

English Pronunciation – The Letter 'O'

English vowels have different pronunciations, depending on the surrounding consonants.

For example, the letter 'o' can be:

- short (examples: *hot*, *topic*)
- long (examples: *toe*, *hotel*)

In a short word, 'o' usually has a short sound:

- lot
- fog
- con

And 'o' followed by a double consonant also usually has a short sound:

- hotter
- jogger
- coffee
- hopper

But 'o' followed by a consonant and an 'e' usually has a long sound:

- hope
- pole
- code

Exercise. Pronounce these words, and say if the 'o' is *short* or *long*:

- got
- coke
- hollow
- top
- telephone
- soccer

Sometimes the pronunciation changes when we add a suffix:

mode (long sound) / **modular** (short sound)

The rules of pronunciation in English have many exceptions (examples: *won*, *women*). So, the best way to speak correctly is to remember how to pronounce every individual word!

Notes:

1. An 'e' is sometimes pronounced as a 'schwa'. Examples: *doctor*, *professor*.
2. An interesting example is the word "*tomorrow*" – because all the vowels have different pronunciations!
3. Exceptions: "two", "to" (long sound as in "boot")

Suggested video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=A8zWWp0akUU> (4 mins)