

# American English Pronunciation



**The Rachel's English Guide  
to sounding American**



**Rachel Smith**

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# Introduction

I've been creating accent reduction videos on YouTube for over six years. During that time I've gotten requests for a book. I always resisted because my ideas on pronunciation and how to teach it are always evolving, thanks to what I learn from teaching. I'm still not done learning. Hopefully I'll never be! But I started to see the importance of writing a book for organizing my thoughts on pronunciation, and setting up a structure for study. Many people find a video through search and don't have any idea how it fits into the bigger picture of American English and accent reduction.

This book presents the 'big picture' of American English pronunciation as I see it. It is broad, but not deep. I look forward to completing other books, videos, and courses in the future that will go deep, that will elaborate upon the groundwork presented in this book.

As I've been exploring pronunciation, one thing that initially surprised me was how much opinion comes into play. There are teachers I respect who have different ideas than I do about how something should be pronounced, and how it should be taught. There is no one right way to speak English, or to teach it to non-native speakers. Truly, this is *Rachel's English*. This is my way of teaching how I talk, as clearly and methodically as possible.

In school, I did not study how to teach English, or pronunciation, or any foreign language. I did not study linguistics. I did not study how to teach anybody anything. I studied Applied Mathematics, Computer Science, and Music (vocal and opera performance). As I became interested in how Americans speak, and how to teach that, while living in Germany, I came to realize that what I studied was actually very significant. What I have developed in *Rachel's English* and this book comes directly from those fields of study: from singing, increased body and voice awareness, connection to rhythm and melody, a keen ear and the ability to imitate. From applied mathematics and computer science: a linear and modular mind, able to break down my vocal awareness into small, teachable chunks.

Developing *Rachel's English*, from the beginning, has been about experience and first-hand investigation more than book learning. This book is written only to support practical experience, perhaps in ways that are sometimes unconventional. I hope something in it will help you communicate more effectively and confidently in English.

What are the most important things about this book? Learning pronunciation concepts together. Most books and resources will teach sounds separate from

rhythm and intonation. But we never use sounds by themselves. They are always a part of words and sentences, where we cannot ignore rhythm and intonation. So when you learn a sound in this book, you'll learn what it sounds like in stressed and unstressed syllables. You'll always be addressing the overall character, no matter what detail you're learning.

# Tools for Learning

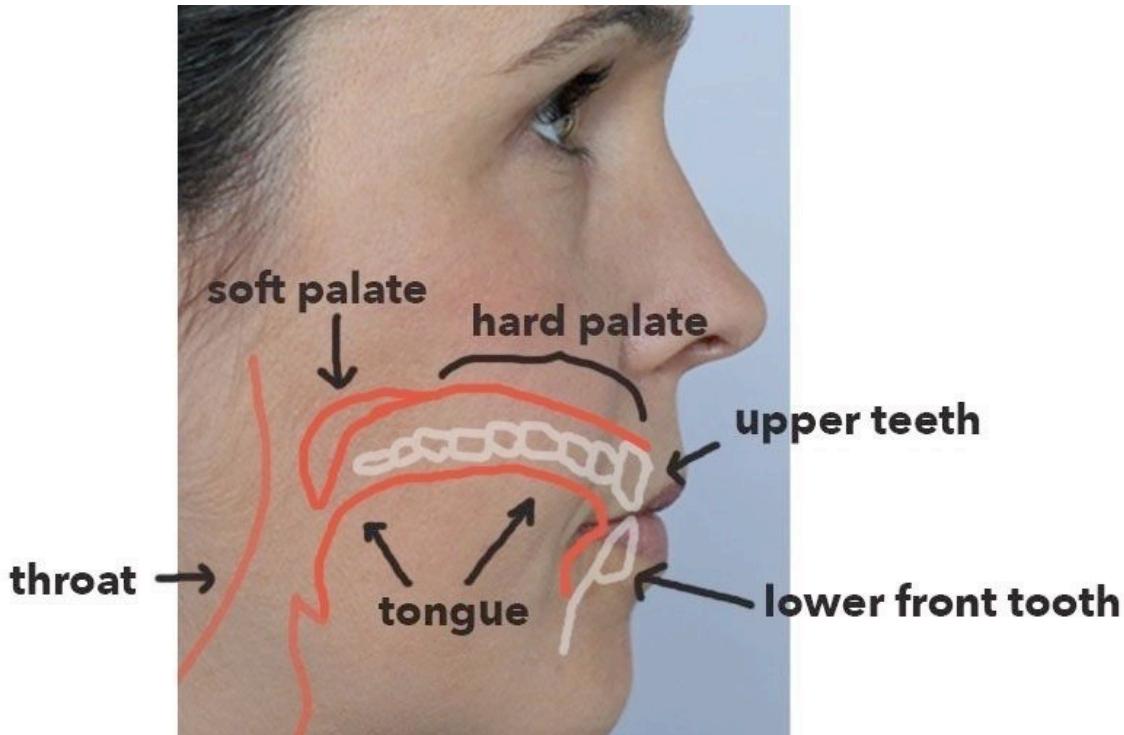
Before you start, get to know what tools you'll find for learning in this book.

## PICTURES

There are several color photos in this book. If your device does not display the photos well, consider using an alternative.

These photos will help you understand what's going on inside the mouth for the sounds of American English. Each photo shows:

1. The throat. It should stay open and relaxed most of the time, and the neck muscles too.
2. The tongue. This amazing muscular structure can flip up, down, stick way out—we want this muscle to be relaxed so it can move easily.
3. The teeth. I draw in the top and bottom front teeth, and the top teeth on the far side of the face.
4. The hard and soft palate. The hard palate, or roof of the mouth, is in the front half of the mouth, and the soft palate is back towards the throat. The soft palate closes (by lifting) for all sounds in American English except for three consonant sounds: N [n], M [m], and NG [ŋ]. This means American English has no nasal vowels. This can be hard for students whose native languages have nasal vowels like Bengali, French, Haitian Creole, Hindi, Hmong, Mandarin, Nepali, and Polish to name a few.



## SYMBOLS

You will see symbols like  $\wedge \eta \ddot{\theta}$ . These are the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet. It is very important to know from the beginning that **English is not a phonetic language**. This means there is not a direct relationship between the letters and the sounds. You can't look at a word and know how to pronounce it; you can't hear a word and know how to spell it. One letter does not correspond to one sound. For example, the letter A is pronounced differently in these three words:

**exact** [ɪg'zækt] — here, it is the [æ] vowel  
**father** ['faðər] — here, it is the [a] vowel  
**about** [ə'baut] — here, it is the [ə] vowel

For many more examples, check out the Sound Chart Appendix. For people whose native language is phonetic, this is very annoying. I apologize on behalf of the English language! It certainly makes it harder to learn. Even native speakers of English sometimes have to look up the pronunciation or spelling of a word.

Luckily, the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) is here to help. Rather than relying on a *letter* to represent a sound, experts have come up with a unique *symbol* for each sound. You will see me use these symbols in my videos and this book. To introduce yourself to these symbols, watch these videos:

<p><b>Video 0.1 — The IPA: Vowels</b>  This video goes over the vowel sounds of American English with sample words. Pay special attention to the IPA symbol for each sound.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aac">engl.io/aac</a>
<p><b>Video 0.2 —The IPA: Diphthongs</b>  This video goes over the diphthong sounds of American English with sample words. Pay special attention to the IPA symbol for each sound.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aae">engl.io/aae</a>

### Video 0.3 —The IPA: Consonants

This video goes over the consonant sounds of American English with sample words. Pay special attention to the IPA symbol for each sound.



[engl.io/aah](http://engl.io/aah)

### Video 0.4 —The IPA: Test Yourself

How well did you learn the sounds? Quiz yourself in this video.



[engl.io/aam](http://engl.io/aam)

The IPA helps a lot when it comes to writing sounds, but it's not perfect. There are some cases in American English where the IPA symbol used does not represent the way Americans speak, but don't worry. You'll learn about these special cases in this book. Additionally, you can look up the same word in several dictionaries and not see the same IPA transcription. This is due to a difference of opinion. Don't panic. Pick the one that makes the most sense to you, or that is in your favorite dictionary.

I use these symbols [ ] to let you know that what you're seeing is IPA.

I will stress again: In general, you cannot look at a written word and know how to pronounce it based on the letters. When you learn a new word, you have to learn the pronunciation as well, by looking in a dictionary or asking a native speaker. Though there are some pronunciation rules, many of them have exceptions that are so important, or so many exceptions, that the rule isn't very helpful.

To continue to make pronunciation complicated, some words are spelled differently but pronounced the same. For example, the past tense of the verb 'to read', *I read this book yesterday*, is pronounced the same way as the color **red**. These are called **homophones**, and there are many in the English language.

## AUDIO

This book comes with example audio. These are samples to illustrate the pronunciation points, and to get you started on improving your accent. Listen and repeat out loud many times. You can listen to each audio file online by following its link, or by listening the files you downloaded with this book. The links are clickable, but if your device does not support clicking, you can just type the URL into your web browser. All of the links begin with [engl.io/](http://engl.io/), and you can type this into your browser with out <http://>.

## VIDEO

This book references many of the free videos on the Rachel's English YouTube channel and website. The links are clickable, but if your device does not support clicking, you can just type the URL into your web browser. All of the links begin with [engl.io/](http://engl.io/), and you can type this into your browser without <http://>. The videos have closed captioning, or subtitles. You can turn these off or on by clicking the 'CC' button at the bottom of the YouTube player.

If YouTube is blocked in your country, don't worry. On the Rachel's English website, there is an alternate option. Just click the link "YouTube blocked?" above the video.

## PRACTICE

Wait! Practice isn't in this book. It's what *you* have to do. Reading this book, watching the videos, listening once or twice to the audio files—these things won't change your accent very much. You have to practice what you learn. Practice with the audio files many times. When you're working on a concept, for example, the IH as in SIT [ɪ] vowel, drill it for 10-20 minutes a day. Practice the same set of words over and over until they're comfortable and roll off your tongue completely naturally while staying relaxed. Then do the same with another set of words. Do you still need more to work with? Don't worry, I'm working hard on developing more materials for you. To make sure that you hear about any and all learning materials that I develop, sign up for the mailing list.

Sign up for the Rachel's English newsletter to make sure you get all of the latest news on videos, books, courses, and more:

[engl.io/nl](http://engl.io/nl)

Be patient with yourself as you practice and work on your pronunciation—you won't transform overnight. However, with dedicated practice time, watching videos and listening to audio, imitating and practicing out loud, you *will* improve. And your listening comprehension will improve too. Make a goal: practice 20 minutes a day.

If you want guidance as you practice, Rachel's English offers one-time accent evaluations. This can be a great way to learn what you need to work on, and how to do it. If you want a coach every step of the way, then lessons, also offered by Rachel's English, are a great option.

Currently, teacher Tom Kelley, who you'll hear on the audio files in this book and see in some videos, offers both lessons and evaluations through Rachel's English. He has trained as a singer and professional actor, getting a Master's Degree in Acting from Harvard University. He is an exceptional accent coach and has been working with Rachel's English students since 2012.

**Lessons and Evaluations**

Learn more about Tom and the evaluations and lesson packages available from Rachel's English.

[engl.io/lessons](http://engl.io/lessons)

## Chapter 1

# Getting Started: Placement

What are the most fundamental building blocks of language? The **sounds** that make up that language? That's where most people seem to want to start. What about the **melody and rhythm**? These, in many ways, define the character of the language more than the sounds. What about the **placement**? What is placement anyway?

All three of these broad topics affect the other two—to try to work on one exclusively before moving on to the next cannot achieve the goal of speaking English like an American.

In this book, we will begin with an overview of all three before moving on to focus on any one of them. As you improve in one area, you should find that the other two areas also see improvement.

Let's start with something a little unconventional...let's not start with English. To begin, we're just going to imitate vocal sounds. There are two reasons for this:

1. to practice and improve imitation skills. A student with strong imitation skills will end up sounding much more like an American than a student with poor skills.
2. to practice and get comfortable with making new kinds of sounds. Even students who are great imitators will only go so far with their spoken English if they're not comfortable using sounds and placement that feel 'funny', that are outside of their native language.

What kind of student do you want to be? Decide now, it's important:

- I will be a student who spends a lot of time and energy practicing only with sounds and feelings that I am already comfortable with, that I already know from my native language.
- I will be a student who spends a lot of time and energy practicing with every weird sound and feeling I can come up with. I am willing to try things that sound and feel foreign.

English is a foreign language; it should feel foreign. If it feels a lot like your native language, then it probably doesn't sound very American. Working with completely new sounds and language concepts can be challenging and uncomfortable as an adult. They can feel embarrassing. Generally, resistance to discovering and using new sounds, and new language concepts (like reductions), is the greatest barrier to sounding American, not actually reproducing the sounds and characteristics of American English.

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 1.1 — Imitation.**

Remember, *this isn't English*. You'll hear random vocal sounds to practice imitation. Each sound or nonsense word can be heard once, with a pause after for you to repeat. Try to repeat everything exactly like you hear it. Experiment. Don't be afraid to sound crazy! Try closing your eyes and focusing on just the sounds.

#### **Audio 1.1 — Imitation**

It's not English, so you don't need to worry about how you sound!



[engl.io/ab1](http://engl.io/ab1)

What is engl.io.ab1? Type it into your web browser to listen to the audio online, or listen to the file you downloaded with this book.

### **Placement**

Of the three topics I mentioned earlier—sounds, melody and rhythm, and placement—placement is the least concrete and most difficult to teach. But it's incredibly important. What is placement? It affects the overall timbre or quality of a sound. (If the word 'timbre' is new to you, don't worry. I didn't hear it until I was in college studying music!) Think of a violin: it can play a lovely little melody. A flute can play the same melody, the same exact pitches and rhythm.

But do they sound the same? Definitely not. Even if you can't see the instrument, you know if it's a flute or a violin. The difference is the timbre, the *quality* of the sound. That sound defines the instrument more than the pitches or the rhythm it plays. That's important.

The instrument of the voice is the same: the vocal cords (also called vocal folds) vibrate involuntarily as the air pushes through from the lungs below, and the body around that shapes the sound to give it its timbre.

### **Video 1.1 — Path of the Voice**

Learn about how the voice works, placement, and how tension lifts placement.



[engl.io/ab7](http://engl.io/ab7)

Through teaching, I've learned how tension affects the placement of speech. American English has a very relaxed throat and neck. This allows the placement of the voice to be low. I feel it coming from my chest or the base of my neck. Very few of my students have a low, American placement when they first come to study with me—the placement of other languages is higher in the face, or sometimes further back in the throat.

### **Video 1.2 — Placement**

Learn more about what placement is and how to find different placements in your body.



[engl.io/abf](http://engl.io/abf)

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 1.2 — Placement.**

Let's experiment with placement. I'll say the part of my body where I feel the resonance, then I'll make a vowel sound from that space. First, just listen and see if you can hear the difference. Then, imitate the sounds and try to put the resonance in the same part in your body. Touch that part while you make the sound: hand flat on the chest, fingers on the nose, etc. Can you feel your voice in different parts of your body? If you can, great! Think about always letting the voice rest low, resonance in the chest, through relaxation. Speaking from here will sound very American!

It's important to note that speaking with a low resonance does *not* mean simply lowering the pitch. If you lower the pitch but still have tension in your throat and neck, your voice won't have the relaxed nature of American speech. Relax and

open up your neck and throat to let the resonance sink lower — never try to force your voice down.

### Audio 1.2 — Placement



[engl.io/abt](http://engl.io/abt)

You can probably hear the different placements on the audio file, but maybe you're not good at imitating them yet. That's ok. Definitely keep working at imitating the sound, but let's get you some other tools too.

The only thing between you and American placement is tension. Many languages involve the use or engagement of some part of the body that American English does not. I'm going to call this extra engagement, or work, 'tension'. Any extra tension in the neck, throat, or tongue lifts the placement. Remember, in American English placement is very low. That means you need to release tension in the neck, throat, and tongue to let the placement sink down. You can't force it.

How do you release it? If your native language involves some tension, then that tension feels very natural to you and can be hard to identify. This is where you need to use your body and not just your mind. To help you develop body-knowledge and relaxation of the neck, throat, and tongue, take a look at the following set of videos.

Do the exercises along with the videos. Try to feel yourself relaxed, even use your imagination to *picture* yourself relaxed. Make some vowels sounds, uuuhhhhhh. Then speak your native language – but pay attention right before you do. What changes in your body? Is tension added anywhere? If you noted anything, write it down. Do this activity with all of the four relaxation videos.

### Video 1.3 — Neck and Throat Relaxation

Exercises to help you release tension in your neck and throat.



[engl.io/abm](http://engl.io/abm)

### Video 1.4 — Jaw Relaxation

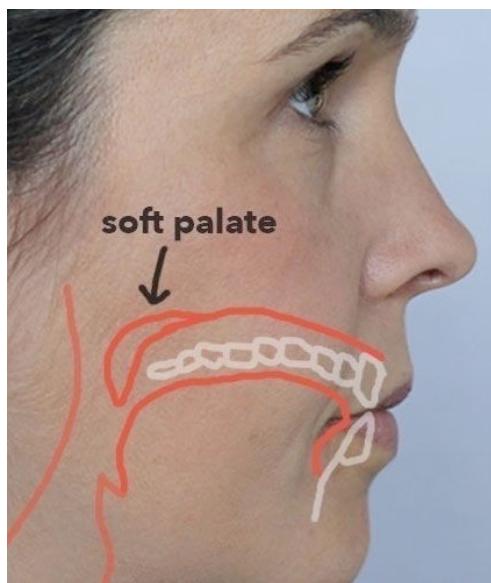
Exercises to help you release tension in your jaw.



[engl.io/ab2](http://engl.io/ab2)

<p><b>Video 1.5 — Tongue Relaxation</b> Exercises to help you release tension in your tongue.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ab9">engl.io/ab9</a>
<p><b>Video 1.6 — Lip Relaxation</b> Exercises to help you release tension in your lips.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/abx">engl.io/abx</a>

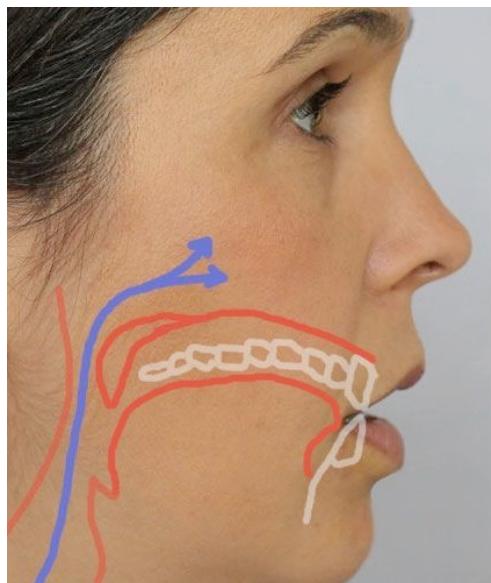
Now let's talk about the soft palate. This is the soft palate:



Tension isn't the only thing that can lift your placement, so can a lowered soft palate. This puts the sound in the nose. Some languages have a lowered soft palate on many sounds, including vowels (for example, French, Portuguese, Vietnamese, and Chinese – for a list, see wikipedia's page on nasal vowels: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasal\\_vowel](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nasal_vowel)).

When the soft palate is lifted, it is closed. This is what we want for all sounds in American English except M [m], N[n], and NG [ŋ]. When it is lowered, it's open. This allows air to go past it and up into the nasal cavity, making the sound nasal. This brings the placement higher,

into the nose.



It's hard to feel and move the soft palate. We all do it without thinking about it as needed for the sounds in our native languages. If you have nasal vowels in your native language, you'll probably need to think about this when working on English.

If you think your soft palate isn't closed, there are a couple of things you can do to lift and close it. First, think of creating more space in the back of throat. Sometimes this thought helps students naturally close the soft palate.

Second, think of drinking through a straw (or really do it!). What changes in your throat? Your soft palate has to close so the water doesn't go up into your nasal passages. Can you identify what it feels like in the back of your throat? The more you can identify and get used to the idea of a lifted and closed soft palate, the easier it will be for you to speak with a low placement.

### Video 1.7 — Soft Palate

Learn what the soft palate is, and how work with it.



[engl.io/abr](http://engl.io/abr)

**Everything you do in the rest of this book should build on what you worked on here.** If you work on rhythm, sounds, linking, reductions, or anything else without really getting this concept of low, relaxed placement when speaking English, you'll never sound truly American. Did you watch each video and do each audio exercise once? That's probably not enough. Watch each video at least one more time, and do the audio exercises several more times. Let your body and mind work together, thinking about what you're doing, but also feeling it.

Now we're ready to start talking about rhythm and sounds – but don't ever stop thinking about placement!

## Chapter 2

# Introduction to Stress, Rhythm, and Intonation

*Many students want to go right to the sounds. In fact, you might be skimming this on your way to the sounds section. STOP! Go back! Start with placement, then spend time here with stress. This book is arranged this way for a reason. Sounds don't matter the most—character matters the most. The character is based on the placement, rhythm, and melody. We will get to the sounds, but first lay the foundation. It is your best chance at successfully transforming your spoken English.*

In some languages, all syllables are the same length. In English, we have long (stressed) and short (unstressed) syllables. This distinction is very important. You can never sound American if you make all the syllables the same length. This is something that will be talked about a lot in this book.

