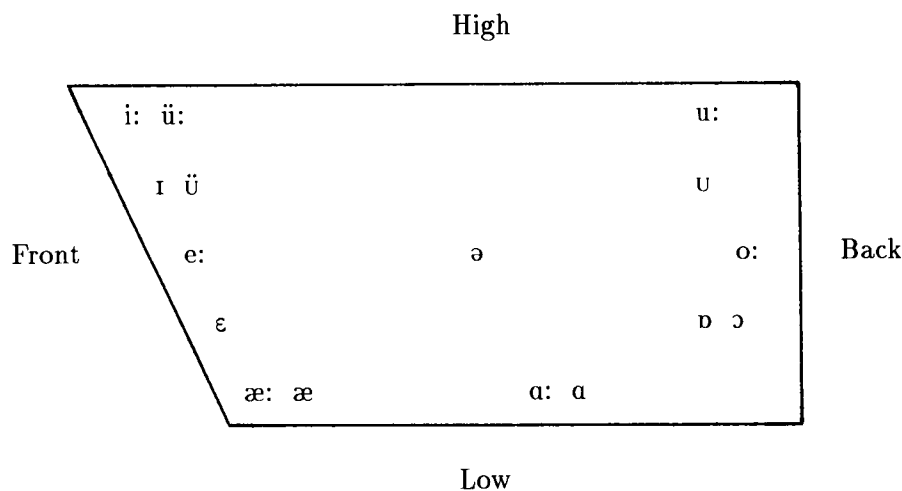


## 2.1 Vowels in Stressed Syllables

The descriptions to follow for the vowel and consonant systems of Old English use the terminology of articulatory phonetics. First, the vowels. The conventional chart to represent the way these sounds are made is this:



Pronunciation is represented in symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (see Appendix A).

The terms to be used are briefly glossed as follows:

**Position** of articulation is designated along two axes, **high – mid – low** and **front – center – back**.

**Rounding** refers to the shaping of the lips in articulation of the vowel, as either **round** or **unround**.

**Length** designates duration of a vowel articulation, which is binary—i.e., either **long** or **short** (not-long).

The term **phoneme** refers to a distinctive unit within the *system* of vowels and consonants of the language (not the incidental variants of sound that may result from stage of maturity, age, regional differences, illness, eccentricity, or whatever else).

A. The **simple vowels** in stressed syllables were distinguished by features of position, rounding, and length.

(1) The **back vowels** in stressed syllables constitute a set distinguished by threefold contrast of height and twofold contrast of length. Back vowels show no contrasts of rounding, a feature which they all share.

	High	Mid	Low
The phonemes:	/ū u	ō o	ā a/
Pronunciation:	[u: u	o: ɒ	ɑ: ʌ, ɔ]

These vowels were normally represented in Anglo-Saxon orthography by **u, o, a**. In modern textbooks, grammars, and dictionaries, length is usually represented by a macron (·) over the vowel letter, thus: **ū, ō, ā**. The non-lengthened vowels are represented by the letters only. One-syllable words may be regarded here as having only stressed vowels.

/ū/ [u:]		/u/ [ʊ]	
ūs	us	hund	hundred; dog
mūs	mouse	wund	wound
hūs	house	pund	pound
lūs	louse	stund	period of time
fūs	eager	sum	a certain; some
ūf	owl	sund	sea; swimming
ūt	out	wulf	wolf
hū	how	full	full, entire
sū	sow	munt	hill
cū	cow	mund	hand
nū	now, now that	wull	wool
clūd	mass of stone	turf	turf
ful	foul	lust	pleasure, desire
sūr	tart, sour	rust	rust
brū	eyebrow, eyelash	dust	dust
būr	bower	dunn	dun, dark-colored
mūr	wall	burn	brook, stream
ūp	up	turl	ladle
tūn	enclosure; village	grund	ground, bottom
mūl	mule	dung	dung

<b>/ō/</b> [o:]		<b>/o/</b> [ɒ]	
<b>hōf</b>	hoof	<b>hof</b>	dwelling
<b>mōt</b>	meeting, court	<b>mot</b>	mote, atom
<b>gōd</b>	good	<b>god</b>	god
<b>fōr</b>	(he) went, fared	<b>for</b>	for, on account of
<b>hōl</b>	slander	<b>hol</b>	hole, hollow
<b>glōf</b>	glove	<b>glof</b>	cliff
<b>gōs</b>	goose	<b>word</b>	word, statement
<b>tō</b>	to; too	<b>fox</b>	fox
<b>dō</b>	(I) do	<b>cosp</b>	fetter
<b>fōt</b>	foot	<b>cost</b>	choice
<b>mōd</b>	mind; courage	<b>on</b>	upon, among
<b>stōd</b>	(he) stood	<b>of</b>	from, out of
<b>stōl</b>	stool, throne	<b>dol</b>	foolish
<b>mōr</b>	moor, wasteland	<b>dolg</b>	wound, scar
<b>flōr</b>	floor	<b>folc</b>	people, nation

