

## Closed Vowels vs. Open Vowels

There are two main differences between closed and open vowels. They are:

1. A closed vowel has a narrow place within the vocal tract. This can be formed with the tongue as in /i/ and /e/ or the lips as in /u/ and /o/. Open vowels do not have this type of narrowing.
2. A closed vowel will change as the jaw is dropped. The process of opening the jaw, while singing a closed vowel as the pitch rises, causes the vowel to modify (or change) to a more open vowel. Open vowels do not change when the jaw is dropped.
3. When singing higher notes on closed vowels in a classical style, the singer must modify the vowel to adjust the resonance and maintain comfort by dropping the jaw, all the while maintaining the tongue shape of the vowel as much as possible. This allows the resonance to remain stable in the vocal tract, while providing more space for the higher pitch. Looking at the vowel map, the vowel /i/ resonates behind the tongue at "10." If the singer maintains the tongue position, while dropping the jaw for higher pitches, the resonance will continue to ring behind the tongue at "10."