### Video 2.1 — English: A Stress-Timed Language

This video goes over the difference between a language where every syllable is the same length and a language like English where syllables are different lengths.



[engl.io/ac2](http://engl.io/ac2)

Every time you learn a word, learn the stress. Keep lists of words with the same stress, for example, a list of two-syllable words with stress on the first syllable, or

a list of three-syllable words with stress on the middle syllable. Practice these groups together.

Most dictionaries will use this symbol ' to mark a syllable with primary stress, and this symbol , to mark a syllable with secondary stress. All other syllables are unstressed. Syllables with secondary stress , are more like unstressed syllables than stressed syllables — but we'll talk more about that later.

**Note:** Along with ['] and [,], you might also see a third symbol between syllables. Some dictionaries will put this symbol [·] before a syllable with no stress that's not at the beginning of a word, like this: ['bju·dɪ·fəl]. Other dictionaries just leave a space, which is what you'll see in this book: ['bju dɪ fəl].

Often when people talk about word stress, they talk about long or short syllables, or rhythm. But we can't talk about rhythm without also talking about intonation and other vocal factors. They all go together. Intonation is the rise and fall of the voice in speech, the pitch, which you'll study more in later chapters.

	<b>Stressed</b>	<b>Unstressed</b>
symbol	[']	[,] or no marking
length	longer	Shorter
intonation (or 'pitch' or 'melody')	Curve up, then down	Flatter pitch, generally lower than stressed syllables
energy	Full engagement of voice, can be a little louder	Less energy/air in the voice (can sound crackly at the end of a sentence)
In the text of this book	↗	.
On-screen text in videos	DA	Da

In many of my videos, I use the nonsense syllable 'da' for stress: **DA** is a syllable with primary stress, **Da** is a syllable with secondary stress, and **da** is an unstressed syllable.

Stressed syllables have a little curve up, then down in the voice. This is the intonation of a stressed syllable. This shape, especially the curve down, defines the stressed syllable and makes it sound really American.

<p><b>Video 2.2 — Introduction to Word Stress</b>          Study Stressed vs. Unstressed syllables as a general concept. Here, I use Praat software. You can get your own free copy here: <a href="http://www.praat.org">www.praat.org</a>.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/acb">engl.io/acb</a>
<p><b>Video 2.3 — The Shape of a Stressed Syllable</b>          If you're confused about the intonation of a stressed syllable, the curve up then down in the voice, watch this video.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ac4">engl.io/ac4</a>

What about unstressed syllables? They will generally be lower in pitch and really fast, and will even feel like some of the energy of the voice is taken out. This can make the sounds in an unstressed syllable less clear.

Watch this video on the word ‘download’. In it, I compare the syllable ‘-load’ in ‘download’, which is unstressed, to the syllable ‘load’, the verb, which is stressed. Hear the difference in length, volume, and intonation. They don’t sound the same, even though the sounds are the same!

<p><b>Video 2.4 — How to Pronounce DOWNLOAD</b>          Compare ‘load’ as an unstressed and stressed syllable.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/acf">engl.io/acf</a>
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Unstressed syllables should be so short that there’s no time to change pitch — no time for a curve up, then down in the voice like for stressed syllables. However, if you have a string of unstressed syllables in a row, the pitch may be moving up towards a stressed syllable, or moving down, after a stressed syllable. For example, in the phrase “It’s amazing”, we have 4 syllables, the third one is stressed. So the pattern is da-da-DA-da:

· · ↗  
 It's a·maz·ing

Rather than thinking of the intonation, or shape of the line, like this:



Think of it like this, smoothly moving up towards the stressed syllable, then down:



Let's use a simple context to study stressed vs. unstressed syllables: two-syllable words.

<p><b>Video 2.5 — Weddings and 2-Syllable Words</b> Study 2-syllable words by having them broken down for you.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ac3">engl.io/ac3</a>
<p><b>Video 2.6 — Wedding Venue: 2-Syllable Words</b> Study 2-syllable words by identifying which syllable is stressed.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ace">engl.io/ace</a>
<p><b>Video 2.7 — Listening Comprehension: 2-Syllable Words</b> You'll hear a 2-syllable word. Which stress does it have, DA-da or da-DA?</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ac5">engl.io/ac5</a>

### Test Yourself: Audio 2.1 — Which Syllable is Stressed?

You'll hear ten 2-syllable words. Write down the word and if stress is on the first or second syllable. Does it sound like DA-da or da-DA? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

<p><b>Audio 2.1 — Which Syllable is Stressed?</b> Test your listening comprehension for stress.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/acg">engl.io/acg</a>
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Now it's time for YOU to get comfortable putting the intonation, or melody—the shape of the voice—and the rhythm together. To keep it simple, we're not going to add words yet. Don't worry, that will come! But first make sure this feels comfortable. How smooth can you make your line? How fast can you make your short, unstressed syllables?

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 2.2 — Rhythmic Patterns.**

First you'll hear a rhythmic pattern just on the melody, on the vowel 'uh'. Try to imitate it just like you hear it, including a nice, relaxed placement. Think about your neck and throat being relaxed so the resonance is low. Then you'll hear the same pattern as separate syllables on 'da'. Does imitating the stress patterns feel comfortable? Does your voice easily flow forward, without ever feeling caught? If not, keep imitating and working, thinking of a low placement and nice, easy, forward flow of the voice. If the D consonant is difficult for you, try using 'm' instead.

#### **Audio 2.2 — Rhythmic Patterns**

da-DA-da-DA-da

da-DA-da

da-DA

da-da-DA

DA-DA

da

da-DA-da-da-DA

da-DA-da

da-DA, DA-da

DA-da-da

da-DA-da-DA

da-da-DA

da-DA-DA

da-DA-DA-da-da

da-DA-da-DA-da

DA-da-DA



[engl.io/ac6](http://engl.io/ac6)

Common mistakes:

1. Making each syllable separate. The syllables should all flow into each other. Forward flow and the linking together of sounds are very important in American English. Make the D very light, just a quick flap of the tongue, to allow this to happen. Think of the *Path of the Voice* video from the last section, and of your air constantly streaming forward. Don't stop it! This is good practice for linking words together, which you'll study in Chapter 8.
2. Making syllables the same length. Chances are, you need to make your unstressed syllables even shorter. Try it: how fast can you make it? da, da, da.

### **Test Yourself: Audio 2.3 — Identify the Rhythmic Pattern.**

You'll hear 10 different rhythmic patterns. Identify which pattern you're hearing on 'da', for example, da-DA. Write your answers down. You might need to listen several times. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

#### **Audio 2.3 — Identify the Rhythmic Pattern**



[engl.io/ac7](http://engl.io/ac7)

Now that you know about rhythm and intonation and how they relate to stressed and unstressed syllables, we can start learning sounds. We'll study each sound as a stressed and unstressed syllable where possible.

Note: ACCENT and STRESS mean the same thing. A stressed syllable is the same as an accented syllable, an unstressed syllable is the same as an unaccented syllable.

## Chapter 3

# Vowels

We've gotten to the point where we can put it all together—placement, rhythm, and the sounds: vowels! Most people want to start with the vowels, but we've laid an important foundation first. Build on it as you work through this section.

The vowels are where we get the length and shape of our longer, stressed syllables, not the consonants. Keep this mind as you work. If you want to make the word ‘mom’ longer, it should be like this: moooooom, not like this: mmmmmmmommmmm.

As you look in different resources, you will see some variation in the vowels and diphthongs of American English. Pronunciation is not an exact science, and there are differences of opinion!

In this section, there is an important element. Back in my Introduction, I made a promise that this book would be different from others because we would learn concepts together. You're not just going to learn vowel sounds here, you're going to learn vowels in both forms: stressed and unstressed. On the audio files, you'll hear the stressed and unstressed sounds together — you'll quickly be able to identify how and why they sound different. The sample words will have examples of the vowel in both stressed and unstressed syllables. Remember

when it's unstressed to make it shorter, flatter in pitch, and with less air and energy in the voice. Try to imitate exactly what you hear on the audio files.

There are eleven vowels in American English.

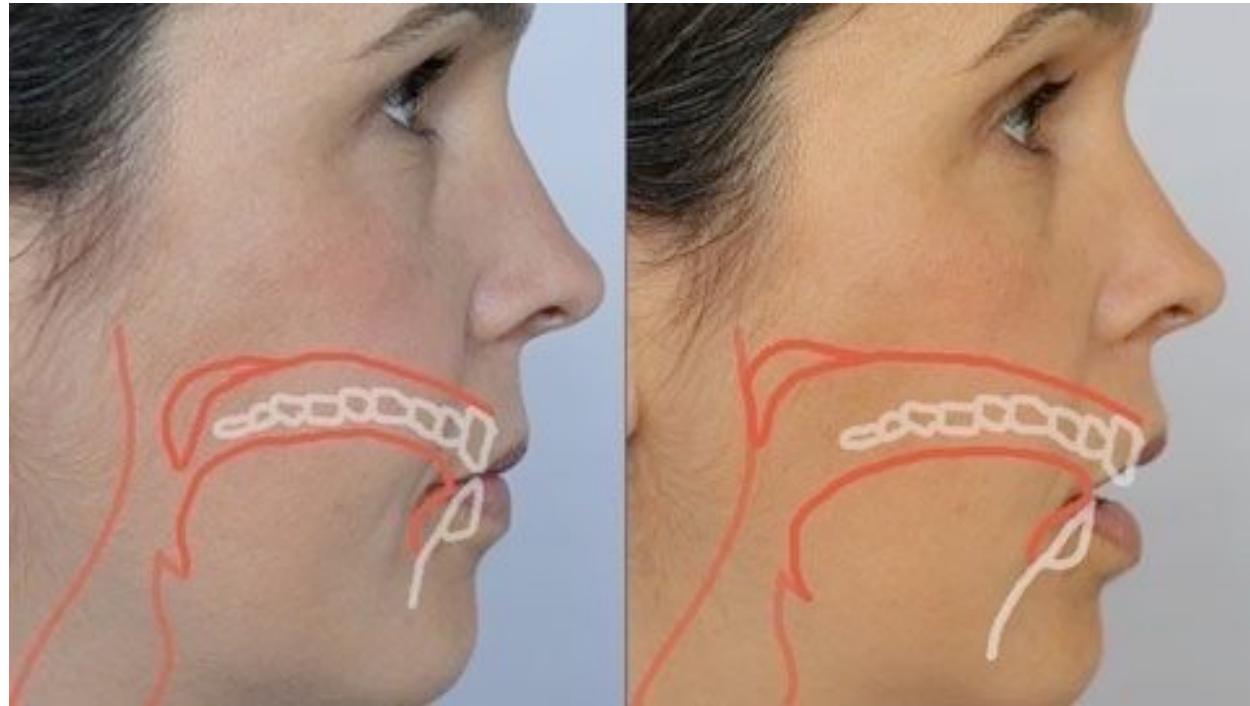
### **Listen: Audio 3.1 — Vowels.**

Before you dive into the specifics of each vowel, listen to all vowel sounds together. You'll hear the sequence below twice. The sounds are in the stressed form except for the schwa [ə], which is only unstressed. Notice how different it sounds from the rest!

<b>Audio 3.1 — Vowels</b> ʌ, ə, ɔ, æ, ε, i, ɪ, u, ʊ, θ, ɜ	 <a href="http://engl.io/ad1">engl.io/ad1</a>
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## **[ʌ] – The UH as in BUTTER Vowel**

Let's start with the core vowel of American English, the 'thinking' vowel ("Uhh...", "Um..."). The UH as in BUTTER vowel.





The jaw drops a bit for this sound, but the shape of the tongue doesn't change compared to the mouth at rest. It's totally relaxed, with the tongue tip forward—doing nothing! If you try to do anything with your tongue, it won't be the right sound. The cheeks, lips, and throat are completely relaxed. Because there is no tension, the placement—resonance—is low, at the base of the neck and very upper chest. Like all vowels, the soft palate is lifted to close the passage to the nasal cavity, letting no air through. Some students have a hard time relaxing all the way, and this vowel comes out more like the AH as in FATHER [ɑ] vowel. We'll compare the two after learning AH.

#### **Video 3.1 — The UH as in BUTTER [ʌ] Vowel**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/ad4](http://engl.io/ad4)

#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.2 — The UH as in BUTTER [ʌ] Vowel.**

Look at the picture, and repeat the sound and words, keeping total relaxation. Just drop your jaw—nothing else has to move! Pay attention to what this vowel sounds like stressed and unstressed; it's not the same. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ʌ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
uh [ʌ]	Stressed
other [əð'ðə]	Stressed
much [mʌtʃ]	Stressed
love [lʌv]	Stressed
uh [ʌ], uh [ʌ]*	Stressed, Unstressed
untie [ʌn'taɪ]	Unstressed
shotgun ['ʃat ,gʌn]	Unstressed

**Audio 3.2 — The UH as in BUTTER [ʌ] Vowel**<engl.io/ad8>

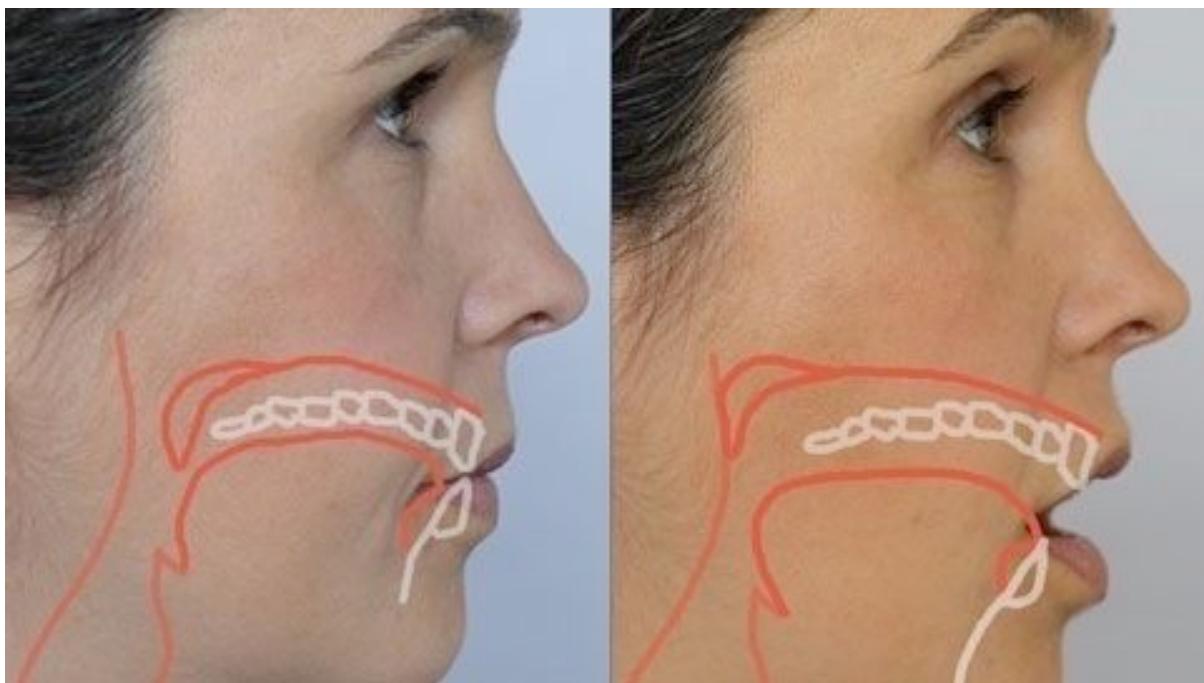
\*Notice how different the sound is when it's in a stressed versus an unstressed syllable. Apply everything you learned in the last section as you work with the vowels and diphthongs: these sounds in stressed syllables are longer, louder, have an up/down shape (intonation, or melody) in the voice, use the full voice. These sounds in unstressed syllables are shorter, flatter in pitch, quieter, and don't use the whole voice (less air is being used). If any of this is still unclear or confusing, work with Chapter Two again.

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English. oe: does [dʌz] o:  
love [lʌv]

oo: blood [blʌd]

ou: trouble ['.tʌbəl̩]

u: up [ʌp]

**[ɑ] – The AH as in FATHER Vowel**



The jaw drops some for this sound, and the tongue presses down in the back while the tip stays forward. Because of this tension in the tongue, the placement lifts a little bit. Though still connected to the chest, the resonance is more in the open space of the mouth. The lips are relaxed. Like all vowels, the soft palate is lifted to close the passage to the nasal cavity, letting no air through.

### **Video 3.2 — The AH as in FATHER [ɑ] Vowel**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/ada](http://engl.io/ada)

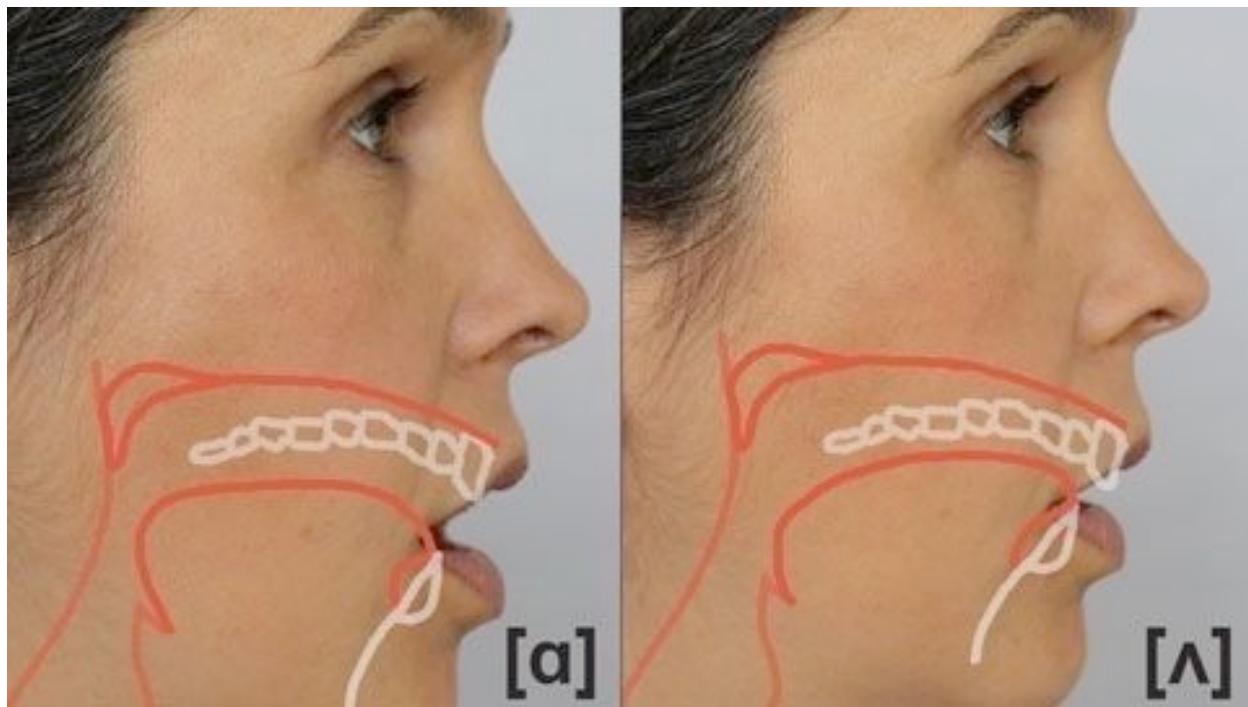
### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.3 — The AH as in FATHER [ɑ] Vowel.**

Look at the picture, and repeat the sound and words, keeping total relaxation in the lips. Watch your jaw drop and feel your tongue press down in the back. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ɑ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
ah [ɑ]	Stressed
father ['faðər]	Stressed
body ['bɒdɪ]	Stressed
lock [lɒk]	Stressed
job [dʒab]	Stressed
ah [ɑ], ah [ɑ]	Stressed, Unstressed
October [ək'toʊbər]	Unstressed

**Audio 3.3 — The AH as in FATHER [ɑ] Vowel**
<engl.io/adc>

Some students can't tell the difference between this sound and the sound we just learned, the UH as in BUTTER [ʌ] vowel.



Can you hear the difference between AH [ɑ] and UH [ʌ]? If they sound the same to you, you're probably pronouncing them the same too, most likely both [ɑ]. To get a more distinct [ʌ] vowel, think of bringing your tongue a little forward. That might help the tongue relax—remember you want total relaxation for [ʌ]. Also, the jaw will drop slightly less for [ʌ].

**Video 3.3 — AH [ɑ] vs. UH [ʌ]**

Compare the mouth position of these two sounds.


<engl.io/adf>
**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.4 — AH [ɑ] vs. UH [ʌ].**

Can you hear the difference in these minimal pairs? If not, don't panic. Listen to this file 10-20 times a day without trying to repeat. Most likely, in a few days, you'll start to hear the difference. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
ah [ɑ], uh [ʌ]	Stressed
shot [ʃɑt], shut [ʃʌt]	Stressed
gone [gɑn]*, gun [gʌn]	Stressed
boss [bas], bus [bʌs]	Stressed
crossed [kɹəst]*, crust [kɹʌst]	Stressed

\*These words can be pronounced with either [ɑ] or [ɔ] — look for more information on this in the next section, the AW as in LAW [ɔ] Vowel.

