

Native-like Accent Course

Introduction:

The IPA:

The International Phonetic Alphabet was created by the International Phonetic Association as a standardized way to write the sounds of spoken language. The English alphabet has 26 letters which represent 44 sounds. This means that one letter of the alphabet stands for more than one sound, and on the other hand, the same sound is represented by different letters of the alphabet.

Why do we need this?

Because English is not a phonetic language —there's not a 1:1 relationship between letters and sounds.

For example, these words: “Love”, “Cove” and “Move”:

They look the same except for the first letter. You might think they should be pronounced the same except for the first sound. But that's not the case.

‘Love’ has the UH as in BUTTER vowel. ‘Cove’ has the OH diphthong, and ‘move’ has the OO vowel. Uh, oh, oo. Love, cove, move. There are no rules to tell you which word should be pronounced which way, you just have to know. You just have to learn the pronunciation when you learn the word.

So again, we need IPA to write these different sounds so we can see that words are spelled the same, may still be pronounced differently.

There are many confusing factors for English pronunciation: First, there are **Homophones**- words that are spelled differently, but pronounced the same. For example, pear. Just one pronunciation for these two words: pear, pare. There are lots of homophones in American English. So, we need the IPA. Second, there are **Heteronyms**- words that are spelled the same, but are pronounced differently. Example: the word “Dove” which means the bird is pronounced as “Dove” exactly like the vowel in love while “Dove” the past of dive is pronounced as dove like cove.

When you write a sound, in IPA, with a symbol instead of a letter, there's no confusion.

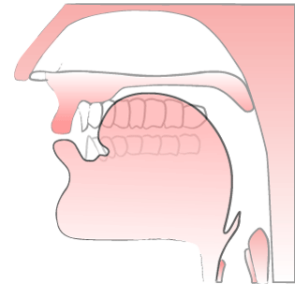
ɪ R <u>E</u> AD	ɪ S <u>I</u> T	ʊ B <u>O</u> OK	uː T <u>O</u> O	ɪə H <u>E</u> RE	eɪ D <u>A</u> Y	John & Sarah Free Materials 1996	
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Lesson 1: SEAT /i:/ / SIT /I/ / SET /e/

Welcome to Lesson 1 of the Native-like Accent pronunciation Course!

Today, we're going to practice the difference between /i:/ (called long e) as in SEAT, /I/ (called short e) as in SIT, and /e/ (called eh sound) as in SET.

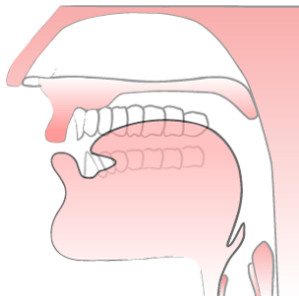
The secret to making the difference between these three sounds is how much you open your mouth:



•



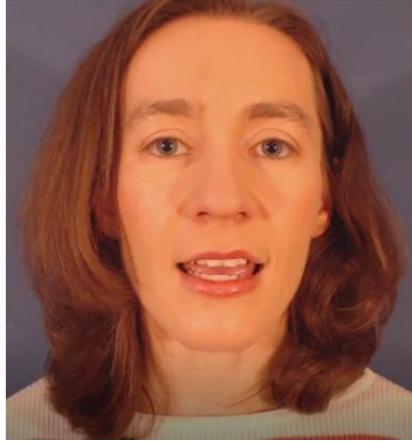
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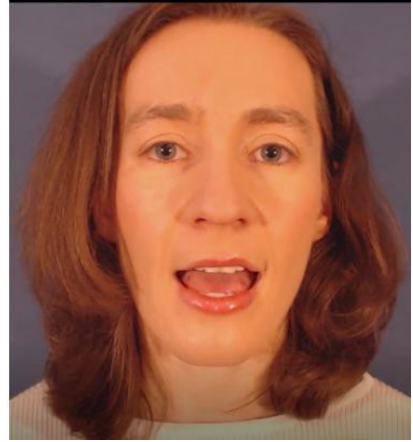
- Watch me, listen and repeat!



EE – SEAT



I – SIT



E - SET

Let's practice each sound individually.

Common words like SEAT:

- easy
- each
- even
- green
- piece

- **key**
- **we**
- **be**
- **see**

Notice that this sound can be spelled several different ways:

e / ea / ee / ie / ey

Common words like SIT:

- **it**
- **if**
- **is**
- **little**
- **big**
- **sick**
- **win**
- **chips**
- **finish**

Common words like SET:

- **egg**
- **extra**
- **end**
- **ten**
- **head**
- **friend**
- **many**
- **said**
- **again**

Notice that this sound can be spelled: e / ea / ie / a / ai

Now let's practice making the difference:

- leave / live
- heat / hit
- sheep / ship
- meet / met
- read / red
- teen / ten
- fell / fill
- mess / miss
- dead / did
- these / this

Are you ready for something more difficult? You're going to see two words, and I'm going to say only one of them. You have 3 seconds to identify the word before the answer appears.

- beat / bit
- wheel / will
- seen / sin
- cheek / check
- feel / fell
- beast / best
- bitter / better
- hill / hell
- since / sense

(answers at the end of this lesson)

It's important to practice these words in sentences, too. Here are 9 practice sentences: 3 of them focus on the sound in SEAT, 3 of them focus on the sound in SIT, and 3 of them focus on the sound in SET.

I'm going to say each sentence slowly one time, then at normal speed one time – and I want you to repeat both times.

Practice Sentences

Focus on SEAT:

- ☐ He teaches reading to three people.
- ☐ We keep the sheep out of the heat.
- She doesn't believe we should eat meat.

Focus on SIT:

- There's a bit of chicken and fish in the kitchen.
- It's not a quick fix for the business.
- ☐ Jim lives in a big building in the middle of the city.

Focus on SET:

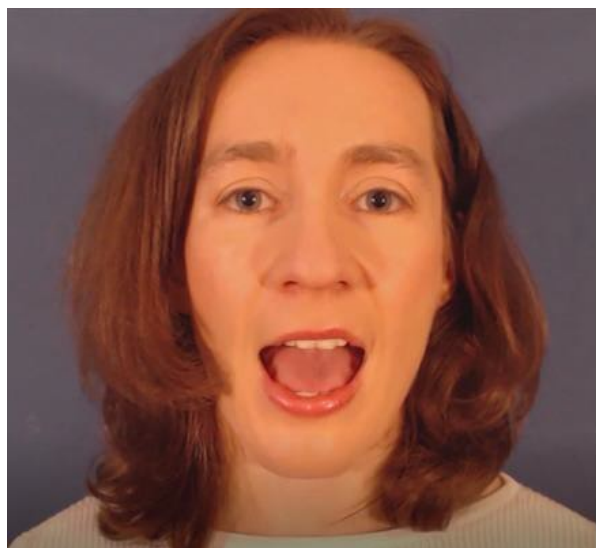
- ☐ Wendy said she met many men.
- ☐ My best friend Kevin checked the test.
- ☐ Don't put your wet, sweaty head on the bed.

Answers to "Which word?" – beat, will, sin, check, feel, best, bitter, hell, sense

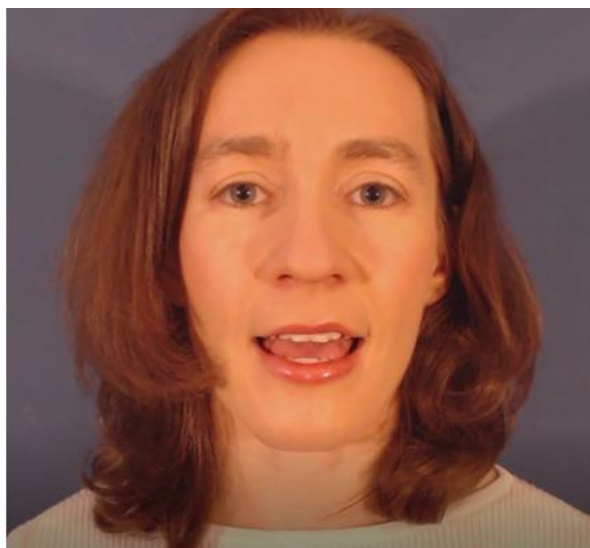
Lesson 2: MAT /æ/ - MATE /ei/- MET /e/

This lesson introduces two new sounds – the /æ/ sound in **mat** and the /ei/ sound in **mate** – and compares them with the /e/ sound in **met**, which we practiced in the last lesson.

First let's look at the sound in **mat** and the sound in **met**. To make the difference, you open your mouth a little more for **mat**. Watch me and repeat:



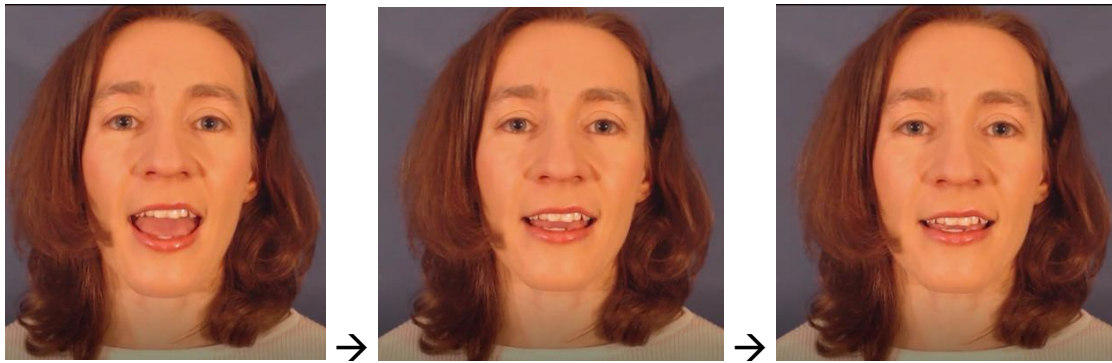
MAT



MET

One good practice exercise to help you feel the difference is to alternate saying the two sounds like this: **A – E – A – E – A – E**

Now, the **mat** sound and the **met** sound are single vowel sounds. But the **mate** sound is a diphthong – that means it's a combination of two vowel sounds together. This means your mouth moves as you pronounce it – starting more open and then closing. Watch me pronounce it slowly to show the movement:



During the pronunciation of this diphthong, your mouth slowly closes

Let's practice each sound individually.

Common words like MAT:

- ❑ **a**pple
- ❑ **a**dd
- ❑ **a**ctor
- ❑ d**a**d
- ❑ c**a**t
- ❑ sn**a**ck
- ❑ bl**a**ck
- ❑ pr**a**ctice
- ❑ h**a**ppy

This sound is always spelled with the letter A.

Common words like MET:

- ❑ **e**ffort
- ❑ **e**pisode
- ❑ **e**xcellent
- ❑ w**e**t
- ❑ s**e**nd
- ❑ br**e**ad
- ❑ g**e**nerous
- ❑ f**e**ather

❑ present

Common words like MATE:

❑ eight

❑ aid

❑ age

❑ play

❑ break

❑ late

❑ main

❑ say

❑ okay

Notice that this sound can be spelled: ei / ai / a e / ea / ay

Here's one tip that can help you know if the letter A has a sound like MAT or a sound like MATE:

❑ a + consonant + consonant = sounds like MAT

apple, black, fast

❑ a + consonant + (end of word) = sounds like MAT

plan, cat, bag

❑ a + consonant + vowel = sounds like MATE

plane, lake, state, ape

This rule applies only to the A in stressed syllables (and it is not perfect – there are exceptions!)

Now try to make the difference:

❑ sand / send

❑ gas / guess

❑ man / men

❑ tap / tape

❑ rat / rate

❑ pan / pain

- ❑ wait / wet
- ❑ sale / sell
- ❑ raid / red
- ❑ taste / test

Now you're going to see two words, and I'm going to say only one of them. You have 3 seconds to identify the word before the answer appears.

- ❑ flash / flesh
- ❑ rant / rent
- ❑ cattle / kettle
- ❑ mad / made
- ❑ snack / snake
- ❑ clam / claim
- ❑ chase / chess
- ❑ late / let
- ❑ main / men

(answers at the end of this lesson)

Let's review these three sounds one more time:

- ❑ To say the A in MAT, your mouth is more open.
- ❑ To say the E in MET, your mouth is more closed.
- ❑ To say the A in MATE, your mouth moves from open to more closed.

Now let's try the practice sentences – repeat each one slowly and then fast.

Practice Sentences

Focus on MAT:

- ❑ My dad attacked that rat with a bat.
- ❑ Does Patty have a fat black cat?
- ❑ The happy aactor had a snack aafter practice.

Focus on MET:

- ☐ The red bed is very expensive.
- It's better to send a second letter.
- ☐ I left my sweater next to the bread at breakfast.

Focus on MATE:

- ☐ They played a great game.
- ☐ Kate complained about the rain while Nate patiently prayed.
- I'm afraid to stay late at the train station.

Answers to "Which word?"

flesh, rant, cattle, mad, snake, clam, chase, let, men

Lesson 3: NOT / NOTE

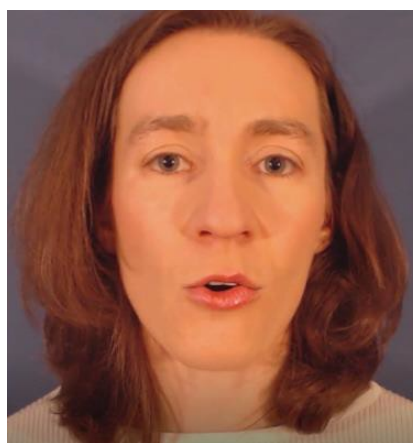
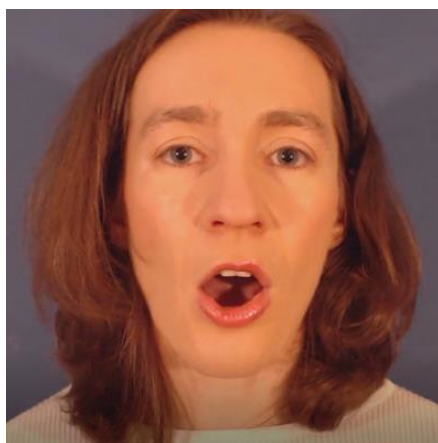
Today we're going to work on two new vowel sounds: the /ɒ/ sound in **not** and the /əʊ/ sound in **note**.

The sound in **not** is very simple – just open your mouth and say **AHH**:



AHHH - NOT

The sound in **note** is another diphthong – remember, that means your mouth moves as you say it. Your mouth starts semi-open, and then your lips come together.



OHHH - NOTE

These two sounds are pretty different – and it's not so difficult to distinguish them. The problems and confusion come from the fact that both of them are spelled with the letter "o" – so when you're reading a word in English, it's hard to know which way to pronounce it.

Common words like NOT:

- ☐ hot
- ☐ box
- ☐ stop
- ☐ option
- ☐ object
- ☐ occupy
- ☐ common
- ☐ possible
- ☐ respond

As you can see, this sound is often spelled with the letter O. But there are some words that have the **not** sound spelled with the letter A. These include:

- ☐ father
- ☐ want
- ☐ wash
- ☐ wach

As well as some words where the letter A is followed by R, like **car** and **bar** – but we'll focus on vowels with the R sound in a later lesson.

The sound in **note** can be spelled in various ways:

- ☐ go
- ☐ over
- ☐ phone
- ☐ snow
- ☐ owner
- ☐ grow

- ❑ **boat**
- ❑ **road**
- ❑ **goal**
- ❑ **soul**
- ❑ **although**

OK, let's do some practice. Listen to and repeat these pairs of words:

- ❑ got / goat
- ❑ on / own
- ❑ sock / soak
- want / won't
- ❑ hop / hope
- ❑ fox / folks
- ❑ rob / robe
- ❑ clock / cloak
- ❑ fond / phoned
- ❑ mop / mope
- ❑ polish / Polish

Here's a new exercise: you're going to see four words. Three of them have the same sound, and one of them has a different sound. You'll have 7 seconds to say the words yourself and identify the word with a different sound – then the answer will appear.

Here's an example: **rock / stop / stole / pot**

The different word is **stole**, because all the other words have the sound in **not**, but **stole** has the sound in **note**.

- ❑ honor / home / lock / forgot
- ❑ open / monster / oppportunity / closet
- ❑ frozen / know / shoulders / drop
- ❑ operate / soap / toes / notebook

Answers at the end of this lesson.

