

# Teachers' Notes: Pronunciation of 'ea' spelling

You will need:

- A copy of handout A for half the students, and a copy of handout B for the other half.
- Approximately 20 minutes

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## Optional Warmer

All the students stand up. Then, going round the class, each student must think of a word with the letters 'ea' in it. You write up the words as they go round, so no one repeats a word. If any student can't think of a word, they must sit down. The winner is the last student standing. You could then come back to these words later to check the pronunciation of 'ea'.

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## Presentation

Write the first sentence on the board and get students to read it aloud. Ask "which word has the sound /ɑ:/?" "Which word has the sound /e/?" and so on, for each of the seven sounds, writing the phoneme on the board above the correct word. Drill the words (maybe ask if they can think of any other words with this sound) to prepare them for the next activity.

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## Practice

Give out the handouts to student A and B. (with an odd number of students just have 2 B's – they can take it in turns to read a word). Student A now dictates their words to student B. They should check their partner's answers as they go along, so they can correct their pronunciation if necessary. Then student B dictates their words to student A. Pairs who finish first should discuss the last question on the handout: which sounds are the most difficult to say, and which words are the most difficult to remember.

As the students are doing this, monitor and note down any problems with the words to focus on in feedback. In my experience, the two different pronunciations of tear often cause problems, as do breath and breathe, bear and beard, sweat and swear. Also, my Japanese students frequently have problems with their /ɜ:/ sounding like /ɑ:/, and my Spanish students often struggle with their /eə/ sounding like /ɜ:/.



# Pronunciation of 'ea' spelling – A

Look at the sentence below. It shows seven different ways to pronounce the letters 'ea'. How do you say each of the sounds?

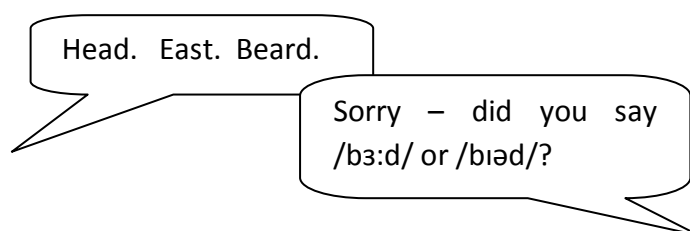
I **hear** that an **early breakfast** of **peaches, pears** and **steak** is good for your **heart**.

/ɪə/	/ɜ:/	/e/	/i:/	/eə/	/eɪ/	/ɑ:/
hear	early	breakfast	peach	pear	steak	heart

Read the words below to your partner. They should put them in the correct place in the table above. If they try to put a word in the wrong place, stop them and repeat the word. What happened? Did you mispronounce it, or did they mishear you?

- |               |                 |
|---------------|-----------------|
| a) deaf /e/   | h) east /i:/    |
| b) heard /ɜ:/ | i) breathe /i:/ |
| c) clear /ɪə/ | j) breath /e/   |
| d) learn /ɜ:/ | k) bread /e/    |
| e) great /eɪ/ | l) heat /i:/    |
| f) tear /eə/  | m) wear /eə/    |
| g) tear /ɪə/  | n) heavy /e/    |

Now listen to your partner carefully. They will read you some words and you should put the words in the correct place in the table above.



Which sounds do you find the most difficult to pronounce? Are there any words here which you find difficult to remember how to say?



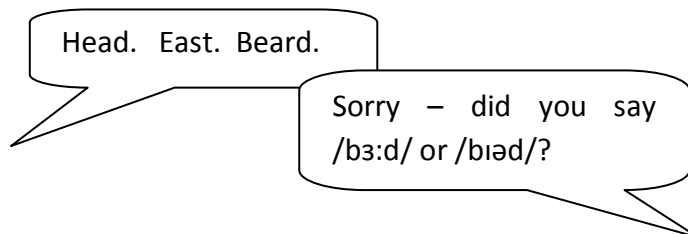
# Pronunciation of 'ea' spelling – B

Look at the sentence below. It shows seven different ways to pronounce the letters 'ea'. How do you say each of the sounds?

I **hear** that an **early breakfast** of **peaches, pears** and **steak** is good for your **heart**.

/ɪə/	/ɜ:/	/e/	/i:/	/eə/	/eɪ/	/ɑ:/
hear	early	breakfast	peach	pear	steak	heart

Listen to your partner carefully. They will read you some words and you should put the words in the correct place in the table above.



Now read the words below to your partner. They should put them in the correct place in the table above. If they try to put a word in the wrong place, stop them and repeat the word. What happened? Did you mispronounce it, or did they mishear you?

- |                 |               |
|-----------------|---------------|
| a) treasure /e/ | h) beard /ɪə/ |
| b) weak /i:/    | i) pearl /ɜ:/ |
| c) idea /ɪə/    | j) dream /i:/ |
| d) near /ɪə/    | k) dead /e/   |
| e) break /eɪ/   | l) peace /i:/ |
| f) bear /eə/    | m) swear /eə/ |
| g) earth /ɜ:/   | n) sweat /e/  |

Which sounds do you find the most difficult to pronounce? Are there any words here which you find difficult to remember how to say?

