ/ /əʊ/
- 3 here /ɪə/ /eə/
- 4 noisy /ɔɪ/ /əʊ/
- 5 blonde-haired /ɪə/ /eə/
- 6 foreground /aʊ/ /əʊ/
- 7 stylish /eɪ/ /aɪ/
- 8 tour /əʊ/ /ʊə/

Now read and pronounce carefully the following words and classify them according to the diphthong they contain.

flow , beer , there , my , wait , noise , jury , cloud , taste , nearly , where , client ,
radio , during , employ , height , doubt , flour , take , high , brown , window , ghost ,
bold , severe , scary , hotel , poor , usually , range , deny , about , only , lawyer ,
cow , medium , oyster , coin , tour , deny , chair , crowd , towel , visual , trainers.