Practice Sentences

Focus on NOT:

- ☐ The model got a lot of comments on her body.
- ☐ Bob paid top dollar for that clock.
- ☐ The doctor forgot to lock up the documents.
- It's not possible for Rob to go to the rock concert and the conference.

Focus on NOTE:

- I don't know if there's snow where we're going.
- ☐ The only hotel is on a road close to the ocean.
- My coach won't notice that I broke my toe.
- ☐ The soldier told me that the old yellow boat is slow.

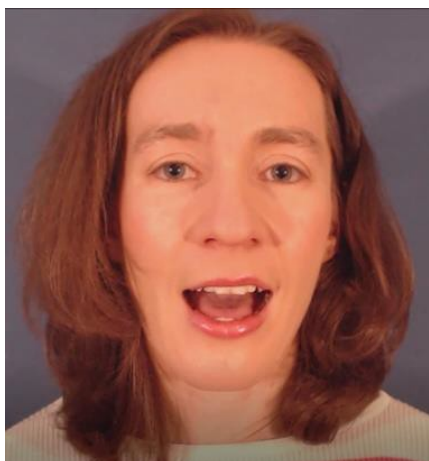
Answers to "Which word is different?" – home, open, drop, operate

Lesson 4: LOW / LAW

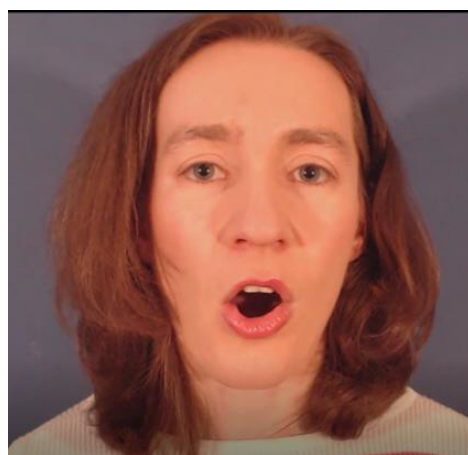
Welcome to Lesson 4 of the American English Pronunciation Course!

Today we're going to continue working with the /əʊ/ sound in **note** and **low**, and compare it to the /ɔ:/ sound in **law**.

To make the **aw** sound in **law**, a good exercise is to start with the "AHH" sound that we learned in the last lesson, and make your mouth more round. Watch me alternate these two sounds:

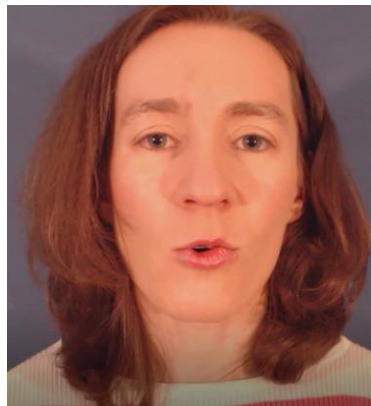
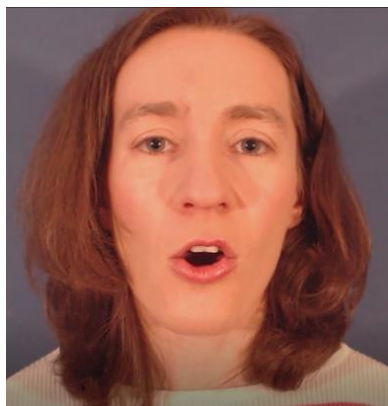


AH



AW

Remember that to make the sound in **low**, start with your mouth a little bit open, and bring your lips together as you pronounce it.



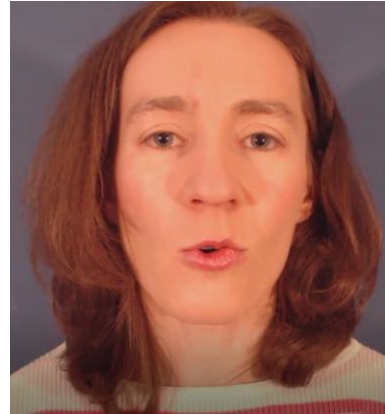
OH

Let's practice all three sounds – **ah** / **aw** / **ow**.

So to make the difference between **law** and **low**, remember that at the end of **law** your mouth stays open; and at the end of **low** your mouth is almost closed. Watch me, listen, and repeat.



End of LAW



End of LOW

Common words like LAW:

- ❑ **saw**
- ❑ **flaw**
- ❑ **boss**
- ❑ **talk**
- ❑ **sauce**
- ❑ **off**
- ❑ **cost**
- ❑ **audio**
- ❑ **caught**
- ❑ **taught**
- ❑ **bought**
- ❑ **thought**

As you can see, there are many different spellings for this sound.

Let's practice some more words with the sound in **low**:

- ❑ **ago**

- ❑ radio
- ❑ potato
- ❑ show
- ❑ bowl
- don't
- ❑ coat
- ❑ poetry
- ❑ follow

Ready to practice? Try to make the difference between these pairs of words:

- ❑ bald / bold
- ❑ flaw / flow
- ❑ cost / coast
- ❑ pause / pose
- ❑ saw / so
- ❑ bought / boat
- ❑ hall / hole
- ❑ vault / volt
- ❑ caught / coat
- ❑ lawn / loan
- ❑ chalk / choke

Good job! Now let's do the "Which word has a different sound?" exercise.

Again, you're going to see four words on the screen. You need to say them and identify the word with a different sound. After 7 seconds, I will say the words and the answer will appear.

- ❑ autumn / only / soft / pause
- ❑ ball / walk / dog / coach
- ❑ both / window / how / whole
- ❑ told / hotel / shoes / rose

Answers at the end of this lesson.

Practice Sentences

Focus on LOW:

- ☐ I suppose most poets are lonely.
- I'm throwing away most of the bowls that I own.
- My co-workers don't focus on the goals.
- ☐ The remote control is next to the phone.

Focus on LAW:

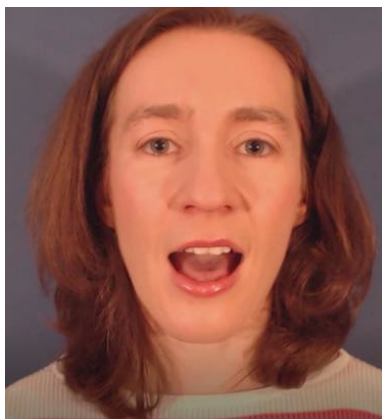
- ☐ The coffee at the office is always awful.
- ☐ I thought you taught your daughter to draw.
- ☐ My boss paused awkwardly while talking to the audience.
- ☐ They caught the guy who called the author a fraud and ran off.

Answers to "Which word is different?" - only, coach, how, shoes

Lesson 5: POT / PART

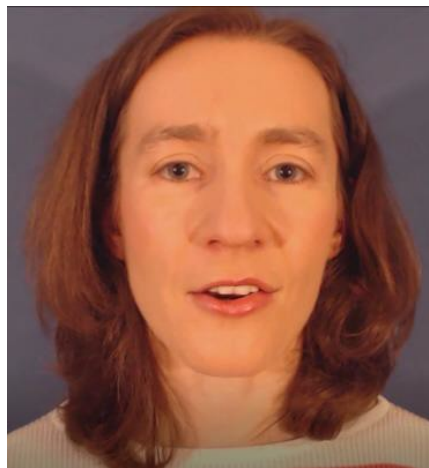
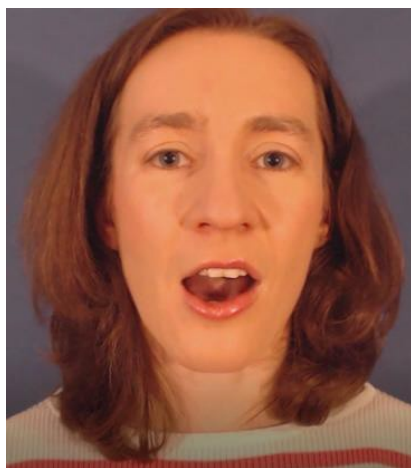
Today we're going to begin studying vowels that are followed by the letter R – and we'll start with the words **pot** and **part**.

We practiced the / **ɒ** / sound in **pot** in lesson 3 – remember, just open your mouth and say **AHH**:



AHH – POT

To make the sound in **part**, begin with **AHH** and then close your mouth into an R sound. It's exactly like the English word “are.” Watch me, listen, and repeat:



AAAAAARRRRRRR - PART

Now let's practice the contrast between the two sounds. Repeat after me.

AHH – AR – POT – PART

This difference is important, because you don't want to confuse the sentences, "I'm going to the party" and "I'm going to the potty"! (Potty is a slang word for toilet).

Let's review the sound in **pot** with some new practice words:

- ❑ **bottle**
- ❑ **modern**
- ❑ **foggy**
- ❑ **popular**
- ❑ **hobby**
- ❑ **college**
- ❑ **bomb**
- ❑ **toddler**
- ❑ **swallow**

Now practice the sound in **part**:

- ❑ **art**
- ❑ **arm**
- ❑ **argue**
- ❑ **car**
- ❑ **far**
- ❑ **star**
- ❑ **charge**
- ❑ **market**
- ❑ **dark**

Time to test your ability to make the difference – listen to and repeat these pairs of words:

- ❑ dock / dark
- ❑ God / guard

- ☐ hot / heart
- ☐ shock / shark
- ☐ hop / harp
- ☐ cotton / carton
- ☐ dot / dart
- ☐ mock / mark
- ☐ scoff / scarf
- ☐ potty / party
- ☐ shop / sharp
- ☐ stock / stark

Now try to identify which one of the two words I'm saying. You have 3 seconds to decide before the answer appears.

- ☐ God / guard
- ☐ hot / heart
- ☐ shock / shark
- ☐ mock / mark
- ☐ potty / party
- ☐ shop / sharp
- ☐ cotton / carton

(Answers at the end of this lesson)

How did you do? Were you able to hear the difference between **AHH** and **AR**?

Let's try some practice sentences.

Practice Sentences

Focus on POT:

- ☐ That **h**obby is **n**ot **p**opular at **c**olleges.
- ☐ Please **s**top **w**atching TV and **w**ash the **p**ots and **b**ottles!
- ☐ My **f**ather **g**ot a **c**ommon **b**ox with a **l**ock.
- ☐ I was **s**hocked that the **m**odern **c**locks were out of **s**tock at the **s**hop.

Focus on PART:

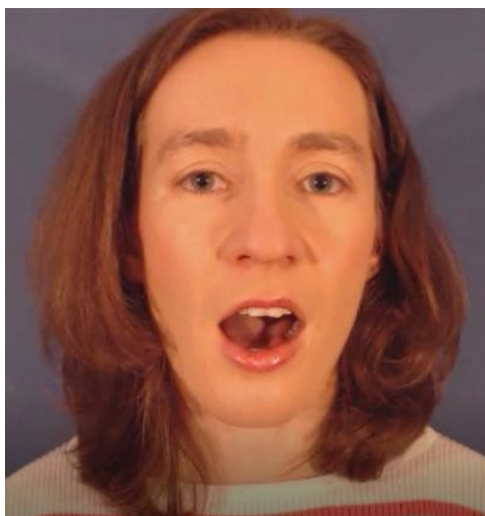
- It's **hard** to drive the **car** to the **market**.
- ☐ The movie **star** and **guards** stayed **far** away from the **party** at the **bar**.
- There's a **large** **dark** **mark** on my **aarm** – it's a **scar** from a **shark** bite.
- ☐ **Are** the **aartists** **aarguing** about the **charges** on the credit **card**?

You've finished lesson 5! In the next two lessons, we're going to learn four more combinations of vowels with R.

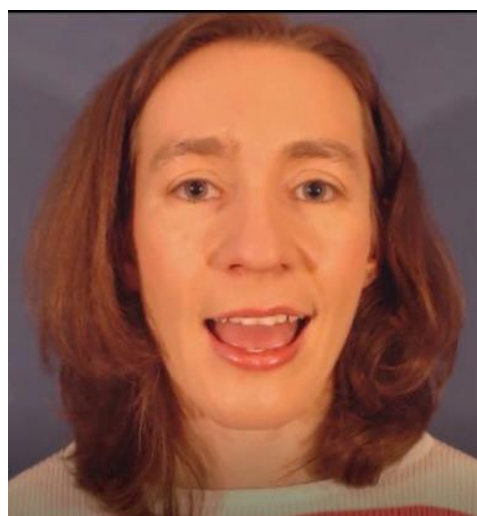
Answers to "Which word?" – God, heart, shark, mock, potty, shop, carton

Lesson 6: CAR / CARE

Today we're going to continue practicing the /a:/ sound in **car** and compare it to the /ei/ sound in **care**. The difference in mouth position between these two sounds is very small – watch me alternate saying them and try to see the difference:



AR (CAR)



AIR (CARE)

For the sound in **car**, my mouth is open more vertically, and for the sound in **care**, my mouth is open more horizontally. Now listen and repeat:

AR – AIR

AR – CAR

AIR – CARE

CAR – CARE

Let's practice some new words with the sound in **car**:

❑ **farm**

❑ **start**

- ❑ **barn**
- ❑ **chart**
- ❑ **parking**
- ❑ **garlic**
- ❑ **archive**
- ❑ **arbitrary**
- ❑ **arthritis**

This sound is always spelled AR – with one exception, the word **heart**.

Now let's practice the sound in **care**:

- ❑ share
- ❑ square
- ❑ area
- ❑ **fair**
- ❑ **hair**
- ❑ stairs
- ❑ bear
- ❑ where
- ❑ their

As you can see, there are many different ways to spell this sound.

Now let's practice the difference – listen to and repeat these pairs of words:

- ❑ bar / bear
- ❑ car / care
- ❑ far / fair
- ❑ char / chair
- ❑ mar / mare
- ❑ par / pair
- ❑ scar / scare
- ❑ spar / spare
- ❑ star / stair
- ❑ tar / tear

The next exercise is “Which word is different?” You’ll see four words, and you have seven seconds to pronounce them yourself and identify the word with a different sound before I say them and give you the answer.

- aren’t / rare / farther / marble
- ☐ careful / army / radar / alarm
- ☐ daring / party / garbage / argument
- ☐ there / scared / pear / cards
- ☐ barely / fairly / hardly / hairy
- ☐ airport / wearing / staring / artificial

To finish the lesson, try some practice sentences:

Practice Sentences

Focus on CAR:

- ☐ Are the stars visible in the dark?
- ☐ I threw the charred part of the food in the garbage.
- ☐ The army started to march when the alarm sounded.

Focus on CARE:

- There’s a pair of chairs next to the stairs.
- ☐ Be careful to share the spare supplies fairly.
- ☐ She wears her hair in a rare style.

You’ve finished lesson 6! Now you can better differentiate between AR and AIR. Next Lesson, we’ll learn and practice three more vowels with R.

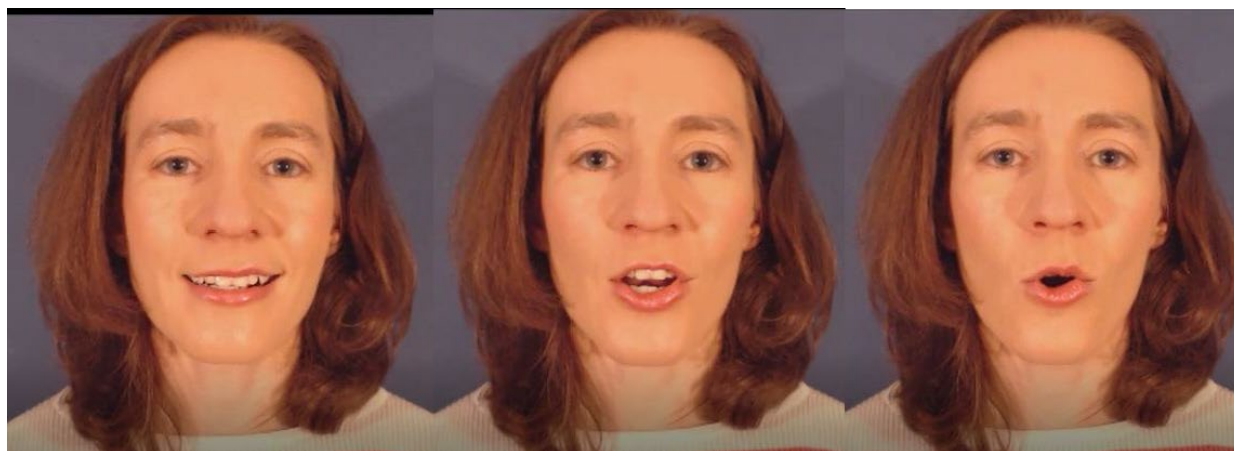
Answers to "Which word is different?"

rare, careful, daring, cars, hardly, artificial

Lesson 7: STEER / STIR / STORE

Today we'll finish our study of vowels with R by practicing the sounds in **Steer** /iə/, **stir** /ɜ:/, /ə:/, and /ɔ:/ **store**.

