

three different vowels for the three words *bead*, *bid* and *bed*. Be sure that the middle vowel is *different* and *between* the other two: one thing which will help you to distinguish /i:/ from /ɪ/ is that /i:/ is longer than /ɪ/ as well as different in the quality of the sound. Practise those three words (and listen for them in English) until you are sure that you can keep them separate. The most likely difficulty is that you will confuse /i:/ with /ɪ/, so be sure that /ɪ/ is nearer in quality to /e/ and that it is always shorter than /i:/.

Remember that when the vowels are followed by a strong consonant they are shorter than when they are followed by a weak consonant, so that *beat*, *bit* and *bet* all have shorter vowels than *bead*, *bid* and *bed*, but even so the vowel /i:/ is always longer than the vowels /ɪ/ and /e/ in any one set. Now practise the following sets and pay attention to both the length of the vowels and their quality:

li:d lead	lɪd lid	led led
wi:t wheat	wɪt wit	wet wet
bi:n been	bɪn bin	ben Ben
tʃi:k cheek	tʃɪk chick	tʃek check
fi:l feel	fɪl fill	fel fell
ri:tʃ reach	rɪtʃ rich	retʃ wretch

/e, æ, ʌ/

Now you need another vowel between /e/ and /ʌ/, that is the vowel /æ/. Say the words *bed*, *bad* and *bud* several times and be sure that your mouth is quite wide open for the vowel of *bad*. Listen to the vowels carefully and then try to say a vowel which is *between* those two, a vowel which sounds a bit like /e/ and a bit like /ʌ/ but which is different from both. You *must* have different vowels in *bed*, *bad* and *bud*. Practise those three words until you can always make a difference between them; they all have comparatively short vowels so that length differences will not help you here.

Practise the following sets and be sure that each word really sounds different:

ten ten	tæn tan	tʌn ton
bet bet	bæt bat	bʌt but
pen pen	pæn pan	pʌn pun
seks sex	sæks sacks	sʌks sucks
ded dead	dæd Dad	dʌd dud
meʃ mesh	mæʃ mash	mʌʃ mush

Simple vowels

/i:, ɪ, e, æ, ʌ/

Now try all five of these vowels in the sets given below: you will see that there are gaps in some of the sets, where no word exists, for instance there is no word lek; but for practice you can fill in the gaps too. Some of the words are rather uncommon, but don't worry about the meanings – just be sure that the vowel sounds are different:

bi:d	bead	bid	bid	bed	bed	bæd	bad	bʌd	bud
li:k	leak	lik	lick			læk	lack	lʌk	luck
hi:l	heel	hil	hill	hel	hell	hæl	Hal	hʌl	hull
ti:n	teen	tɪn	tin	ten	ten	tæn	tan	tʌn	ton
ni:t	neat	nɪt	knit	net	net	næt	gnat	nʌt	nut
li:st	least	list	list	lest	lest			lʌst	lust
ri:m	ream	rim	rim			ræm	ram	rʌm	rum
bi:t	beat	bit	bit	bet	bet	bæt	bat	bʌt	but

/ʌ, ɑ:, ɒ/

In England when the doctor wants to look into your mouth and examine your throat he asks you to say *Ah*, that is the vowel /ɑ:/, because for this vowel the tongue is very low and he can see over it to the back of the palate and the pharynx. So if you have no vowel exactly like /ɑ:/ in your language you may find a mirror useful – keep your mouth wide open and play with various vowel sounds until you find one which allows you to see the very back of the soft palate quite clearly; this will be similar to an English /ɑ:/, but you must compare it with the /ɑ:/ vowels that you hear when you listen to English and adjust your sound if necessary. Remember that /ɑ:/ is a long vowel. The short vowel /ɒ/ is a bit like /ɑ:/ in quality though of course they must be kept separate. For /ɒ/ the lips may be slightly rounded, for /ɑ:/ they are not. Try the following sets:

lʌk	luck	lɑ:k	lark	lɒk	lock
kʌd	cud	kɑ:d	card	kɒd	cod
dʌk	duck	dɑ:k	dark	dɒk	dock
lʌst	lust	lɑ:st	last	lɒst	lost
bʌks	bucks	bɑ:ks	barks	bɒks	box
kʌp	cup	kɑ:p	carp	kɒp	cop

/ɒ, ɔ:, ʊ, u:/

In your language there will be a vowel which is similar to the English