

Improving Pronunciation



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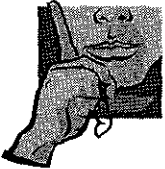
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Improving pronunciation

You should be proud that you speak English with an accent. A “foreign” accent tells people that you speak at least two languages. And the world would be very dull if we all sounded the same.

Unfortunately, the disadvantage to having a “foreign” accent is that it may hinder effective communication in your nonnative language and cause you to be misunderstood.

(English Pronunciation Made Simple, page ix)



Self-analysis of basic pronunciation problems

Think about the answers to the following questions to help you analyze your pronunciation problems.

- Which English sounds do you have difficulty with?
 - a. Do you make a difference between the vowels in *sit* and *seat*, *good* and *food*?
 - b. Do you make a difference between *sheep* and *cheap*, and *rice* and *lice*?
- Do you pronounce consonants at the end of words? How do you pronounce *ask* and *first*?
- Do you pronounce <s> and <ed> endings? How do you pronounce *cats*, *cars*, and *buses*, and *stopped* and *started*?
- Do you pronounce all words with the correct number of syllables? How many syllables are in *school* and *student*?
- Do you stress the correct syllable in a word? Which syllable is stressed in *excellent*, *interesting*, and *engineer*?
- Does your voice rise and fall enough so your meaning is clear, or does it remain flat and monotonous?
 - a. He's coming.
 - b. He's coming?



Spelling and pronunciation

Do not confuse **pronunciation** of words with their **spelling**!

- ♦ Different letters may represent the same sound:

to too shoe glue through

- ♦ The same letter represents different sounds:

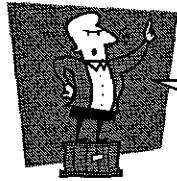
cake mat any sofa call

- ♦ Combinations of letters may represent one sound:

rough physics head

- ♦ Letters may represent no sounds:

bomb cake knee debt though



Learn to practice what you **hear**, not what you **see**.

Sounds of English

A. Vowels: find words that have the same vowels as the examples in each line.

heat sheep leave

hit ship live

pain tail taste

pen tell test

pool food full

pull good fool

hat pan bag

part arm father

us come does

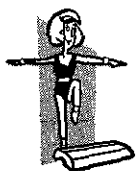
oat nose toe

all loss law

ice eye style

cow out owl

toy oil join



Exercise: In pairs, say each word aloud and circle the word in each group that is *not* pronounced with the same vowels as others.

1. gym win teen been
2. peas bread wheat leaf
3. dead guess red hate
4. friend pain weight safe
5. mean meant met men
6. group shout loud count
7. hood room book foot
8. come nut calm does

B. Consonants: find words that have the same consonants as the examples in each line.

- | | | | | | |
|------|-------|-------|--------|----------|-------|
| pet | map | _____ | bed | cab | _____ |
| tap | cat | _____ | die | sad | _____ |
| can | pack | _____ | get | bag | _____ |
| fan | safe | _____ | van | save | _____ |
| thin | bath | _____ | then | bathe | _____ |
| sad | class | _____ | zoo | rose | _____ |
| shoe | wash | _____ | vision | pleasure | _____ |
| chip | watch | _____ | jump | page | _____ |
| hen | have | _____ | | | |
| | | | men | come | _____ |
| | | | new | sun | _____ |
| | | | sing | singer | _____ |
| | | | love | oil | _____ |
| | | | rice | marry | _____ |
| | | | win | view | _____ |
| | | | you | yes | _____ |



Problem sounds for Thai speakers of English

s and z

I said "c".	I said "z".
Is she fussy ?	Is she fuzzy ?
What's the price ?	What's the prize ?
I'd like some peace .	I'd like some peas .

sh and ch

They are sheep	They are cheap .
We've washed it.	We've watched it.
He took my share .	He took my chair .
We should cash it.	We should catch it.

th and t

It's thin .	It's tin .
I gave him a bath .	I gave him a bat .
He thought about war.	He taught about war.

TH and t

You'll see her mother .	You will see her mutter
He threw the leather away.	He threw the letter away.

th and s

Her mouth is pretty	Her mouse is pretty.
He's the tenth child.	He's the tense child.
He has a strange faith .	He has a strange face .

TH and d

They began early.	Day began early.
Did you see her then ?	Did you see her den ?
He was there to do it.	He was dared to do it.

f and v

I want a fan .	I want a van .
I'd like a few .	I'd like a view .
They want a leaf .	They want to leave .

v and w

That's a nice vine .	That's a nice wine .
The veil was enormous.	The whale was enormous.
What happened to the veal ?	What happened to the wheel ?

r and l

That's a big rock .	That's a big lock .
I want some rice .	I want some lice .
She bought a red pencil.	She bought a lead pencil.
He's reading them.	He's leading them.