All of these sounds end in R, and the difference is in the starting mouth position:



STEER

STIR

STORE

- For **steer**, your mouth starts in an open horizontal position, like the sound in the word **seat** from Lesson 1.
- In the word **store**, your mouth starts in an “O” shape.
- In the word **stir**, your mouth is in a “middle” position between the **steer** sound and the **store** sound.

Watch me and you'll see the difference – and also try to repeat it.

EER – STEER

OR – STORE

IR – STIR

Let's practice the sound in **steer**:

- ❑ **here**
- ❑ sinc**ere**
- ❑ atmosph**ere**
- ❑ appe**ar**
- ❑ **ear**rings
- ❑ **near**
- ❑ care**er**
- ❑ **beer**
- ❑ volunt**eer**

As you can see, this sound is usually spelled ERE, EAR, or EER. There are also a few words with IER, like **fierce**, **pierce**, and **cashier**.

Now let's practice the sound in **stir**:

- ❑ w**ere**
- ❑ p**er**fect
- ❑ t**urn**
- ❑ b**ir**d
- ❑ **learn**
- ❑ w**or**k
- ❑ **cour**age
- ❑ sug**ar**
- ❑ doct**or**

Notice the many different spellings. All of these words have the same sound – the ER sound – so don't be fooled by the written form of the word! I'll talk more about this later in the lesson.

Listen to and repeat these words with the OR sound in **store**:

- ❑ m**ore**
- ❑ bef**ore**
- ❑ expl**ore**
- ❑ **or**der
- ❑ **or**ange

- ❑ **or**ganize
- ❑ **for**est
- ❑ **st**ory
- ❑ **cor**ner
- ❑ **to**ur
- ❑ **four**
- ❑ **c**ourse
- ❑ **d**oor
- ❑ **p**oor
- ❑ **f**loor

This sound can be spelled ORE, OR, OUR, and OOR.

Let's go back to the EER sound for a moment. Some students have difficulty making the difference between a word with the EE sound and a word with the EER sound – so try practicing with these pairs:

- ❑ be / beer
- ❑ fee / fear
- ❑ ease / ears
- ❑ knee / near
- ❑ piece / pierce
- ❑ she / sheer
- ❑ tea / tear
- ❑ weed / weird

And let's do a few exercises of "Which word do I say?" You'll have three seconds to identify the correct word before the answer appears.

- ❑ bead / beard
- ❑ cheese / cheers
- ❑ he / hear
- ❑ pea / peer
- ❑ tease / tears

Answers at the end of this lesson

It can also be difficult to distinguish the EER sound and the ER sound – so let's practice a few pairs:

- ❑ bird / beard
- ❑ her / hear
- ❑ purse / pierce
- ❑ fur / fear
- ❑ word / weird

Let's focus on this ER sound for a moment. There are a few common pronunciation errors that many students make due to the irregular spelling in English.

Common Error #1

Pronouncing **urgent** as "OOR – gent," with a strong "U" sound. But this word is actually pronounced "ER – gent," as if it began with the letter E. The words **hurry, purple, return,** and **occur** also have the ER sound, even though they are spelled with the letter U.

Common Error #2

A similar error also happens with words ending in –URE, such as **picture**. Sometimes students say "PIC – toor," which is incorrect. The word is really pronounced more like "PIC – cher" with the ER sound. (We'll talk about the "t" and the "ch" sound in a later lesson).

Here are more words with the ER sound: **nature, pressure, measure** – remember that the end of these words is pronounced ER and not UR.

Common Error #3

I frequently hear students mispronounce the word "work." – They pronounce the "O" like an "O" – but in reality, it sounds like "werk" – it's that same ER sound, even though it's spelled with an "O."

This is the case with many words beginning with WOR, like **word, worse, worry,** and **world**. (Pronounced "werd, werse, worry, and world").

Common Error #4

In general, the letters OR or AR, when they are in an unstressed syllable, are pronounced with the ER sound. You can see this in the word **forget**. It is not pronounced like a combination of the words “for” and “get” – instead, the first part sounds like “fer” – “ferget.”

A few more examples are **effort**, **comfort**, and **grammar** (“effert, comfort, grammer”) – in fact, many native English speakers misspell the word “grammar” because of this pronunciation difference at the end of the word.

Now let’s practice a bit with the OR sound in **store**. Some students get this mixed up with the AW sound in **saw** – so let’s do some practice.

- saw / sore
- paw / poor
- law / lore
- fought / fort
- flaw / floor
- raw / roar
- cause / cores
- sauce / source
- often / orphan
- draw / drawer

That last one is difficult. The first word is pronounced “draw” and the second word is pronounced “dror.”

Practice Sentences

Here are some sentences focusing on the sound in **steer**:

- My volunteering interferes with my career as an engineer.
- It’s clear that beer brings cheer to my peers.
- The cashier had severe hearing problems for years.

Sentences focusing on the sound in **stir**:

- The third picture of the bird is worse than the first.
- The teacherer prefers to hurry and return to work early.
- The girl in the shirt and skirt searched for a purple purse.

Note that the word “for” in this sentence sounds like “fer” – this is because of the rhythm of natural spoken English. We’ll study more about this later in the course.

Sentences focusing on the sound in **store**:

- I bought four more oranges at the corner store.
- Let’s explore the forest in the morning, before the tour.
- George told a short, boring story about a sports award.

You’ve finished lesson 7! The good news is that we’re finished with the letter R for now. Next Lesson, you’ll practice three new sounds as in the words **but**, **foot**, and **boot**.

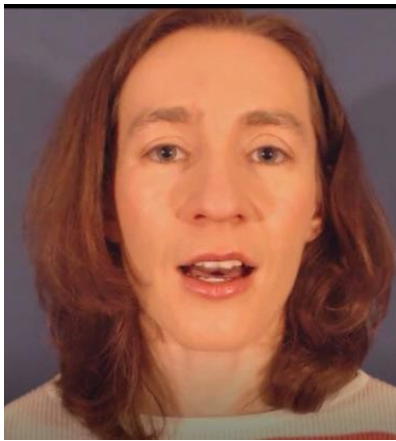
Answers to "Which word?"

beard, cheese, he, peer, tease

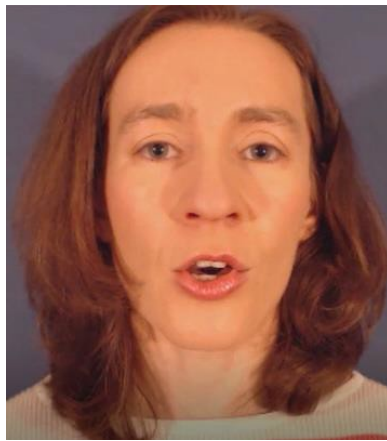
Lesson 8: BUT / BOOT / FOOT

Today we'll practice three very similar sounds in the words **but** / **ʌ** /, **boot** / **u:** /, and

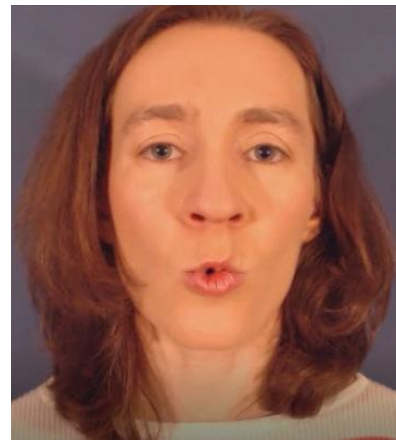
Foot / **u** / . The key difference between these 3 sounds is in the position of your lips.



BUT



FOOT



BOOT

- In the word **but**, your lips are relaxed.
- In the word **foot**, your lips come forward a bit.
- In the word **boot**, your lips come together and forward even more.

Watch me and repeat the sounds:

UH - BUT

U - FOOT

OO - BOOT

Let's practice the sound in **but**:

- **u**p
- **u**nder
- m**u**ch
- c**o**me
- y**ou**ng

- does
- blood
- what
- appear

You can see that there are a few different ways to spell this sound. One interesting thing is that the letter “A” in unstressed syllables has this same “UH” sound – as in the words **appear**, **about**, **again**, and **away**.

Let’s practice the sound in **foot**:

- book
- took
- good
- put
- full
- woman
- could
- should
- would

I want to call particular attention to the word **woman**, because there’s often confusion about the pronunciation. The singular form is pronounced “WUH – min,” and the plural form is pronounced “WI – min.”

Here are some words with the same sound as in **boot**:

- to
- who
- move
- rule
- blue
- food
- school
- pool
- new

- jewel
- group
- routine
- soup
- fruit
- cruel

Most of the difficulty in distinguishing these three sounds comes from the spelling of the words:

Spelling →	OO	U	OU
Sound 1: BUT	blood	bus	young
Sound 2: FOOT	book	push	-----
Sound 3: BOOT	boot	rude	group
			round (OW sound: tomorrow)

To practice, we're going to do ten exercises of "Which word is different?" You'll have seven seconds to decide - before I say the words and the answer appears.

1. **BUT:** come / son / number / nuclear
2. **BUT:** publish / good / couple / flood
3. **BUT:** suddenly / done / touch / coupon
4. **FOOT:** cook / food / wood / bullet
5. **FOOT:** stupid / put / full / took
6. **FOOT:** double / could / stood / look

7. **BOOT:** room / push / soup / juice
8. **BOOT:** true / move / lucky / view
9. **BOOT:** moon / although / through / shoe
10. **BOOT:** bus / roof / who / suit

(Answers at the end of this lesson)

Practice Sentences

Focus on **BUT:**

- My mother and brother love money very much.
- This country sometimes doesn't punish young troublemakers.
- We had fun in the sun with a couple of our cousins.

Focus on **FOOT:**

- Look in the cookbook for a pudding recipe with no sugar.
- The woman stood on one foot.
- I took the cushion and put it on the wooden chair.

Focus on **BOOT:**

- Julia's blue shoes are near the pool.
- The food at the school will improve soon.
- I always choose the new fruit juice to boost my energy.

You've finished Lesson 8! Next Lesson, we'll finish our study of vowels before continuing to consonants.

Answers to "Which word is different?"

- | | |
|------------|-------------|
| 1. nuclear | 6. double |
| 2. good | 7. push |
| 3. coupon | 8. lucky |
| 4. food | 9. although |
| 5. stupid | 10. bus |

Lesson 9: NIGHT / NOISE / NOW

Welcome to Lesson 9 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today we're going to work on the sounds in **night** /ai/, **noise** /ɔi/, and **now** /au/. Let's practice each sound individually.

Night

The sound in **night** is one of the first sounds you learned in English – it's exactly the same as the word "I." Like many sounds in English, it has several spellings. Listen and repeat:

Spelled with **i**:

- smile
- nine
- white
- kind
- library
- item
- final
- private

Spelled with **igh** (often before **t**):

- right
- light
- night
- sight
- high

We also have **sign** and **height**. However, the sound in **weight** is different – it is the same as in **wait** and **late**. It's just one more example of how irregular the English language is!

Spelled with **y** and **uy**:

- my
- cry
- type
- reply
- buy
- guy
- eye

Many students confuse this sound with other sounds that can also be spelled with the letter “i” – so let’s do some “Which word is different?” exercises. You have seven seconds to identify which word does NOT have the “I” sound.

1. mind / idea / bicycle / sick
2. written / fire / satisfy / trying
3. science / child / surprise / children
4. client / analyze / piece / tie

(Answers at the end of this lesson)

Now you can try the practice sentences:

- The smiling child is riding a nice white bike.
- I was surprised by his wise ideas about the climate crisis.
- My private client lied to me and tried to start a fight.

Noise

Now let’s look at the OI in **noise**. This sound is easy to identify – it’s typically spelled OI or OY. Listen and repeat:

- noise
- avoid
- join
- point
- boy
- toy
- annoy

- enjoyoy

This sound isn't usually confused with other sounds in English, so let's go right to the practice sentences.

- The noise of the boys' voices annoyed the employees.
- The royal family avoided eating the poisoned oysters.
- There's no point in joining the loyalty program.

Now

Finally we have the OW sound in **now**, which can be spelled OW or OU. Listen and repeat:

- now
- brown
- crowded
- power
- allow
- around
- found
- south
- mountain
- announce

The problem is that OW and OU have multiple pronunciations. For example, the words **low**, **grown**, and **own** have the OH sound in NO. But the words **allow**, **brown**, and **owl** have the OW sound in NOW.

The letters OU are even worse, because they can have three possible pronunciations. Words like **young** and **country** have the sound in BUT. Words like **group**, **soup**, and **coupon** have the sound in BOOT. And words like **sound**, **count**, and **house** have the sound in NOW.

Let's practice the difference to help you avoid errors:

- coach / couch

- hose / house
- know / now
- done / down
- groaned / ground
- devote / devout
- load / loud
- tone / town

We'll finish this lesson with four practice sentences focusing on the OW sound.

- The brown owl flew south in the clouds over the mountain.
- The loud crowd drowned out the sound of her shouting.
- I found a mouse in a towel under the couch in my house.
- Many houses around the big tower downtown have now lost power.

You've finished Lesson 9! Next Lesson, we'll start working on consonants, beginning with the difference between B and P.

Answers to "Which word is different?"

- sick
- written
- children
- piece

Lesson 10: PACK / BACK

Welcome to Lesson 10 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today we begin our study of consonants with a simple pair of sounds: the **/p/** P sound in **pack** and the **/b/** B sound in **back**.

The sounds of P and B have the same mouth position – you put your lips together and then open them, letting out a small “explosion” of air. The difference is that the P sound is unvoiced, meaning there’s no sound except for the air. And the B sound is voiced, meaning you make some sound with your vocal cords.



In both P and B, you release a small “explosion” of air between your lips

Let's practice the P sound first:

- **p**ay
- **p**ublic
- **p**en
- **p**aper
- na**p**kin
- **p**eople
- cu**p**
- li**p**

- keep**p**

Now practice the B sound:

- **b**ig
- **b**est
- **b**aby
- ha**b**it
- ro**bb**er
- a**b**sent
- ta**b**
- **b**ul**b**
- ru**b**

There are hundreds of pairs of words in English that are different only by the P and B sound. Here are a few for you to practice:

- pear / bear
- pig / big
- pad / bad
- simple / symbol
- rope / robe
- mop / mob
- crap / crab
- cup / cub

Now test your listening and identify which word I say:

1. pill / **bill**
2. **staple** / stable
3. **lap** / lab
4. **repel** / rebel
5. pride / **bride**
6. **punch** / bunch
7. **peach** / beach

There are a few common combinations with P and B, like PR and BR. Let's practice:

- **pretty, present, product, prove, praise, prroud**
- **brief, bring, bread, broom, brush, brain, bright**

Another combination is PL and BL:

- **pleasant, plastic, plus, plane, plenty, place, plural**
- **bleed, blink, blast, blonde, blow, blame, blind**

We also have combinations of PS and BS at the ends of words. But there's a difference here – in PS, the S has an "S" sound – but in BS, the S has a "Z" sound. Listen and repeat:

- stopps, helpps, cupps, lipps, dropps
- rubs, ribs, tabs, knobs, robes

Finally, practice these words with a silent P and a silent B:

- pneumonia, psychology, receipt, cupboard, coup
- climb, comb, crumb, debt, doubt, numb, subtle, tomb

Let's do some practice sentences. Try to challenge yourself to say them fast:

Focus on P:

- The happy pastor paused to pray for the people while preaching in public.
- Please prepare a plan for purchasing plenty of profitable products.
- I dropped the cup of pepper soup on my lap during the trip.

Focus on B:

- The big black bear bit the boy and broke his bone.
- My blonde brother brought some beautiful brown bread back from the bakery.

