

The Sounds of English

Spoken words are made by combining sounds together in particular ways. Every language has its own phonology – a particular group of sounds, combined to form the words of the language.

The actual number of sounds in English depends on the variety of English being spoken. You will see the number of sounds of English vary from 42 to 46 or more. In British English, for example, the *or* pattern in *organise* is pronounced the same as the *aw* in *awful* because the letter **r** is not pronounced 'r'. In American English, the letter **r** is pronounced 'r' so the *or* and the *aw* patterns represent two different sounds.

Written English is an alphabetic language. The 26 letters of the alphabet are used in many different combinations to represent the more than 40 sounds of English. Learning to use the alphabetic code to read and write English therefore depends firstly on learning to identify individual sounds in words. Once children can recognise sounds, they can learn to write them down and to recognise the letters and spelling patterns that represent them when they are reading. Skills with sound analysis – phonemic awareness – are therefore critical to literacy success.

The songs on this CD have been written to help children recognise 45 sounds and sound clusters that they will be learning to read and write. As well as the individual sounds of English, some sound clusters have been included. These sound clusters are common to many words and are reliably written ('ear', 'air', 'kw' – **qu**, 'ks' – **x**), so it is easier to teach children to listen for them as a unit of sound, even though, strictly speaking, they are not individual sounds.

Alison Kimble-Fry¹, speech pathologist and communication consultant, says: "the first step in becoming aware of speech sounds is to tune your ear to individual sounds within words..." (p 26.). *Singing the Sounds of English* teaches children to do just that. Through learning to sing these catchy songs, children will tune into the sounds of English and will learn to recognise them in words. The words of the songs also encourage correct pronunciation and an awareness of the position of sounds in words. The songs also build awareness of rhyme, rhythm and alliteration.

The sounds on this CD are grouped according to the way in which they are pronounced. They are grouped together as consonant or vowel sounds. Some are short sounds and some are long drawn out sounds that can last as long as a breath. Some are made through the mouth, some through the teeth and some through the nose. Some have voice and some are just made with air.

There are four different melodies, and the songs with the same melody are linked in some way. The long and short vowel sounds share the same melody (tracks 1 and 2), the other vowels share a melody (Tracks 14-16), the consonants that are pronounced with a short burst of air share a melody (tracks 3-7), and the consonants that are drawn out sounds share a melody (tracks 8-13).

1 Kimble-Fry, A. (2001). *Perfect Pronunciation. A guide for trainers and self-help students*. Sydney: Clearpeak Pty Ltd.

Teaching Suggestions

You can use these songs in any order to match the sound you are going to be working with.

For example, if you are teaching the 'sh' sound, choose track 8 and play verse 3.

At the end of each sound hunt song, pause the music and allow time for children to think of more words that begin with the focus sound. You could extend this by thinking of words that have the sound at the end or in the middle.

The sound hunt verses end with questions or challenges. Allow time for the children to answer these before moving on.

You can use the long and short vowel songs in particular, with older children by setting them a listening task before you play the songs.

For example, say to the children, "When these songs finish playing I want you to see if you can answer these questions:

Where can we feel the short vowel sounds? What is the clue for pronouncing the long vowel sounds? Where in words do the short vowels occur? Which short vowel sound do we often hear at the end of words? Where in words do long vowels occur? What are the six short vowel sounds? What are the six long vowel sounds?"

We hope you enjoy singing the sounds of English and laying the foundations for literacy success!

Short and Long Vowel Sounds

Track 1: Singing short vowel sounds



These sounds are short, a burst of air
Make them now, it's fun
Put your hand on your throat
And feel them there
Our game has just begun
'a' 'e' 'i' 'o' 'u' 'oo'
You did it! That was fun!



They love to be at the start of words
Say these sounds right now
Short vowel sounds at the start of words
Come on, show us how!
Ant and apple – 'a' 'a' 'a'
Egg and exit – 'e' 'e' 'e'
Is and inside – 'i' 'i' 'i'
On and often – 'o' 'o' 'o'
Up and under – 'u' 'u' 'u'
You did it! That was fun!