### Audio 3.4 — AH [ɑ] vs. UH [ʌ]



[engl.io/adh](http://engl.io/adh)

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.5 — AH [ɑ] vs. UH [ʌ] Test.

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

### Audio 3.5 — AH [ɑ] vs. UH [ʌ] Test

1. [ɑ] or [ʌ]
2. song [ɑ] or sung [ʌ]
3. pop [ɑ] or pup [ʌ]
4. crossed [ɑ] or crust [ʌ]
5. robber [ɑ] or rubber [ʌ]



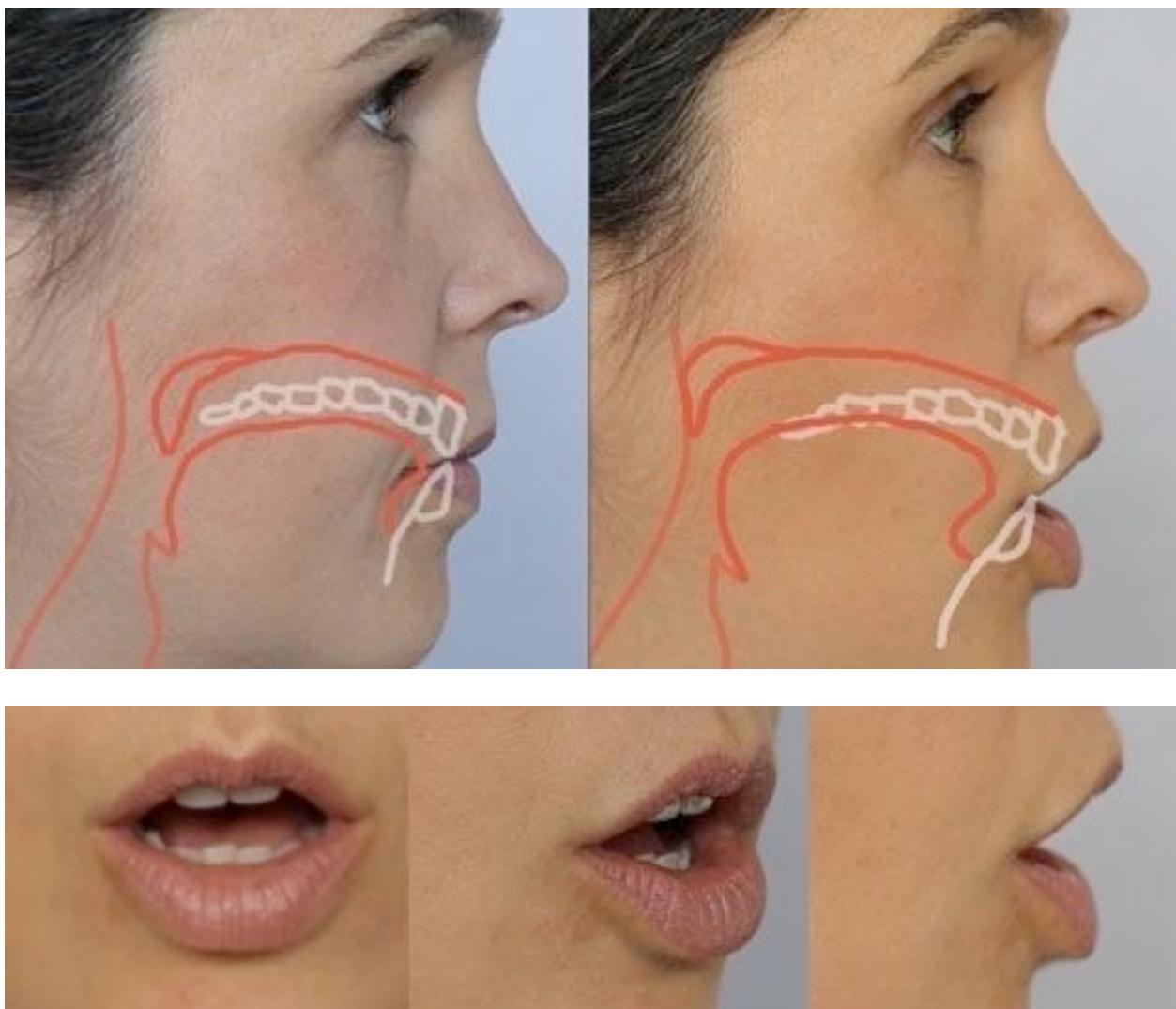
[engl.io/adk](http://engl.io/adk)

There are several audio files with minimal pairs in this book. Perhaps there will be some pairs where you can't hear the difference, the two words in each pair sound exactly the same to you. Don't worry, you're not the only one. I have had students master minimal pairs that, at first, they couldn't differentiate. They did it by *listening only*. Listen to the minimal pairs over and over, 10 minutes a day, *everyday*. Be patient. There's a very good chance that in a few days or a week you'll start to hear the difference. When that happens, start repeating with the audio file.

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

- a: father ['fɑ ðər]
- aa: bazaar [bə'zɑr]
- e: sergeant ['sɔr dʒənt]
- ea: heart [haʊt]
- ou: cough [kɑf]
- o: body ['bɑd i]

## [ɔ] – The AW as in LAW Vowel



This sound is interesting: many people don't really use it. They just use the AH as in FATHER [ɑ] vowel instead. I myself don't have a very distinct AW [ɔ] vowel. Most of the time it just sounds like AH [ɑ]. AW [ɔ] as a distinct vowel is most common on the east coast of the United States (except in the Southern states).

To make the AW as in LAW [ɔ] vowel, the tongue lifts up and shifts back. The lips come forward, flaring a bit. To aid this, you can think of pushing the corners of the lips away from the face. Feel the cheeks come in a little bit. The resonance is in the middle of the mouth.

#### **Video 3.4 — The AW as in LAW [ɔ] Vowel**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/adm](http://engl.io/adm)

#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.6 — The AW as in LAW [ɔ] Vowel.**

Listen to the AW as in LAW [ɔ] vowel. Watch yourself in a mirror: do the lips look the same as in the picture? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ɔ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
aw [ɔ]	Stressed
saw [sɔ]	Stressed
along [ə'lɔŋ]	Stressed
wrong [rɔŋ]	Stressed
aw [ɔ], aw [ɔ]	Stressed, Unstressed
recall [ˈri kɔl] (noun — the verb is [rɔl]!)	Unstressed
runoff [rʌn'ɔf]	Unstressed

#### **Audio 3.6 — The AW as in LAW [ɔ] Vowel**



[engl.io/adp](http://engl.io/adp)

There is something you need to know about AW [ɔ]: it's not quite the same when followed by the R sound, like in 'quarter' ['kwɔrətə], 'war' [rɔr], and 'four' [fɔr]. Most people will not pronounce these words with a pure AW [ɔ] vowel. Instead, round the lips more, and pull the tongue up and back just a little bit more, so it is more in the middle of the mouth.

### Video 3.5 — How to Pronounce Quarter

This video points out how the AW [ɔ] vowel followed by an R is different from a regular AW [ɔ] vowel.

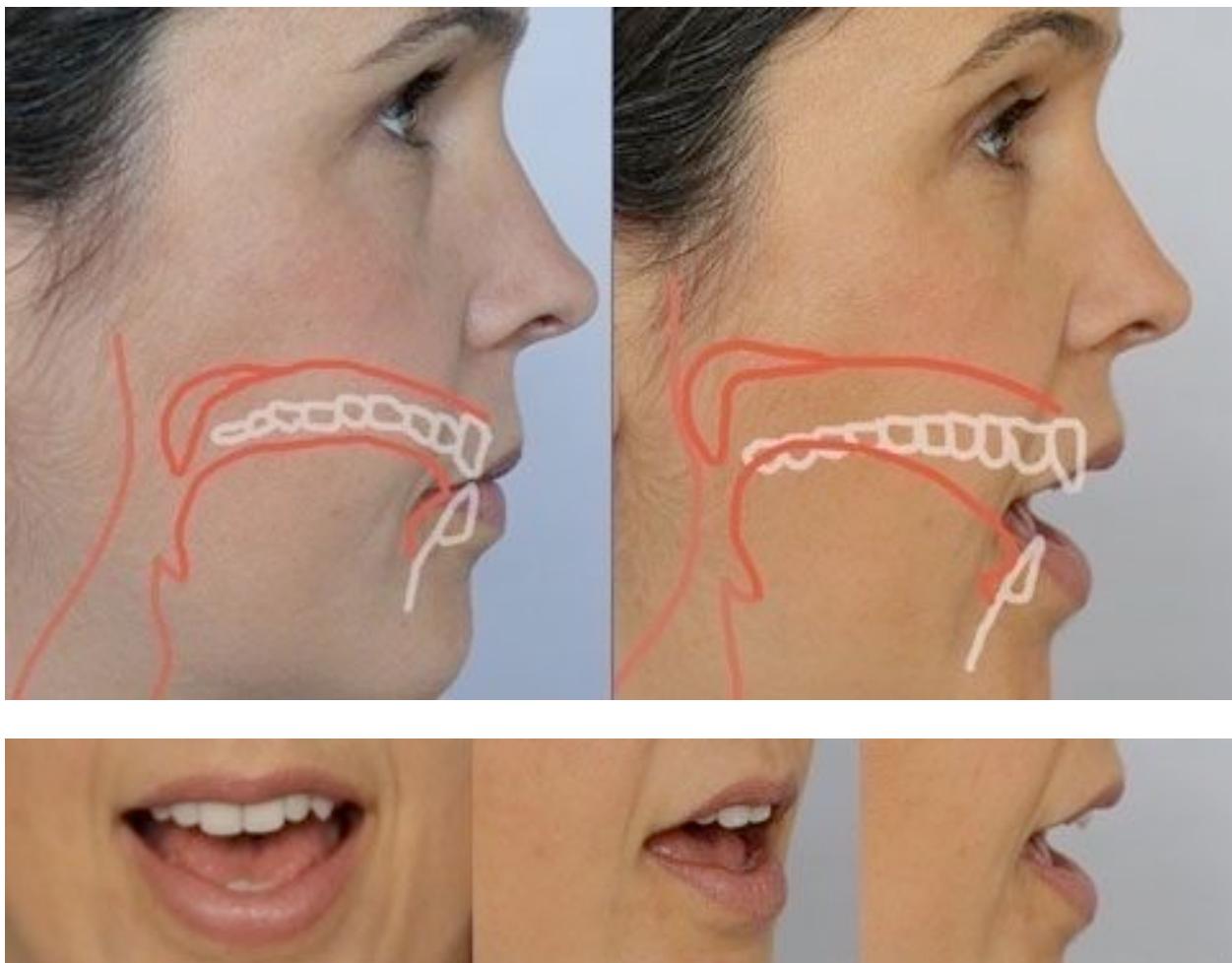


[engl.io/ads](http://engl.io/ads)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

- a: fall [fɔl]
- au: cause [kɔz]
- augh: daughter [rə pɔθ̩]
- aw: shawl [ʃɔl]
- ough: thought [θɔt]

## [æ] – The AA as in BAT Vowel



The jaw drops quite a bit for this vowel. The tongue tip stays forward, lightly touching the back of the bottom front teeth. The back part of the tongue

stretches up. This can be a hard sound for students. One trick is to slightly lift the top lip. When students focus on this, the tongue tends to lift as well. Because there is some tension in the upper lip, the placement for this sound is further forward in the face, with the resonance at the upper lip.

<p><b>Video 3.6 — The AA as in BAT [æ] Vowel</b> See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/adv">engl.io/adv</a>
<p><b>Video 3.7 — Lesson Excerpt: The AA as in BAT Vowel</b> In this video, I'm teaching my friend how to make a better AA vowel. Look at the adjustments he has to make, and practice doing the same.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ady">engl.io/ady</a>

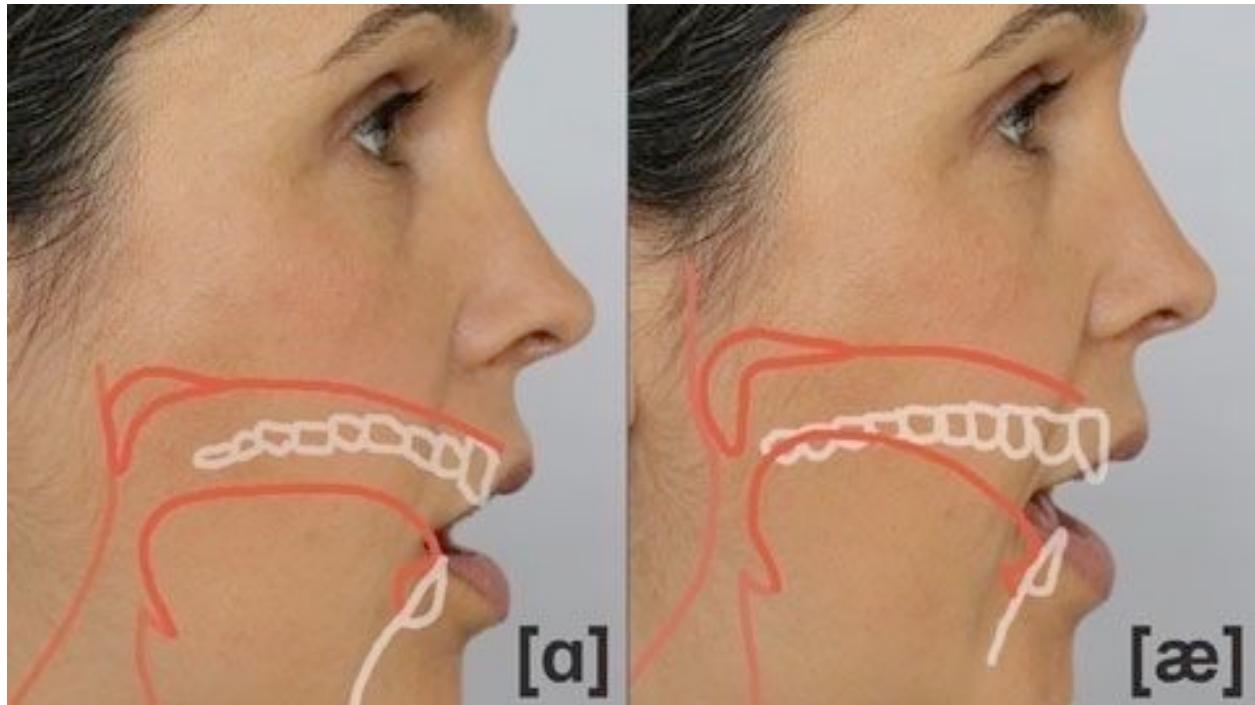
### Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.7 — The AA as in BAT [æ] Vowel.

Listen to the AA as in BAT Vowel and repeat. Watch yourself in a mirror: drop your jaw, lift your lip. Because the tongue lifts in the back, you should see a lot of tongue. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [æ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
aa [æ]	Stressed
pass [pæs]	Stressed
master ['mæs tə]	Stressed
bad [bæd]	Stressed
aa [æ], aa [æ]	Stressed, Unstressed
racetrack ['reɪs tæk]	Unstressed
coatrack ['kout ræk]	Unstressed

<p><b>Audio 3.7 — The AA as in BAT [æ] Vowel</b></p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ae2">engl.io/ae2</a>
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Students who have a hard time with this sound often substitute the AH as in FATHER [ɑ] vowel. But the tongue position is quite different: the back of the tongue presses down for [ɑ] and lifts for [æ]. It also helps to think of lifting the top lip just a bit for the AA [æ] vowel.



### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.8 — AH [ɑ] vs. AA [æ].**

If you can't hear the difference, just listen frequently until you can, then repeat. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
ah [ɑ], aa [æ]	Stressed
top [tɑp], tap [tæp]	Stressed
mop [map], map [mæp]	Stressed
hot [hat], hat [hæt]	Stressed
sock [sak], sack [sæk]	Stressed

**Audio 3.8 — AH [ɑ] vs. AA [æ]**



[engl.io/ae4](http://engl.io/ae4)

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.9 — AH [ɑ] vs. AA [æ] Test.

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

<b>Audio 3.9 — AH [ɑ] vs. AA [æ] Test</b> 1. [ɑ] or [æ] 2. bomb [ɑ] or bam [æ] 3. bog [ɑ] or bag [æ] 4. rock [ɑ] or rack [æ] 5. lost [ɑ] or last [æ]	 <a href="http://engl.io/ae7">engl.io/ae7</a>
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If you didn't do well on the listening comprehension, remember not to worry. Go back and listen to the minimal pairs audio file several times a day for several days in a row, then try again.

The AA as in BAT [æ] vowel isn't always the AA as in BAT [æ] vowel. What? When this vowel is followed by one of the nasal consonants, N [n], M [m], or NG [ŋ], it changes (this is different from British English, where it doesn't change). **When you look one of these words up in the dictionary, you won't find this change.** This is a case where IPA hasn't caught up with the way most Americans actually speak. So, **you just have to know** how the sound changes:

Sound Sequence	Example Words	What it really sounds like
Followed by [n] [æn]	band [bænd] answer ['æn sər] began [bɪ'gæn] exam [ɪg'zæm] camp [kæmp] hammer ['hæm ər]	Two sounds: first, the AA vowel [æ], then an UH sound, like [ʌ]. The second sound should be quicker than the first. The 'uh' part of the sound happens as the tongue relaxes in the back.
Followed by [m] [æm]		<b>Pronounce [æn] as [ævn].</b> <b>Pronounce [æm] as [ævm].</b>

Followed by [ŋ] [æŋ]	anger ['æŋ gər] hang [hæŋ] thanks [θæŋks] (Note: the letter N makes the NG [ŋ] sound if it's followed by a K)	The AY as in SAY [eɪ] diphthong. The beginning of 'sank' [sæŋk] sounds like the word 'say' [seɪ].  <b>Pronounce [æŋ] as [eɪŋ].</b>
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<b>Video 3.8 — The AA as in BAT Vowel followed by N, M, and NG</b>  Learn how the AA sound changes when it's followed by a nasal consonant.	 <a href="http://engl.io/ae9">engl.io/ae9</a>
<b>Video 3.9 — English in Real Life: Easter</b>  This video uses the word 'ham' as an example to study, in real life, how the AA vowel changes when followed by a nasal consonant.	 <a href="http://engl.io/aeb">engl.io/aeb</a>

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.10 — AA [æ] followed by Nasal Consonants.** You'll hear each word three times. The middle time is in slow motion. Repeat the slow motion word as well. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 3 times, 2 <sup>nd</sup> time slowly)	Sounds like
ban [bæn]	[bævn]
exam [ɪg'zæm]	[ɪg'zævm]
thanks [θæŋks]	[θeɪŋks]

<b>Audio 3.10 — AA [æ] followed by Nasal Consonants</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aed">engl.io/aed</a>
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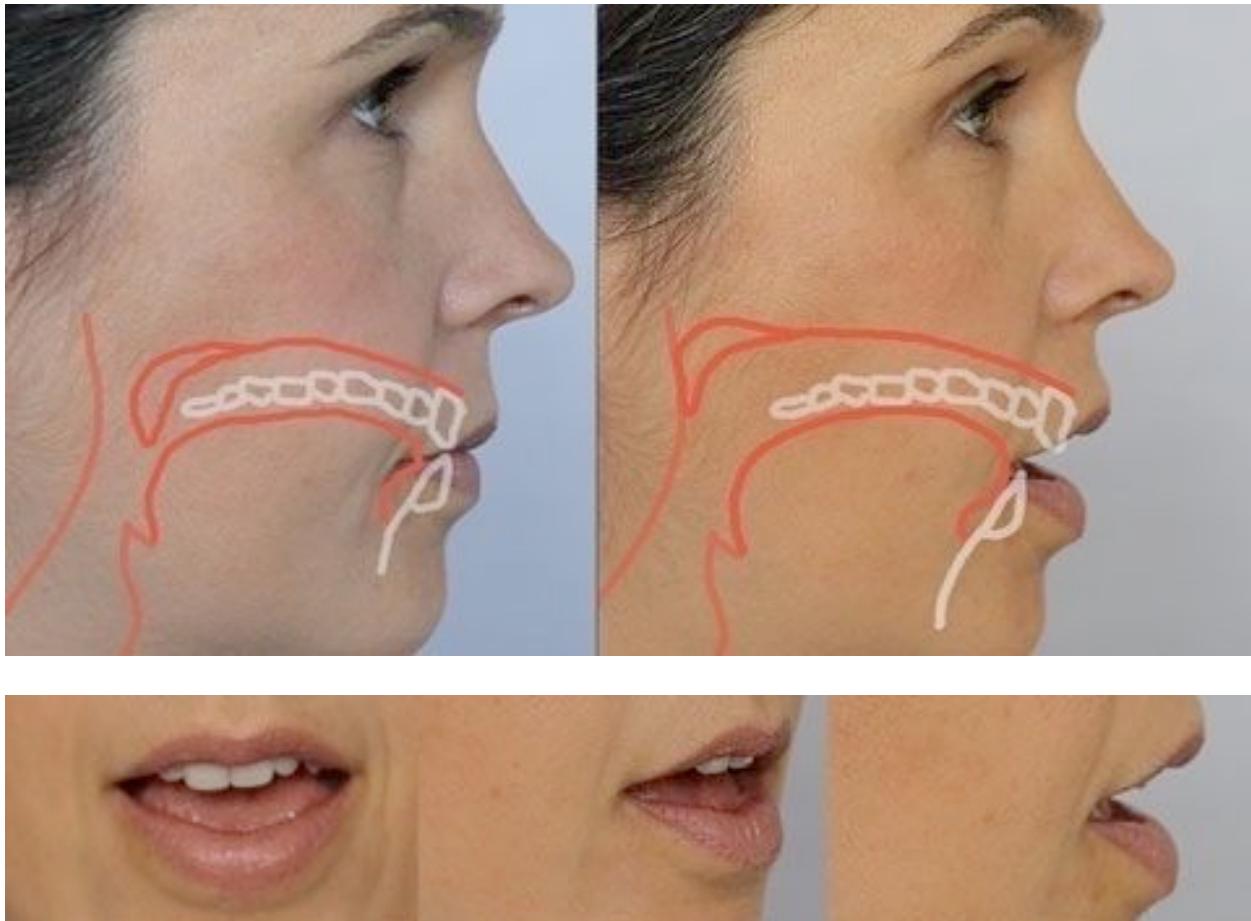
You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.  
a: bat [bæt]

au: aunt [ænt]

ai: plaid [plæd]

i: timbre ['tæm bər]

## [ɛ] – The EH as in BED Vowel



The jaw drops a good bit for this vowel. The tongue tip is forward and down, lightly touching the back of the bottom front teeth. The middle/front part of the tongue lifts towards the roof of the mouth. Make the middle of the tongue wider as it lifts. This sound resonates in the middle of the mouth, but it's still connected to the core placement in the upper chest and lower neck.