- **B**ob was a**b**le to **b**reak the terrible ha**b**it of **b**eing a**b**sent from a num**b**er of **b**iology la**b**classes.

You've finished Lesson 10! Next Lesson, we'll practice comparing the sounds in **came** and **game**.

Lesson 11: CAME / GAME

Welcome to Lesson 11 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today we'll focus on the difference between **/k/ came** and **/g/game**.

Both of these sounds are made in the back of your throat. The only difference is that the C sound is unvoiced, and the G sound is voiced.

Let's practice these words with the sound in **came**:

- **c**at
- **k**ee**p**
- **c**ase
- **k**ill
- **acc**ount
- es**c**ape
- **f**ac**t**
- s**k**ip
- **c**oo**k**
- **c**ake
- too**k**
- dar**k**

This sound can be spelled with **C** or **K**... but it's also included in some words with **X**. The word **explain**, for example, is pronounced **EK** – splain, and not **E** – splain. The word **excited** is similar – the correct pronunciation is **EK** – si – ted, and not **E** – si – ted. The words **taxi** and **relax** also have the “C” sound inside the letter X.

Another place this sound appears is in words spelled with **QU**, which in English, has the sound of **KW**. Be careful with words like **question** – the correct pronunciation is **KWES** – tion, and not **KES** - tion. Another example is **require** – the QU is pronounced with the same KW sound.

Now let's practice some words with the “G” sound:

- **g**ive
- **gu**ess
- **g**one
- **gu**ide
- **a**gain
- **l**egal
- **a**ngry
- **l**ugg**g**age
- **b**ag
- **d**og
- **l**eg
- **v**ag**ue**

This sound can be spelled **g** or **gu**.

Be careful to avoid this common pronunciation error – in words that begin with GU + a vowel, the U is NOT pronounced:

- guard = ***gard*** (not *gward*)
- guide
- guess
- guitar

It's the same with words ending in –GUE:

- colleague
- fatigue
- morgue
- tongue
- intrigue
- synagogue
- vogue

(The only exception is the word “argue”)

The letters C and G in written English each have two pronunciations in spoken English.

- There is the “hard C” in the word “cat” – that’s the sound we’ve been studying in this lesson – and the “soft C” like in the word “city” – it sounds like an S.
- There’s the “hard G” in the word “gas” – that’s the sound we’ve been studying today – and the “soft G” like in the word “general” (we’ll study that sound later).

The general rule is that C and G are “hard” before the vowels A, O, U, or a consonant:

- cat, come, cut, class, fact
- game, go, gum, grow, glue

And C and G are “soft” before E, I, or Y:

- center, city, cycle
- general, giant, energy

Of course, there are some exceptions – as in the words **gift**, **tiger**, **gear**, and **get** – which have the “hard G” sound even though it’s followed by I or E.

Now let’s practice the difference. Listen and repeat these pairs of words:

- back / bag
- card / guard
- cave / gave
- class / glass
- coal / goal
- crate / great
- crime / grime
- cut / gut
- duck / dug
- pick / pig

Now test your listening and identify which word I say:

1. anchor / anger
2. bucks / bugs
3. cap / gap
4. clean / glean
5. coast / ghost
6. crumble / grumble
7. lock / log

(Answers at the end of this lesson)

Practice Sentences

Focus on C:

- The **c**ook **c**almly and **c**arefully **b**ak**e**d the **c**arrot **c**ak**e** in the **k**itchen.
- The **c**lass **c**leared the table, **c**leaned the room, and **c**losed the door.
- The **c**rowd **s**cream**e**d and **c**ried after the **c**ar **c**rash left the **q**ueen in **c**ritical **c**ondition.

Focus on G:

- I **g**ave the **g**irl a **g**reat **g**ift when she **g**ot a **g**ood **g**rade.
- **G**reen **g**rass **g**rew on the **g**round over the **g**raves.
- The **g**lamorous **g**olden **g**lobe **g**littered and **g**lowed in the **g**loomy light.

You've finished Lesson 11! Next Lesson, we'll turn our attention to **T** and **D**.

Answers to "Which word?"

anger, bucks, cap, clean, ghost, grumble, lock

Lesson 12: TO / DO

Welcome to Lesson 12 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today we'll practice the **T /t/** and **/d/ D** sounds in **to** and **do**.

These sounds seem pretty simple, but there are some details about T and D in English that you might not know about.

To make the T and D sound, the tip of your tongue touches the top of your mouth, behind your front teeth. The **T is unvoiced** (meaning there is only the sound of the air) and the **D is voiced** (meaning you add sound with your voice).

Let's practice these words with the T sound:

- **t**eam
- **t**ip
- **t**ell
- **t**ag
- **t**all
- **t**oe
- **t**op
- **t**ool
- **t**ore
- **t**oy
- **t**ook
- **t**urn
- **t**ake
- **t**ime
- **t**own

The T sound is also used in some verbs with –ED endings in the simple past. For example, the past tense of **work** is **worked**, pronounced *workt* (not work – ed). The past tenses of regular verbs ending in K, P, F, S, CH, and SH sounds all follow this pattern of –ED sounding like T.

Let's practice:

- **KT** – asked, liked, looked, talked
- **PT** – helped, escaped, stopped
- **FT** – laughed, stuffed, coughed
- **ST** – passed, promised, focused
- **CHT** – watched, attached
- **SHT** – finished, rushed, pushed

Now let's practice some words with the "D" sound:

- ❑ **d**eep
- ❑ **d**ish
- ❑ **d**eck
- ❑ **d**are
- ❑ **d**ark
- ❑ **d**oor
- ❑ **d**og
- ❑ **d**o
- ❑ **d**irt
- ❑ **d**ull
- ❑ **d**ay
- ❑ **d**ie
- ❑ **d**own
- **d**on't
- ❑ **d**ead

The **D** sound is also used in other verbs ending in -ED. For example, the past tense of **arrive** is pronounced **ar - rived** (not ar – riv – ed).

Let's practice some of these words – remember that the end goes directly to the D sound, without adding an extra syllable.

- ❑ called
- ❑ pulled
- ❑ lived

- ☐ received
- ☐ claimed
- ☐ turned
- ☐ compared
- ☐ paused
- ☐ played
- ☐ robbed
- ☐ hugged
- ☐ arranged

Now – one detail about the letters T and D in written English is that their pronunciation changes when they are followed by the letter R:

- ☐ tree = *chree*
- ☐ draw = *jraw*

Practice some words with T and D followed by R:

- ☐ trip, trend, track, true, trust, try
- ☐ street, strong, straight, struck
- ☐ dream, drink, dress, drop, drain

Now repeat these words where the only difference is the T or D:

- ☐ tear / dare
- ☐ ten / den
- ☐ time / dime
- ☐ tip / dip
- ☐ toes / doze
- ☐ tomb / doom
- ☐ ton / done
- ☐ town / down

Now test your listening and identify which word I say:

1. tense / dense
2. tie / die

3. tune / dune
4. tech / deck
5. tore / door

(Answers at the end of this lesson)

Practice Sentences

Focus on T:

- ☐ Ten tall boys took turns with the toy.
- It's ten to twelve, time to take a tour of the town.
- ☐ Ted taught the team how to use the tools for the task.

Focus on D:

- Don't let the dog get dirty during the day.
- ☐ Did Dan close the door or does Dina need to do it?
- Dad didn't dare to go down the dark road at dusk.

You've finished Lesson 12!

Next Lesson, we're going to go into more detail about the different sounds of "T" in American English.

Answers to "Which word?"

tense, die, tune, tech, door

Lesson 13 – Six Different Sounds of T

Welcome to Lesson 13 of the American English pronunciation course!

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:

- ☐ team, task, time, too, tough
- ☐ 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”:

- ☐ letter
- ☐ butter
- ☐ little
- ☐ computer

- ❑ whatever
- ❑ beautiful
- ❑ meeting
- ❑ getting
- ❑ ability
- ❑ bottom
- ❑ artificial
- ❑ 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):

- ❑ smarter, later, tighter
- daughter, cheater, writer

When the word ends in –TING

- writing, sitting, waiting, letting, exciting, repeating

When the word ends in –TY

- ❑ capacity, celebrity, humanity, reality
- ❑ 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:

- ❑ trick, treasure, trade, tradition, tropical, truck
- ❑ country, entry, chemistry, artistry
- ❑ statue, virtue
- ❑ picture, nature, mixture, literature, capture, posture
- ❑ situation, mutual

Pronunciation #4 – TI like “SH”

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

- ❑ emotion
- ❑ national
- ❑ relation
- ❑ evolution
- ❑ condition
- ❑ action
- ❑ ambitious
- ❑ nutritious
- ❑ cautious
- ❑ flirtatious

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

- 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)

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 **t**alking about the **t**ime she **t**ook a class with a **t**errific **t**eacher.

I got **t**en **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’ **meet**ing to **beg**in.

3. T like “TCH”

I **tr**y to take **int**eresting pictures of **tr**opical **tr**ees.

My **count**ry has a **str**ong **cult**ure and many **tr**aditions.

4. T like “SH”

I’m too **emot**ional to take **act**ion in this **situat**ion.

The leader of the **revolut**ion is **ambit**ious and **pretent**ious.

5. T as a glottal stop

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

My **part**ner **put** the football **helm**et next to the **whit**e shirt.

6. Disappearing T

I didn’t **want** to take **advant**age of the **situat**ion.

I **just** found out it **cost**s more at the shopping **cent**er.

You’ve finished Lesson 13 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Next Lesson, we’re going to study one of the most problematic sounds in English - the **TH** sound.

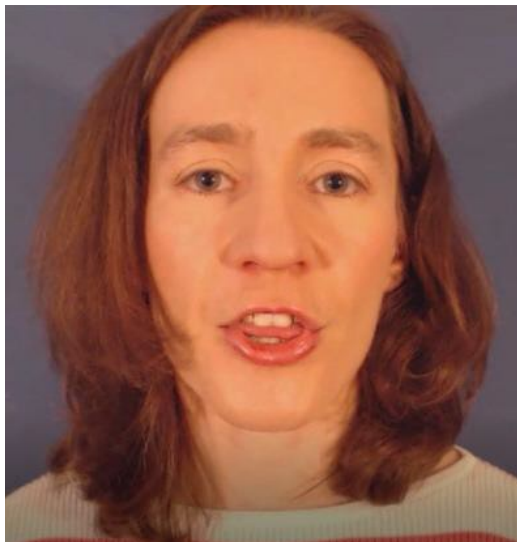
Lesson 14: TH Sound – THIN & THIS

Welcome to Lesson 14 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today 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 – 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”)



- **Unvoiced TH – THIN** /θ/
- **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.

- ❑ tttttthhhhanks - thanks
- ❑ healtttthhhh - health
- ❑ ttthhhhhey - they
- ❑ motttthhher - mother

Let's practice these words with an unvoiced TH:

- ❑ **think**
- ❑ **thirsty**

- ❑ **theater**
- ❑ **thought**
- ❑ **thousand**
- ❑ **thunder**
- ❑ **throw**
- ❑ **author**
- ❑ **method**
- ❑ **without**
- ❑ **both**
- ❑ **teeth**
- ❑ **earth**
- ❑ **cloth**
- ❑ **faith**
- ❑ **south**
- ❑ **north**
- ❑ **path**
- ❑ **youth**

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

- ❑ deaf / death
- ❑ first / thirst
- ❑ fought / thought
- ❑ free / three
- ❑ fret / threat
- ❑ frill / thrill
- ❑ fin / thin
- ❑ boat / both
- ❑ mat / math
- ❑ rat / wrath
- ❑ team / theme
- ❑ tick / thick

❑ taught / thought

Practice these words with the voiced TH:

❑ brother

❑ father

❑ together

❑ although

❑ weather

❑ either

❑ further

❑ rhythm

❑ that

❑ then

❑ this

❑ there

❑ breathe

❑ soothe

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 are commonly confused with it:

❑ there / dare

❑ then / den

❑ they / day

❑ though / dough

- ❑ clothing / closing
- ❑ wetter / weather
- ❑ udder / other
- ❑ vat / that
- ❑ ten / then

Practice Sentences

These 8 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.

They went with their father and mother to the theater.

Their three brothers are healthy and wealthy.

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.

You've finished Lesson 14! I hope it has helped you become more confident in your ability to pronounce TH. Next Lesson will focus on F and V.

Lesson 15: FAN / VAN

Welcome to Lesson 15 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today we're going to practice with the **F** sound in **fan** and the **V** sound in **van**.

To make these sounds, your upper teeth touch your lower lip, like in the picture:



The **F** sound is unvoiced, and the **V** sound is voiced.

Practice these words with F:

- ☐ feel
- ☐ far
- ☐ food
- ☐ few
- ☐ full
- ☐ office
- ☐ suffer
- ☐ effect
- ☐ defend
- ☐ life

- ☐ safe
- ☐ half
- ☐ **ph**one
- ☐ **gr**aph
- ☐ **ne**phew

The most common spelling of this sound is with the letter F – but we also have PH (as in phone and pharmacy). There are even a few words where GH is pronounced with the F sound, such as **rough, tough, enough, and laugh.**

Listen to and repeat these words with the V sound:

- ☐ **v**ery
- ☐ **v**ivid
- ☐ **v**ine
- ☐ **v**oice
- ☐ **v**ote
- ☐ **e**ven
- ☐ **l**evel
- ☐ **i**nvest
- ☐ **r**eview
- ☐ **p**rovoke
- ☐ **l**eave
- ☐ **g**ive
- ☐ **l**ove
- ☐ **m**ove
- ☐ **b**rave

As you can see, the V sound is only spelled with the letter V.

F and V in Singular and Plural Forms

Some words that end in the F sound have a V sound in the plural. For example:

- ☐ One knife

- ☐ Two **knives**

This is not the case for all words ending in F. For example,

- ☐ One **chef** / two **chefs**

Practice these words in the singular and plural forms:

- ☐ one **half** / two **halves**
- ☐ one **leaf** / two **leaves**
- ☐ one **loaf** / two **loaves**
- ☐ one **shelf** / two **shelves**
- ☐ one **thief** / two **thieves**
- ☐ one **wife** / two **wives**
- ☐ one **wolf** / two **wolves**

Let's practice the difference between similar words with F and V:

- ☐ **belief** / **believe**
- ☐ **fast** / **vast**
- ☐ **fault** / **vault**
- ☐ **fear** / **veer**
- ☐ **leaf** / **leave**
- ☐ **safe** / **save**
- ☐ **proof** / **prove**
- ☐ **surfing** / **serving**
- ☐ **wafer** / **waiver**

Now identify which word I say:

- ☐ **fail** / **veil**
- ☐ **fine** / **vine**
- ☐ **few** / **view**
- ☐ **grief** / **grieve**
- ☐ **rifle** / **rival**

- ❑ infest / invest
- ❑ surface / service

(Answers at the end of this lesson)

Practice Sentences

Focus on **F**:

1. **F**ive **f**at **f**riends **f**easted on **f**ifty **f**ine, **f**resh **f**ish.
2. The **f**irst **f**light was **f**ull, so I **f**lew on the **f**our-**f**ifteen **f**light.
3. **F**our **f**urious **f**ellows **f**ought **f**or the **p**hone.

Focus on **V**:

1. **V**anessa believes the **v**ault is **v**ery heavy.
2. **V**incent **i**nvested in **v**aluable **v**alley **v**illas.
3. **V**ivian bravely **v**oiced her **v**ote on eleven **v**ital issues.

You've finished Lesson 15! Congratulations on completing half of the course. Next lesson, we'll practice the S and Z sounds in SIP and ZIP.

Answers to "Which word?"

fail, fine, view, grief, rifle, invest, surface

Lesson 16: SIP / ZIP

Welcome to Lesson 16 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today we're going to work on **sip** /**s**/ and **zip** /**z**/.

They are the same sound, except that **sip** is unvoiced, and **zip** is voiced.



*To make the S and Z sounds, your teeth are together
and your mouth is open wide horizontally.*

Practice these words with S:

- ☐ **s**een
- ☐ **s**ad
- ☐ **s**ail
- ☐ **s**our
- ☐ **s**core
- ☐ le**ss**on
- ☐ te**s**t
- ☐ wa**s**te
- ☐ ki**ss**
- ☐ **s**ince
- ☐ **c**ell

- ❑ **science**
- ❑ **circle**

As you can see, this sound is written with S, SS, C, or SC (when the C is followed by E, I, or Y). That's why we pronounce the C as a "hard C" in **score**, but not in **science**.

