

English vocabulary – “breath” / “breathe”

Pronunciation: <https://www.youtube.com/shorts/1Ooyf5yb64o>

1) Verb: **to breathe** (regular) (vowel sound: “ee” as in “been”) (PT : *respirar*)

Phrasal verbs: **to breathe in** / **to breathe out** (PT: inalar / exalar)

Examples:

- Help! I can't **breathe**!
- It's difficult to **breathe** when you are high in the mountains.
- It's important to **breathe** slowly and regularly.
- Doctor: “**Breathe** slowly and deeply.”
- I prefer to use **breathable** clothes in the summer.
- Doctor: “Please **breathe in** quickly and **breathe out** slowly.”
- My son has difficulty in **breathing**. He has sinusitis.

Synonyms:

to respire	=	to breathe ('respire' usually refers to plants)
to inhale	=	to breathe in
to exhale	=	to breathe out

Expressions:

to breathe more easily (to be more relaxed)

Example: Phew! I've just received my salary, so I can **breathe more easily** now.

a breather (a rest)

Example: Please – I need **a breather** – we've been walking for more than an hour.

Note: The verbs “to inspire” (to give someone courage or creativity) and “to expire” (to cease to be valid) are not related to this topic.

Suggested song: Taylor Swift – “Breathe”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qsUK-BG5OQQ>

2) Noun: **breathing** (vowel sound: “ee” as in “been”) (PT : *respiração*)

Examples:

- When I put my cheek to her mouth, I could feel her shallow **breathing**.
- During meditation you must concentrate on your **breathing**.
- My grandmother needs assisted **breathing** due to her condition. She uses a respirator.
- Let's do some deep **breathing** exercises.

3) Noun: **breath** (vowel sound: “é” as in “ten”) (PT : *fôlego*)

Examples:

- Doctor: “Take a deep **breath** and hold.”
- My dog has terrible **breath**!

Expressions:

to take your breath away (describes something truly amazing)

Example: When I saw the Taj Mahal, it took my breath away.

to be short of breath (to breathe with difficulty)

Example: I'm always short of breath after running a race.

shortness of breath (the condition of breathing with difficulty)

Example: I'm suffering from shortness of breath – I think I'll see my doctor.

to lose your breath / to be out of breath (to be physically tired)

Examples: Please give me a minute – I've lost my breath.
I'm often out of breath after climbing the stairs.

to catch your breath (to recover after losing your breath)

Example: Let me catch my breath. I've been running for more than an hour.

to hold your breath (to stop breathing temporarily)

Examples: How long can you **hold your breath** under water?
Peter said that he'll pay you back, but don't **hold your breath**. (*metaphorical*)

to save your breath / don't waste your breath (don't talk)

Examples: Save your breath – Greg is as stubborn as a mule.
Greg is as stubborn as a mule – don't waste your breath.

to say something under your breath (speak very quietly, secretly)

Example: My dad said something under his breath to my sister. I want to know what it was!

a breath of fresh air (something new and invigorating)

Examples: That new trainee is a breath of fresh air! The team will benefit from her ideas.

bad breath, garlic breath* / fresh breath (bad oral hygiene / good oral hygiene)

Examples: My brother suffers from bad breath – I wish he'd go to the dentist.
I've just cleaned my teeth – I have fresh breath.
My dog has bad breath.

* *garlic breath = barfo de alho*

Related vocabulary:

- breathless without breath/shortness of breath
- a breath test a test of your breath to detect alcohol
- to breathalyze someone to test someone's breath for alcohol using a **breathalyzer**

Suggested songs:

The Police – "Every breath you take"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LPr3N4AMXNQ>

Queen – "You take my breath away"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v_wLNqUz7pM

Berlin – "Take my Breath Away"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bx51eegLTY8>

4) Adjective: **brehtaking** (*PT : tirar o fôlego/empolgante*)

Examples:

- Look at the view! It's **brehtaking**!
- The way she dances is absolutely **brehtaking**!

Breathing and Drinking simultaneously

Humans can't breathe and swallow (or drink) at the same time, and we're one of the few mammals with that limitation.

This is because when we swallow, a small flap called the "epiglottis" closes over the windpipe ("trachea") to prevent liquid or food from entering the lungs. This means that the airway is temporarily blocked, so we can't breathe during that moment. Other animals have a different throat structure that allows them to breathe while drinking, which is very useful for newborns that need to suckle.

Humans have evolved a lowered larynx (voice box) that enables speech and singing, but that change made it impossible for us to breathe and swallow at the same time. The human's larynx descends during infancy. Babies can breathe while suckling for a few months, but by 6 months old, the larynx drops, and so the ability is lost.

Mammals that can breathe and drink at the same time

Most mammals have a throat anatomy that allows simultaneous breathing and swallowing. Here are some examples and how they manage it:

Dogs, cats, and other quadrupeds

Their larynx are situated higher in the throat than in humans. This positioning allows the epiglottis to overlap with the soft palate, creating a separation between the food path (to the esophagus) and the air path (to the trachea). This means they can breathe while drinking.

Cows, goats, and other ruminants

These animals need to regurgitate and re-chew food (cud), so their throats are built to manage both air and food efficiently. While eating or drinking, they can maintain airflow through the nose thanks to the high larynx and flexible soft palate.

Elephants

Elephants don't drink directly through their trunk (they suck water up the trunk and then put it into their mouths), but their nasal passages remain open while they swallow, so they can still breathe through their trunk while they're drinking.

Whales and dolphins

These marine mammals have completely separated air and food passages. They breathe through the blowhole, not the mouth, and eat with the mouth, so they can "breathe" while swallowing fish.