### Video 3.10 — The EH as in BED [ɛ] Vowel

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/aee](http://engl.io/aee)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.11 — The EH as in BED [ɛ] Vowel.

Listen to the EH as in BED Vowel and repeat. Watch yourself in a mirror: does your jaw drop? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

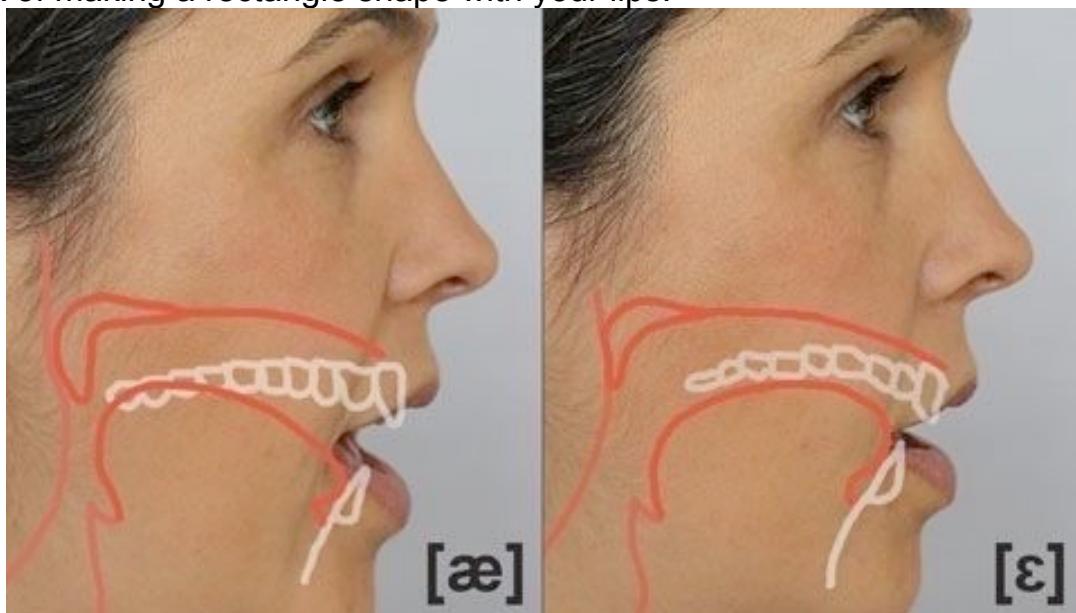
What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ɛ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
eh [ɛ]	Stressed
ten [tɛn]	Stressed
special ['speʃ əl]	Stressed
left [lɛft]	Stressed
eh [ɛ], eh [ɛ]	Stressed, Unstressed
embrace [ɛm'breɪs]	Unstressed
employ [ɛm'plɔɪ]	Unstressed

### Audio 3.11 — The EH as in BED [ɛ] Vowel



[engl.io/aeg](http://engl.io/aeg)

Some students have a hard time hearing the difference between EH [ɛ] and AA [æ]. Can you hear it? One thing that helps is to focus on what you can see: the lips. Let them be very relaxed for EH. You might even want to rest your fingertips on your upper lip to help it relax. Do the opposite for AA: pull the top lip up. Think of making a rectangle shape with your lips.



**Video 3.11 — EH [ɛ] vs. AA [æ]**

This video compares the mouth positions of these two sounds.



[engl.io/aei](http://engl.io/aei)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.12 — AA [æ] vs. EH [ɛ].**

If you can't hear the difference, just listen frequently until you can, then repeat. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
aa [æ], eh [ɛ]	Stressed
bat [bæt], bet [bɛt]	Stressed
gas [gæs], guess [gɛs]	Stressed
sad [sæd], said [sɛd]	Stressed
slapped [slæpt], slept [slepɪt]	Stressed

**Audio 3.12 — AA [æ] vs. EH [ɛ]**

[engl.io/aeik](http://engl.io/aeik)

**Test Yourself: Audio 3.13 — EH [ɛ] vs. AA [æ] Test.**

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 3.13 — EH [ɛ] vs. AA [æ] Test**

1. [ɛ] or [æ]
2. head [ɛ] or had [æ]
3. leapt [ɛ] or lapped [æ]
4. guess [ɛ] or gas [æ]
5. kettle [ɛ] or cattle [æ]



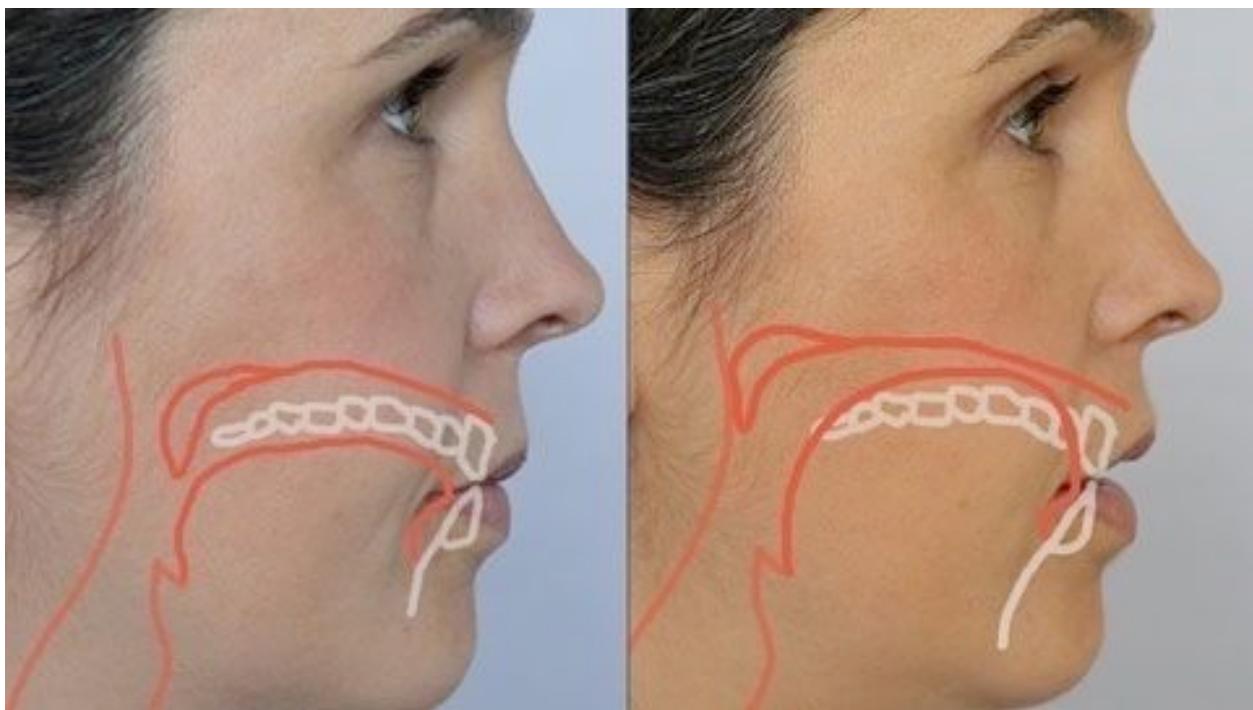
[engl.io/aen](http://engl.io/aen)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

a: share [ʃɛr]

- ai: said [səd]
- ay: says [səz]
- ea: head [həd]
- e: shed [ʃed]
- eo: leopard [ˈlɛpərd]
- ie: friend [friːnd]
- u: bury ['berɪ]

## [i] – The EE as in SHE Vowel



This vowel involves only a little bit of jaw drop. The tongue tip stays behind the bottom front teeth, and the middle/front part of the tongue arches up towards the roof of the mouth. It doesn't touch the roof of the mouth, but it is very close, diminishing the space between the tongue and the roof of the mouth. Do this with as little jaw and tongue tension as possible.

The corners of the lips pull a little wide, sort of like a smile—they’re not quite relaxed. The tongue position brings the resonance up a little bit. Feel the vibration between your tongue and hard palate. But, as always, keep it connected to that lower placement at the base of the neck and upper chest.

### Video 3.12 — The EE as in SHE [i] Vowel

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/aer](http://engl.io/aer)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.14 — The EE as in SHE [i] Vowel.

Watch yourself in a mirror: do the corners of your lips pull out? Feel your tongue arching up towards the roof of the mouth. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [i] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
ee [i]	Stressed
need [nid]	Stressed
thirteen [θɜːtɪn]	Stressed
keep [kip]	Stressed
ee [i], ee [i]	Stressed, Unstressed
coffee ['kɔ̄ fi]	Unstressed
busy ['bɪz i]	Unstressed

### Audio 3.14 — The EE as in SHE [i] Vowel



[engl.io/aet](http://engl.io/aet)

You’ll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

ay: quay [ki]

ea: heat [hit]

e: be [bi]

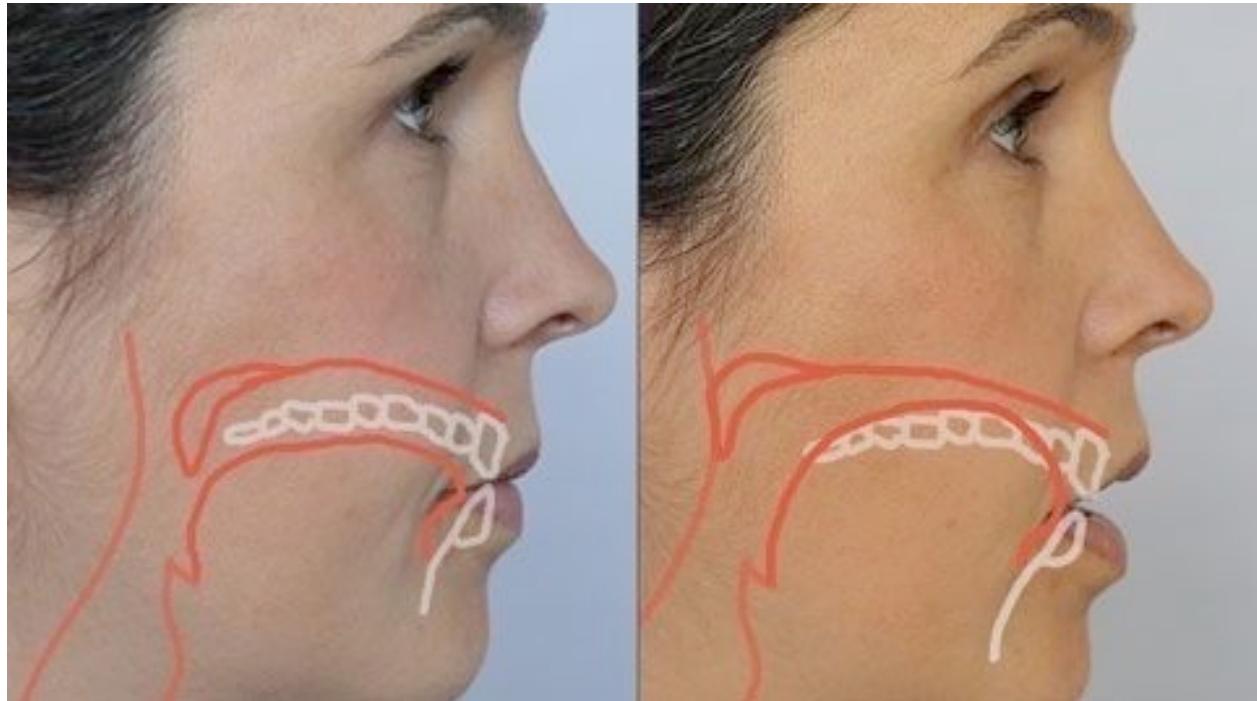
ee: weep [wip]

ei: receive [rɪ'siv]

eo: people ['pi pəl]

ey: key [ki]  
 ie: brief [brijf]  
 i: police [pə'lis]  
 y: busy ['bɪz i]

## [ɪ] – The IH as in SIT Vowel



This is one of the hardest sounds for non-native speakers. Many try to make [ɪ], but end up making [i], [ɛ], or [eɪ] instead.

The jaw drops a bit more than for the EE as in SHE [i], which means the arch of the tongue isn't as close to the roof of the mouth. The tongue tip is forward, lightly touching the back of the bottom front teeth, and the front/mid part lifts up towards the roof of the mouth. The lips, and the corners of the lips, stay relaxed. For the EE as in SHE vowel, the vibration is along the front half of the hard palate. For the IH as in SIT [ɪ] vowel, it's more in the middle of the mouth.

**Video 3.13 — The IH as in SIT [ɪ] Vowel**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/aeax](http://engl.io/aeax)

**Tip:** start with the EE as in SHE [i] vowel, then create a little more space between the tongue and the roof of the mouth by dropping your jaw just a bit more.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.15 — The IH as in SIT [ɪ] Vowel.**

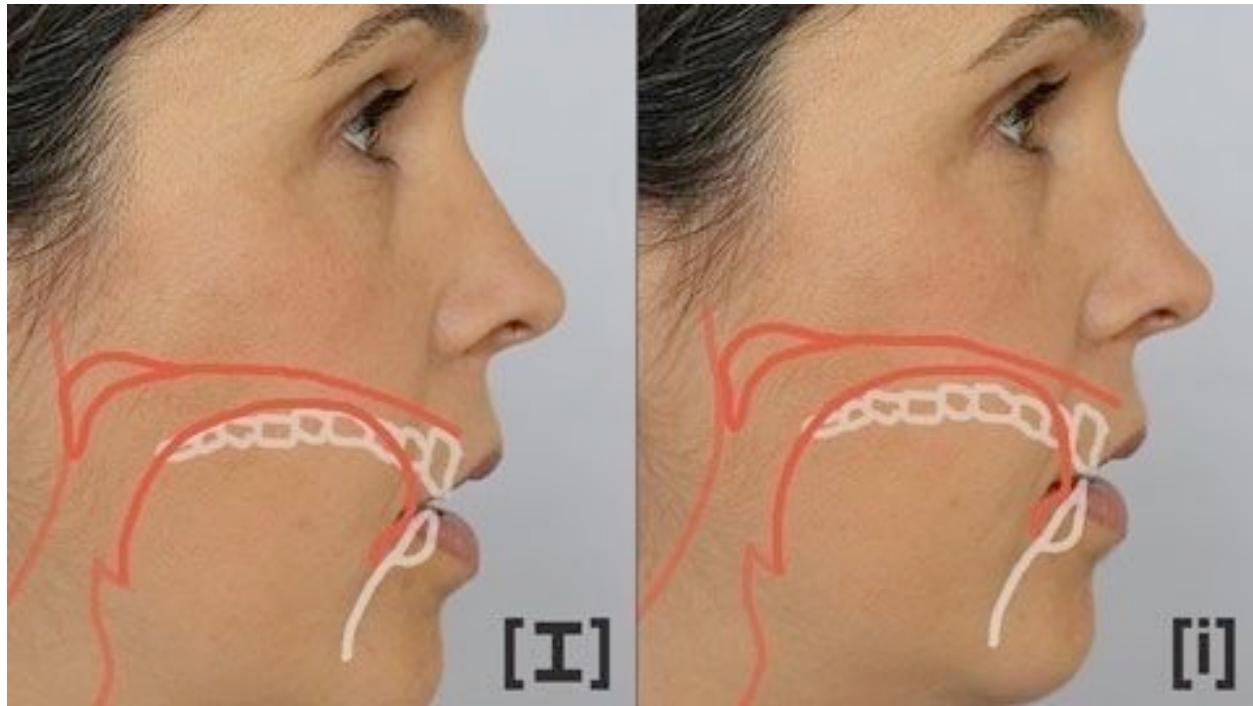
Listen to the IH vowel. Watch yourself in a mirror: does your jaw drop a little? Are your lips relaxed? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ɪ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
ih [ɪ]	Stressed
shift [ʃɪft]	Stressed
dinner ['dɪn ər]	Stressed
quit [kwɪt]	Stressed
ih [ɪ], ih [ɪ]	Stressed, Unstressed
instead [ɪn'stɛd]	Unstressed
office ['o fɪs]	Unstressed

**Audio 3.15 — The IH as in SIT [ɪ] Vowel**

[engl.io/aez](http://engl.io/aez)

Many students struggle with the difference between EE [i] and IH [ɪ]. Can you hear the difference? Remember for the EE [i] vowel, the tongue is very close to the roof of the mouth and the corners of the lips pull wide. For the IH [ɪ] vowel, the lips are relaxed and the jaw drops a little more, allowing a little more space between the arch of the tongue and the roof of the mouth.



### Video 3.14 — EE [i] vs. IH [ɪ]

Compare the mouth positions of these two sounds.



[engl.io/af2](http://engl.io/af2)

### Video 3.15 — EE, IH, and Vowel Length

Some people think of these vowels in terms of how long they are. I don't think that's important. What's more important is whether or not the sound is in a stressed or unstressed syllable.



[engl.io/af3](http://engl.io/af3)

### Video 3.16 — Beach vs. Bitch

Bitch, shit. These are both cuss words in American English, but they sound so much like the everyday words 'beach' and 'sheet'. This video explains the differences in these word pairs.



[engl.io/af6](http://engl.io/af6)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.16 — IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i].

If you can't hear the difference, just listen frequently until you can, then repeat. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
ih [ɪ], ee [i]	Stressed
bin [bɪn], bean [bɪn]	Stressed
fist [fɪst], feast [fɪst]	Stressed
rich [rɪtʃ], reach [rɪtʃ]	Stressed
ship [ʃɪp], sheep [ʃɪp]	Stressed

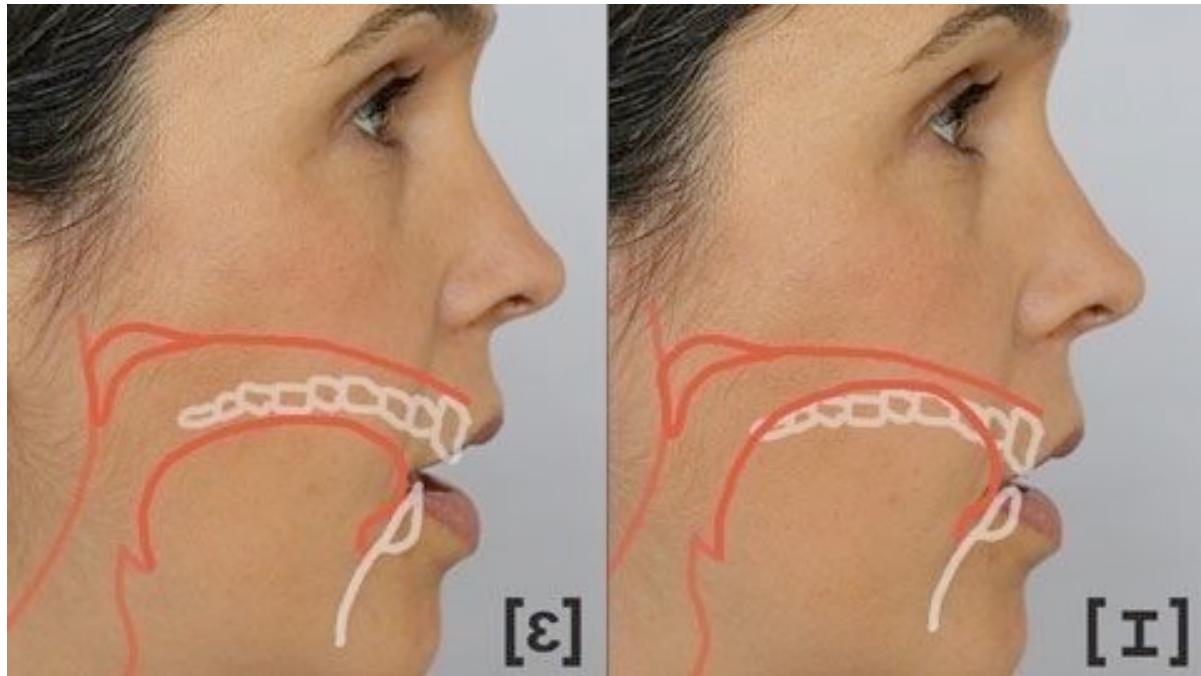
<b>Audio 3.16 — IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i]</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/af8">engl.io/af8</a>
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### Test Yourself: Audio 3.17 — IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i] Test.

