

## 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 by [conversing 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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