

Teacher's notes: /ɜ:/ /ɔ:/ /ɑ:/

Note: Many words with these sounds are pronounced differently, depending on the accent of the speaker (for example fast, laugh, almond). This might change the way you deliver the lesson!

Timing: All these activities (including the crossword) took my intermediate students 1hr 15mins.

Preparation: Cut up the word cards (one set for each pair/group of 3), and make copies of the handout and crossword. I'd recommend doing the crossword yourself, so you feel confident with it.

1: Introduction

Start by eliciting **fur**, **four** and **far**, and writing them in three columns on the board. Drill the long vowel sounds in isolation (/ɜ:/ /ɔ:/ /ɑ:/). If you think it'll help your students, you could elicit a few other groups of three (e.g. first, forced, fast; Bert, bought, Bart; burn, born, barn; firm, form, farm) and drill the sentences below – see how fast the students can say them accurately.

I've got **four fur** coats so **far**.

I **forced** the **first** student to speak **fast**.

Bert bought Bart a cake.

2: Presentation

Now, students categorise the word cards into the three groups. You could do it as a race to see which group can finish first, with all answers correct. Get feedback, and put the answers on the board in the same table (students can complete the table on the handout now).

/ɜ:/	/ɔ:/	/ɑ:/
fur dirty burn turn learn earth work girl	four fork sore law thought caught warm walk	far war car park guard past half calm

3: Practice 1

In pairs, students decide which is the odd one out for each of the 10 questions on the handout. In feedback, make sure they identify the sound for the three similar answers too. Answers:

1. away	2. heart	3. wore	4. laugh	5. word
6. warn	7. salt	8. cure	9. mirror	10. almost

Then students identify the spelling 'rules' and decide how to pronounce the extra words.

/ɜ:/ = wor, ur, ir

/ɔ:/ = or, war, aw, al, au

/ɑ:/ = ar, alm





war	dirty	walk
burn	fork	half
sore	turn	calm
car	law	work
learn	earth	guard
thought	caught	girl
warm	park	past



Pronunciation /ɜ:/ /ɔ:/ /ɑ:/

(er, or and ah)

Your teacher will give you some words. Do you pronounce the vowels as /ɜ:/ /ɔ:/ or /ɑ:/?

/ɜ:/	/ɔ:/	/ɑ:/

Which word is the odd one out (has different pronunciation) in each group?

- saw awful raw away
- heart heard earn pearl
- work worst wore worth
- naughty taught laugh August
- word short sword born
- card warn hard part
- talk walk fall salt
- hurt fur cure Thursday
- thirsty shirt first mirror
- almond calm palm almost

English spelling and pronunciation can be very different, and there are often several ways to pronounce the same groups of letters. In the examples above, are these letters pronounced /ɜ:/ /ɔ:/ or /ɑ:/ ?

or ar wor war ur ir au aw al alm

So, now you have some spelling guidelines, how do you think we say these words?

yawn worm flirt squawk award thorn curse barge laundry

