



## The EE and IH Vowels

The EE /i/ vowel (like in *beat*) and the IH /ɪ/ vowel (like in *bit*) are two of the vowels that I target with almost all of my clients, as these sounds are usually problematic for most non-native English speakers. But here are some tips to help you pronounce them correctly!

### The EE /i/ vowel (*beat*)

The EE vowel is common in most languages, so you may not have difficulty pronouncing it correctly. But I'll quickly review the lips, jaw, and tongue positioning for this vowel.

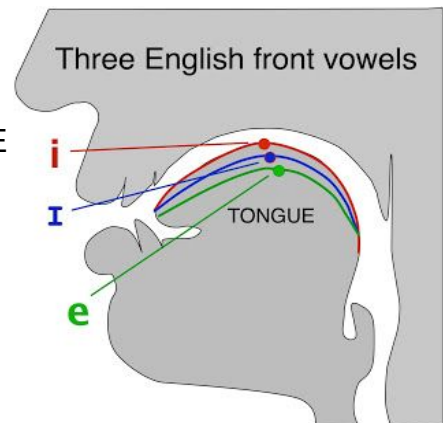
#### Lips and Jaw:

Lips are spread apart, and the jaw is closed:



#### Tongue:

The tongue is positioned high and forward in the mouth. It is also in a wide shape, and the sides of the tongue should touch the inside of the upper back teeth. Look at the drawing to see how the tongue height is different for the EE /i/ vowel versus the IH /ɪ/ vowel:



#### Tension:

The EE vowel is considered a **tense** vowel, meaning there is more tension within the face/lips/tongue when you say this sound. Put your hands under your chin when you say EE. You should feel some tension in the muscles just below your jaw (this is the base of the tongue), and your lips should spread out into a smile - so you should feel tension in the lips and cheeks, too.



## IH /ɪ/ vowel (*bit*)

The IH vowel is less common in other languages, which is why you might have difficulty pronouncing it correctly. Many of my clients also substitute the EE for the IH vowel and vice versa, which can lead to some embarrassing moments. If you use the IH vowel in the word *sheet*, you will end up saying a curse word in English!

### Lips and Jaw:

The lips are more neutral than they are for the EE vowel, and the jaw is slightly open. Look at the photo to see the difference in lips/jaw with this vowel.



### Tongue:

The tongue is slightly lower in the mouth (as the tongue naturally moves down with the jaw), and it is more neutral and relaxed.

### Tension:

One key difference between the EE and IH vowels is the **tension!** The IH vowel is considered a lax vowel, meaning the muscles are more relaxed when you say this sound. Put your hand under your chin as you alternate saying the EE and IH vowels - you should feel the muscles relax as you say IH and then tense as you say EE.

### Practice Words:

EE /i/	IH /ɪ/
sheep	ship
leap	lip
peach	pitch
meat	mitt
heat	hit

Free, printable resource from San Diego Voice and Accent  
[julie@sandiegovoiceandaccent.com](mailto:julie@sandiegovoiceandaccent.com)



Thanks for reading! Make sure you watch the videos that go along with this resource ([\*The Top 5 Problematic Sounds In American English: The “eee” and “ih” Vowels\*](#) and [\*EE and IH Vowels: A Visual Test\*](#)) and contact me if you have any questions! Happy studying!

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