

Native-like Accent Pronunciation Course



Lesson 7

Part 1: Six Different Sounds of T

One thing that can be confusing for students is that the letter “T” in written English can have six different sounds in spoken English.

This causes problems not only in your pronunciation, but also in your listening – because you might not recognize some words that you already know when you hear them spoken by native English speakers.

In this lesson, you’re going to learn all 6 possible pronunciations of the letter

T, with common words for you to practice listening and repeating.

Pronunciation #1 – Normal T

When T is the first letter of a word, or of a stressed syllable, it usually has a “normal” T sound. This is the sound we practiced last lesson:

thththththth. team, task, time, too, tough

pppppppp. attach, between, pretend

Pronunciation #2 – T like a fast “D”

When the letter T is in the middle of the word, between two vowels (often at the beginning of an unstressed syllable) – it has the sound of a fast “D” in American English. You can hear the difference if you compare the British and American pronunciations of **water** and **notice**.

Listen to and repeat these words, pronouncing the T as a fast “D”:

ssssssss. letter

tttttttt. butter

vvvvvvvv. little



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ကကကကကကက.	computer
ဝဝဝဝဝဝဝဝ.	whatever
ဇဇဇဇဇဇဇ.	beautiful
ဗဗဗဗဗဗဗ.	meeting
ငငငငငငင.	getting
အအအအအအအ.	ability
ပပပပပပပပ.	bottom
ကကကကကကက.	artificial
တတတတတတတ.	attic

Here are some typical cases when the T is pronounced like a fast “D”:
When the word ends in –TER (especially in comparative adjectives):

ဧဧဧဧဧဧဧ.	smarter, later, tighter
ဖဖဖဖဖဖဖဖ.	daughter, cheater, writer

When the word ends in –TING

γγγγγγγγ.	writing, sitting, waiting, letting,
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exciting, repeating When the word ends in –TY

ηηηηηηηηη.	capacity, celebrity, humanity, reality
υυυυυ.	city, dirty, pity, eighty, sweaty

Pronunciation #3 – T like “TCH”

In some combinations of letters (like TR, TUE, and TURE), the T sounds like the TCH in watch. We practiced this a little bit last lesson, but let’s continue with some new words:

φφφφφφφφ.	trick, treasure, trade, tradition, tropical, truck
κκκκκκκκκ.	country, entry, chemistry, artistry
λλλλλλλλλ.	statue, virtue
μμμμμμμμ.	picture, nature, mixture, literature, capture, posture
ννννννννν.	situation, mutual



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Pronunciation #4 – TI like “SH”

In words with -TION and -TIOUS, the letters TI have a SH sound like in the word SHE.

oooooooo.	emot tion
ππππππππ.	nat ional
θθθθθθθθ.	relat ion
ρρρρρρρρ.	evol ution
σσσσσσσσ.	condit ion
ττττττττ.	act ion
υυυυυυυυ.	ambit ious
ϖϖϖϖϖϖϖ.	nutrit ious
ωωωωωωωω.	caut ious
ξξξξξξξξ.	flirtat ious

Pronunciation #5 – T as a glottal stop

What exactly is a glottal stop?

Well, the space between your vocal cords is called the “glottis.” To make a glottal stop, you close this space, stopping the flow of air in your throat (not your mouth).

One example is in the middle of the word uh-uh (an informal way to say “no” in English). Notice how the sound stops for a moment, but my mouth doesn’t close. It’s because I’m stopping the sound in my throat. This is a glottal stop.

uh-uh

The letter T becomes a glottal stop in two situations:

1. In the middle of a word after a vowel, N, or R – and before N, M, or L:

- partner
- fitness



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- department
- Atlantic
- treatment
- forgotten
- written
- eaten

Listen to the difference in the word *partner* pronounced with a “normal T” (incorrectly) and with the T as a glottal stop (correctly):

Incorrect: partner

Correct: partner

2. At the end of a word:

- cat
- but
- get
- foot
- what
- start
- light
- put
- shirt
- hot

It sounds like the T disappears – but it is still there! It is just pronounced as a glottal stop. These three examples show the difference:

SEAT (with “normal T” – INCORRECT)

SEAT (with “glottal stop T” – CORRECT)

SEE (with no T at the end)



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Pronunciation #6 – Disappearing T

This varies from person to person, and depends on the region the speaker is from – but in some words, the sound of the letter T really disappears (especially when there is an N or S before it):

interview (*it's like "innerview"*)

center

advantage

wanted

I don't like it.

He didn't come to the party.

The facts are all true.

It costs nine dollars.

I just finished the course.

This pronunciation isn't so important for you to DO in your spoken English... but it's important for you to KNOW that it exists so that you can understand native speakers better.

Practice Sentences

1 – Normal T

Tara's talking about the time she took a class with a terrific teacher.

– T like a fast "D"



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Put a **litt**le bit of **butt**er on the **bot**tom of the pan.

3. T like "TCH"

I **try** to take **int**eresting pictures of **tr**opical **t**rees.

4. TI like "SH"

I'm too **emoti**onal to take **acti**on in this **situati**on.

5. T as a glottal stop

I'm **fat**. What can I do to get **fit** without going on a diet?

Disappearing T

I didn't want to take **advant**age of the **situati**on.

Homework:

7: Part 1 - Record yourself reading these sentences:

- Normal T

Tara's **t**alking about the **t**ime she **t**ook a class with a **t**errific **t**eacher. I
got **ten** **t**ickets **t**o the **t**alk on **T**uesday at **t**welve.

