

EnglishMamOnline.com - The 50 Most Tricky Minimal Pairs

Target Level: A1-C2

Category: Pronunciation, Phonetics & Accent Guides

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Vowel contrasts that native speakers distinguish instantly:

1. /i:/ (Long E) vs. /ɪ/ (Short I)

- sheep vs. ship | seat vs. sit | reach vs. rich
- Mouth Position: /i:/ is smiled, wide. /ɪ/ is relaxed, open.

2. /ʌ/ (Flat A) vs. /ʊ/ (Short U)

- cat vs. cut | hat vs. hut | cap vs. cup
- Mouth Position: /ʌ/ drops jaw wide. /ʊ/ is short, throat sound.

3. /v/ vs. /w/ (Vocal fricatives)

- vet vs. wet | vest vs. west | vine vs. wine
- Mouth Position: /v/ uses top teeth on bottom lip. /w/ rounds lips.