

Nā Woela (Vowels)

Vowels are the key to good Hawaiian pronunciation. In our previous lesson, we learned how to pronounce the individual vowel sounds. But what happens when you combine two vowel sounds together, as in “ae” or “ua”? Being able to distinguish different combinations of vowels will aid you in your pronunciation of Hawaiian.

Sometimes, two vowel sounds are combined into one syllable—called **huēwoela**. The following are examples of huēwoela:

au	ao	ai	ae
āu	āi		
oe	oi	ou	
eu	ei		

Some huēwoela glide together with a “y” sound, as in:

iu (i-y-u)	io (i-y-o)	ie (i-y-e)	ia (i-y-a)
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or a “w” sound, as in:

ui (u-w-i)	ue (u-w-e)	uo (u-w-o)	ua (u-w-a)
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Using what you learned about huēwoela, practice saying the following words aloud.

<u>pau</u>	<u>lau</u>	<u>kao</u>	<u>hao</u>
<u>pae</u>	<u>‘ae</u>	<u>mai</u>	<u>wai</u>
<u>kāu</u>	<u>nāu</u>	<u>‘āina</u>	<u>hāiki</u>
<u>hoe</u>	<u>moe</u>	<u>poi</u>	<u>hoihoi</u>
<u>hou</u>	<u>kou</u>	<u>keu</u>	<u>‘eu</u>
<u>lei</u>	<u>nei</u>	<u>kiu</u>	<u>niu</u>
<u>mio</u>	<u>pio</u>	<u>‘ie</u>	<u>kiele</u>
<u>pia</u>	<u>kia</u>	<u>nui</u>	<u>hui</u>
<u>hue</u>	<u>uepa</u>	<u>huo</u>	<u>kuolo</u>
<u>kua</u>	<u>‘uala</u>		

Common Mispronunciations

One of the most common mispronunciations of huēwoela are between these pairs:

au & ao

ai & ae

oi & oe

ou & ō

ei & ē

For example, the word “pau” is commonly mispronounced as “pao.” “Pau” means “finish, complete” whereas “pao” means “to scoop out, peck, chisel out.” In this example, pronouncing a word with the incorrect vowel sound completely changes the meaning of the word.

Another common mispronunciation is to “drop” the second vowel completely, as in the word “lei,” commonly mispronounced as “lē.” Again, you end up with two completely different meanings—“lei” is a garland worn around the neck, and “lē” means to “go about aimlessly, be lazy.”

Practice saying the different vowel sounds in the following sets of words. Notice how different the meanings are in each word pair:

mau (*always, steady, perpetual*)

mao (*cleared, as rain; alleviated*)

kai (*sea, ocean*)

kae (*refuse or rubbish*)

poi (*pounded taro mixed with water*)

poe (*round, rounded*)

hou (*new, fresh, again*)

hō (*to give; to wheeze*)

nei (*to rumble; this*)

nē (*fretting, teasing*)

Words that include several vowels in a row are sometimes mispronounced with an added ‘okina, as in the word “heiau,” which is commonly mispronounced as “he‘iau.” Remember from the first page of this lesson that “ei” and “au” are huēwoela that are pronounced as one syllable. However, when you combine these two huēwoela (hei + au), the “i” and the “a” produce the huēwoela “ia” that glides together with a y sound. So the correct pronunciation of the word is: **hei-y-au**.

'Oko'a Nō Ho'i!

It's Different!

This activity will help you learn to distinguish the different huēwoela sounds. For each number, read the list of words aloud to your partner. See if your partner can identify the word with a different huēwoela sound (underlined word).

Partner A		Partner E	
1. pau	6. noenoe	1. mau	6. hiamoe
hau	koe	<u>naonao</u>	<u>koi</u>
laulau	hoe	kēhau	māhoe
<u>wao</u>	moemoe	kau	poe
pākaukau	<u>noi</u>	wau	noe
2. kao	7. <u>kō</u>	2. lao	7. nou
hao	kou	mao	hou
pao	pou	nao	<u>pō</u>
<u>mākaukau</u>	lou	Makawao	kākou
'ao'ao	kūnou	<u>lau</u>	kūlou
3. pai	8. Puakō	3. <u>haehae</u>	8. manō
<u>wae</u>	hō	wai	pō
kahakai	kinipōpō	hai	kōkō
laina	<u>nou</u>	kai	kūwō
mai	lōlō	paila	<u>nūhou</u>
4. hae	9. nei	4. paepae	9. <u>ūpē</u>
mae	lei	hae	nei
<u>hāpai</u>	heihei	<u>lānai</u>	kīhei
lae	Mei	Kalae	lei
wae	<u>nē</u>	mae	pei
5. koi	10. pē	5. noi	10. pēpē
poi	'ukē	hoihoi	<u>nei</u>
<u>Kanoe</u>	<u>Kalei</u>	moi	pōkē
hoi	nēnē	mākoi	nē
loiloi	makalē	<u>poe</u>	mē