

How many speech sounds are there in the words below? For example, for the word “pot”, there would be three sounds, and for the word “spot” there would be four. Note that for these two examples the number of speech sounds is that same as the number of letters. This will not always be the case. For example, the word “note” has four letters but just 3 speech sounds; the word “know” has four letters but just two speech sounds. Answers are attached.

1. cat _____
2. sissy _____
3. pits _____
4. bill _____
5. phone _____
6. plant _____
7. this _____
8. breath _____
9. steak _____
10. cough _____
11. filly _____
12. Philly _____
13. league _____
14. throw _____
15. thought _____
16. limb _____
17. Kansas _____
18. cash _____
19. steal _____
20. beau _____
21. bath _____
22. bathe _____
23. lass _____
24. edit _____
25. bus _____
26. buzz _____
27. flew _____
28. plaid _____
29. ring _____
30. boxes _____
31. stroke _____
32. pants _____
33. show _____
34. pew _____
35. exist _____
36. tomb _____
37. chill _____
38. print _____
39. pillow _____
40. chew _____

Answers (and IPA transcriptions)

- | | | | |
|-------------|---|----------|---|
| 1. cat | 3 | [kæt] | |
| 2. sissy | 4 | [sɪsi] | (the 'ss' in the middle represents a single /s/) |
| 3. pits | 4 | [pɪts] | |
| 4. bill | 3 | [bɪl] | (the final 'll' is a single /l/) |
| 5. phone | 3 | [fɒn] | (ph = /f/) |
| 6. plant | 5 | [plænt] | |
| 7. this | 3 | [ðɪs] | (the 'th' at the beginning is a single sound, not 2) |
| 8. breath | 4 | [brɛθ] | (same deal, though this sound is not the same as the 'th' above) |
| 9. steak | 4 | [stek] | |
| 10. cough | 3 | [kɔf] | |
| 11. filly | 4 | [fɪli] | |
| 12. Philly | 4 | [fɪli] | |
| 13. league | 3 | [lig] | (a lot of letters for just 3 sounds, but that's it) |
| 14. throw | 3 | [θro] | |
| 15. thought | 3 | [θɔt] | ('th'=1 sound; 'ough' all represents 1 vowel; then the 't') |
| 16. limb | 3 | [lɪm] | |
| 17. Kansas | 6 | [kænzɪs] | (1 st letter 's' corresponds to [z], the 2 nd to [s]) |
| 18. cash | 3 | [kæʃ] | (the 'sh' <i>digraph</i> corresponds to a single sound) |
| 19. steal | 4 | [stil] | |
| 20. beau | 2 | [bo] | ('eau' = 1 vowel) |
| 21. bath | 3 | [bæθ] | |
| 22. bathe | 3 | [beð] | (note the difference in pronunciation between this 'th' and the one above) |
| 23. lass | 3 | [læs] | |
| 24. edit | 4 | [ɛɪt] | (the 2 nd sound is a flap, not a /t/; more on this later) |
| 25. bus | 3 | [bʌs] | |
| 26. buzz | 3 | [bʌz] | |
| 27. flew | 3 | [flu] | (the 'ew' here represents just 1 vowel) |
| 28. plaid | 4 | [plæd] | (the 'ai' <i>digraph</i> corresponds to the single vowel [æ]) |
| 29. ring | 3 | [rɪŋ] | (tricky: final sound here is <i>not</i> 'n' followed by 'g'; it's 1 consonant: [ŋ]) |
| 30. boxes | 6 | [baksɪz] | (this is spoken like 'bahksɪz') |
| 31. stroke | 5 | [stroʊk] | |
| 32. pants | 5 | [pænts] | |
| 33. show | 2 | [ʃo] | (1 consonant represented in spelling by 'sh', followed by 1 vowel) |
| 34. pew | 3 | [pjʊ] | (tricky: there is a 'y' sound – [j] – after the [p]) |
| 35. exist | 6 | [ɛgzɪst] | (spoken like “eggzɪst”) |
| 36. tomb | 3 | [tʊm] | (no [b]) |
| 37. chill | 3 | [tʃɪl] | ('ch' = corresponds to just 1 sound – [tʃ]) |
| 38. print | 5 | [prɪnt] | |
| 39. pillow | 4 | [pɪlo] | |
| 40. chew | 2 | [tʃu] | (again, the symbol [tʃ] uses 2 characters but represents <i>one</i> sound) |