Now practice the Z sound:

- ❑ **zero**
- ❑ **zoo**
- ❑ **zone**
- ❑ **zipper**
- ❑ **quiz**
- ❑ **crazy**
- ❑ **puzzle**
- ❑ **razor**
- ❑ **music**
- ❑ **reason**
- ❑ **choose**
- ❑ **rose**
- ❑ **has**
- ❑ **pays**
- ❑ **lives**

This sound can be spelled with Z, ZZ, or S.

So, how can you know if the letter S in written English is pronounced **S** or **Z**? Well, when the S is in the middle of the word, it's impossible to know. In fact, some words are identical in written form, yet pronounced differently:

- **close (adj.) – with an S sound:**
"I live close to the beach."
- **close (v.) – with a Z sound:**
"Please close the door."

- **use (n.) – with an S sound:**
“That’s not a good use of your time.”
- **use (v.) – with a Z sound:**
“We use computers at work.”
- **loose (adj.) – with an S sound:**
“These pants are too loose.”
- **lose (v.) – with a Z sound:**
“Don’t lose your keys!”

But when the S is at the end of the word, there is a rule we can follow:

- ❑ **-ES** is always pronounced with a **Z sound**:
glasses, boxes, watches
- ❑ **-S** is pronounced as **S** when it follows an **unvoiced sound**:
bets, books, helps
- ❑ **-S** is pronounced as **Z** when it follows a **voiced sound**:
beds, bags, ribs, cars, plays

I want to make a special note about the letter X, because sometimes it’s pronounced “KS” like in the word **exciting** and sometimes it’s pronounced “GZ” like in the word **exam**.

There’s a simple rule for this: **X** is pronounced as **GZ** if both of the following are true:

- The stressed syllable begins immediately after the X
- The X is followed by a vowel

Words in this category include: exist, exact, exotic, exempt, and exult.

If the two conditions are not met, then **X** is pronounced **KS**. This includes:

- explain, excuse, extra, exercise
- mix, tax, box, six, crux

Practice the difference:

- bus / buzz
- false / falls
- sip / zip
- rice / rise
- peace / peas
- fierce / fears
- loose / lose
- place / plays
- sink / zinc
- sue / zoo

Now test your listening – which word do I say?

- race / raise
- fuss / fuzz
- spice / spies
- gross / grows
- sown / zone
- lacy / lazy
- precedent / president

Answers at the end of this lesson.

Practice Sentences

On to the practice sentences!

Focus on **S**:

4. **S**id **s**old his **s**ister's **s**cissors **s**ix months **s**ago.
5. Have you **s**een my **s**mall **s**triped **s**ocks **s**recently?
6. **C**indy **s**miled **s**weetly when she **s**melled the **s**teaks.

Focus on **Z**:

4. The zebra at the zoo was spoisoned by two crazy guys.
5. These quizzes always surprise me.
6. I chose to use the puzzle with a dozen kids in my classes.

You've finished Lesson 16! Next Lesson, we'll practice 3 new sounds
– **sheer, cheer, and jeer.**

Answers to "Which Word?"

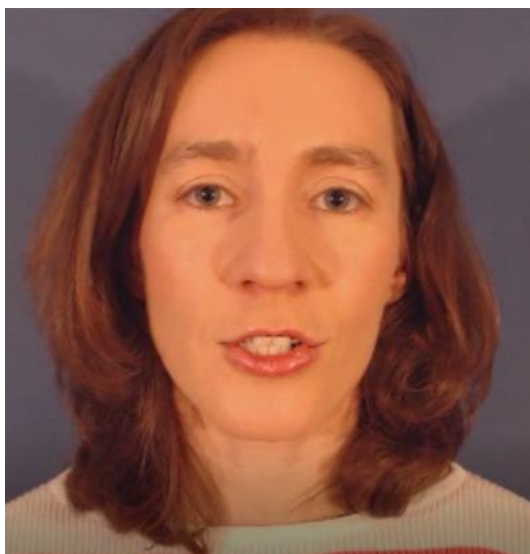
race, fuzz, spice, grows, zone, lacy, precedent

Lesson 17: SHEER / CHEER / JEER

Welcome to Lesson 17 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today you're going to practice three very commonly confused sounds, as in the words **sheer**, **cheer**, and **jeer**.

Let's start with the /ʃ/ sound in **sheer**. This is a gentle sound – and you can hold it for a long time, like this: SSSHHHH. The /tʃ/ sound in **cheer** is more “explosive” – CH. And the /dʒ/ sound in **jeer** is simply the voiced version of CH.

Practice with me: **SH / SHEER / CH / CHEER / J / JEER**



Practice these words with SH:

- ❑ **sh**e
- ❑ **sh**ip
- ❑ **sh**are
- ❑ **sh**ort
- ❑ fa**sh**ion
- ❑ fi**sh**
- ❑ pu**sh**
- ❑ **s**ure

☞ **s**ugar

This sound is spelled with SH, but in the words **sugar** and **sure**, the S has this SH sound. These are the only two words where S has the sound of SH.

But wait! There's more...

In words ending in -SSION or -SSURE, the SS has an SH sound.

- discuss – discu**ss**ion
- express – expre**ss**ion
- ☞ pa**ss**ion, mi**ss**ion, se**ss**ion
- press – pre**ss**ure

As we learned in the lesson about T, the letters TI have an SH sound in words ending in -TION and -TIOUS.

- ☞ na**ti**on, condi**ti**on, secti**ti**on
- ☞ ambi**ti**ous, nutriti**ti**ous

Words ending in -CIOUS, -CIENT, and -CIAL have this sound as well.

- ☞ deli**ci**ous, spa**ci**ous, vi**ci**ous
- ☞ effi**ci**ent, an**ci**ent, suffi**ci**ent
- ☞ cru**ci**al, finan**ci**al, spec**ci**al

Finally, there are a few words in English where CH is pronounced SH. These are mostly words that originated in French:

- ☞ bro**ch**ure, **ch**ampagne, **ch**ef, **ch**ic, ma**ch**ine, musta**ch**e, para**ch**ute

So, as you can see, the SH sound is pretty common in English!

Practice these words with CH:

- ☞ **ch**ease
- ☞ **ch**eck

- ❑ **ch**air
- ❑ **ch**apter
- ❑ **ch**urch
- ❑ tea**ch**er
- ❑ ki**tc**hen
- ❑ ma**tc**hing
- ❑ wa**tc**hing
- ❑ tou**ch**
- ❑ sea**rch**
- ❑ ri**ch**
- ❑ ca**tc**h
- ❑ lun**ch**

This sound is only spelled with CH or TCH.

Practice these words with J:

- ❑ **j**eans
- ❑ **j**et
- ❑ **j**ust
- ❑ **g**ym
- ❑ **g**eneral
- ❑ **r**egion
- ❑ da**ng**er
- ❑ su**bj**ect
- ❑ en**g**ine
- ❑ la**rg**e
- ❑ ma**n**age
- ❑ bri**dg**e
- ❑ cha**ng**e
- ❑ spo**ng**e
- ❑ bu**d**get

This sound is spelled with J, and sometimes with G or DG. Remember in the lesson about “hard G” (in go) and “soft G” (in gym) – this is the “soft G” and it is used before E, I, or Y.

Let’s get to the most important part – practicing the difference.

Practice the difference (SH and CH)

- ☐ cash / catch
- ☐ share / chair
- ☐ sheet / cheat
- ☐ ship / chip
- ☐ shop / chop
- ☐ wish / which

Practice the difference (CH and J)

- ☐ chest / jest
- ☐ cheer / jeer
- ☐ chin / gin
- ☐ H / age
- ☐ lunch / lunge
- ☐ search / surge

Now test your listening – which word do I say?

- ☐ washing / watching
- ☐ crush / crutch
- ☐ marsh / march
- ☐ shoe / chew
- ☐ shore / chore
- ☐ char / jar
- ☐ choke / joke
- ☐ rich / ridge
- ☐ perch / purge

☐ chug / jug

Answers at the end of this lesson.

Practice Sentences

Let's try some practice sentences!

Focus on **SH**:

1. **She** **sh**ould wa**sh** her **sh**irt and **sh**orts.
2. I'll **sh**ow you some spec**ial**, fash**ion**able **sh**oes.
3. Polit**ici**ans publi**sh**ed an offic**ial** report on the nat**ion**'s financ**ial** condit**ion**.

Focus on **CH**:

1. The tea**ch**er and prea**ch**er are wa**tch**ing the tennis ma**tch**.
2. I **ch**ose the **ch**eapest **ch**icken and **ch**ease sandwi**ch** for lunc**h**.
3. Don't tou**ch** the **ch**ocolate **ch**ip cookies in the kit**ch**en.

Focus on **J**:

1. The surge**on** **g**ently gave **J**ohn an in**je**ction.
2. The **j**udge sugg**e**sted some changes in **J**une and **J**uly.
3. **J**en **j**ust **d**ropped the **g**iant **j**ar of **j**am.

Remember from the lesson about D that D before R often has more of a J sound.

You've finished Lesson 17! Next Lesson, we'll work on the L and R sounds in **light** and **right**.

Answers to "Which Word?"

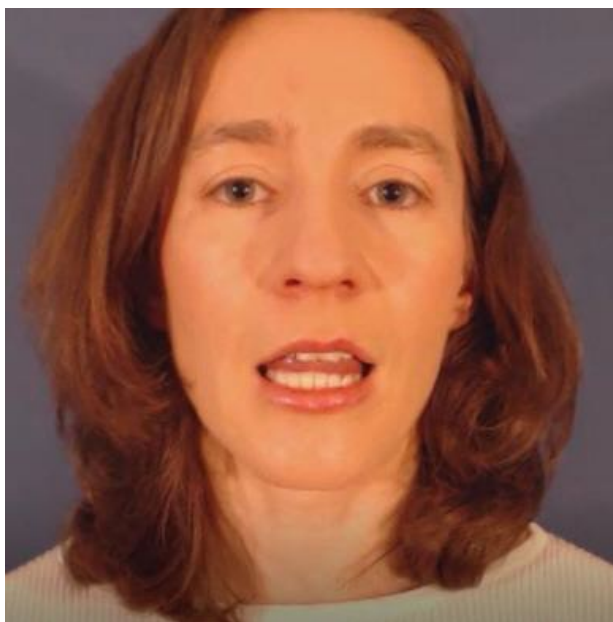
washing, crush, march, shoe, shore, jar, joke, rich, purge, chug

Lesson 18: LIGHT / RIGHT

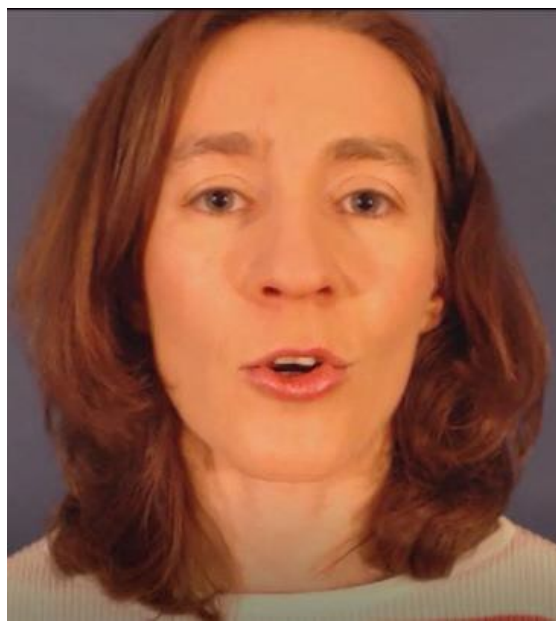
Today you're going to practice the L and R sounds in **/l/ light** and **/r/ right** – both individually, and together as in the word **world**.

We've studied vowels with R in past lessons, but now we're going to focus on the sound itself. This is often one of the most difficult sounds to master in English, especially if the written letter R is pronounced differently in your native language – it can be hard to change your pronunciation habits!

In the L sound, the tip of your tongue touches the roof of your mouth, just behind your front teeth. In the R sound, your tongue is low and does NOT touch the roof of your mouth.



L SOUND



R SOUND

A good exercise is to practice exaggerating and prolonging the L and R sounds at the beginning of the word. Listen, and then try it yourself:

LLLLLLIGHT / RRRRRRIGHT

Practice these words with R:

- ❑ **r**ed
- ❑ **r**ear
- ❑ **r**at
- ❑ **r**un
- ❑ **r**aise
- ❑ **r**ound
- ❑ **c**ar**r**y
- ❑ **s**to**r**y
- ❑ **s**or**r**y
- ❑ **h**ur**r**y
- ❑ **a**rrange
- ❑ **h**ar**d**
- ❑ **e**ar**n**
- ❑ **m**or**e**
- ❑ **c**ar**e**
- ❑ **w**er**e**
- ❑ **f**ar

This sound is spelled R or RR. In words beginning with WR, the W is silent and it sounds like R:

write = right

wrong, **w**rist, **w**rap, **w**restle

Practice these words with L:

- ❑ **l**ast
- ❑ **l**ock
- ❑ **l**ady
- ❑ **l**oyal

- ❑ loud
- ❑ silly
- ❑ lonely
- ❑ alive
- ❑ building
- ❑ all
- ❑ will
- ❑ cool
- ❑ bottle
- ❑ miracle
- ❑ terrible

This sound is spelled with L or LL.

We're going to do two "practice the difference" exercises – one with a simple R and L, and the other with R and L in combination with other consonants.

Practice the difference

- ❑ late / rate
- ❑ law / raw
- ❑ lip / rip
- ❑ lead / read
- ❑ lock / rock
- ❑ load / road
- ❑ loot / root
- ❑ lust / rust
- ❑ belly / berry
- ❑ alive / arrive
- ❑ collect / correct

Both R and L very commonly appear in combination with other consonants – especially:

- B – blink, brink

- C – clap, crap
- F – fly, fry
- G – glass, grass
- P – play, pray

Practice the difference (R and L in combination)

- ❑ bland / brand
- ❑ blush / brush
- ❑ climb / crime
- ❑ cloud / crowd
- ❑ flee / free
- ❑ flute / fruit
- ❑ glow / grow
- ❑ glue / grew
- ❑ pleasant / present
- ❑ supplies / surprise

It's common for students to have difficulty pronouncing R and L together as in **world**. We're going to take on this challenge in two steps. First, pronouncing RL in separate syllables and then pronouncing RL in a single syllable.

Here are some words with R and L together, but in separate syllables. For example, **airline**. Try to pronounce each syllable with a pause between them, and then decrease the pause until you can say it together:

- ❑ air line
- ❑ air line
- ❑ air line
- ❑ airline

Repeat these words after me – I'll say it once with the syllables separated, and once normally:

- ❑ barley

- ❑ garlic
- ❑ nearly
- ❑ earlobe
- ❑ scarlet
- ❑ overlook
- ❑ cheerleader
- ❑ sugarless
- ❑ underline
- ❑ waterlogged

Let's move on to R and L in the same syllable. To really perfect this sound, you can do the exercise of prolonging both the R and the L, so that you can "feel" the transition from one to another. Remember that when you transition to L, the tip of your tongue goes up to touch the roof of your mouth:

- worrrrrrrllllllld – world

Here are more words for you to practice:

- ❑ girl
- ❑ pearl
- ❑ curl
- ❑ twirl

Fortunately, there aren't very many of these in the English language!

Practice Sentences

Focus on **R**:

1. **R**andy **r**owed the **r**ed **r**aft down the **r**aging **r**iver **r**apids.
2. Our **r**mother **r**hurried to park the car **r**in the yard when she **r**arrived.
3. The **r**usty **r**ailroad **r**arely **r**eceives **r**ain.

Focus on **L**:

1. **L**arry **l**ost the **l**ast **l**etter from the **l**onely old **l**ady.
2. **L**ily **s**lowly **l**icked the **l**ime **l**ollipop while **l**aughing **l**ightly.
3. **T**ell **J**ill to put **a**ll the app**l**es and a couple sma**l**l bott**l**es of **l**iquor on the tab**l**e.

Mixed **R** and **L**:

1. The red and yellow parrots love riding the trolley.
2. I regularly read large books when I arrive at the bar for lunch.
3. That lovely mirror on the wall is really very narrow.

Here's an extra challenge sentence for you:

Every girl in the world loves pearls!

