

UNROUNDED BACK VOWELS

Examples from languages with contrasting rounded back vowel (from IPA illustrations).
Korean and Thai also have a quantity contrast. Turkish also contrasts with front rounded.
See also Vietnamese (SoWL)

1. Korean

	<u>Rounded</u>	<u>Unrounded</u>
<u>Long</u>	z u: b a g ▶ “watermelon”	u: m z i g ▶ “food”
<u>Short</u>	g u l i ▶ “bronze”	ʌ: l u n ▶ “seniors”

2. Thai

	<u>Rounded</u>	<u>Unrounded</u>	<u>Rounded</u>	<u>Unrounded</u>
<u>Long</u>	s u: t ▶ “inhale”	k^h l u: n ▶ “wave”	k^h o: n ▶ “to fell”	dʌ:n ▶ “to walk”
<u>Short</u>	s u t ▶ “last”	k^h u n ▶ “to go up”	k^h o n ▶ “thick soup”	ŋ ʌ n ▶ “silver”

3. Turkish

Front rounded

k y l

▶ “ashes”

Back rounded

k u ł

▶ “slave”

Back unrounded

k u l

▶ “hair”

(Note: IPA (p.155) describes the velarized ł as dental, the “plain” l as palatalized postalveolar. The laterals are all substantially devoiced in this word-final position)

For all these languages the unrounded back vowels are placed at a centralized (fronted) location on the vowel chart compared to the rounded counterparts. In practice, it may be quite difficult to separate the effects of tongue position and lip configuration: Removing lip rounding raises F2 for back vowels, and thus makes them move acoustically towards rounded front vowels. *Rounded* back vowels are thus more distinct from front vowels, which is probably the reason why they occur much more frequently.