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

<b>Audio 3.17 — IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i] Test</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. [ɪ] or [i]</li> <li>2. hill [ɪ] or heal [i]</li> <li>3. it [ɪ] or eat [i]</li> <li>4. living [ɪ] or leaving [i]</li> <li>5. rim [ɪ] or ream [i]</li> </ul>	 <a href="http://engl.io/afb">engl.io/afb</a>
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Some students make the EH as in BED [ɛ] vowel instead of the IH as in SIT [ɪ] vowel. If you think you might be making the EH as in BED [ɛ] vowel instead, try dropping your jaw a little less, and lift your tongue more in the front.



**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.18 — EH [ɛ] vs. IH [ɪ].**

If you can't hear the difference, just listen frequently until you can, then repeat. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
eh [ɛ], ih [ɪ]	Stressed
when [wɛn], win [wɪn]	Stressed
ten [tɛn], tin [tɪn]	Stressed
bed [bɛd], bid [bɪd]	Stressed
mess [mɛs], miss [mɪs]	Stressed

**Audio 3.18 — EH [ɛ] vs. IH [ɪ]**



[engl.io/afc](http://engl.io/afc)

**Test Yourself: Audio 3.19 — EH [ɛ] vs. IH [ɪ] Test.**

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 3.19 — EH [ɛ] vs. IH [ɪ] Test**

1. [ɛ] or [ɪ]
2. strep [ɛ] or strip [ɪ]
3. wet [ɛ] or wit [ɪ]
4. well [ɛ] or will [ɪ]
5. net [ɛ] or knit [ɪ]

[engl.io/aff](http://engl.io/aff)

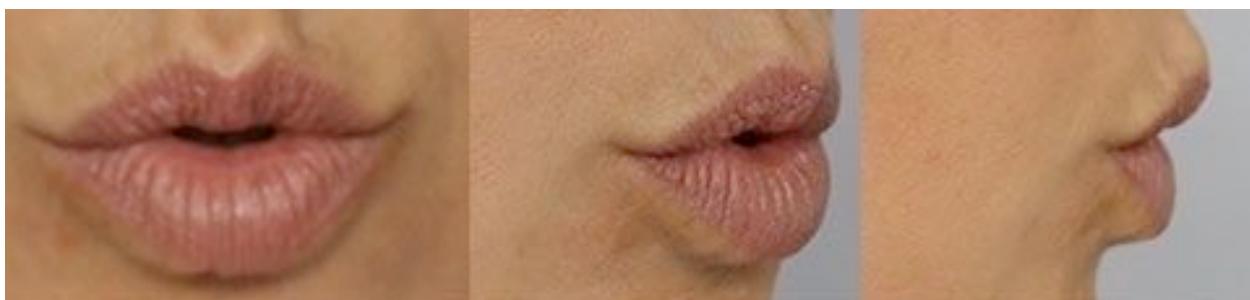
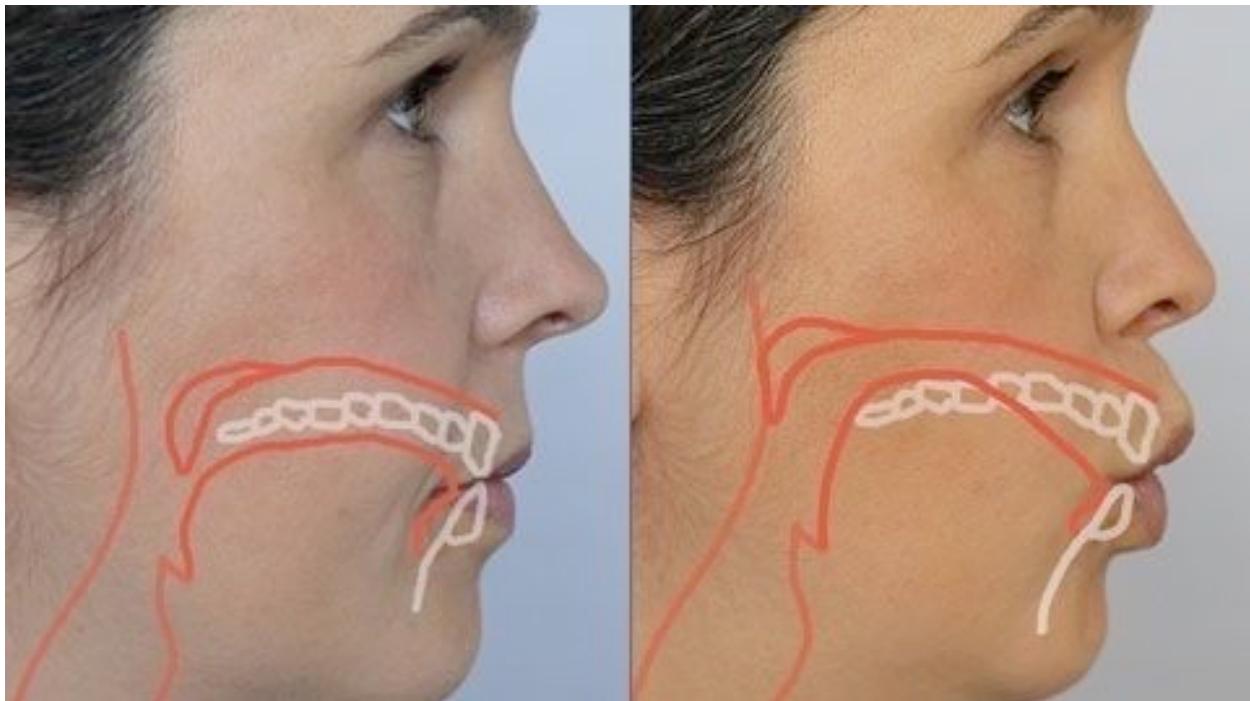
Some students make the AY as in SAY [eɪ] diphthong instead of the IH as in SIT [ɪ] vowel. In the next section on Diphthongs, you'll learn how the AY as in SAY [eɪ] diphthong is different from the IH as in SIT [ɪ] vowel.

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

- a: private ['prɔɪvɪt̩]
- e: pretty [prɪt̩ i]
- ee: been [bɪn̩]
- i: him [hɪm̩]
- ui: build [bɪld̩]
- o: women ['wɪm̩ ɪn̩]
- u: minute ['mɪn̩ ɪt̩]
- y: symbol ['sɪm̩ bəl̩]

## [u] – The OO Vowel

It wasn't until I had been teaching pronunciation for a while that I realized—hold on!—the OO as in BOO [u] vowel is not a pure vowel. This vowel sounds really American when it's more about the *movement into* the position than the position itself. Start relaxed, then bring the corners of the lips together so the lips round. The tongue tip stays forward, and the back part of the tongue lifts.



The movement from relaxed lips to rounded lips is important. Let's take the word 'rude' [ɹud]. The R consonant has very round lips when it's at the beginning of a word. It looks a lot like the lip position for the OO as in BOO vowel. But if we go from the R sound to the OO vowel without moving our lips, it sounds funny. We have to relax them a little bit after the R, so we can have the *movement into* the lip position again for the OO vowel. It can help to think of this as being a diphthong [ɪu], where the [ɪ] is very light. We'll learn more about diphthongs in

the next section, but the key point about diphthongs is they involve a *movement* of the mouth, not a stationary position.

The vibration for this sound moves forward a little bit because the lips move, but you can just think of it as being in the middle of the mouth.

### Video 3.17 — The OO as in BOO [u] Vowel

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/afh](http://engl.io/afh)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.20 — The OO as in BOO [u] Vowel.

Listen to the OO vowel. Watch yourself in a mirror. Do your lips start more relaxed so they can move into the more rounded lip position? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [u] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
oo [u]	Stressed
blue [blu]	Stressed
stupid ['stu pɪd]	Stressed
shoes [ʃuz]	Stressed
oo [u], oo [u]	Stressed, unstressed
argue ['aʊ gju]	Unstressed
issue ['ɪʃ u]	Unstressed

### Audio 3.20 — The OO as in BOO [u] Vowel



[engl.io/afk](http://engl.io/afk)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

eu: sleuth [sluθ]

ew: blew [blu]

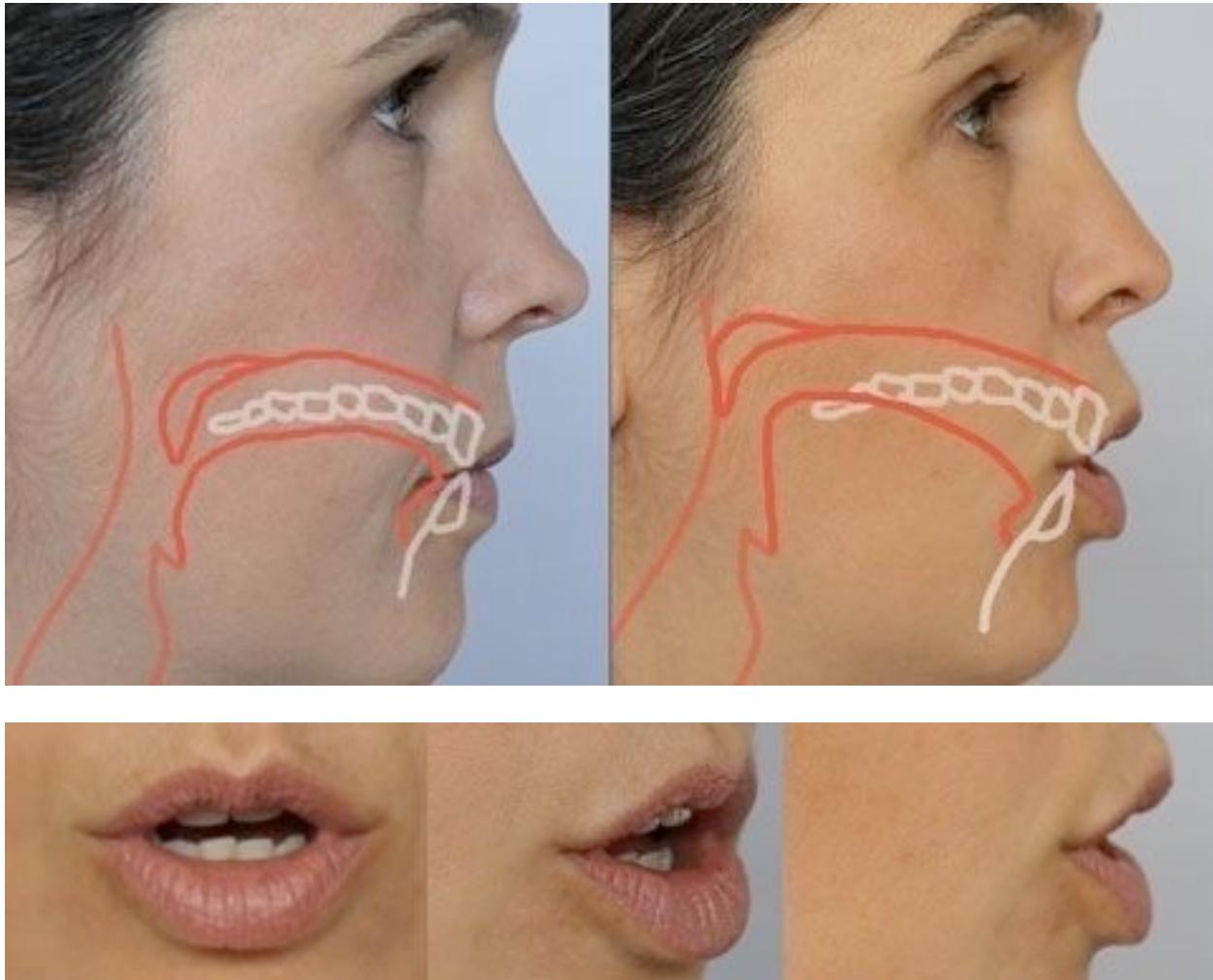
o: do [du]

oe: shoe [ʃu]

oo: too [tu]

- ou: you [ju]  
ough: through [θju]  
u: flute [flut]  
ue: blue [blu]  
ui: juice [dʒus]  
wo: two [tu]

## [ʊ] – The UH as in PUSH Vowel



The tongue lifts in the back, towards the soft palate, for this vowel. The tongue tip pulls slightly back so it's not quite touching the back of the bottom front teeth. The lips aren't completely relaxed: the corners of the mouth come in a little so the lips flare and push away from the face.

**Video 3.18 — The UH as in PUSH [ʊ] Vowel**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position. Note: This video uses the example word ‘pull’, as in, the ‘uh’ as in ‘pull’ vowel. (It’s the same vowel.)



[engl.io/afm](http://engl.io/afm)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.21 — The UH as in PUSH [ʊ] Vowel.**

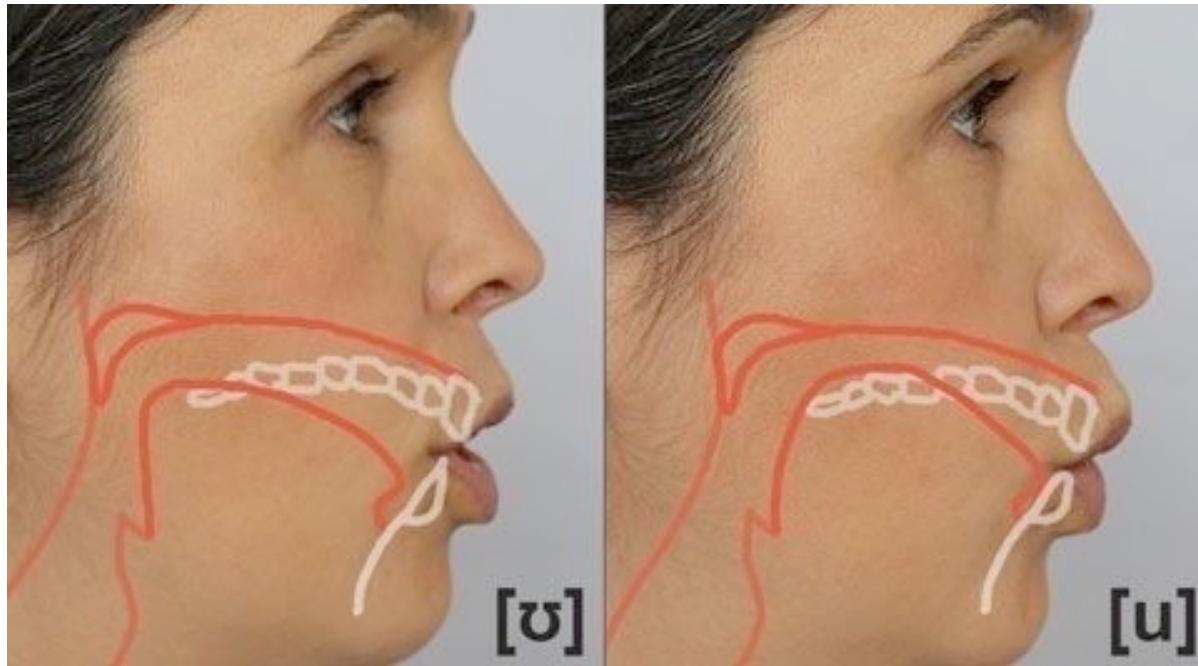
Listen to the UH as in PUSH vowel. Watch yourself in a mirror: are your lips pushing out? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ʊ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
uh [ʊ]	Stressed
book [bʊk]	Stressed
looking ['lʊkɪŋ]	Stressed
stood [stʊd]	Stressed
uh [ʊ], uh [ʊ]	Stressed, Unstressed
childhood ['tʃaɪld hʊd]	Unstressed
goodbye [gʊd'baɪ]	Unstressed

**Audio 3.21 — The UH as in PUSH [ʊ] Vowel**

[engl.io/afp](http://engl.io/afp)

Some students make an OO as in BOO [u] vowel instead of the UH as in PUSH [ʊ] vowel. The lips round much less for this vowel than for the OO as in BOO [u] vowel. Listen to the minimal pairs. Relax your lips more for the first sound, then round them more for the second.



**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.22 — UH [ʊ] vs. OO [u].**

If you can't hear the difference, just listen frequently until you can, then repeat. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
uh [ʊ], oo [u]	Stressed
stood [stʊd], stewed [stud]	Stressed
pull [pʊl], pool [pul]	Stressed
look [lʊk], Luke [luk]	Stressed
soot [sʊt], suit [sut]	Stressed

**Audio 3.22 — UH [ʊ] vs. OO [u]**



[engl.io/afs](http://engl.io/afs)

**Test Yourself: Audio 3.23 — UH [ʊ] vs. OO [u] Test.**

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 3.23 — UH [ʊ] vs. OO [u] Test**

1. [ʊ] or [u]
2. wood or wooed
3. full or fool
4. cookie or kooky
5. pull or pool

[engl.io/afv](http://engl.io/afv)

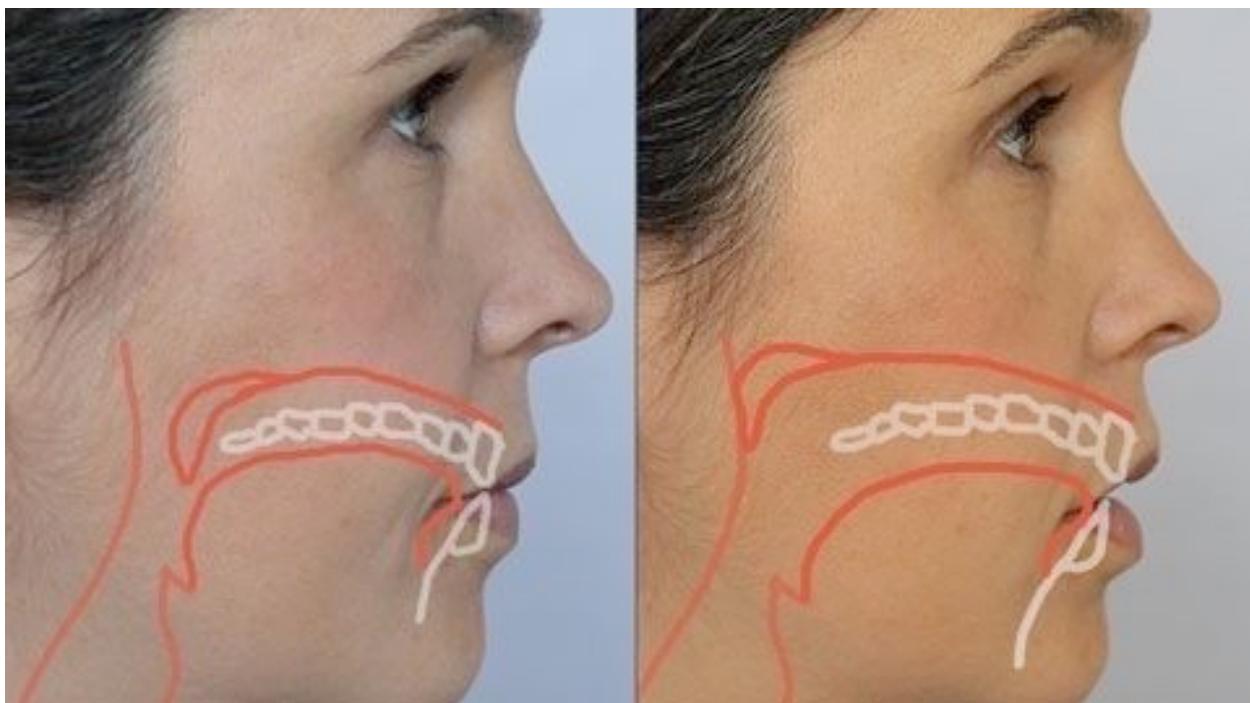
You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

o: wolf [wʊlf]

oo: wood [wʊd]

ou: could [kʊd]

u: sugar [ˈʃʊg ər]

**[ə] – The UH as in SUPPLY Vowel (or, The Schwa)**

This is another vowel that is, unfortunately, not straightforward. On its own, it's very clear: the lips part but there's almost no jaw drop, and the tongue stays very relaxed, low in the mouth, with the tip forward, lightly touching the back of the bottom front teeth. Part your lips and make the quickest, simplest sound without moving anything else.

This sound is only in unstressed syllables with a few exceptions, like bear [bɜːr], where it is not the main vowel and is absorbed by the following consonant. In these cases you don't even need to think about making a separate schwa sound, it will blend in from sound to sound. Think of it like this: [bɜː]. So, think of the schwa as only being unstressed. As you know, unstressed syllables are lower in pitch and have less energy in the voice. This may help you connect to the placement in the upper chest.