They love to be in the middle of words
Say these sounds right now
Short vowel sounds in the middle of words
Come on, show us how!
Cat and hat – ‘a’ ‘a’ ‘a’
Bed and red – ‘e’ ‘e’ ‘e’
Sit and knit – ‘i’ ‘i’ ‘i’
Dog and frog – ‘o’ ‘o’ ‘o’
Pup and cup – ‘u’ ‘u’ ‘u’
Look and book – ‘oo’ ‘oo’ ‘oo’
You did it! That was fun!



They're very shy at the end of words
Only one goes there
Hear that sound at the end of words
What's that sound you hear?
Camera, banana, China, umbrella
Sofa, panda, pizza, pasta too
There is an 'uh' right at the end
Can you hear it too?



Now you can say short vowel sounds
Use them every day
You can hear short vowel sounds
Hip, hip, hip hooray!

Track 2: Singing long vowel sounds



Can you hear long vowel sounds?

Here's a little clue

Listen to the name of the letters

Makes it easy for you!

'a' 'e' 'i' 'o' 'u'

You'll also hear an 'oo'



They love to be at the start of words

Say these sounds right now

Long vowel sounds at the start of words

Come on, show us how

Ape and apron – 'a' 'a' 'a'

Eat and eagle – 'e' 'e' 'e'

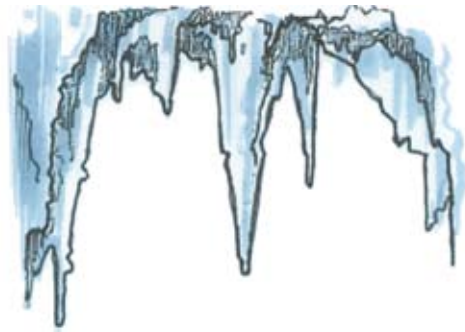
Ice and island – 'i' 'i' 'i'

Oh and open – 'o' 'o' 'o'

Use and useful – 'u' 'u' 'u'

But hardly ever 'oo'

You did it – clever you!



They love to be in the middle of words

Say these sounds right now

Long vowel sounds in the middle of words

Come on, show us how

Cake and make – 'a' 'a' 'a'

Green and seen – 'e' 'e' 'e'

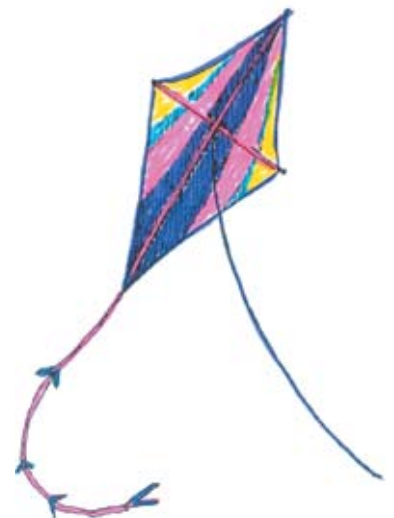
Night and kite – 'i' 'i' 'i'

Cone and bone – 'o' 'o' 'o'

Moon and spoon – 'oo' 'oo' 'oo'

But hardly ever 'u'

You did it – clever you!





They love to be at the end of words
Say these sounds right now
Long vowel sounds at the end of words
Come on, show us how
Say and tray – 'a' 'a' 'a'
Bee and three – 'e' 'e' 'e'
My and try – 'i' 'i' 'i'
Go and no – 'o' 'o' 'o'
Chew and flew – 'oo' 'oo' 'oo'
But hardly ever 'u'
You did it – clever you!



Now you can say long vowel sounds
Use them every day
You can hear long vowel sounds
Hip, hip, hip, hooray!



Sound Hunt Singing Games

Consonant Sounds

Track 3: Singing 'p' 't' 'k' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'p' and 't' and 'k'
They're popcorn sounds like puffs of air
Let's all make them now!
'p' 'p' 'p'
't' 't' 't'
'k' 'k' 'k'



I'm hunting in the kitchen,
For things that start with 'p'
Pot, pan, pudding and pie
Peanuts, potatoes and peas
Think about your kitchen
Can you find more of these?





I'm hunting in the bathroom
For things that start with 't'
Towel, tub, toothbrush and toy
Toothpaste, tissues and tap
Think about your bathroom
Any more things like that?



I'm hunting in the kitchen
For things that start with 'k'
Cake, cup, kettle and can
Cookies, carrots and cream
Think about your kitchen
What 'k' things have you seen?