<b>/ā/</b> [ɑ:]		<b>/a/</b> [ɑ, ɔ]	
<b>ā</b>	ever	<b>ac</b>	but, moreover
<b>gā</b>	(I) go; Go!	<b>farān</b>	(to) go, fare
<b>pād</b>	covering	<b>fatū</b>	vessels, cups
<b>bād</b>	(he) awaited	<b>ham</b>	ham
<b>bān</b>	bone	<b>hwamm</b>	corner, angle
<b>dā</b>	doe	<b>camp</b>	struggle
<b>ān</b>	one	<b>and*</b>	and
<b>wāc</b>	weak	<b>ond</b>	and
<b>mā</b>	more	<b>land</b>	land
<b>wā</b>	woe	<b>lond</b>	land
<b>mān</b>	crime, evil deed	<b>man</b>	man
<b>fām</b>	foam	<b>mon</b>	man
<b>hām</b>	home, region	<b>sand</b>	sand
<b>swāt</b>	sweat, toil	<b>sond</b>	sand
<b>grāf</b>	grove	<b>hand</b>	hand
<b>gāst</b>	ghost, spirit	<b>hond</b>	hand

\*Before a nasal consonant **a** and **o** spellings may alternate; see Appendix B.

(2) The **front vowels** in stressed position constitute an unbalanced set of round and unround vocalic units. A threefold contrast of height distinguishes unround front vowels; a twofold contrast of length distinguishes both round and unround vowels.

	High	Mid	Low	High
The phonemes:	/ī i	ē e	æ æ	ȳ y/
Pronunciation:	[i: ɪ	e: ɛ	æ: æ	ü: ü]

Unround

Round

These vowels were normally represented by **i, e, æ, y** (**æ** is called 'ash'). The macron in edited texts indicates length, **ī, ē, æ, ȳ**, with non-lengthened vowels represented by the letters only.

/ī/ [i:]		/i/ [ɪ]	
wīn	wine	hit	it
pīn	anguish	bist	(thou) beast, art
sīn	his, her, etc.	mid	with
mīn	my, mine	min	small
līf	life	milts	mercy
sīd	vast	in	in, on, at
tīr	fame	wind	wind
tīd	time, occasion	clif	cliff
wīd	wide, vast	bill	battle-axe
līm	anything sticky	lim	limb, member
twīn	double thread	twinn	double
fīf	five	swift	swift
rīp	harvest	ribb	rib
rīm	number	sibb	peace
līn	flax, linen	lid	ship
sllm	slime	sinc	treasure
īs	ice	lind	lime-tree, linden
pīl	a pointed object	dimm	dark
hwīl	while, time	blis	joy, pleasure
swīn	wild boar	swinn	melody
wīf	woman	flint	flint
wīs	wise	his	his

<b>/ē/</b>	<b>[e:]</b>		<b>/e/</b>	<b>[ɛ]</b>	
wē	we		menn	men	
hē	he		feld	open land	
mē	me		fenn	mud, fen	
wēn	hope		penn	pen, fold	
cwēn	queen, woman		nebb	beak, face	
spēd	success		helm	protection	
hēr	here		nest	nest	
fēt	feet		west	west(-ward)	
bēn	request		bedd	bed	
mēd	meed, reward		spell	story, history	
gēs	geese		nett	net	

<b>/æ/</b>	<b>[æ:]</b>		<b>/æ/</b>	<b>[æ]</b>	
ǣl	eel		ǣl	awl	
æt	eatables		æt	at	
fæt	metal plate		fæt	vessel, cup	
læst	least		læst	fault	
mæst	most		mæst	mast	
dǣl	portion		dǣl	dale	
sǣd	seed		sǣd	satiated	
bǣl	fire, pyre		fǣst	fast, firm	
sǣl	time		sǣl	hall	
bǣr	bed, litter		bǣr	uncovered	
wǣd	garment		wǣd	shallow water	
fǣr	sudden peril		fǣr	journey	
wǣl	deep water		wǣl	the slain	
ǣ	law		ǣppel	apple	
gǣst	(thou) goest		ǣsp	aspen-tree	
ǣr	ere, before		sǣp	sap, juice	
blǣst	blast (of wind)		bǣst	bast	
hwǣm	whom		bǣc	back	
glǣm	brilliant light		græs	grass	
slǣp	sleep		bræs	brass	
stǣr	story, narrative		glæs	glass	