You've finished Lesson 18. Next Lesson, we'll talk about **M**, **N**, and **NG** as in the words **SUM**, **SUN**, and **SUNG**.



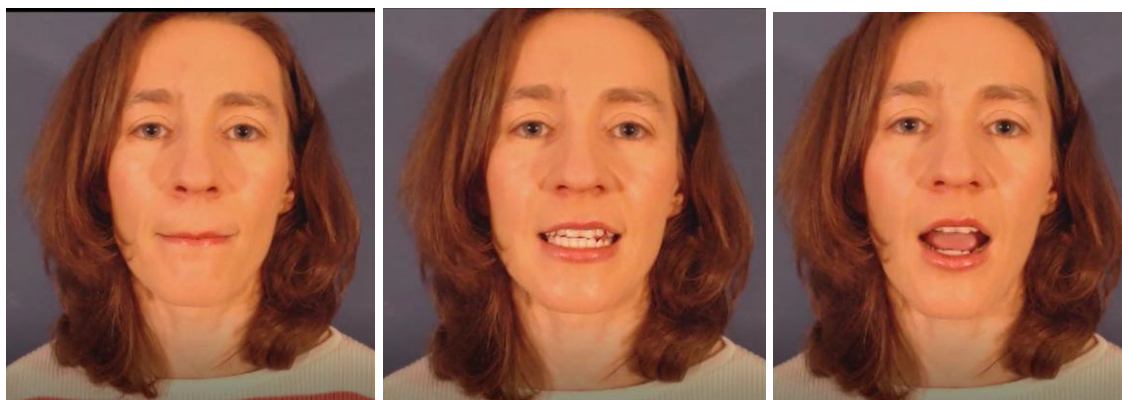
Lesson 19: SUM / SUN / SUNG

Welcome to Lesson 19 of the American English Pronunciation Course!

Today, you're going to practice the M /m/ and N /n/ sounds in **sum** and **sun** – as well as the NG sound in **sung**.

The M sound is very easy – just put your lips together and hum. In the N sound, your lips are slightly apart and your tongue touches the roof of your mouth behind your front teeth.

Most students have difficulty with these sounds at the end of a word. Watch how my mouth is completely closed at the end of **sum**, but it is slightly open at the end of **sun**.



M – SUM

N – SUN

NG – SUNG

Now, the contrast between **sun** and **sung** is very small. There are two common errors – either eliminating the G sound entirely so that the two words are the same – or pronouncing the G too much, like this: /ŋ /**sunG**

The NG sound has just a very small, very subtle G at the end of it.

Practice these words with N:

☐ **n**eat

☐ **n**ine

- ☐ **noon**
- ☐ **nut**
- ☐ **knee**
- ☐ **knot**
- ☐ **knife**
- ☐ man**nner**
- ☐ fi**n**ish
- ☐ a**nn**oy
- ☐ mai**n**
- ☐ **known**
- ☐ bo**rn**

This sound is spelled N or NN. In words beginning with KN, the K is silent – so **knot** is pronounced the same as **not**.

Practice these words with M:

- ☐ **me**
- ☐ **main**
- ☐ **must**
- ☐ su**mm**er
- ☐ **memory**
- ☐ s**m**ile
- ☐ s**m**art
- ☐ fro**m**
- ☐ see**m**
- ☐ fir**m**
- ☐ la**mb**
- ☐ autu**mn**

This sound is spelled with M or MM. As you can see, with words ending in MB and MN, the B and N are silent:

- ☐ cli**mb**, co**mb**, to**mb**, li**mb**, cru**mb**, bo**mb**

☐ colmn, condemn, hymn, damn, solemn

Practice these words with NG:

☐ sing
☐ ring
☐ hang
☐ bang
☐ song
☐ strong
☐ lungs
☐ young
☐ going
☐ having
☐ coming

This sound is very common in English, because it exists in all the –ING forms of the verbs. Again, be careful not to over-pronounce or under-pronounce the final G.

Note that the pronunciation of words ending in –NGE is different. In this case, we pronounce the G like a “soft G” (or J sound):

☐ arrange, revenge, sponnge, lnge

Practice the difference: M and N

☐ beam / bean
☐ game / gain
☐ mail / nail
☐ map / nap
☐ scream / screen
☐ them / then
☐ warm / warn

Practice the difference: N and NG

- ❑ fan / fang
- ❑ run / rung
- ❑ gone / gong
- ❑ robin / robbing
- ❑ sin / sing
- ❑ win / wing

Practice Sentences

Let's try some practice sentences!

Focus on M:

- ❑ **M**ary re**mm**bers **mm**any **mm**orable **mm**ents from**m** the su**mm**er.
- ❑ I '**mm**ad that Sa**mm**'s **mm**ade **mm** **mm**et hi**mm**.
- ❑ It's **mm**e for the tea**mm** to co**mm**e into the roo**mm**.

Focus on N:

- ❑ **N**ancy **nn**ever **nn**oticed the **nn**ine **nn**ew **nn**eon si**gn**s.
- ❑ **N**one of the **nn**apki**nn**s are made of **nn**ylon.
- ❑ The **nn**orthern **nn**nati**nn**o**nn**s often **nn**eed to**nn**s of grain**nn**.

Focus on NG:

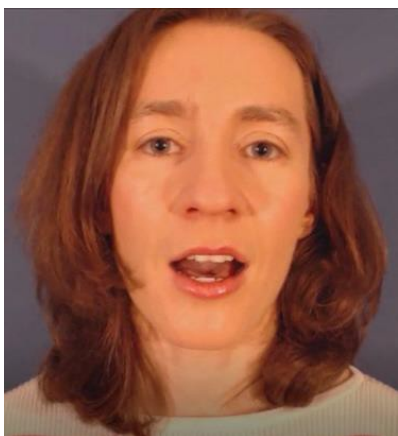
- ❑ The you**ng** woman with lo**ng** hair sa**ng** the wro**ng** so**ng**.
- ❑ The swi**ng**s hu**ng** from ri**ng**s in the ceing.
- ❑ Please bri**ng** the thi**ng**s to the weddi**ng**.

You've finished Lesson 19! Next Lesson is our final lesson about consonants. We'll talk about **H**, **W**, and **Y**. In the final part of the course, we'll study word stress, sentence stress, linking, and intonation.

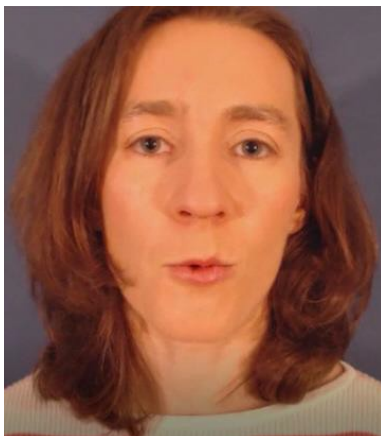
Lesson 20: HELL / WELL / YELL

Welcome to Lesson 20 of the American English Pronunciation Course! In today's lesson, you're going to practice the **H /h/**, **W /w/**, and **Y /j/** sounds in **hell**, **well**, and **yell**.

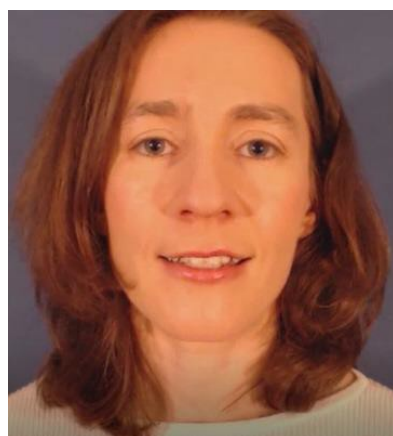
As you can see, the starting mouth positions for these three sounds are very different – for the H sound, your mouth is open. At the beginning of the W sound, your lips are very close together. And at the beginning of the Y sound, your lips are open and wide.



H – HELL



W – WELL



Y – YELL

Let's practice each sound and the sounds that are easily confused with them.

Practice these words with H:

- ❑ **h**ere
- ❑ **h**im
- ❑ **h**elp
- ❑ **h**air
- ❑ **h**ave
- ❑ **h**eat
- ❑ **h**ot
- ❑ **h**ope

- ❑ **h**unt
- ❑ **wh**o
- ❑ **wh**ose
- ❑ **wh**ole
- ❑ a**h**ead
- ❑ be**h**ind
- ❑ in**h**erit
- ❑ in**h**abit
- ❑ in**h**ale

This sound is always spelled with the letter **H**. In the majority of words beginning with WH, it sounds like W – **what, when, where**. But there are a few exceptions in which the W is silent – **who, whose, and whole**.

There are also some words that have a **silent H** in English – such as **hour, honor, honest, herb, and heir**.

The H sound is very soft, so it's easy to confuse words with H and words with no H – such as **hair** and **air**. Practice these pairs of words to help make the difference:

- ❑ hair / air
- ❑ hall / all
- ❑ heat / eat
- ❑ heart / art
- ❑ hear/ ear
- ❑ hand / and
- ❑ harm / arm
- ❑ hat / at
- ❑ hedge / edge
- ❑ high / eye
- ❑ hold / old

Practice these words with W:

- ☐ **week**
- ☐ **wheel**
- ☐ **wind**
- ☐ **wild**
- ☐ **west**
- ☐ **worse**
- ☐ **way**
- ☐ **why**
- ☐ **one**
- ☐ **once**
- ☐ **swim**
- ☐ **swear**
- ☐ **swallow**
- ☐ **twice**
- ☐ **tweak**

This sound is spelled with W. Remember that in the majority of words beginning with WH, you pronounce only the W and not the H – as in **wheel** and **why**. The words **one** and **once** are interesting because they begin with a W sound even though there's no W in the written form.

Remember from a previous lesson that words with **QU** also contain this sound. QU is pronounced KW, so it's **kwestion** and not **kestion**:

- ☐ **quip, queen, quirk, quota**
- ☐ **earthquake, request, equal**

English learners sometimes confuse **W** with **R**, so let's practice some pairs of words with this difference:

Practice the difference: W and R

- ☐ **raise / ways**
- ☐ **rare / wear**
- ☐ **read / weed**

- ❑ right / white
- ❑ run / won
- ❑ crest / quest
- ❑ room / womb
- ❑ rip / whip

Which word do I say?

- ❑ rake / wake
- ❑ real / wheel
- ❑ ride / wide
- ❑ rich / which
- ❑ rest / west

Answers at the end of this lesson.

Practice these words with Y:

- ❑ **y**ear
- ❑ **y**esterday
- ❑ **y**ellow
- ❑ **y**ard
- ❑ **y**awn
- ❑ **y**oung
- ❑ **y**olk
- ❑ **y**ou
- ❑ use
- ❑ unit
- ❑ uniform
- ❑ be**y**ond
- ❑ can**y**on
- ❑ human
- ❑ music

The words **use**, **unit**, **uniform**, **human** and **music** are interesting, because there's no Y in the written form, but the pronunciation includes an "invisible" Y sound before the U.

USE

Incorrect: **ooz**

Correct: **yooz**

MUSIC

Incorrect: **moo - zik**

Correct: **myoo - zik**

Here are some more words with the "invisible Y" sound:

- ❑ uniform
- ❑ university
- ❑ community
- ❑ ridiculous
- ❑ continue
- ❑ issue
- ❑ reunion
- ❑ distribute
- ❑ regular
- ❑ huge
- ❑ cute
- ❑ fuel

Practice the difference: Y and W

- ❑ yet / wet
- ❑ your / wore
- year / we're

- ☐ you / woo
- ☐ yonder / wander

Practice Sentences

Try these practice sentences – once slowly, and once fast.

Focus on H:

- ☐ **H**arry **h**id the **h**elmet **beh**ind the **h**ouse on the **h**ill.
- ☐ **W**ho can **h**elp **H**annah **h**old that **h**uge **h**ammer?
- ☐ **H**elen **h**as **h**ardly any **h**air on her **h**ead.

*You might notice that when we say sentence #3 fast, the H sound in the word **her** disappears – “on her” sounds like “oner.” We’ll study this in a later lesson.*

Focus on W:

- ☐ **W**hich **w**atch is **W**illiam **w**earing?
- ☐ I **w**onder **w**hether **w**e **w**on.
- **W**endy’s **w**orried that the **w**indy **w**eather **w**ill **w**orsen next **w**ee**k**.

Focus on Y:

- ☐ **Y**ou **u**sed **y**our **y**ellow **u**niform **y**esterday.
- ☐ The **y**oung **y**oga teacher **y**elled at the **y**awning student.
- ☐ The comm**u**nity distrib**u**ted the **f**uel in **h**uge tanks.

You’ve finished Lesson 20! Next Lesson, we’ll begin working on the rhythm of your spoken English, with a lesson about word stress.

Answers to "Which Word?"

rake, real, wide, which, west

Lesson 21: Syllables and Word Stress

Welcome to Lesson 21 of the American English Pronunciation Course! Today's lesson is an introduction to syllables and word stress. A syllable is a "unit" of sound in a word.

For example, the word **mom** has one syllable. **Mother** has two syllables. And **grandmother** has three syllables. One way to help you define the syllables is to clap or tap once for each syllable: **mom**, **mo - ther**, **grand - mo - ther**.

Remember that the number of syllables is related to the sound of the word, not the spelling. So words with one syllable can be short – like **he**, **sit**, **car**, or **help** – or they can be a little longer in written form, like **friends**, **thought**, **washed**, or **laughed**.

Some English students have difficulty pronouncing words with one and two syllables clearly – they either add an extra syllable to one-syllable words:

- sport → "esport"

Or they drop the second syllable of a two-syllable word:

- I'm having fun → "I'm have fun"

Try this exercise with similar one-syllable and two-syllable words/phrases:

1 syllable	2 syllables
sit	cit - y
rain	rain - ing
rent	rent - ed
store	a store
four	for - ty
blow	be - low
cleaned	clean it
watch	watch - es

does	does - n't
Miss	Mrs. ("miss - es")

In words with two or more syllables, one of the syllables is the “**strong**” or “**stressed**” syllable. This is very important, because stressing the wrong syllable can change the sound of the word so much that it’s impossible to understand.

Take the word **computer** as an example – it has three syllables, and the stress is on the second one: com – PU – ter. If we put the stress on the first or third syllable, the word sounds *completely* different:

- COM – pu – ter
- com – pu – TER

Unfortunately, there is no way to know, from simply looking at the written form of the word, which syllable is stressed – you need to listen to it or look it up in the dictionary.

But there are some general trends, which we’ll be learning in the next few lessons. One of them is that 2-syllable **nouns and adjectives** tend to have the stress on the first syllable, and 2-syllable **verbs** tend to have the stress on the second syllable:

Noun	Adjective	Verb
PAR – ty	FA – mous	for – GET
SA – lad	EAR – ly	pro – VIDE
PER – son	PUB – lic	en – JOY
COUN – try	MA – jor	be – LIEVE
STU – dent	SPE – cial	ex – PECT
SYS – tem	RE – cent	con – TROL
PRO – gram	COM – mon	re – PEAT

Of course, there are many exceptions to this trend!

In some words, that are used as both nouns and verbs, the word stress changes – when it is used as a noun, you stress the first syllable; when it is used as a verb, you stress the second syllable.

❑ We want to **increase** sales.

❑ There was a big **increase** in sales last month.

These words have a change in the stressed syllable when pronounced as nouns or verbs:

❑ record, contrast, desert, export, object, present, protest, rebel

However, there are also words that are both nouns and verbs, in which the pronunciation doesn't change: answer, picture, visit, promise, reply, and travel.

Let's practice a few words with three and four syllables. I've divided them into categories based on which syllable is strong:

1st Syllable Stressed	2nd Syllable Stressed	3rd Syllable Stressed
HIS – to – ry	re – MEM – ber	en – gi – NEER
SCI – en – tist	al – READ – y	af – ter – NOON
E – le – phant	po – TA – to	re – com – MEND
BI – cy – cle	con – SIS – tent	ma – ga – ZINE
MI – cro – wave	an – NOUNCE – ment	gua – ran – TEE

Now try these four-syllable words.