Track 4: Singing 'b' 'd' 'g' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'd' and 'b' and 'g'
Popcorn sounds with a voice sound too
Let's all make them now!
'd' 'd' 'd'
'b' 'b' 'b'
'g' 'g' 'g'



I'm hunting in the toy box
For things that start with 'd'
Doll, darts, dragon and dog
Dominoes, dinosaurs, drum
Think about the toys you have
Can you name just one?





I'm hunting in the bedroom
For things that start with 'b'
Book, bed, bunny and boat
Button, belt and bat
Think about your bedroom
Can you find more than that?



I'm hunting in the garden
For things that start with 'g'
Gate, goat and guinea pigs
Grapefruit, gravel and glove
Think about your garden
What things do you love?



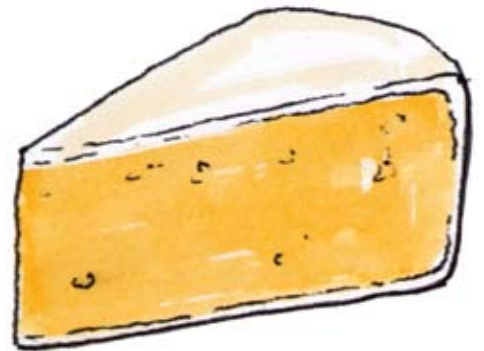
Track 5: Singing 'ch' and 'j' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'ch' and 'j'
'Ch' has air and 'j' has voice
Let's all make them now!
'ch' 'ch' 'ch'
'j' 'j' 'j'



I'm hunting in the pantry
For things that start with 'ch'
Cheese, chips, chocolate and chives
Cherries, and chops to chew
Let's look in your pantry
And find some things for you!



I'm hunting in the shopping cart
For things that start with 'j'
Jam and juice, and jelly in jars
Ginger, and gingerbread too
What is in your shopping cart?
Yummy things for you!



Track 6: Singing 'y' and 'w' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are hard to say alone
'Y' and 'w' at the start of words
Let's all make them now!
'y' 'y' 'y'
'w' 'w' 'w'



I'm hunting in my mind now
For things that start with 'y'
A yacht, a yak, yoghurt and yoke
A yo-yo and a yes
There's a colour in my mind
What colour – can you guess?



I'm hunting at the seaside
For things that start with 'w'
A wave of water, a wasp, some wood
A wagon and water-toys
Think about the seaside
Fun things for girls and boys



Track 7: Singing 'qu' and 'x' sounds



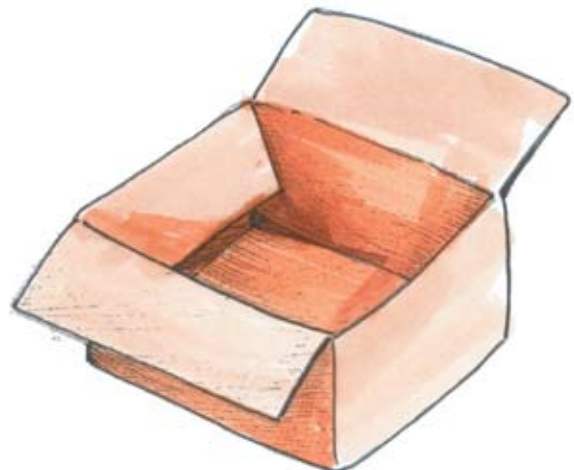
We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'qu' and 'x'
Both are made of two sounds
Let's all make them now!
'qu' 'qu' 'qu'
'x' 'x' 'x'



I'm hunting in a castle
For things that start with 'qu'
A queen, a quilt, a quiver, a quail
A quiz book and a quad
Now here's a little quiz for you
What's the opposite of slow?



I'm hunting in my thoughts now
For words that have a 'x'
A box, a fox, an exit, an axe
And excellent exercise
A letter x can send a kiss
What a nice surprise!



Track 8: Singing 'th' 's' 'sh' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'th' and 's' and 'sh'
Push the air between your teeth
Let's all make them now!
'th' 'th' 'th'
's' 's' 's'
'sh' 'sh' 'sh'



We're hunting in the woods
We play the sound hunt game
We're hunting in the woods now
For things that start with 'th'
Three thirsty rabbits
A thorn, a thistle, a thrush
Thousands of things to think about
But we don't have to rush!