This sound will be mentioned a lot in Chapter 10. Many words that reduce involve changing the vowel to the schwa.

**Video 3.19 — The UH as in SUPPLY [ə] (Schwa) Vowel**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.


  
[engl.io/afx](http://engl.io/afx)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.24 — The UH as in SUPPLY [ə] Vowel (Schwa).**  
 Listen to the schwa. Just part your lips and make the quickest, simplest sound without moving anything else. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ə] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
uh [ə]	Unstressed
again [ə'gen]	Unstressed
China ['tʃaɪ nə]	Unstressed
extra ['ɛk stə]	Unstressed
visa ['vi zə]	Unstressed

**Audio 3.24 — The UH as in SUPPLY [ə] (Schwa) Vowel**
[engl.io/ag1](http://engl.io/ag1)

The above examples all have a clear schwa. The schwa is different when it's followed by an M [m], N [N], L [l], or R [r] sound. These are called **syllabic consonants**, which means they take over the whole syllable. That means you don't need to make a schwa sound at all. You'll see it in the IPA, but all you have to do is make the following consonant, M, N, L, or R. Examples: system ['sɪs təm] — go straight from the T to the M. Open ['oʊp ən] — go straight from the P to the N. Pencil ['pɛn səl] — go straight from the S to the Dark L. Mother ['mʌð ər] — go straight from the TH to the R.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.25 — Syllabic Consonants.**

Listen to the examples on the audio file. Notice there is no separate sound for the schwa, it gets absorbed by the consonant after it. Practice the unstressed syllable on its own, not just as part of the word. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (2x)	Is [ə] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
-tom [dəm], bottom ['bad əm]	Unstressed
con- [kən], control [kən'trəl]	Unstressed
-ple [pəl], people ['pi pəl]	Unstressed
syr- [sɪr], syringe [sɪrɪŋ]	Unstressed

**Audio 3.25 — Syllabic Consonants**
[engl.io/ag3](http://engl.io/ag3)

Syllabic consonants and the schwa will come up a lot in this book. Many words that reduce involve changing the vowel to the schwa sound. Be prepared to dive into this concept in Chapter 10.

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

a: about [ə'baʊt]

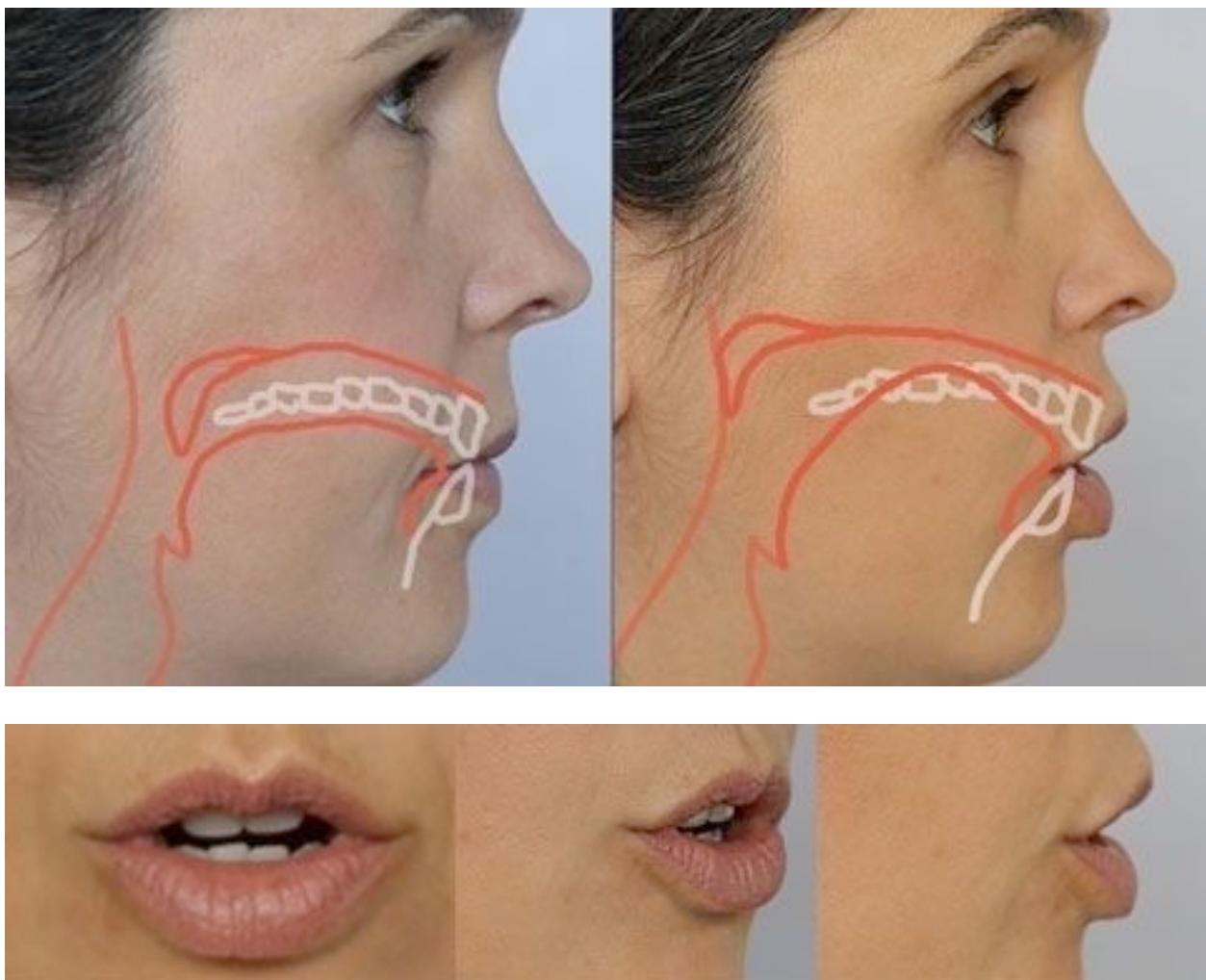
ea: ocean ['oʊs ən]

e: anthem ['æn θəm]

eu: chauffeur (verb) ['ʃoʊfɜːr]

- i: possible ['pas ə bəl]
- o: bottom ['bɒt əm]
- ou: jealous ['dʒeɪl əs]
- u: autumn ['ɔ dəm]
- y: syringe [spɪrɪng]

## [ɜ] – The UR as in BIRD Sound



This vowel is interesting because it's basically the R consonant acting like a vowel. It is **always followed by the R consonant**, but you never make first the vowel then the R consonant—it's all the same sound! So here we have two

symbols in IPA, but you just need to make one sound: rrrrr. This is different from British English, where it is a sound that is independent of the R consonant.

The most common mistake with this sound is not lifting the tongue enough. Then it sounds like a vowel sound plus the R consonant, but remember we just want one sound for these two symbols, rrrrr. It should be quite high in the mouth, pulled back and up so the tip isn't touching anything. For some people, the sides of the tongue touch the sides of the roof of the mouth, or the side teeth, at about the front-to-back midpoint. Feel the vibration in the front of the mouth, between the front of the tongue and the roof of the mouth. The corners of the lips come in so the lips can flare and push away from the face.

### Video 3.20 — The UR as in BIRD Vowel

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position. Note: This video uses the example word 'her', as in, the 'ur' as in 'her' vowel. (It's the same vowel when 'her' is stressed.)



[engl.io/ag5](http://engl.io/ag5)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 3.26 — The UR as in BIRD [ɜ] Vowel.

Listen to the UR vowel. Hold it out—it should be just one sound. Watch yourself in a mirror: Are your lips flared? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ɜ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
ur [ɜ]	Stressed
bird [bɜ:d]	Stressed
early ['ɜ:li]	Stressed
Nurse [nɜ:s]	Stressed
ur [ɜ] , ur [ɜ]	Stressed, unstressed
research ['ri:sɜ:tʃ]	Unstressed
thirteen [θɜ:ti:n]	Unstressed

### Audio 3.26 — The UR as in BIRD [ɜ] Vowel



[engl.io/ag8](http://engl.io/ag8)

If this sound is still confusing, don't worry. We'll be studying the consonant version of it, R, in the next two chapters, Consonants and Consonant Clusters.

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

ea: learn [lɜːn]

eu: chauffeur [ʃuːfɜːr] (noun)

i: bird [bɜːd]

ou: journey ['dʒɜːr ni]

o: word [wɜːd]

u: burn [bɜːn]

y: myrtle ['mɜːtl]

I am not an expert in British English pronunciation. The standard is known as RP (Received Pronunciation). But I have pointed out a couple of differences between American and British pronunciation in this chapter on vowels. If you want more information, watch this video I made with a British English teacher on the difference in vowel and diphthong sounds.

**Video 3.21 — Differences between British and American Vowels**



[engl.io/agb](http://engl.io/agb)

## Test Yourself on the Vowels of American English

### Test yourself: Non-Audio 3.1 — Match the Sound with the Symbol.

Make sure you're familiar with the symbols of the American vowels. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

1. UH as in BUTTER	a. [u]
2. AH as in FATHER	b. [i]
3. AW as in LAW	c. [ɜ]
4. AA as in BAT	d. [ɛ]
5. EH as in BED	e. [ʊ]
6. EE as in SHE	f. [æ]
7. IH as in SIT	g. [ə]
8. OO as in BOO	h. [ʌ]
9. UH as in PUSH	i. [ɔ]
10. UH as in SUPPLY (schwa)	j. [ɪ]
11. UR as in HER	k. [ə]

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.27 — Vowel Test.

What vowel sound do you hear? All of the vowels are on the audio file once. Write down the vowels below in the order you hear them, then listen again to check yourself. Remember, it's not important to have a distinctly different AH as in FATHER and AW as in LAW sound, so don't worry if they sound the same to you! Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. UH as in BUTTER
- b. AH as in FATHER
- c. AW as in LAW
- d. AA as in BAT
- e. EH as in BED
- f. EE as in SHE
- g. IH as in SIT
- h. OO as in BOO
- i. UH as in PUSH
- j. UH as in SUPPLY (Schwa)
- k. UR as in HER

Test Yourself: Audio 3.27 — Vowel Test



[engl.io/agc](http://engl.io/agc)

**Test Yourself: Audio 3.28 — Stressed or Unstressed?**

You'll hear 10 vowels. Is each stressed or unstressed? It doesn't matter what vowel you hear, just identify if it seems longer and more fully pronounced, with an up-down curve in the voice (stressed), or shorter and flatter, with less energy in the voice (unstressed). Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. Stressed      b. Unstressed

**Test Yourself: Audio 3.28 — Stressed or Unstressed?**



[engl.io/age](http://engl.io/age)

Good for you — you've studied the American English vowels while keeping stress in mind. Let's move on to Diphthongs.

## Chapter 4

# Diphthongs

A diphthong is two vowel sounds together. Some of the sounds are American English vowels on their own, like [ɪ] and [ʊ]. But, I've found they're not quite the same in diphthongs as they are when they are pure vowels.

The mouth position matters: what defines the diphthong is that there are *two different* sounds. This means there has to be a *movement*, going from a starting position to an ending position. We talked about this a little already with the OO as in BOO [u] vowel, which isn't quite pure but involves a moment into and out of a mouth position.

### Listen: Audio 4.1 — Diphthongs.

Before you dive into the specifics of each diphthong, listen to all diphthong sounds together. You'll hear the sequence below twice. The sounds are all stressed in this audio file.

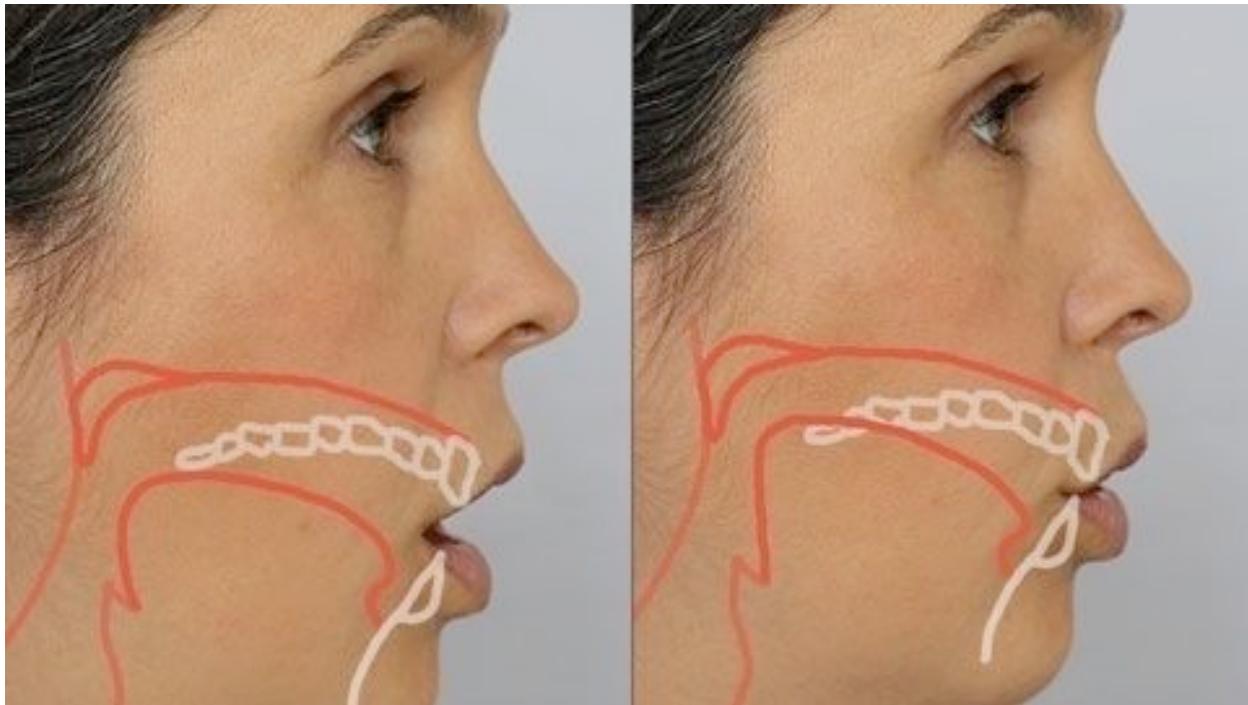
#### Audio 4.1 — Diphthongs

ou, au, ai, ei, ɔɪ, ju



[engl.io/aha](http://engl.io/aha)

## [oʊ] – The OH as in NO Diphthong



The jaw drops for the beginning position, and the lips round for the ending position (with the jaw being less dropped). The lips might round some for the beginning position, but what's important is that they round even more in the ending position. The tongue shifts back a little bit at the beginning, and the back lifts in the ending position. The back of the tongue is more lifted here than in the pure [ʊ] vowel (like in the word 'push' [pʊʃ]). Focus on the movement of the jaw:

drop it more for the beginning of the diphthong, and let it relax up for the ending position as the lips round.

#### **Video 4.1 — The OH as in NO [ou] Diphthong**

See illustrations of the beginning and ending positions for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech.



[engl.io/ahd](http://engl.io/ahd)

#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.2 — The OH as in NO [ou] Diphthong.**

Does your jaw change from more dropped to less? Do your lips round for the ending position? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

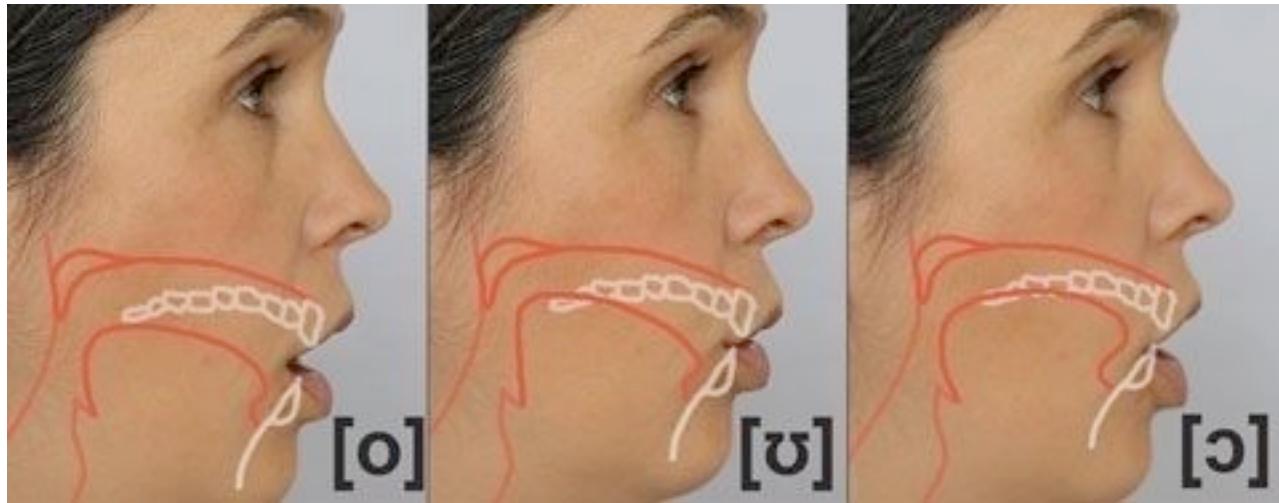
What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [ou] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
oh [ou]	Stressed
go [gou]	Stressed
know [nou]	Stressed
below [bɪ'lou]	Stressed
oh [ou], oh [ou]	Stressed, Unstressed
borrow ['baʊ ou]	Unstressed
yellow ['jel ou]	Unstressed

#### **Audio 4.2 — The OH as in NO [ou] Diphthong**



[engl.io/ahf](http://engl.io/ahf)

When students don't round their lips enough, this diphthong can sound like the AW as in LAW [ɔ] or AH as in FATHER [a] vowel instead. Work with the following audio file and take your time rounding your lips. Slow it down. Remember, it's the movement of rounding the lips that defines this diphthong. Exaggerate it a little bit.



**Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.3 — OH [oʊ] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [a].**

Remember, if you can't hear the difference, don't panic. Listen several times a day for several days in a row. Practice with the two different mouth positions: unmoving for the vowel, moving for the diphthong. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
aw [ɔ], oh [oʊ]	Stressed
nod [nad], node [nəʊd]	Stressed
ball [bɔl], bowl [boʊl]	Stressed
called [kɔld], cold [kould]	Stressed
mop [map], mope [məʊp]	Stressed

**Audio 4.3 — OH [oʊ] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [a]**



[engl.io/ahg](http://engl.io/ahg)

**Test Yourself: Audio 4.4 — OH [oʊ] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [a] Test.**

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 4.4 — OH [oʊ] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [ɑ] Test**

1. [oʊ] or [ɔ]
2. toad [oʊ] or Todd [ɑ]
3. taupe [oʊ] or top [ɑ]
4. boast [oʊ] or bossed [ɔ]
5. toast [oʊ] or tossed [ɔ]

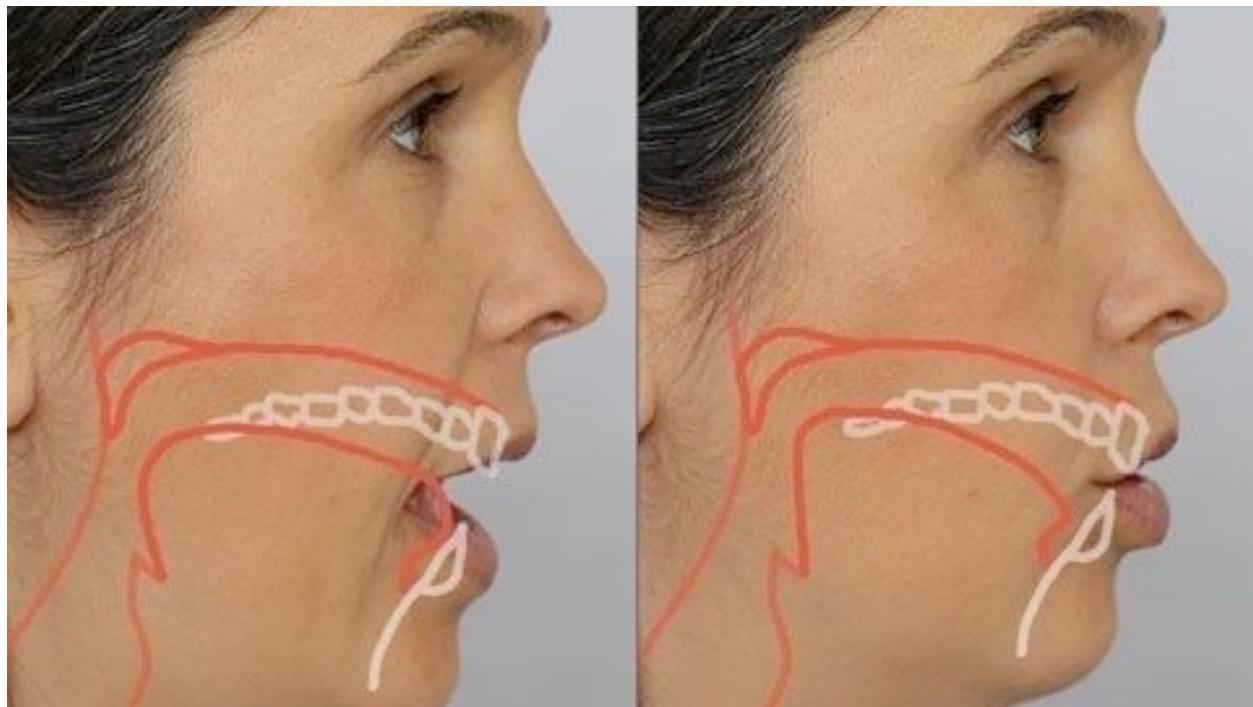


[engl.io/ahj](http://engl.io/ahj)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

o:	go [gəʊ]
oo:	brooch [brʊəʊtʃ]
ou:	soul [səʊl]
ow:	row [rəʊ]
oa:	oat [oʊt]
oe:	foe [fəʊ]
ough:	though [ðəʊ]
au:	chauffeur ['ʃəʊ fə]
eau:	beau [bəʊ]

## [aʊ] – The OW as in NOW Diphthong





The beginning position of this diphthong, [a], is not a vowel in American English. It is similar to the AA as in BAT [æ] vowel. Unlike the OH as in NO diphthong, the lips should not round at all for the beginning of this sound. You can think of the shape of the mouth as a rectangle rather than a circle. Drop your jaw, the tongue will be wide and flat. Just like the OH as in NO above, move positions by rounding the lips, relaxing the jaw up, and lifting the back of the tongue.