1st Syllable Stressed	2nd Syllable Stressed	3rd Syllable Stressed
CA – te – go – ry	cer – TI – fi – cate	de – mon – STRA – tion
MECH – a – ni – sm	ex – PE – ri – ment	math – e – MA – tics
IR – ri – ta – ble	pho – TO – gra – pher	id – i – O – tic
TES – ti – mo – ny	ap – PRE – ci – ate	ad – o – LES – cent
AN – y – bo – dy	un – THINK – a – ble	con – tro – VER – sial

Four-syllable English words almost never have the stress on the last syllable.

One place where correct stress is important is when pronouncing numbers.

❑ **thirteen** (13)

❑ **thirty** (30)

Listen to these numbers and identify which one I say:

- 14 / 40
- 15 / 50
- 16 / 60
- 17 / 70
- 18 / 80
- 19 / 90

Answers at the end of this lesson.

You've finished Lesson 21! Next Lesson, you'll learn how prefixes and suffixes affect word stress. This is helpful for pronouncing longer words, and knowing when the stress changes.

Lesson 22: Word Stress and Prefixes/Suffixes

Welcome to Lesson 22 of the American English Pronunciation Course! In today's lesson, you're going to learn how prefixes and suffixes change word stress.

Prefixes and suffixes are sets of letters added to the beginning or ending of a word to change its meaning or form. For example, adding the prefix **un-** to **happy** makes the word **unhappy** (which is equivalent to "not happy" or "sad"). Adding the suffix **-able** to **inflate** makes the word **inflatable** – this is an adjective describing something that can be inflated.

In these two examples, the addition of the prefix and suffix doesn't change the stress of the main word:

- **HAP** – py
un – **HAP** – py
- in – **FLATE**
in – **FLAT** – a – ble

But some prefixes and suffixes do change the position of the stress – for example, the verb **ED – u – cate** has the stress on the first syllable. But when we say **ed – u – CA – tion**, the stress changes from "ed" to "ca."

Let's begin with the prefixes and suffixes that DON'T change the stress of the main word:

Prefix	Word	Prefix + Word
in- / im-	POSS – i – ble a – BIL – i – ty	im – POSS – i – ble in – a – BIL – i – ty
un-	pro – FESS – ion – al	un – pro – FESS – ion – al

over-	re – ACT	o – ver – re – ACT
under-	ES – ti – mate	un – der – ES – ti – mate

Suffix	Word	Word + Suffix
-able	MEA - sure	MEA – sur – a – ble
-al	MU – sic	MU – si – cal
-er	pro – DUCE	pro – DU – cer
-ful	POW – er	POW – er – ful
-hood	NEIGH – bor	NEIGH – bor – hood
-ize	CO – lo – ny	CO – lo – nize
-less	CO – lor	CO – lor – less
-ly	RE – cent	RE – cent – ly
-ment	em – PLOY	em – PLOY – ment
-ness	LA – zy	LA – zi – ness
-ship	PART – ner	PART – ner – ship

Okay – that was the easy part. Now let’s study the suffixes that change the word stress. The good thing about these changes is that they are consistent – so when you know how to pronounce one example, you’ll be able to pronounce ANY word with that ending.

-TION, -IAN/-CIAN, and -IC

These three endings change the stress to the syllable immediately before the suffix, as we saw with **educate** and **education**. Practice with these examples:

LO – cate	lo – CA – tion
CI – vi – lize	ci – vi – li – ZA – tion
com - POSE	com – po – SI – tion
ex – HI – bit	ex – hi – BI – tion
e – VOLVE	e – vo – LU – tion
SUB – sti – tute	sub – sti – TU – tion

CO – me – dy	co – MED – ian
CI – vil	ci – VIL – ian
pe – di – A – trics	pe – di – a – TRI – cian
MU – sic	mu – SI – cian

AR – tist	ar – TIS – tic
e – CON – o – my	e – co – NO – mic
HY – giene	hy – GIEN – ic
PE – ri – od	pe – ri – OD – ic
SYM – bol	sym – BOL – ic

Longer words ending with –y

In these words, the stress always falls two syllables BEFORE the –y.

GEN – er – ous

gen – er – **OS** – it – y

-ity is the most common, but we also have -ify, -ogy, -omy, -aphy, -stry, and more. Practice with these examples:

PUB – lic	pub – LIC – i – ty
NA – tion – al	na – tion – AL – i – ty
re – LI – a – ble	re – li – a – BIL – i – ty
e – LEC – tric	e – lec – TRI – ci – ty
ME – thod	me – thod – O – lo – gy
CHO – re – o – graph	cho – re – O – gra – phy
con – fi – DEN – tial	con – fi – den – ti – AL – i – ty

This rule of the word stress being two syllables before the -y always applies, even if the word doesn't originate in a shorter word. So, now you know how to pronounce:

- **MIN** – i – stry
- bi – **O** – gra – phy
- as – **TRO** – no – my
- a – **NA** – lo – gy
- di – **VER** – si – fy
- vi – **CIN** – i – ty

Suffixes that take the stress: -ee, -eer, -ette, -esque

Finally, we have some suffixes that take the stress on the suffix itself. For example:

- AM – pu – tate (v.)
- am - pu – TEE (n. – a person who has had an amputation)

There aren't too many words with these endings in English, but it's helpful to practice a few of them to help you remember the rule:

- ❑ re-fer-**EE**
- ❑ nom-in-**EE**
- ❑ train-**EE**
- ❑ en-gi-**NEER**
- ❑ vo-lun-**TEER**
- ❑ bache-lor-**ETTE**
- ❑ kit-chen-**ETTE**
- ❑ gro-**TESQUE**
- ❑ pic-tur-**ESQUE**

*Exceptions: The words employ**ee** and refuge**ee** should also have the stress on the last syllable, but nowadays a lot of people say emp**l**oyee and ref**u**gee.*

When we put all these rules together, we get some “families” of words with different stresses:

☐ **DEM**-o-crat
dem-**O**-cra-cy
dem-o-**CRAT**-ic

☐ **PHO**-to-graph
pho-**TO**-gra-phy
pho-to-**GRAPH**-ic

☐ **NA**-tion-al
na-tion-**AL**-i-ty
na-tion-al-i-**ZA**-tion

English pronunciation is certainly interesting, isn't it?

You've finished Lesson 22! In Next Lesson, we're going to begin talking about **sentence stress**.

Lesson 23:

Sentence Stress – Introduction

During this course, we've been practicing a lot of individual words – and now we're going to focus on making your English phrases and sentences sound more natural. When we say a sentence, we don't say all the words exactly the same. Listen to these two examples: which one sounds more natural?

- ❑ Nice to meet you.
- ❑ **Nice to meet** you.

You can hear that the words “nice” and “meet” are stronger; we put more emphasis on them.

Just as individual English words have stressed syllables, English sentences also have “strong” and “weak” words. The pattern in this sentence is strong-weak-strong-weak (**QoQo**)

Here's an example of a sentence that has the opposite structure: weak-strong-weak-strong:

oQoQ The **bank** was **closed**.

We put the emphasis on “bank” and “closed.”

There are many other rhythms in English, for example:

ooQo Can you **help** me?

QoooQ **Where** does she **live**?

ooQoQ Would you **like** a **drink**?

Practice these sentences to help you get the hang of different patterns of strong and weak words and syllables in a sentence:

000

0o0o0o

0oo0oo0oo

JOHN LIKES BEER.

John went back to London.

John and his girlfriend were arguing.

000

0o0o0o

0oo0oo0oo

Bill plays golf.

Bill was writing letters.

Bill has been mad at his co-worker.

Notice that the “weak” words and syllables are pronounced *softer and faster*, and there are some “reductions”. We don’t say “**Bill has been mad.**” We say, “**BILL** *ezbin* **MAD** *atis* **CO**-worker.”

How can you know which words in a sentence are “strong” and should be emphasized? Here are some tips:

“Strong” words carry the content of the sentence:

Main verbs	think, play, give
Nouns	music, bike, Diana
Adjectives	green, modern, beautiful
Adverbs	quickly, always
Negative auxiliary verbs	don’t, aren’t, can’t, haven’t

“Weak” words provide the structure/links in the sentence:

Pronouns	he, we, you, they
Prepositions	at, from, on, in
Articles	a, an, the

Conjunctions	and, but, yet, because
Positive Auxiliary verbs	do, are, can, have

The fact that positive auxiliary verbs are weak and negative auxiliary verbs are strong can help you hear the difference in similar sentences, by the difference in the rhythm. For example:

QoQ **JEN can SWIM.**

OOO **JEN CAN'T SWIM.**

ooQo Do you **LIKE** it?

QoQo **DON'T** you **LIKE** it?

Try to repeat these practice sentences at normal speed – imitating the rhythm of strong and weak words and syllables. One thing you'll notice is that the “weak words” are often pronounced very quickly, and they tend to “run together” – this is what often gives the impression of native English speakers speaking fast.

I'm **STUD**ying **ENG**lish so that I can **TRA**vel to Au**STRAL**ia next De**CEM**ber.

Notice that the words “so that I can” – all of which are weak words – are pronounced as if they were one word: “sothetiken”

PAUL and **KAT**ie **CRASHED** their **CAR** while they were **DR**iving to the **PAR**ty.

We should have **BROUGHT** a **CAM**era – we could have **TAK**en some **PIC**tures of the **SH**OW.

Notice that “should have” and “could have” sound like “shoulda” and “coulda”

I **THINK** he **FELL** a**SLEEP** while **WATCH**ing a **MOV**ie.

How about **WAIT**ing for a few **DAYS** to **SEE** what will **HAP**pen?

The words “what will” sound like “whatll”

It was some of the **BEST ICE** cream I've **TAST**ed in my en**TIRE** **LIFE**.

Have you ever **THOUGHT** about **GET**ting a **MAST**er's de**GREE**?

HARry can **COOK** pretty **WELL**, but he has **NO CLUE** how to **BAKE** a **CAKE**.

*The words "but he has" run together so that they sound like one word:
"butteeas"*

If you **DON'T KNOW** what you're **TALK**ing about, then you **SHOULDN't SAY**
ANything at **ALL**.

*Again, compare the different rhythms when we have a "strong" negative
auxiliary verb and a "weak" positive auxiliary verb:*

oo**OO**o You should **SAY SOMething.**

o**OO**oo You **SHOULDN't SAY ANything.**

You've finished Lesson 23! Next Lesson, we'll study some of the
common pronunciation changes in "weak words."

Lesson 24: Reductions – Part I

In today's and the coming lessons, we're going to learn some of the pronunciation changes that occur in "weak words" in spoken English. This will help you not only with your pronunciation, but also with your listening.

Two examples of reductions that you probably already know are:

- going to → gonna
I'm gonna take piano lessons.
- want to → wanna
I wanna practice my English.

Let's start there – with reductions of the word "to."

TO → TA or A

have to → hafta

has to → hasta

I hafta work on this project; it hasta be finished by Friday.

wants to → wantsta

Jim wantsta get a haircut.

Who wantsta order a pizza?

wanted to → wanteda

I've always wanteda be a pilot.

She wanteda learn how ta sing.

like to → liketa

I liketa listen a classical music.

Wouldja liketa go fer a walk?

trying to → tryna

Be quiet – I'm tryna study.

He's tryna fix the computer.

For more practice with reductions of TO, you can go to this link with a list of verbs followed by "to" and read the practice sentences, changing "to" to "ta": http://www.englishpage.com/gerunds/infinitive_list.htm

YOU → YA / JA

The word "you" often sounds like "ya" in fast spoken English.

- *D'**ya** have the time?*
- *Have **ya** bought the tickets?*
- *Will **ya** get here by 8?*
- *Are **ya** interested in sports?*
- ***Ya** never mentioned that.*
- *Make sure **ya** bring a jacket.*

This often happens in **questions** and when the word "you" is at the beginning or middle of the sentence. When "you" is the last word, then it's often pronounced normally. Compare these sentences:

- *I wanna talk to **you**.*
- *I wanna tell **ya** something.*
- *She likes **you**.*
- *She'd like **ya** ta call her.*

When "you" comes after a word ending in the letter D, it often sounds like "ja":

- ***Wouldja** like a drink?*
- ***Couldja** gimme a hand?*
- ***Didja** know about this?*

OR, FOR, YOUR & YOU'RE → ER, FER, YER

- *Wouldja like coffee **er** tea?*
- *Should we go to the mall **er** the park?*
- *D'ya have a pen **er** a pencil I could borrow?*
- *This is **fer** you.*
- *I'm looking **fer** my keys.*
- *We asked **fer** an extra blanket.*
- ***Yer** shoe's untied.*
- *I know **yer** upset.*
- *Is this **yer** purse?*
- ***Yer** a genius!*

WE'RE → WER

In a similar way, the word “we’re,” which is the short form of “we are,” often sounds like “wer”:

- ***Wer** gonna visit the capital.*
- *I think **wer** lost.*
- ***Wer** not very hungry.*
- ***Wer** thinkin about it.*
- ***Wer** not Italian, **wer** Spanish.*

I'M / I'LL → AM / ALL

In the contractions “I’m” and “I’ll,” we usually pronounce the “I” more like “a” – so “I’m” becomes “am” and “I’ll” sounds like “all.”

- ☐ *Sorry, **am** busy at the moment.*
- ☐ *Yeah, **am** enjoying the class.*
- ☐ ***Am** really annoyed.*
- ☐ ***All** be out of town next week.*
- ☐ ***All** hafta work late today.*
- *I can't talk now, but **all** call ya later.*
- ☐ ***Am** pretty sure **all** pass the test.*

CAN → KIN

As mentioned in the last lesson, the word “can” is often pronounced very fast, like “kin.”

- ☐ *I **kin** meet with ya Next Lesson,.*
- ☐ *He **kin** speak five languages.*
- ☐ *They **kin** join us fer dinner.*
- ☐ ***Kin** ya gimme a call?*
- ☐ ***Kin** we start the meeting?*
- ☐ ***Kin** yer brother pick us up?*

You’ve finished Lesson 24! I hope it has helped you see why spoken English often sounds different from what you might expect. Next Lesson, we’ll continue our study of reductions.

Lesson 25: Reductions – Part II

Ready to learn and practice more reductions? Today we're going to focus on a few more "extreme" reductions with the words **of** and **and**, as well as the **disappearing H and T sounds**.

OF → A

The word **of** is often pronounced like **a**. You can practice this reduction with a "shopping list":

- ☐ A bag **a** chips
- ☐ A jar **a** jam
- ☐ A piece **a** fruit
- ☐ A carton **a** milk
- ☐ A bar **a** soap
- ☐ A can **a** beer
- ☐ A bottle **a** wine
- ☐ A box **a** matches

This reduction only happens when the following word begins with a consonant. When the word after "of" begins with a vowel, we pronounce the word normally.

Compare these sentences:

- It's made **a** cheese
- It's made **of** eggs
 "a veggs"

Notice how the V sound in "of" is linked to the word eggs: "of eggs" sounds like "a veggs."

- ☐ A bowl **a** soup

- ❑ A bowl **of** oatmeal
 "a voatmeal"
- ❑ A gallon **a** juice
- ❑ A gallon **of** ice cream
 "a vice cream"
- ❑ A couple **a** pears
- ❑ A couple **of** apples
 "a vapples"
- ❑ I ate a slice **a** the cake.
- ❑ I ate a slice **of** an apple.
 "oven apple"

AND → N

The word "and" often gets shortened to "n." Practice this with these "binomials" in English. A binomial is a common pair of two words that are linked together by a conjunction:

- ❑ She walked back **n** forth.
- ❑ I bought some pots **n** pans.
- ❑ I hear you loud **n** clear.
- ❑ Life has many ups **n** downs.
- ❑ We won fair **n** square.
- I'm sick **n** tired of this.
- ❑ The kids are safe **n** sound.

Disappearing H and T

You may remember from the lesson about T that this sound often disappears – especially after N and S. This is why we pronounce "want to" as "wanna." It's common to drop the T at the end of **isn't**, **don't**, **doesn't**, and **didn't**:

- ☐ *Isn* she beautiful?
- ☐ We *don* wanna be late.
- ☐ He *doesn* know anything.
- ☐ I *didn* like the movie.

The H sound is also often dropped, especially in **he**, **him**, **his**, and **her** – and often, the shortened word gets “attached” to the previous word:

- ☐ Where *doesee* live?
- ☐ I *gavim* a call.
- ☐ We *metis* wife.
- ☐ *Asker* about it.

This is also common in the various forms of **have**:

- ☐ I *ave* a problem.
- ☐ Where *ve* you been?
- We *aven't* been there yet.
- Why *asn ee* finished the work?
(Why **hasn't he** finished the work?)