We're hunting in the playground
We play the sound hunt game
We're hunting in the playground
For things that start with 's'
Slide, swing, seesaw and skates
A swing-bridge and some sand
Think about your playground
What is on your land?



We're hunting in the shops now
We play the sound hunt game
We're hunting in the shops now
For things that start with 'sh'
Shirt, sheet, sugar and shawl
A ship and shiny shoes
Think about your shop now
What things would you choose?



Track 9: Singing 'f' and 'h' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are soft and hard to hear
Hear our 'f', hear our 'h'
Let's all make them now!
'f' 'f' 'f'
'h' 'h' 'h'



We're hunting in the countryside
We play the sound hunt game
We're hunting in the countryside
For things that start with 'f'
Fox, foal, farmer, frog
Forest and firewood too
Think about the countryside
What things interest you?



We're hunting in the house now
We play the sound hunt game
We're hunting in the house now
For things that start with 'h'
Hat, harp, hammer, hoop
Some honey, a hamburger too!
Think about your house now
I'll come and hunt with you!



Track 10: Singing 'v' 'z' 'th' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'v' and 'z' and 'th'
They make our voices wobble and shake
Let's all make them now!
'v' 'v' 'v'
'z' 'z' 'z'
'th' 'th' 'th'



I'm hunting in my mind
I play the sound hunt game
I'm hunting in my mind
For things that start with 'v'
Vet, vase, violet, van
Volcanoes and vegetables too
What words pop into your mind?
Give me a little clue!

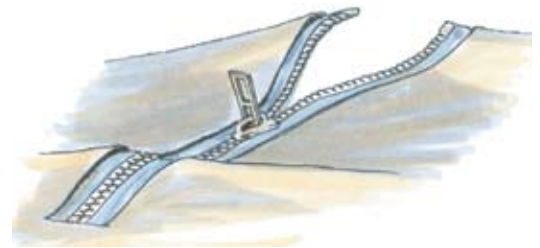




I'm hunting in a book
I play the sound hunt game
I'm hunting in a book
For things that start with 'z'
Zoo, zip, zebra, zed
Zig-zag and xylophone
Think about a picture book
That you have in your home



I'm hunting in the dictionary
Playing the sound hunt game
I'm hunting in the dictionary
For words that start with 'th'
Like this, and that, and these, and those
And them, and then, and they
Think about your dictionary
And all the words we say



Track 11: Singing the 'zh' sound



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
We're hunting for just one sound
The sound we want is 'zh'
It's mostly heard inside a word
Let's all make it now!
'zh' 'zh' 'zh'



I'm hunting right inside the words
I play the sound hunt game
I'm hunting right inside the words
To hear the sound of 'zh'
Treasure, pleasure, measuring tape
Invasion, television too
This sound is not in many words
But I found a few for you!



Track 12: Singing 'm' 'n' 'ng' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'm' and 'n' and 'ng'
We hum these sounds like a song
Let's all make them now!
'm' 'm' 'm'
'n' 'n' 'n'
'ng' 'ng' 'ng'

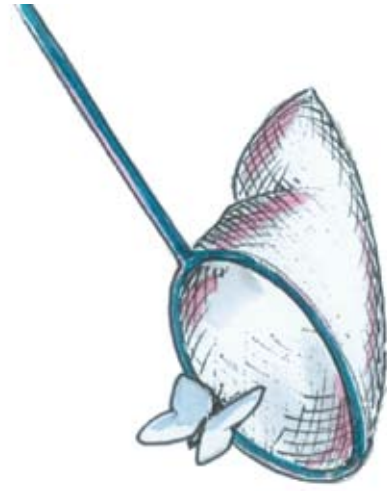


I'm hunting in the classroom
I play the sound hunt game
I'm hunting in the classroom
For things that start with 'm'
Mat, mop, magnet, map
A mandarin to munch
Think about our classroom
And what is in your lunch

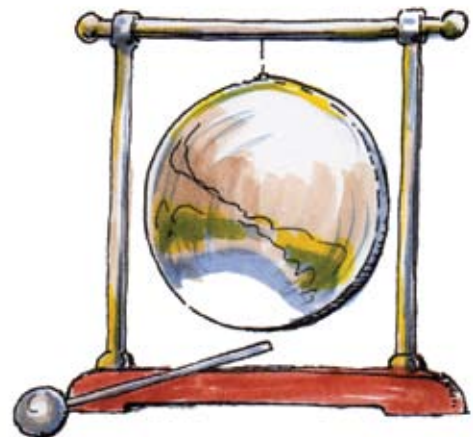




I'm hunting in the cupboard
I play the sound hunt game
I'm hunting in the cupboard
For things that start with 'n'
Net, nest, necklace, nuts
Nice new knife and spoon
Think about your cupboard
And things around the room