#### **Video 4.2 — The OW as in NOW [aʊ] Diphthong**

See illustrations of the beginning and ending positions for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech.



[engl.io/ahm](http://engl.io/ahm)

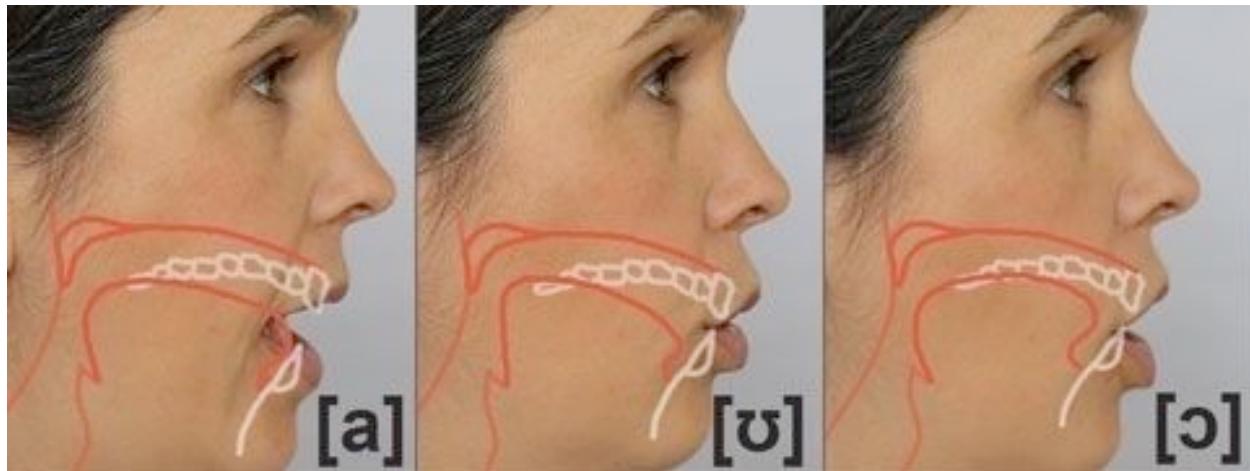
#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.5 — The OW as in NOW [aʊ] Diphthong.**

Does your jaw drop for the beginning position? Do your lips round into the ending position? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [aʊ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
ow [aʊ]	Stressed
now [naʊ]	Stressed
sound [saʊnd]	Stressed
power ['paʊ ər]	Stressed
ow [aʊ], ow [aʊ]	Stressed, Unstressed
letdown ['letdəun]	Unstressed
blackout ['blæk aut]	Unstressed

**Audio 4.5 — The OW as in NOW [au] Diphthong**
[engl.io/ahp](http://engl.io/ahp)

Just like the OH [oʊ] diphthong, this diphthong can sound like the AW as in LAW [ɔ] or AH as in FATHER [a] vowel instead when students don't round their lips. Remember, the OW [au] diphthong is made by a movement, you must round your lips to get the right sound.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.6 — OW [au] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [a].**

Work with these minimal pairs and take your time rounding your lips. Exaggerate it a little bit.

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
ow [au], aw [ɔ]	Stressed
down [daʊn], dawn [dən]	Stressed
pound [paʊnd], pond [pənd]	Stressed
mouse [maʊs], moss [məs]	Stressed
spout [spaʊt], spot [sɒt]	Stressed

**Audio 4.6 — OW [au] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [a]**
[engl.io/ahr](http://engl.io/ahr)

**Test Yourself: Audio 4.7 — OW [aʊ] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [ɑ] Test.**

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 4.7 — OW [aʊ] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [ɑ] Test**

1. [aʊ] or [ɔ]
2. out [aʊ] or ought [ɔ]
3. mouth [aʊ] or moth [ɔ]
4. foul [aʊ] or fall [ɔ]
5. brown [aʊ] or brawn [ɔ]

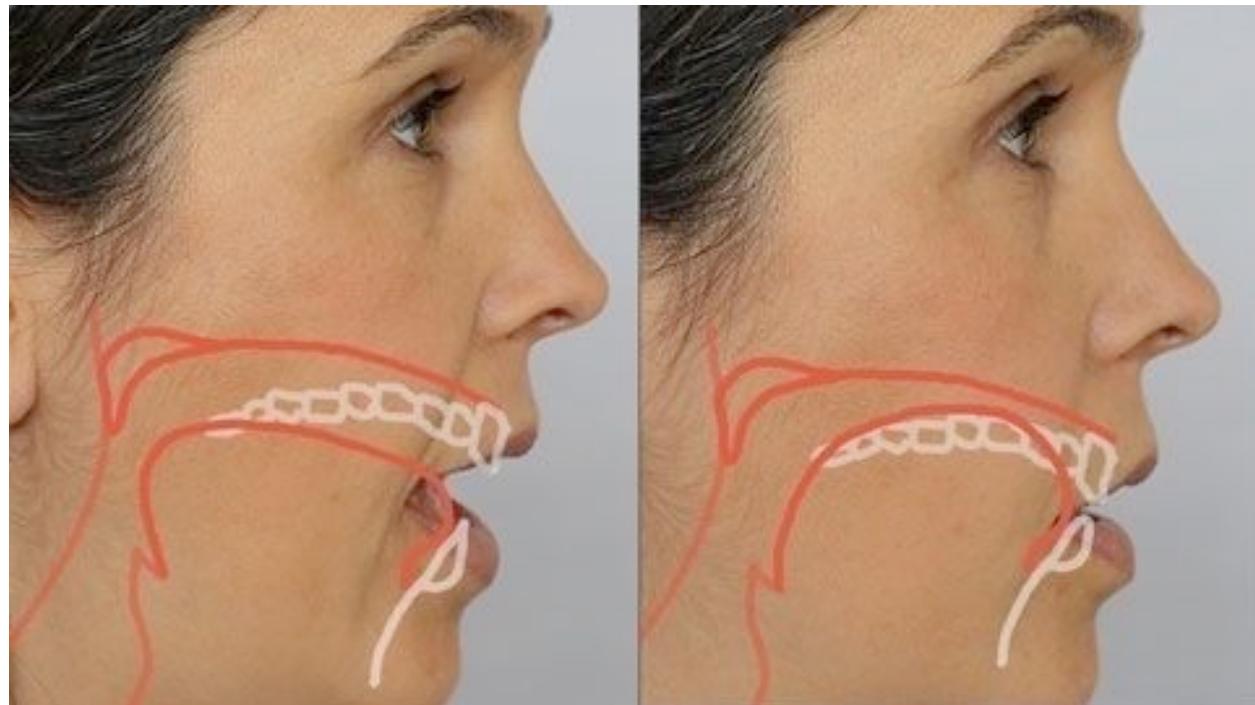
[engl.io/ahu](http://engl.io/ahu)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

ou: round [raʊnd]

ow: cow [kaʊ]

ough: bough [baʊ]

**[aɪ] – The AI as in BUY Diphthong**



This diphthong has the same beginning position as the OW as in NOW [au] diphthong, but the ending position is quite different. To begin, the jaw is more dropped, and the tongue is flatter. To end, there is no lip rounding. The corners of the lips should be totally relaxed. The tongue tip stays down so the tip touches the back of the bottom front teeth, but the top, front part arches up towards the roof of the mouth. If you're not sure what to focus on when working on this diphthong, focus on arching the tongue while keeping everything else relaxed.

#### **Video 4.3 — The Aɪ as in BUY [aɪ] Diphthong**

See illustrations of the beginning and ending positions for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech.



[engl.io/ahw](http://engl.io/ahw)

#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.8 — The Aɪ as in BUY [aɪ] Diphthong.**

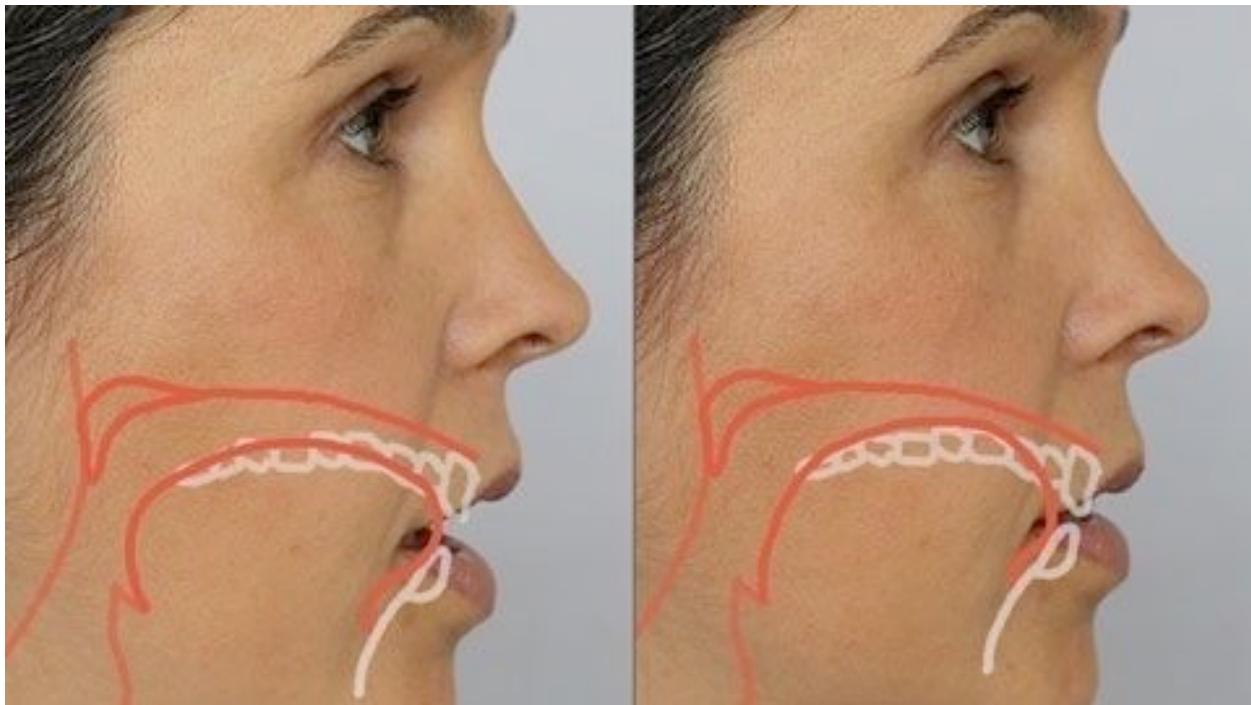
Does your jaw change from more dropped to less? Are your lips relaxed? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is [aɪ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
ai [aɪ]	Stressed
buy [baɪ]	Stressed
united [ju'naɪ dɪd]	Stressed
mind [maɪnd]	Stressed
ai [aɪ], ai [aɪ]	Stressed, Unstressed
idea [aɪ'di ə]	Unstressed
exercise [ˈek sər saɪz]	Unstressed

**Audio 4.8 — The Aɪ as in BUY [aɪ] Diphthong**[engl.io/ahy](http://engl.io/ahy)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

- y: my [maɪ]
- ai: aisle [aɪl]
- ie: lie [laɪ]
- ye: bye [baɪ]
- uy: buy [baɪ]
- igh: sight [saɪt]
- eigh: height [haɪt]
- aye: aye [aɪ]
- i: time [taɪm]

**[eɪ] – AY as in SAY Diphthong**



This sound begins with the [e] vowel, which is not a vowel on its own in American English. To make the position, the jaw drops some. The tip of the tongue stays down, touching behind the bottom of the top front teeth. The mid-front part lifts slightly towards the roof of the mouth. Think of making the top of the tongue extra wide. For the ending position, the jaw should drop less. The front part of the tongue arches up towards the roof of the mouth, just like the ending of the Aɪ as in BUY [aɪ] diphthong.

#### **Video 4.4 — The AY as in SAY [eɪ] Diphthong**

See illustrations of the beginning and ending positions for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech.



[engl.io/ah2](http://engl.io/ah2)

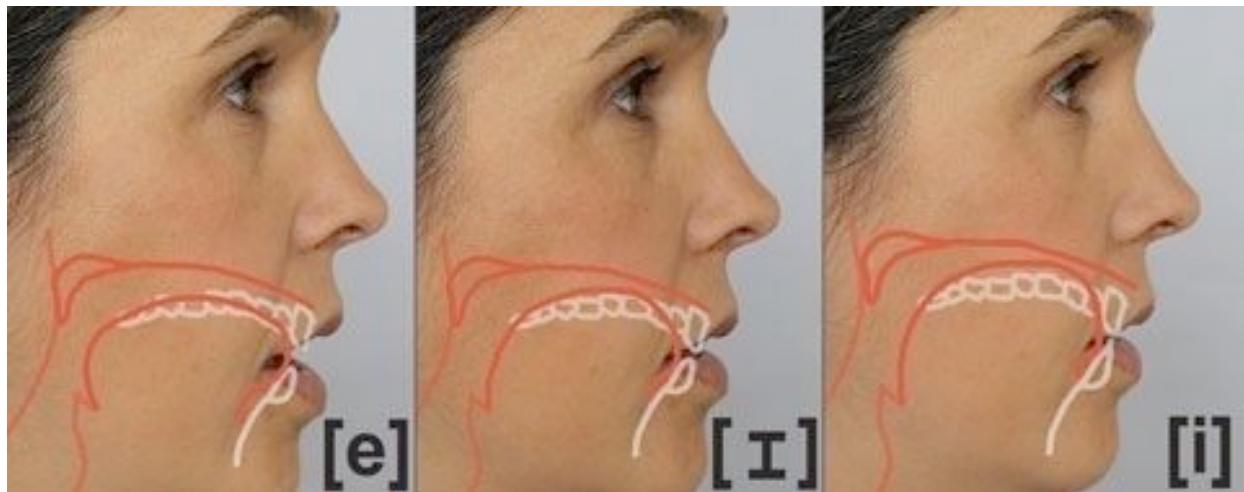
#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.9 — The AY as in SAY [eɪ] Diphthong.**

Does your tongue move up into an arched position? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 3 times)	Is [eɪ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
ay [eɪ]	Stressed
play [pleɪ]	Stressed
stay [steɪ]	Stressed
late [leɪt]	Stressed
ay [eɪ], ay [eɪ]	Stressed, unstressed
highway [ˈhaɪ weɪ]	Unstressed
always [ˈɔ:l weɪz]	Unstressed

**Audio 4.9 — The AY as in SAY [eɪ] Diphthong**
[engl.io/ah5](http://engl.io/ah5)

Sometimes when students are trying to learn the IH as in SIT [ɪ] vowel, which you learned in the last chapter, they substitute this diphthong instead. Below is a complicated audio file—you’re comparing three different sounds. Remember, for the AY as in SAY [eɪ] diphthong, your mouth should be moving from a beginning position to an ending position. The other two sounds are vowels, so the mouth shouldn’t move as you’re making them.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.10 — AY [eɪ] vs. IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i].**

Your jaw will go from most to least lowered: Lower the most for the beginning of the [eɪ] diphthong, then lower just a bit for the second half of the [eɪ] diphthong. Keep the same jaw position for the [ɪ] vowel, then drop the jaw even less for the [i] vowel. The tongue will change from further away from the roof of the mouth for the beginning of the [eɪ] diphthong, to arching up closer for the ending of the diphthong. Keep the same position for the [ɪ] vowel, but then move the arch of the tongue closer to the roof of the mouth for the [i] vowel.

What you hear (each 2 times)	Stressed or Unstressed?
ay [eɪ], ih [ɪ], ee [i]	Stressed
shape [[eɪp], ship [[ʃɪp], sheep [[ʃɪp]	Stressed
tame [teɪm], Tim [tɪm], team [tim]	Stressed
sane [seɪn], sin [sɪn], seen [sin]	Stressed
ate [eɪt], it [ɪt], eat [it]	Stressed

**Audio 4.10 — AY [eɪ] vs. IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i]**
[engl.io/ah8](http://engl.io/ah8)
**Test Yourself: Audio 4.11 — AY [eɪ] vs. IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i] Test.**

You'll hear five different three-word sequences, like 'shape, ship, sheep', each two times. Write down the words in the order you hear them. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 4.11 — AY [eɪ] vs. IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i] Test**

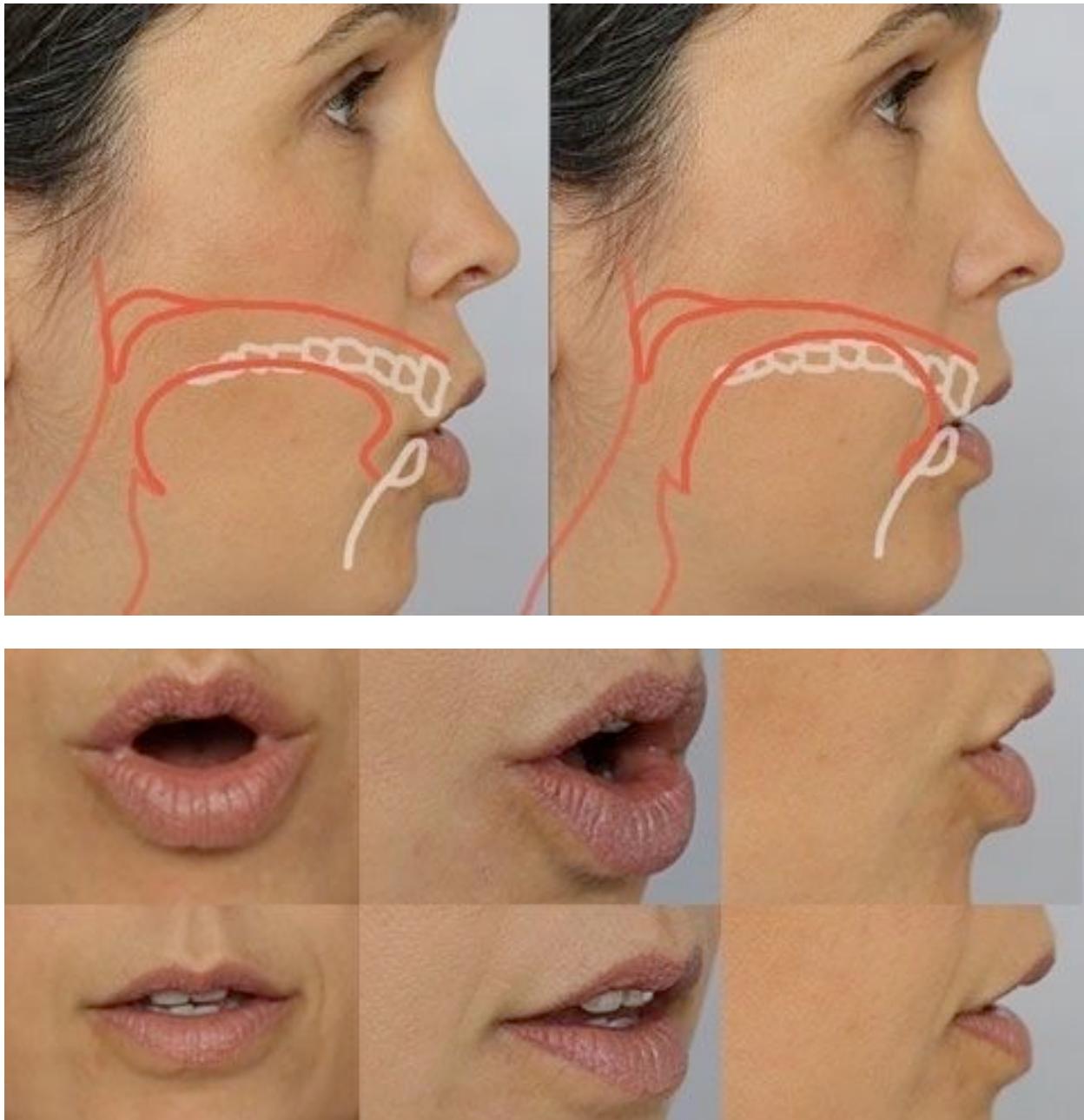
1. 'hail' sequence
2. 'Nate' sequence
3. 'whale' sequence
4. 'grain' sequence
5. 'nail' sequence


[engl.io/aib](http://engl.io/aib)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

- |        |             |
|--------|-------------|
| a:     | age [eɪdʒ]  |
| ai:    | aid [eɪd]   |
| ay:    | say [seɪ]   |
| eight: | eight [eɪt] |
| ey:    | they [ðeɪ]  |

## [ɔɪ] – The OY as in TOY Diphthong



This diphthong begins with the AW as in LAW [ɔ] vowel. As a part of the diphthong, the lips round more than they do for the pure vowel by itself, like in 'law' [lɔ]. The tongue lifts, front and back, and the tip might pull back just a bit so it's not touching the back of the front teeth. The jaw will drop some, and the lips will flare and round. To move into the second position, the IH as in SIT [ɪ] vowel, relax the lips. The corners will move out into their natural position again. Let the

jaw close some. The tongue tip stays down so the tip touches the back of the bottom front teeth, but the front part arches up towards the roof of the mouth.

