



Pronunciation: /i/, /ɪ/, & /ai/

The /i/ (as in see /si/) /ɪ/ (as in it /it/), and /ai/ (as in my /mai/) vowels are all sounds that are frequently written with the letter i. They are pronounced differently though. You pronounce the /i/ vowel by keeping the space in your mouth pretty small, your tongue is forward, and you tense your mouth and tongue. The /ɪ/ vowel is very similar, but you relax your mouth and tongue. When you relax, pull your tongue down just a little bit. The /ai/ sound is actually a combination of two vowels /a/ + /i/. The /a/ vowel is made by making the space in your mouth very big and pulling your tongue back. By saying the /a/ and /i/ vowel close together, you get the /ai/ vowel.

The paragraph below is to help you practice. The vowels in blue and underlined are the /i/ (as in see /si/) sound, the vowels in green and double underlined are the /ɪ/ (as in it /it/) sound, and the vowels in red and dotted underlined are the /ai/ (as in my /mai/) sound. Read the paragraph a few times outloud, then record yourself reading it. Send your recording to your teacher and ask for feedback.

Dear Mike,

I miss you a lot. It has been a long time since we went to school together in New York. I'm so excited that you're coming out west to visit me in my hometown of Idaho Falls.

The coolest part is that there's a waterfall right in the middle of town. The snake river runs through the city, and a dam used for generating power was built in it. The dam forms a really pretty waterfall. The city has put in many parks and walkways up and down the river, so it's a fun place to visit. You can even go swimming and kayaking there. It's kind of like we have our own beach right here in Idaho.

Obviously the waterfall isn't everything in the town. We have many things to see, and friendly people to meet. You're just going to have to come out here and experience it for yourself.

Sincerely,
Quinn



Idaho Falls. Photo taken by Sophia Trotter

Would you like to visit Idaho Falls, Idaho? Explain to a friend why or why not. Pay attention to your pronunciation of the i, ɪ, and ai sounds.