I'm hunting round the room
I play the sound hunt game
I'm hunting round the room
For things that end with 'ng'
A gong to bang, some things to hang
Some string, some earrings too
Think about our room now
And all the things we do



Track 13: Singing 'l' and 'r' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'l' and 'r'
Stretch them out nice and long
Let's all make them now!
'l' 'l' 'l'
'r' 'r' 'r'



I'm hunting at the zoo
I play the sound hunt game
I'm hunting at the zoo
For things that start with 'l'
Lynx, lark, leopard, lamb
Lion and llama too
Think about the zoo now
What's exciting for you?



I'm hunting in the park
I play the sound hunt game
I'm hunting in the park
For things that start with 'r'
Rat, rose, rainbow and rocks
Rake and rubbish bin
Think about things in the park
There are lots, so let's begin!



More Vowel Sounds

Track 14: Singing 'er' 'or' 'ar' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'er' and 'or' and 'ar'
These are also vowel sounds
Let's all make them now!
'er' 'er' 'er'
'or' 'or' 'or'
'ar' 'ar' 'ar'



We're going on a sound hunt
To find a special sound
Hunting in Mum's bedroom
For things that have an 'er'
Purse, shirt, perfume, pearls
A purple rug to shake
A cat is on the bed
What 'er' sound does it make?

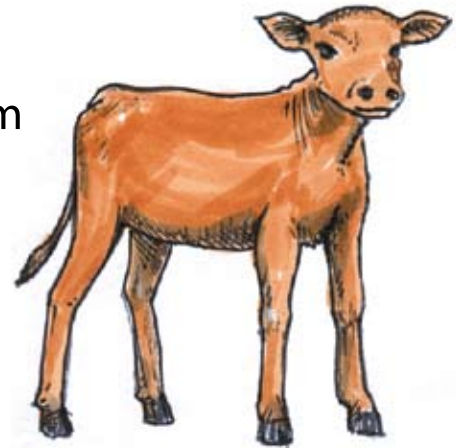




We're going on a sound hunt
To find a special sound
Hunting through the house
For things that have an 'or'
Door, corn, board, torch
Wardrobe and a ball
What words can you think of
That rhyme with ball and tall?



We're going on a sound hunt
To find a special sound
Hunting on a farm
For things that have an 'ar'
Cart, yard, farmer, calf
Garden and car
You'll know, if you've been on a farm
What other things there are



Track 15: Singing 'ear' and 'air' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'ear' and 'air'
These are also vowel sounds
What difference can you hear?
'ear' 'ear' 'ear'
'air' 'air' 'air'



We're going on a sound hunt
To find a special sound
Listening very hard
For things that have an 'ear'
Fear, near, hear, spear
Cheerfully and clear
Can you find some 'ear' words
We would like to hear?



We're going on a sound hunt
To find a special sound
We have to think again
For things that have an 'air'
Chair, bear, a pair of shoes
A fairy over there
Lots of words that have an 'air'
We would like to share



Track 16: Singing 'oy' and 'ow' sounds



We're going on a sound hunt
Children, come with me
Are your ears all ready?
Then one, two, three ...
The sounds that we are hunting
Are 'oy' and 'ow'
These are also vowel sounds
Let's all make them now!
'oy' 'oy' 'oy'
'ow' 'ow' 'ow'



We're going on a sound hunt
To find a special sound
Hunting in the workshop
For things that have an 'oy'
We found some soil, a coil of rope
A toilet and a coin
What could we make to play with?
Something that rhymes with boy





We're going on a sound hunt
To find a special sound
Hunting in the outdoors
For things that have an 'ow'
The ground, an owl, a cloud
A flower, a cow, a mouse
Let's go back inside
And hunt around the house!



Track 17: Well Done!



We all went on a sound hunt
Hunting sounds was fun
Children, you heard all the sounds
Every single one!
You're such good word detectives
See you another day
You all did so very well
Hip, hip, hip, hooray!