<b>/ȳ/</b> [ū:]		<b>/y/</b> [ü]	
<b>cȳ</b>	cows	<b>wyrd</b>	fate
<b>fȳr</b>	fire	<b>wyrt</b>	vegetable, herb
<b>hȳd</b>	hide, skin	<b>fyrn</b>	former(ly)
<b>hwȳ</b>	why	<b>fyrst</b>	first
<b>hȳf</b>	hive	<b>cynn</b>	kin, race, type
<b>hȳr</b>	hire, wages	<b>mynd</b>	memory
<b>brȳd</b>	betrothed woman	<b>pyff</b>	puff (of wind)
<b>mȳs</b>	mice	<b>wyrm</b>	serpent
<b>lȳt</b>	few	<b>lyft</b>	air, sky
<b>ȳst</b>	tempest	<b>nytt</b>	utility, duty
<b>fȳst</b>	fist	<b>dȳnt</b>	dint, stroke

**B.** Syllable nuclei other than simple vowels in stressed syllables consist of a progress of vocalic sounds, traditionally called **diphthongs**. They occur with gradation of articulation, and function in distinguishing morphemes in the same way that simple vowels do. In every instance the beginning of the diphthong is more heavily stressed, the second element less stressed (hence the nucleus being called a 'falling diphthong'). The second element probably varied [ɛ, ɑ, ɔ] with [ə], the neutral unstressed vowel sound. This second (the less-stressed) element apparently took the phonetic form of a glide. These diphthongs were spelled **ie**, **eo**, **ea**. Length is marked with a macron, as usual: **īe**, **ēo**, **ēa**.

The diphthongs:	/	īe	ie	ēo	eo	ēa	ea	/
Pronunciation:	[	i:ɛ	ɪɛ	e:ɔ	ɛɔ	æ:ɑ	æɑ	]
or:	[	i:ə	ɪə	e:ə	ɛə	æ:ə	æə	]

<b>/īe/</b> [i:ɛ] or [i:ə]		<b>/ie/</b> [ɪɛ] or [ɪə]	
<b>hīe</b>	they	<b>hierde</b>	shepherd
<b>hīersum</b>	obedient	<b>fierd</b>	army, campaign
<b>sīere</b>	sere, dry	<b>siexta</b>	sixth
<b>stīeran</b>	(to) steer, govern	<b>wiell</b>	well, foundation
<b>nīed</b>	necessity	<b>dierne</b>	secret, hidden
<b>tīen</b>	ten	<b>biernan</b>	(to) burn
<b>frīend</b>	friends	<b>stiell</b>	a jump, leap

<b>/ēo/</b>	<b>[e:ɔ] or [e:ə]</b>		<b>/eo/</b>	<b>[ɛɔ] or [ɛə]</b>	
<b>wēop</b>	(he) wept		<b>eom</b>	am	
<b>bēo</b>	be, am; bee		<b>weorc</b>	work	
<b>bēon</b>	(to) be		<b>meolc</b>	milk	
<b>bēor</b>	strong drink		<b>feorr</b>	far, distant	
<b>nēod</b>	longing		<b>eorl</b>	nobleman	
<b>sēoc</b>	sick, ill		<b>deorc</b>	dark, obscure	
<b>lēod</b>	prince, man		<b>feorm</b>	food, meal	
<b>fēond</b>	adversary		<b>beorn</b>	man; noble	
<b>fēol</b>	file		<b>beorg</b>	mountain; hill	
<b>dēop</b>	deep		<b>deorc</b>	dark, cheerless	
<b>hēo</b>	she		<b>heord</b>	herd; custody	
<b>frēond</b>	friend		<b>heorr</b>	hinge	
<b>lēof</b>	beloved, desirable		<b>meox</b>	filth; dung	
<b>dēor</b>	animal; brave		<b>reord</b>	voice, speech	
<b>mēos</b>	moss		<b>seolc</b>	silk	
<b>/ǣa/</b>	<b>[æ:ɑ] or [æ:ə]</b>		<b>/ǣa/</b>	<b>[æɑ] or [æə]</b>	
<b>ǣa</b>	river, stream		<b>eart</b>	art, are	
<b>ǣad</b>	riches, prosperity		<b>eald</b>	old	
<b>wǣa</b>	misfortune, woe		<b>eall</b>	all, everything	
<b>ǣam</b>	uncle		<b>eard</b>	dwelling place	
<b>lēan</b>	reward, retribution		<b>earm</b>	arm; poor	
<b>hēap</b>	assembly, host		<b>healp</b>	(he) helped	
<b>dēad</b>	dead		<b>bearn</b>	offspring	
<b>stēap</b>	deep, precipitous		<b>beard</b>	beard	
<b>stēam</b>	steam		<b>weard</b>	guardian	
<b>lēap</b>	basket		<b>wearp</b>	(he) threw	
<b>lēas</b>	without, free from		<b>wearm</b>	warm	
<b>hēan</b>	lowly		<b>wearn</b>	reluctance	
<b>ēast</b>	east(-ward)		<b>heals</b>	neck	
<b>grēat</b>	great, massive		<b>heald</b>	custody	
<b>lēaf</b>	leaf		<b>leax</b>	salmon	