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# Did you know there are two ways to pronounce "the"?

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English is a simple language, though sometimes it gets difficult to understand. Grammar is the backbone of the English language. Hence, it is important to use it properly while framing a sentence or while conversing in the language. You can learn English grammar through various sources, such as books or through internet. Learning how to speak English is very easy, one can acquire it byconversing in English. As said, practice makes a man perfect, continuous practicing will improve your communication skills in English. As English is a globally accepted language, it becomes easy for you to communicate when you visit any foreign country.




However, it is essential to know the pronunciation of the words. You might be aware of words which sound same but have different meanings. These words are called homophones. For instance, sea - see, ear - hear, right – write etc. Similarly, there are words that can have different pronunciations, such as the word “the”, which is same but its pronunciation differs accordingly. Let’s have a look on its expression as how it is pronounced.

You might pronounce "the" with a short sound (like "thuh"). But when "the" comes before a vowel sound, we pronounce it as a long "thee".

| Vowel sound | How to write | How to say |
|---|---|---|
| A | The apple | Thee apple |
| E | The egg | Thee egg |
| I | The ice-cream | Thee ice-cream |
| O | The orange | Thee orange |
| U | The ugli fruit | Thee ugli fruit |

It is vital to know that what you say matters, not what you write. It is the sound that matters, not the letter used in writing a word. Hence, “thee” is used before a vowel sound, not necessarily before a vowel. For example:

| What to write | With | What to say | With |
|---|---|---|---|
| The home | Consonant (h) | thuh home | consonant sound |
| the hour | Consonant (h) | Thee our | Vowel sound |
| The university | Vowel (u) | Thuh university | consonant sound |
| The umbrella | Vowel (u) | Thee umbrella | Vowel sound |

**Emphatic thee**

When you try to place importance on a particular word, you can use "emphatic the" [thee], whether or not the word begins with a consonant or vowel sound.

**For example:**

X: I saw the [thuh] President yesterday.

Y: What! The [thee] President of the United States?

X: Yes, exactly.

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**- By Shailja Varma**

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