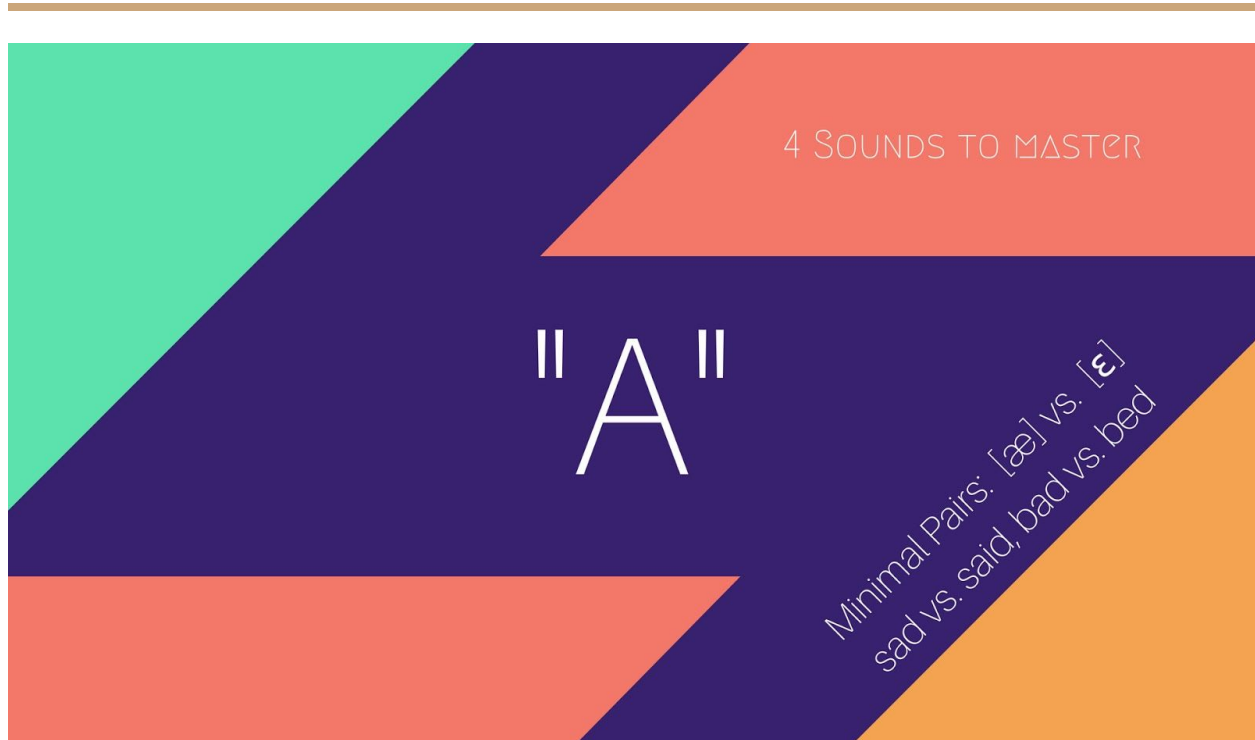


# The Vowel : A

SONS DIFÍCEIS PARA BRASILEIROS: A



There are three vowels in this section that we'll be focusing on: the short a sound in *sad*, the short "e" sound in *said* and the "long a" sound *date*. Once again that's sad, said and date. To hear about the "ah" sound in father, be sure the vowel section labeled "Vowel O".

Let's begin with the long a.

## #1. Long A: [ei]

As mentioned in the beginning of the vowel section, long vowels regularly occur when there's a silent e afterward, we call this a *magic e* (*mad* [mæd] vs. *made* [meid] ).

However, a long "a" is also commonly produced by ai, ay or ei letter combinations.

- **Magic Silent E:** cake, lake, shape, cape, gate

- **AI:** maintain, mail, fail, rail, tail, bail
  - Notice dark !! See next section.
- **EI:** weight, weigh, rein, vein, eight
- **AY:** day, stay, hay, layover, pay

**There are very few words** that begin with the long "A". To name a few: *alien, apron, angel* and *amen!*

**Lots of Exceptions!:** Although a lot of three syllable and four syllable words have the long a sound (investigate, procrastinate, illiterate, desperate, candidate, etc.) it can sometimes be confusing to know whether to use a long "a" or an unemphasized a or schwa sound in the last syllable.

A lot of times the long a sound will be used with verbs. Listen closely.