You can see in this last example that there are three disappearing sounds: the H and the T from **hasn't**, and the H from **he**.

The word **has** is usually shortened to 's when used as an auxiliary verb as in the present perfect:

- John's gone to bed.
= John **has** gone to bed.
- She's never tried it.
- My computer's just crashed.

But when used as a main verb, we often drop the H to *as*:

- ☐ He *as* a new car.
- ☐ She *as* three cats.

☐ My brother **as** the flu.

You've finished Lesson 25! Next Lesson, we're going to go back to sentence stress, and learn about how special stress can change the meaning of the sentence.

Lesson 26: Special Sentence Stress

In Lesson 23, you learned about strong and weak words in the rhythm of a sentence. But sometimes we give **extra** emphasis to specific words, to call attention to a detail, depending on the situation.

Consider these examples, where the same sentence is spoken with different stress, depending on the situation:

Did John give Mary the book?
No, **I** gave Mary the book.

Did you lend Mary the book?
No, I **gave** Mary the book.

Did you give **Jane** the book?
No, I gave **Mary** the book.

Did you give Mary the magazine?
No, I gave Mary the **book**.

You can see that each example emphasizes the most important word for that situation. When the question asks about who received the book, the emphasis in the answer is on the person who received the book (Mary). When the question asks about the action (lend vs. give), the response also emphasizes the action (**gave** the book).

Now test your ability to identify which word is most important and should receive the emphasis. We're going to work with the sentence "We had dinner at Mary's house yesterday."

You'll see this sentence as the answer to four different questions and you need to say it with the stress on the correct word. After ten seconds, the answer will appear (*answers at the end of the document*).

Did you have dinner at Mary's house last week?
We had dinner at Mary's house yesterday.

I heard you had lunch at Mary's house yesterday.
We had dinner at Mary's house yesterday.

So you were over at Mary's apartment the other day?
We had dinner at Mary's house yesterday.

Didn't you eat at Martha's house yesterday?
We had dinner at Mary's house yesterday.

Special emphasis is often used in three situations:

❓ **Corrections**

"We have five new employees."

"Actually, there are **seven** new employees."

"So you speak German?"

"Well, I'm **learning** German."

You can also use it to correct yourself:

"The company is located in the southeast of France – oh, sorry – the south**west** of France."

❓ **Disagreements**

"I told you, we **don't** have enough money to buy this."

"Yes, we **do!**"

"*That's a stupid idea.*"

"No, it's **not!**"

❓ **Adding new details / information**

"I heard you're a teacher?"

"Yes – a **history** teacher."

Let's do an exercise where you practice saying the same sentence two different ways, depending on the stress needed:

Is the event this October?
No, it'll be **next** October.

Is the event next November?
No, it'll be next **October**.

He bought a new car.
Actually, he bought a **used** car.

He bought a used motorcycle.
Actually, he bought a used **car**.

Does the class start on Thursday night?
It starts on **Tuesday** night.

Does the class start on Tuesday morning?
It starts on Tuesday **night**.

Michelangelo was a 17th-century Italian painter – excuse me – a **16th-century** Italian painter.

Michelangelo was a 16th-century Spanish painter – excuse me – a 16th-century **Italian** painter.

Special emphasis can also be used to add **implied** meaning to a sentence – something we don't say directly, but that the other person can understand "between the lines" or indirectly.

Here's a sentence that has 7 different implications, depending on how you say it and where you put the stress:

I never said she stole my money.
(implies that I never said it, but someone else did)

I **never** said she stole my money.
(emphasizes that this event – my saying she stole my money – never happened, not even once)

I never **said** **she** stole my money.

(implies that I never said it out loud, but perhaps I thought, implied, or behaved as if this was true)

I never said **she** stole my money.

(implies that I am not accusing her specifically, but that someone else DID steal my money)

I never said she **stole** my money.

(implies that I never accused her of stealing, but perhaps I said that she did something else with my money)

I never said she stole **my** money.

(implies that she stole someone else's money, but not mine)

I never said she stole my **money**.

(implies that she stole something else from me, but it wasn't money)

You've finished Lesson 26! Next Lesson, we're going to begin a two-part study on linking, which will help you connect the words in your sentences.

Answers to Exercise:

Did you have dinner at Mary's house last week?

We had dinner at Mary's house **yesterday**.

I heard you had lunch at Mary's house yesterday.

We had **dinner** at Mary's house yesterday.

So you were over at Mary's apartment the other day?

We had dinner at Mary's **house** yesterday.

Didn't you eat at Martha's house yesterday?

We had dinner at **Mary's** house yesterday.

Lesson 27: Linking – Part I

In a previous lesson, you learned how the words “of eggs” sound like “**a veggs**” and “an apple” sounds like “**a napple.**”

This type of linking between two words is very common – it’s one of the reasons that natural spoken English sounds “fast,” making it hard to hear where one word ends and the next word begins. Practicing this technique will help you speak faster and more naturally, with fewer pauses.

When a word ending in a consonant sound is followed by a word beginning in a vowel sound, the final sound of the first word either acts as a “connection” between the two words (as in **pass out** – the S sound continues until the beginning of the word “out”) or even “moves” to the beginning of the next word (as in **wake up**, which sounds like “way cup”).

This is especially common in phrasal verbs:

- ❑ **help out**
= *hell pout*
- ❑ **turn off**
= *tur noff*
- ❑ **hold on**
= *hol don*
- ❑ **come in**
= *co min*
- ❑ **look after**
= *loo kafter*

Let’s practice with some example phrases and sentences:

Linking with N

- ❑ an apple = a napple

- ❑ an ocean = a nocean
- ❑ an idiot = a nidiot
- ❑ an alternative = a nalternative
- ❑ an egg = a negg
- ❑ one evening = wa nevening
- ❑ one artist = wa nartist
- ❑ one orange = wa norange
- ❑ one option = wa noption
- ❑ one umbrella = wa numbrella

Linking with M

- ❑ What time is it?
- ❑ She came out of the house.
- ❑ We saw some animals.
- ❑ Sam and Jim are here.

Linking with L

- ❑ I feellokay.
- ❑ Fill up the tank. = Fi lup the tank.
- ❑ Will anybody help me?
- ❑ Tell us all about it.

Linking with R

- It's too faraway.
- ❑ Did you hearrany news?
- ❑ The store is closed.
- ❑ I want more ice cream.
- You're absolutely right.

These two sentences are extra difficult – I'll say them both slow and fast!

- ❑ Where re are all the papers?
- ❑ Where re are all our r employees?

Linking with S and Z

- Let's ask permission.
- It's always sunny.
- Your wallet's under the chair.
- That's outrageous!
- She's interested in politics.
- He's ugly.
- ❑ The movie was awful.
- ❑ Those se apples are rotten.

Linking with T, D, K, and P

- ❑ The food is cold.
- ❑ Please send all the letters.
- ❑ We tried everything.
- ❑ I need eight dollars.
- ❑ Great idea!
- ❑ I slept in yesterday.
- ❑ We got off the bus.
- ❑ They missed out on the party.
- ❑ Can you help p us?
- I can't stop eating sweets.
- Let's look around.
- They'll take over the company.

How is it possible to remember these links while speaking English? Well, the fact is that it's not really necessary to think about them consciously – you just need to practice them, as you did in this lesson, and this will help you develop the habit so that you will make the connections automatically while talking.

You've finished Lesson 27! In this lesson, we practiced linking consonants and vowels; Next Lesson, we'll practice consonant-consonant and vowel-vowel links.

Lesson 28: Linking – Part II

Today we'll continue to practice linking with pairs of consonants and vowels.

When the end of one word and the beginning of the next word have the same sound, the two words “share” the sound, with no pause in between them – like in the phrase **phone number**. We continue the N sound at the end of **phone** directly into the beginning of the word **number**.

We'll practice this with examples from the two types of consonants in English – “stops” and “continuous sounds.” The T, D, K, G, P, and B sounds are **stops** – they are quick and explosive sounds, that are made in a single moment. All the other sounds like L, R, S, and V are **continuous** – because we can extend the sound for some time, like this: LLLL, RRRR, SSSS, VVVV.

Linking Continuous Sounds

Continuous sounds are easy to link, because we just continue the end of the first word into the beginning of the second word, as in the example with **phone number**. Practice with these phrases and sentences:

enough food

We have enoughgh food for everyone.

have very

I haveve very good friends.

both things

I like bothth things.

soothe the

This lotion will help soothethe the irritation.

looks so

He looksso happy.

wish she

I wish she hadn't said that.

some more

Can I have some more juice?

one night

We spent one night in a hotel.

whole lot

He won a whole lot of money in the lottery.

you're really

You're really late.

We can also link two similar continuous sounds, even if they are not exactly the same. For example, in the phrase "have faith." V and F are almost the same sound, but the V is voiced and the F is unvoiced. We can still link them, like this:

havvvvfffaith

have faith

Practice linking similar sounds with a few more examples:

F/V

love free

I love free concerts.

leave food

Don't leave food on your plate.

S/Z

was sitting

I was sitting in the park.

has something

He has something to say.

Unvoiced TH / Voiced TH

with the

The kids played with the toys.

both these

Both these machines are broken.

Linking Stops

When we link two stops, the transition between the words is very fast – it almost sounds like one word:

take care

I'll take care of your dogs.

all takara yer dogs.

When you combine the linking in “take care” with the other reductions and pronunciation changes (I’ll → all, of → a, your → yer), it makes the sentence sound completely different from what you would expect!

Let’s do a few linking exercises with stops:

help prepare

I can helppprepare the presentation.

last time

The lastttime I wenttto Europe was seven years ago.

bad day

I’m having a baddday.

big gift

We gave our mother a bigggift.

bank closes

The bankkcloses early today.

Linking Two Vowels

Do you know the Nike slogan: “Just do it”?

Listen carefully to the pronunciation – it sounds like there is a small W sound between **do** and **it**:

Jus duwit

When the first word ends in a vowel sound and the second word also begins in a vowel sound, we can link them with a small W sound or Y sound:

You always get so angry.

Youwalways get sowangry.

He asked me out.

Heyasked meyout.

Practice with these ten sentences, trying to imitate my pronunciation as closely as possible:

1. I yate the yice cream.
2. I yonly work on weekends.
3. The yend of the book was surprising.
4. She yanswered the phone.
5. I yunderstood the yexplanation.
6. Do wall the student have textbooks?
7. Who winvited him to the wedding?
8. Your shoe wis untied.
9. I'm saving up money so wI can travel.
10. We yarrived too wearly.

You've finished Lesson 28! Next Lesson, we'll practice intonation – how to add emotion to your spoken English.

Lesson 29: Intonation

Intonation is sometimes called the “music” of English – it’s the way your voice expresses extra attitude and meaning through the way you speak. Studying intonation is a little difficult because it’s rather subjective, and it’s hard to identify definite rules – but this lesson will give you an introduction to the basics.

Rising and Falling Tones

Listen to the difference between these two sentences:

I’m sorry.
(apologizing)

I’m sorry?
(asking for clarification)

When the phrase “I’m sorry” is used as a statement, to apologize, it has a **falling tone** – my voice starts high and goes down. When it is used as a question, to ask for clarification, it has a **rising tone** – my voice starts low and goes up.

Here’s another example – listen to the difference between the statement and the question.

“We’ll discuss this when the director arrives next week.”

“He’s coming tomorrow.”

“He’s coming tomorrow?”

“Yes, the visit was rescheduled.”

Again, you can hear that the statement has a falling tone, and the question has a rising tone. We usually use rising tones for questions in which we have an idea about a fact, but we want to **confirm** the information.

Practice saying these sentences once with a **falling tone** (statement) and once with a **rising tone** (question to confirm the information).

The meeting was canceled.

The meeting was canceled?

He broke his arm.

He broke his arm?

She's married.

She's married?

Tones in Question Tags

Another way to check information, or to see if someone agrees with you, is by making a statement and adding a question tag, for example:

She's married, **isn't she?**

"Isn't she" is the question tag – it makes the statement into a question, asking the other person to confirm the information. The intonation when you use this type of question tag is **high-low-high** – the tone falls during the statement, and rises again in the question. Practice with these examples:

The meeting was canceled, wasn't it?

You're from France, aren't you?

She hasn't quit her job, has she?

You've been to China, haven't you?

They live in New York, right?

(If you can't remember how to form the correct question tag, the simplest way is to add "...right?")

Asking vs. Checking Question Tags

When you have some doubt, and you need confirmation, we use a high-low-high intonation.

You're from France, aren't you?

Yes – born and raised in Paris.

You're from France, aren't you?

Actually, I'm from Canada. But I speak French.

In this case, you are really asking if the person is from France, because you are not sure about their answer.

But when you are making an observation, and you are pretty confident that the other person will agree, we change the intonation pattern from **high-low-high** to **low-high-low**. Listen to the difference:

You're from France, aren't you?

It's a beautiful day, isn't it?

In this second question, you are pretty sure that the other person will agree. Here's another example – imagine you see your friend's kids eating salad, but they don't eat the tomatoes. You can say:

You don't like tomatoes, do you?

High Tones vs. Flat Tones

Exclamations in English are typically spoken with high tones, for example:

Great job!

Wow!

That's perfect!

The high tones express an attitude of **excitement** or **surprise**. However, if the exclamations are said in a different way – with a “flat” tone – they can express a negative attitude like **sarcasm** or **disapproval**.

It's a little hard to explain – but practice these examples with the same sentence spoken in different ways, showing a different attitude in each case.

I got a promotion!

Wow! Congratulations!

(pleasant surprise)

I was just fired.

Wow – I'm sorry to hear that.

(unpleasant surprise, compassion)

The boss said we can leave early today.

Oh, great!

(happiness)

The boss said we have to work late today.

Oh, great.

(sarcasm, annoyance)

Sheila won the lottery.

No way! How much did she win?

(surprise)

Can I borrow \$100?

No way! You still haven't paid me the money I lent you last month.

(disapproval, rejection)

Intonation is also very individual – it varies from person to person – but it's good to remember that we don't speak English in a monotone way, like a robot. We use the tone of our voice to add emotion, attitude, and communicate extra meaning – so keep this in mind when you speak English.

You've finished Lesson 29!

Lesson 30: Evaluation

Today's lesson is your opportunity to get an evaluation of your pronunciation, with some tips and suggestions for improvement.

There are two parts to the evaluation:

1. Reading a text aloud
2. Speaking spontaneously

Part 1: Reading a Text Aloud

Smile in Each Moment

There's a tendency to get caught up in the tasks of our day, the urgency of what's coming up, the distractions of being online.

And we forget to smile.

In the rush of the day, the stress of wanting things to happen a certain way, we lose the enjoyment of each moment.

In every moment, there's the capacity for happiness. It's not that we need to be ecstatic, full of pleasure, excited or even joyous each and every second of the day. Who needs that kind of pressure? And it's not that we can never feel sadness or anger or stress. It's that we can feel happiness, in some form, any moment we like, even in the midst of stress or sadness.

And it's exceedingly simple. We just need to remember to smile.

You can smile in each and every moment.

OK, maybe you don't need a smile on your face all day long — your cheeks will feel tired. But we can smile more, and in between physical smiles, we can have an internal smile.

Try an internal smile now: have a calm, unsmiling face, but think of the miracle of this moment, and find a thought to smile about. Feel the smiling feeling inside. Isn't that amazing?

You'll forget to smile in some moments, because your mind gets caught up in stories about the past, stresses about what might happen in the future. None of this is happening right now — it's just movies playing in our heads.

Instead, remind yourself of what's happening right now, and see the beauty in it, see the reason to smile. And then smile, externally and internally. This changes your day, because now instead of being caught up in stress and stories, we are present, and happy.

What do you have to smile about in this moment?

By Leo Babauta – <http://zenhabits.net/smile>

Part 2: Speaking Spontaneously

For this part, record another message and talk about anything you want! You can speak about yourself, your job, your hobbies and interests... or you can answer the question at the end of the Part 1 Text – “What do you have to smile about in this moment?” – what are you happy about and thankful for?

You can think about what you want to say before you start recording, but **DO NOT** write out your answer and then read it from the paper. **It's okay** if you have to pause to think, or if you make mistakes – don't worry about it! The important part is to talk spontaneously, as if you and I were speaking in person.

Again, you can record your speaking

Thanks for participating in the course!

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