The letter "u" and the sound [u]

1. Sounds produced by the letter "u"

In English, several sounds are produced by the letter "u":

[u] fl**u**te
[^] fl**u**tter } Letter "u"

> ➢ **In Spanish, only one sound is produced by the letter "u."**

This sound is the [u] as in "flute."

[u] **ú**ltima, br**u**ja, p**u**nto → Letter "u"

2. Letters that produce the sound [u]

In English, more than one letter can produce the sound [u].

Letter "u" → [u] as in fl**u**te
Letter "o" → [u] as in wh**o**
Letters "ou" → [u] as in r**ou**te
Letters "oo" → [u] as in h**oo**t
Letters "oe" → [u] as in sh**oe**
Letters "ue" → [u] as in gl**ue**

> ➢ **In Spanish, only one letter produces the sound [u].**

Letter "u" → [u] as in **ú**ltima

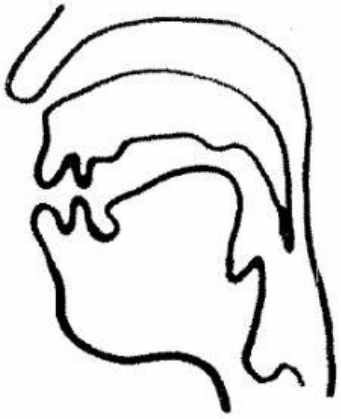
3. Pronunciation Reminder

The Spanish vowels are "short" in duration in comparison to English; the sound is not drawn-out, like the sound cows make: "m**ooooooo**." It is short, like "Oh no! What are we going to d**o** about this?"

4. Making the Sound

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The sound [u] is called a rounded back high vowel. The tongue approaches the roof of the mouth, while pushing toward the back of the mouth. When making the sound [u], the lips form a rounded shape that is tighter than [o]. The drawing below illustrates the approximate position of the tongue while producing the sound [u].



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Exercises to practice the Spanish [u]

A. For the following list of English words, look at the bold vowel. Say the words aloud, and circle the words with bold vowels that produce the [u] sound like the Spanish letter "u."

R**oo**mmate	Al**ou**d	B**u**t
Utter	Wh**o**	Bl**ue**
Sh**oe**	**U**ncouth	Unc**ou**th
Thr**ou**gh	H**ou**se	B**oo**st
Sh**oe**	Th**u**s	Br**u**te

B. Look at the following pairs of words in English and Spanish. Listen to them aloud and note the different pronunciations of the bold vowels. Using the phonetic guide table, choose the correct phonetic symbol for the bold vowel and write it on the line next to the word. Try to use correct pronunciation of all the vowels, but focus particularly on the letter "u."

English	**Spanish**
1. **U**ltimate [_____]	**Ú**ltima [_____]
2. M**u**ch [_____]	M**u**cho [_____]
3. Noct**u**rnal [_____]	Noct**u**rno [_____]
4. Instit**u**tion [_____]	Instit**u**cional [_____]
5. D**u**ke [_____]	D**u**que [_____]
6. J**u**ne [_____]	J**u**nio [_____]
7. Occ**u**r [_____]	Occ**u**rir [_____]
8. Cons**u**ltation [_____]	Cons**u**ltación [_____]

C. Look at the following long words. Sound them out slowly with correct vowel pronunciation, then practice saying them faster while maintaining correct pronunciation.

Aerofumigación	(crop-dusting)
Estadounidense	(American)
Hamburguesería	(hamburger restaurant)
Malacostumbrarse	(to become spoiled)
Pluscuamperfecto	(perfect subjunctive)

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