1. Her dress is **appropriate** for the occasion. (appropriate is a **ADJECTIVE**). XX
  - a. I'd like to **appropriate** the resources. (appropriate is a **VERB**).
2. She's a **graduate** student. (graduate is a **ADJECTIVE**).
  - a. She's going to **graduate** soon. (graduate is a **VERB**).
3. Please keep my clothes **separate**. (appropriate is an **ADJECTIVE**).
  - a. Please **separate** the white clothes from the black ones. (separate is a **VERB**).
4. I'm your **affiliate**. (affiliate is a **NOUN**).
  - a. I don't like to **affiliate** myself with low-lives. (affiliate is a **VERB**).
5. The temperature in Sao Paulo is **moderate**. (moderate is an **ADJECTIVE**).
  - a. We need to **moderate** the debate. (moderate is a **VERB**).

**Best option:** Remember the rule for the *magic e* and that verbs are most likely going to stress the last syllable meaning that they will have a long "a" sound at the end.

## #2. How to create the "[æ]" (as in *apple*) sound

The [æ] sound can be made by first opening your mouth wide. Make sure the back of your tongue is high and the tip of your tongue is resting on the back of your lower front teeth. Your tongue is flat and due to its position, you will be able to see it if you're looking in the mirror. Listen to the following words (and look at my mouth if you're watching the video).

- **[æ]: acrobatics, sad, combat, apple, animal, democrat**

*Make sure to open your mouth wide. You should be able to see your tongue if you're looking in the mirror.*

## When the sound changes . . .

You might be thinking, is this the same as *man* or *stand* or *cram*? Well, kind of, but not really! You need to move the [æ] sound to a schwa before landing on the n or m. Listen closely.

- **Lamb, lifespan, caravane, garbage can, Japan, Pakistan, tram, diagram**

Practice making this [æ] sound when it comes before an m or an n. This will improve your pronunciation.

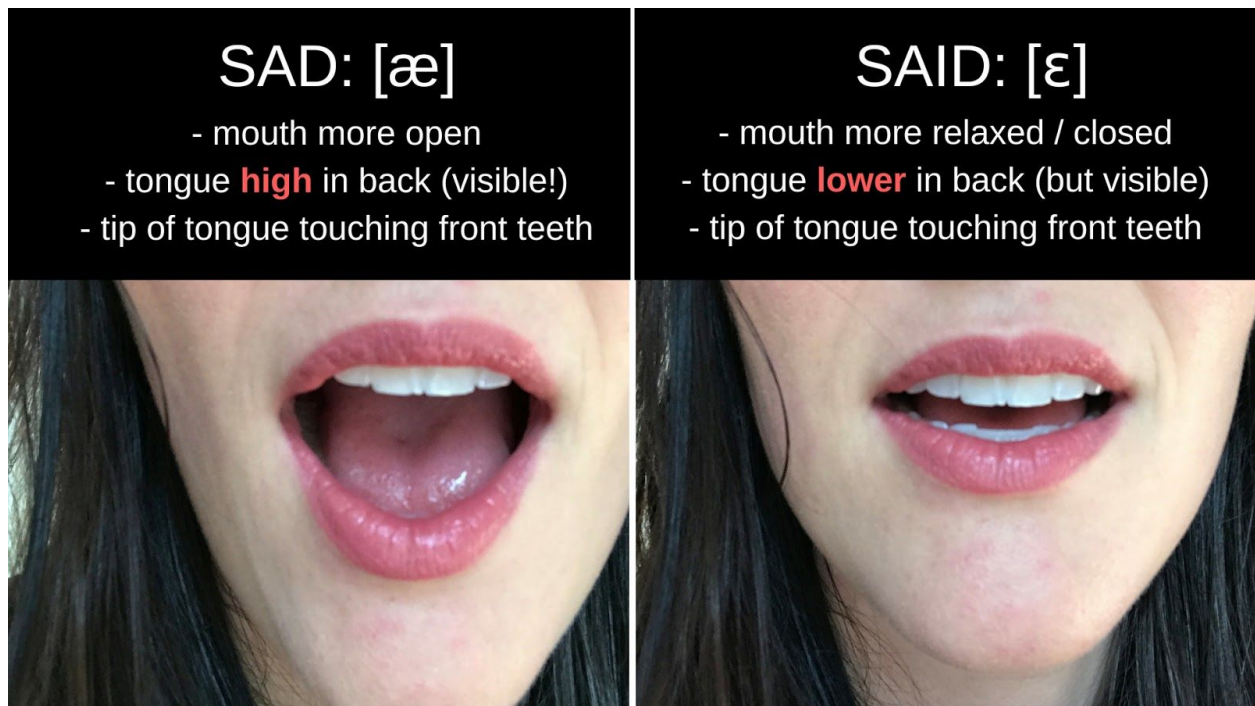
## #3. How to create [ɛ] (as in *said* or *bed*) sound