2 - T like a fast "D"

Put a **litt**le bit of **butt**er on the **bot**tom of the pan.

I'm **sitt**ing here **wait**ing for the **writ**ers' meeting to **beg**in.

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6. T like "TCH"

I **try** to take interesting pictures of **tropical trees**.

My country has a **strong** culture and many **traditions**.

7. TI like "SH"

I'm too **emotional** to take **action** in this **situation**.

The leader of the **revolution** is **ambitious** and **pretentious**.

8. T as a glottal stop

I'm **fat**. What can I do to **get fit** without going on a **diet**?

My **partner** **put** the football **helmet** next to the **white**
shirt.

9. Disappearing T

I didn't **want to** take **advantage** of the **situation**.

I **just** found out it **costs** more at the **shopping center**.

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Lesson 7

Part 2: TH Sound – THIN & THIS

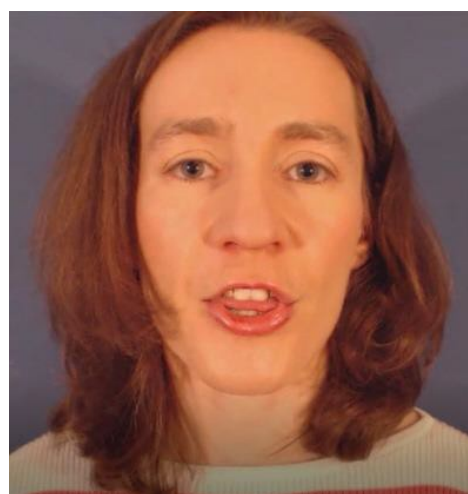
Welcome to part 2 of Lesson 7! We're going to perfect your ability to make the TH sound in English. Most students confuse the sound of TH with F or D – pronouncing “with” as “wiff” and “these” as “dese.”

The essential secret for making a good TH sound is to have the correct mouth position

6- with your tongue in between your teeth:

Do this in front of a mirror so you can check if the position is correct!

In this position, we can make two versions of the TH sound – the “unvoiced” TH (as in thanks and health) and the “voiced” TH (as in “they” and “mother”)



α. Unvoiced TH – THIN /θ/

β. Voiced TH – THIS /ð/

One exercise that feels ridiculous, but helps you make sure your TH is correct is to prolong and exaggerate the TH sound, checking that your tongue is really in the right position. Say each word once with a “long” TH, and then once normally.

χ. ttttthhhanks - thanks

δ. healtttthhhh - health

ε. ttthhhhhey - they

φ. motttthhher – mother

γ.

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Let's practice these words with an unvoiced TH:

- η. **think**
- ι. **thirsty**
 - φ. **theater**
 - κ. **thought**
 - λ. **thousand**
 - μ. **thunder**
 - ν. **throw**
 - ο. **author**
 - π. **method**
 - θ. **without**
 - ρ. **both**
 - σ. **teeth**
 - τ. **earth**
 - υ. **cloth**
 - ϖ. **faith**
 - ω. **south**
 - ξ. **north**
 - ψ. **path**
 - ζ. **youth**

Now practice the difference between the TH sound and the F sound, as well as TH and T:

- αα. deaf / death
- ββ. first / thirst
- χχ. fought / thought
- δδ. free / three
- εε. fret / threat
- φφ. frill / thrill
- γγ. fin / thin
- ηη. boat / both

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υ.	mat / math
φφ.	rat / wrath
κκ.	team / theme
λλ.	tick / thick
μμ.	taught / thought

Practice these words with the voiced TH:

vv.	bro th er
oo.	fa th er
ππ.	to g ether
θθ.	al th ough
ρρ.	wea th er
σσ.	ei th er
ττ.	fu r ther
υυ.	ry th m
ϖϖ.	th at
ωω.	th en
ξξ.	th is
ψψ.	th ere
ζζ.	bre ath e
ααα.	soo th e

The definite article in English also has this sound – but did you know it can be pronounced two different ways? It's usually pronounced **thee** before a word starting with a vowel sound, for example – *the apple, the orange* – and **tha** before a word starting with a consonant sound, for example – *the pen, the lake*.

Note that the rule follows the **sound** of the first letter – so we say *the umbrella* and *the hour* (because the H is silent) – but *the uniform* because “uniform” sounds like it begins with a Y sound.

Now practice the difference between voiced TH and other sounds that



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are commonly confused with it:

βββ.	there / dare
χχχ.	then / den
δδδ.	they / day
εεε.	though / dough
φφφ.	clothing / closing
γγγ.	wetter / weather
ηηη.	udder / other
υυ.υατ / θατ	
φφφ.	ten / then

Practice Sentences

These practice sentences are difficult even for native English speakers! But they are perfect for practicing the TH sounds:

My birthday is on Thursday, September thirteenth.

Their three brothers are healthy and wealthy.

I think they have thirty thin, thirsty cats.

The first death was the sick, thirsty deaf man.

Homework:

7: Part 2- Record yourself reading these sentences:

My birthday is on Thursday, September thirteenth.

They went with their father and mother to the theater.

Their three brothers are healthy and wealthy.



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The three thin women have thirteen loose teeth.

I think they have thirty thin, thirsty cats.

Thanks for the three thousand free theater tickets.

Ted thought he'd taught the students the tenth verb tense.

The first death was the sick, thirsty deaf man.

References:

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