

Forming Sounds

The different sounds that you make are formed by using different parts of your oral cavity, which is the airway, especially above the vocal cords (larynx), that is used to produce speech. The vocal tract includes the pharynx, mouth, and nasal cavity.

The consonants are formed by just using your breath or by using your breath and your voice together. Try forming these consonants:

/t/ Place your tongue up against the alveolar ridge at the top of your mouth, just behind your front teeth. Keep your lips and teeth slightly open. Now expel a breath and let your tongue drop down.

/d/ Form your mouth in the same position as for the “t” sound, but this time when you expel your breath, add your voice.

/p/ Close your lips, keep your teeth slightly parted, let your tongue rest naturally, and then expel a breath.

/b/ Form your mouth the same way you did for the “p” sound but now add your voice.

The vowels are also formed in the front, central, and back parts of the mouth, with the tongue being in different states of relaxation. First say the word listed below with each vowel, and then try to say the vowel alone to see what shapes your mouth forms. Then try saying the different vowels one after the other to better see how your mouth changes with the vocalization of each vowel.

/ɪ/ bit: Mouth is slightly open and tongue is relaxed.

/i/ beet: Lips are drawn back and mouth is slightly closed; tongue is tensed.

/æ/ bat: Mouth is slightly open, jaw drops down.

/ʌ/ but: Jaw drops down, tongue is relaxed.