The next sound is the [ɛ] sound. The [ɛ] sound can be made by first opening your mouth wide. Make sure the back of your tongue is high and the tip of your tongue is resting on the back side of your lower front teeth. This is the exact same position as the previous [æ] sound. Your tongue is flat and once again if you look in the mirror you will be able to see your tongue.

The difference is, that it is slightly lower in your mouth than with the [æ] sound. There's another difference too. The tip of your tongue will move up quicker (to reach the next consonant). Your mouth can be slightly less opened than the [æ] sound and your mouth can also be a little bit more relaxed).

Repeat after me:

- [ɛ]: said, head, threat, stepped, ahead, cigarette, upset, internet



As you may notice, you can see a little bit more dark space in my mouth than with the [ɛ] sound because the back of my tongue is slightly lower.

## Minimal Pairs: Sad vs. Said ( [æ] vs. [ɛ] )

Let's practice some minimal pairs together. The goal is to work on the movement of your mouth and tongue to produce the same sound as me. Repeat after me.

<b>sad</b>	The movie was so <b>sad</b> we cried.	<b>said</b>	He <b>said</b> , "that movie was so sad."
<b>bland</b>	The food was <b>bland</b> .	<b>blend</b>	They have a delicious <b>blend</b> of coffee.
<b>band</b>	We should see that <b>band</b> in concert.	<b>bend</b>	Don't <b>bend</b> my notebook!
<b>sand</b>	The <b>sand</b> was too hot to walk on.	<b>send</b>	<b>Send</b> our regards to your mother.
<b>land</b>	What time will we <b>land</b> in Austin?	<b>lend</b>	Can you <b>lend</b> me a shirt?
<b>man</b>	He's a nice <b>man</b> .	<b>men</b>	They are nice <b>men</b> .
<b>brat</b>	Children can be <b>brats</b> .	<b>Brett</b>	<b>Brett</b> doesn't have a ticket.
<b>than</b>	I have more time <b>than</b> you.	<b>then</b>	I wonder what life was like back <b>then</b> .
<b>tanned</b>	He came back from vacation <b>tanned</b> .	<b>tend</b>	We <b>tend</b> to take after our parents.
<b>fad</b>	Bell bottoms are just a <b>fad</b> .	<b>fed</b>	Have you <b>fed</b> the cat?

You will often be able to determine which word is being said based on context. However, it's important to be able to isolate the sounds out of context and be able to recreate them. This will help you avoid making errors during conversation.

Let's read these minimal pairs once again, next to each other. Afterwards, I will give you an audio quiz.

- sad vs. said (sad, said 2x)
- had vs. head (had, head 2x)
- bad vs. bed (bad, bed 2x)
- fad vs. fed (fad, fed 2x)
- mat vs. met (mat, met 2x)
- brat vs. Brett (brat, Brett 2x)
- man vs. men (man, men 2x)

- band vs. bend (band, bend 2x)
- tanned vs. tend (tanned, tend 2x)
- bland vs. blend (bland, blend 2x)
- than vs. then (than, then 2x)

**Which word am I saying?** You have 5 seconds to spell each word then I will read it to you.

1. T - H - A - N
2. T - E - N - D
3. B - R - A - T
4. M - A - T
5. B - L - A - N - D
6. B - E - T
7. H - E - A - D
8. T - H - E - N

Reflecting on all of these words, one of the biggest mistakes I hear on a regular basis is the inaccurate pronunciation of *sad* and *said* and *than* and *then*. Be sure to learn the difference between these words.

- *Said* is shorter than *sad*.
  - My tongue travels up to the top of my mouth to make the "d" sound faster than in "sad."
  - My tongue is lower in "said" and . . .
  - My mouth is more relaxed.

**Read these examples in the exercise above to your language partner or your teacher. Have them work with you until you hear difference between these two sounds and feel a difference in your mouth.**