Pronouncing final consonants sounds (the last sound in a word)

- | | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1. cat | cap | can | cab |
| 2. bow | bowl | bold | bolt |
| 3. rag | rack | rat | rap |
| 4. ten | tense | tent | tend |
| 5. bill | bin | build | built |

Pronouncing consonant clusters (two or more consonant sounds grouped together)

Common errors:

- dropping one of the consonant sounds in a cluster
drink flat likes ask fact east

- inserting a vowel sound in between
spy school student screen spray



What is the difference between the sounds **p**, **t**, and **k** in the *left* and the *right* columns?

park	spark
peak	speak
pit	spit

top	stop
tool	stool
team	steam

can	scan
care	scare
kin	skin

Pronouncing the -s ending

The s-ending is pronounced three ways according to the end of the word:

-s = /s/ when the word ends in
-f <i>graph</i> → <i>graphs</i>
-k <i>park</i> → <i>parks</i>
-p <i>cup</i> → <i>cups</i>
-t <i>hat</i> → <i>hats</i>

-s = /ɪz/ when the word ends in
-s <i>box</i> → <i>boxes</i>
-sh <i>bush</i> → <i>bushes</i>
-z <i>blouse</i> → <i>blouses</i>
-j <i>page</i> → <i>pages</i>

-s = /z/
when the word does NOT
end in the sounds in the
two lists:
<i>dogs, letters, apples</i>



Exercise: Say the words in each group aloud and decide which one has a different **-s** sound.

- | | | | |
|----|----------|---------|----------|
| 1. | cups | plates | spoons |
| 2. | belts | hats | ties |
| 3. | dishes | gates | pages |
| 4. | dogs | cats | birds |
| 5. | eyes | toes | noses |
| 6. | shoes | dresses | blouses |
| 7. | teachers | doctors | dentists |

Pronouncing the **-ed** ending

The **ed**-ending is pronounced three ways according to the end of the word before adding **-ed**.

<p>-ed = /t/ when the word ends in</p> <p>-ch <i>watch</i> → <i>watched</i></p> <p>-f <i>laugh</i> → <i>laughed</i></p> <p>-k <i>talk</i> → <i>talked</i></p> <p>-p <i>stop</i> → <i>stopped</i></p> <p>-s <i>miss</i> → <i>missed</i></p> <p>-sh <i>push</i> → <i>pushed</i></p>	<p>-ed = /ɪd/ when the word ends in</p> <p>-t <i>want</i> → <i>wanted</i></p> <p><i>start</i> → <i>started</i></p> <p><i>protect</i> → <i>protected</i></p> <p>-d <i>need</i> → <i>needed</i></p> <p><i>hand</i> → <i>handed</i></p> <p><i>decide</i> → <i>decided</i></p>	<p>-ed = /d/</p> <p>when the word does NOT end in the sounds in the two lists.</p> <p><i>played, listened, lived</i></p>
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Exercise: Say the words in each group aloud and decide which one has a different **-ed** sound.

- | | | | |
|----|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. | stopped | started | stated |
| 2. | loved | looked | liked |
| 3. | tasted | traded | talked |
| 4. | wanted | needed | desired |
| 5. | cooked | cleaned | baked |
| 6. | lifted | skipped | hopped |
| 7. | ended | added | danced |

Word stress

In English, we do not say each syllable with the same strength. We say **one** syllable very **loudly** and **all the other syllables** very **quietly**.



TEACHER	JaPAN	CHIna
converSAtion	INteresting	imPORtant

How do you know which syllable is stressed in a word?

- The best way to learn is from experience.
- Look in a dictionary for the phonetic spelling of a word.
- Notice how someone else says that word.
- When you learn a new word, you should also learn its stress pattern.

☞ Many common nouns and adjectives are stressed on the first syllable.

breakfast	father	building	carrot
lovely	funny	stupid	yellow

☞ Two-syllable nouns and verbs: stress on the first syllables when they are nouns and on the last syllable when they are verbs.

1. The band **recorded** a new **record** yesterday.
2. He **presented** his wife with a beautiful **present**.
3. The **desert** is so dry that it is usually **deserted**.



More than words: sentence stress

Pronouncing **every** word in a sentence leads to poor pronunciation! Good pronunciation comes from stressing the right word(s) in each sentence. Don't focus on pronouncing each word.

Listen.

What **time** is it?

It's a beautiful **day**.

I **need** something to **eat**.

I **bought** a new **car**.



Tips for improving pronunciation

- Watch English language news on TV or listen to radio news in English as often as you can. Practice saying common words and phrases after the announcer.
- Whenever you have the opportunity to talk to an English speaker, try to include things you have practiced.
- Ask your listener how a specific word is pronounced. (*How do you say this word? Is this word pronounced " _____"?*)
- Look up a word and its pronunciation in an English dictionary (e.g. Longman, Oxford)
- Practice your pronunciation using various resources on the Internet, for example:
 - <http://www.soundsofenglish.org/pronunciation/index.htm>
 - <http://international.ouc.bc.ca/pronunciation/>
 - <http://evaeaston.com/pr/home.html>
 - <http://www.manythings.org/pp/>



Just for fun

How do you pronounce these words?

apple sugar singer juice paper future jam
computer debt onion cassette busy oil camera

Where do you put stress in these words?

banana hamburger salad money comfortable September