### Video 4.5 — The OY as in TOY [ɔɪ] Diphthong

See illustrations of the beginning and ending positions for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech.



[engl.io/aie](http://engl.io/aie)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.12 — The OY as in TOY [ɔɪ] Diphthong.

Does your jaw drop for the beginning of the sound, then relax up as the lips relax? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 3 times)	Is [ɔɪ] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
oy [ɔɪ]	Stressed
toy [tɔɪ]	Stressed
employs [əm'plɔɪz]	Stressed
voice [vɔɪs]	Stressed
oy [ɔɪ], oy [ɔɪ]	Stressed, unstressed
steroid [ˈsteɪrɔɪd]	Unstressed
envoy ['en vɔɪ]	Unstressed

### Audio 4.12 — The OY as in TOY [ɔɪ] Diphthong

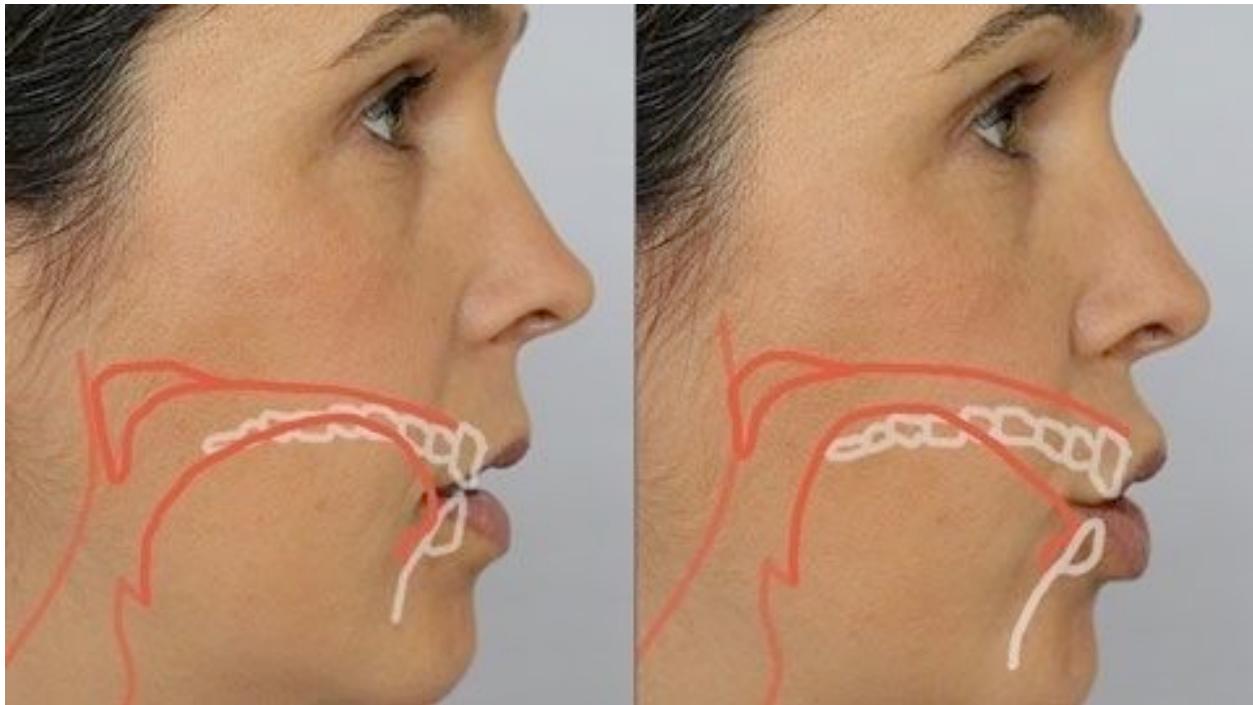


[engl.io/aig](http://engl.io/aig)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

oi: moist [moɪst]  
 oy: boy [bɔɪ]

## [ju] – The EW as in FEW Diphthong



I said at the beginning of this section that a diphthong is two vowel sounds together. Yes ... but ... the Y [j] sound isn't a vowel (see the box below). I still call it a diphthong! Start with the top, front part of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth. Press the tongue against it with a forward motion. The tongue tip stays down, so the tip touches the back of the bottom front teeth. Then move into the OO as in BOO vowel [u] shape. The lips have to round and the tongue

lifts in the back. The front part of the tongue pulls away from the roof of the mouth.

### **Video 4.6 — The EW as in FEW [ju] Diphthong**

See illustrations of the beginning and ending positions for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech.



[engl.io/aik](http://engl.io/aik)

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 4.13 — The EW as in FEW [ju] Diphthong.**

Do your lips start relaxed, then round? What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 3 times)	Is [ju] in a Stressed or Unstressed syllable?
ew [ju]	Stressed
few [fju]	Stressed
beauty ['bju di]	Stressed
view [vju]	Stressed
ew [ju], ew [ju]	Stressed, Unstressed
U. S. [ju's]	Unstressed
January ['dʒæn ju ,εɪ i]	Unstressed

### **Audio 4.13 — The EW as in FEW [ju] Diphthong**



[engl.io/ain](http://engl.io/ain)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

- u:      use [juz]
- eu:     feud [fjud]
- ew:     few [fju]
- eau:    beauty ['bju di]

How many diphthongs are there? That depends on who you ask. Some resources do not consider the EW as in FEW [ju] diphthong a diphthong. I have chosen to. It makes sense to me that in the word ‘music’, for example, the [j] sound goes with the [u] sound to make a diphthong, rather than with the M consonant to make a consonant cluster. Some resources list additional diphthongs that I did not include here, like [ɛə], as in ‘bear’ [bɛər], or [ɪə], as in ‘ear’ [ɪər]. I think it’s confusing to think of these as diphthongs because there’s not really a schwa sound; it blends into the R sound. The point is, different labels make sense to different people! If you see a different set of diphthongs in another resource, it’s not wrong. It’s just what seems right to someone else!

### **Test yourself: Non-Audio 4.1 — Match the Symbols with the Sound.**

Make sure you’re familiar with the symbols of the American diphthongs. Answers are in the Answers Appendix.

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| 1. OH as in NO<br>2. OW as in NOW<br>3. AI as in BUY<br>4. AY as in SAY<br>5. OY as in TOY<br>6. EW as in FEW | a. [aʊ]<br>b. [ɔɪ]<br>c. [oʊ]<br>d. [aɪ]<br>e. [ju]<br>f. [eɪ] |
|---|--|

### **Test yourself: Audio 4.14 — What diphthong are you hearing?**

All of the diphthongs are on the audio file once. Write down the numbers below in the order you hear them, then listen again to check yourself. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. OH as in NO
- b. OW as in NOW
- c. AI as in BUY
- d. AY as in SAY
- e. OY as in TOY
- f. EW as in FEW

**Audio 4.14 — What diphthong are you hearing?**



[engl.io/aip](http://engl.io/aip)

**Test yourself: Audio 4.15 — Mixed Minimal Pairs, Vowels and Diphthongs.**  
Each set is written alphabetically. Is that the right order or wrong order, based on what you hear on the audio file? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

1. hale [heɪl], heal [hil], hill [hɪl]
2. lane [leɪn], lean [lin], Lynne [lɪn]
3. ought [ɒt], out [aʊt]
4. fond [fənd], found [faʊnd]
5. bag [bæg], bog [bag]
6. sap [sæp], sop [sap]
7. fond [fənd], fund [fʌnd]
8. stock [stak], stuck [stʌk]
9. bad [bæd], bed [bɛd]
10. had [hæd], head [hɛd]
11. fell [fel], fill [fil]
12. pet [pɛt], pit [pɪt]
13. woed [wud], wood [wʊd]
14. fool [ful], full [fʊl]

**Audio 4.15 — Test yourself: Mixed Minimal Pairs, Vowels and Diphthongs**



[engl.io/ais](http://engl.io/ais)

## Chapter 5

# Consonants

Now we get to complete the sounds. In the sample words from the previous two chapters, you may have noticed a few things that surprised you. For example why is there a [d] in ‘beauty’? In this section, you’ll find out why.

This section does not give two audio versions of each sound, stressed and unstressed, like the *Vowels* and *Diphthongs* chapters. This is because the shape and length of a syllable generally comes from the vowel or diphthong sound, not the consonants.

With vowels and diphthongs, you learned that English is not a phonetic language. One letter can represent various sounds, and you have to learn the pronunciation of each word as you learn the word. This is true of consonants as well. The letters CH, for example, can make the CH [tʃ] sound like in ‘chance’, the SH [ʃ] sound like in ‘machine’, or the K [k] sound like in ‘choir’. To know which pronunciation goes with which word, you’ll have to look the word up in a dictionary.

Consonants fall into two categories, voiced and unvoiced (all vowels and diphthongs are voiced). Unvoiced sounds are made with just the breath, no sound from the vocal cords. Voiced sounds involve a sound from the vocal cords. It’s almost like your throat is making the ‘uh’ sound while the rest of your mouth takes the position of the consonant. Look at, for example, the [s] sound. This sound is unvoiced. When you make it, place your hand on your throat. Nothing in your throat moves, the vocal cords are not engaged. Now make the

[z] sound, which is just like the [s] sound in position, only the vocal cords *are* engaged, making sound. Hold out the sound touching your throat. You should feel the throat vibrating.

<b>Video 5.1 — Voiced vs. Unvoiced Consonants</b> See the difference in these sounds explained, and hear the difference.	 <a href="http://engl.io/ak2">engl.io/ak2</a>
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Some consonants are paired, where there is just one mouth position for both sounds. One is voiced and the other unvoiced.

Paired Consonants:

Voiced:	Unvoiced:
B [b]	P [b]
G [g]	K [k]
D [d]	T [t]
V [v]	F [f]
Z [z]	S [s]
ZH [ʒ]	SH [ʃ]
TH [ð]	TH [θ]
J [dʒ]	CH [tʃ]

#### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.1 — Paired Consonants.

Each of the pairs in the chart above are on the audio file, in order. You'll hear the sequence twice.

<b>Audio 5.1 — Paired Consonants</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ak4">engl.io/ak4</a>
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The rest of the consonants are unpaired. That means they have a unique mouth position. Of the unpaired consonants, there is only one unvoiced sound, H [h]. M [m], N [n], NG [ŋ], Y [j], W [w], R [ɹ], and L [l] are all voiced, with the vocal cords buzzing with the sound.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.2 — Unpaired Consonants.**  
You'll hear the sequence twice.

### Audio 5.2 — Unpaired Consonants

H [h], M [m], N [n], NG [ŋ], Y [j], W [w], R [ɹ], Light L [l], Dark L [ɫ]

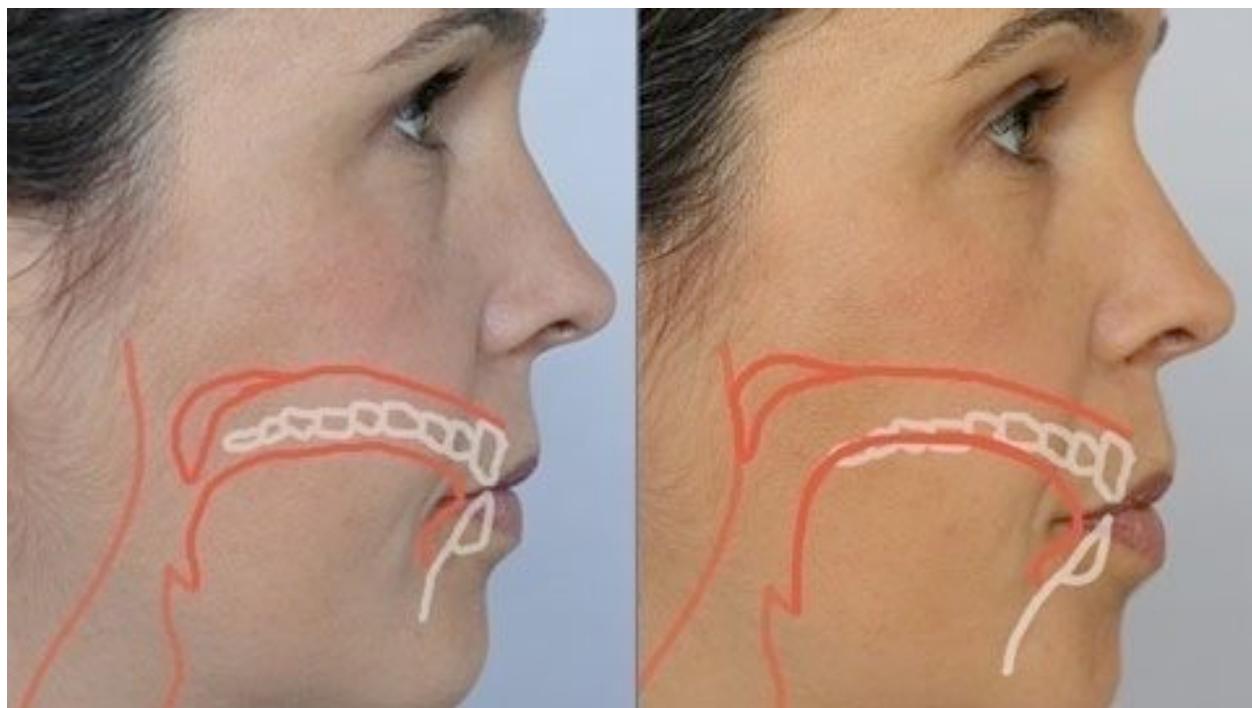


[engl.io/ak7](http://engl.io/ak7)

## Section 1: Paired Consonants

The first three pairs of this section are **stop consonants**, for six stop consonants in total. These consonants are different from all the others in an important way: you can't hold them out. They all involve a stop of air, then a release. As you'll learn, it's common to skip the release of stop consonants.

### The B [b] and P [p] Consonants





The jaw may drop a little bit for these sounds, but the lips remain closed. The tongue is forward. Because they are stop consonants, there is a stop of air and a release of air. The stop happens when the lips close. Then the lips part and release into the next sound, if there is one. If the word is 'bye', the B releases directly into the Aɪ as in BUY diphthong [aɪ], there is not a release of air followed by the diphthong. The P sound is unvoiced and the B sound is voiced.

### **Video 5.2 — The B [b] and P [p] Consonants**

See illustrations of the tongue position for these sounds, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/ak8](http://engl.io/ak8)

Stop consonants can be tricky because many Americans only pronounce the first half of the sound, the stop. For these sounds, that means putting the lips together, but not releasing the air afterward. We do this often when a word ends in B or P and the next word begins with a consonant ("I can't help myself.").

When the B or P is at the end of a sentence, the release will be dropped, or the release will be light ("Stop!", "I haven't heard from Bob.").

**Stop Consonants: Why skip the release?** In American English, we like everything to be smooth and for all the words in a sentence to flow together. Stop consonants, in full with their release, chop up and separate words. When we leave out the release and go right into the next word, it sounds smoother.

### Video 5.3 — Stop Consonants

Now that you've learned a little about Stop Consonants, see more examples and watch how the mouth stops the sound without the release.



[engl.io/aka](http://engl.io/aka)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.3 — The B [b] and P [p] Consonants.

You'll hear these consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is the stop consonant released or unreleased?
bb [b], pp [p]	Released
put [put]	Released into vowel
boss [bɔs]	Released into vowel
shopping ['ʃapɪŋ]	Released into vowel
subway ['sʌbweɪ]	Released
stop [stap]	Released
job [dʒab]	Unreleased

### Audio 5.3 — The B [b] and P [p] Consonants



[engl.io/akd](http://engl.io/akd)

You'll see these sounds spelled several ways in American English.

[b]

b: bought [bɔt]

bb: wobble ['wabəl]

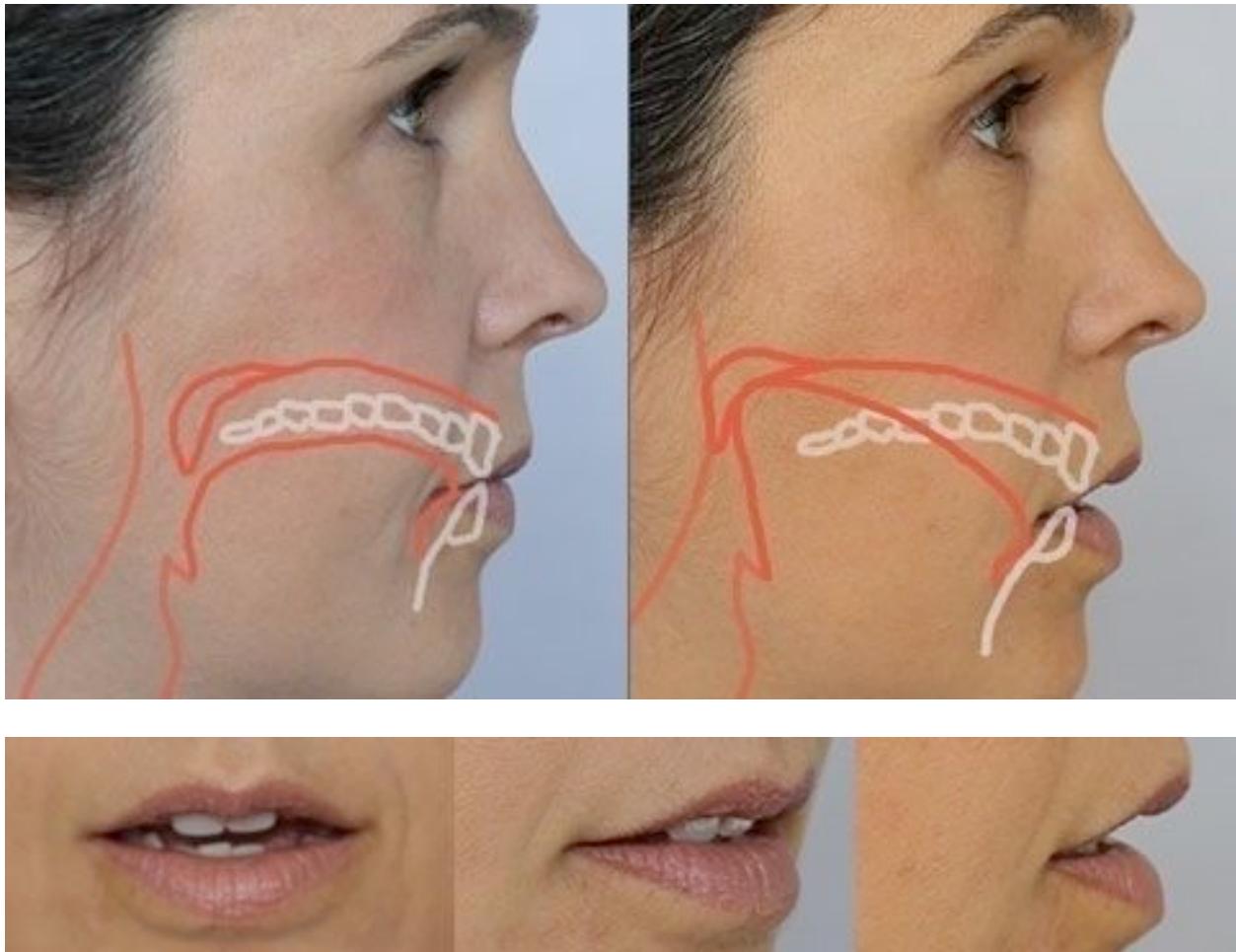
[p]

p: put [put]

pp: happy ['hæpɪ]

gh: hiccup ['hɪkʌp] (this is an unusual spelling, it's usually spelled 'hiccup')

## The G [g] and K [k] Consonants



These sounds are made by lifting the back of the tongue so that it touches the soft palate, then pulling down to release the tongue and the air. The tip of the tongue and the lip position do not affect this sound. That means they can start to take the shape of the next sound. For example, the word 'great' [great]. The tip of the tongue can pull back and up and the lips can flare for the R [ɹ] sound while you make the G [g] sound. The G sound is voiced, and the K sound is unvoiced.

These consonants are stop consonants. The air is stopped when the tongue touches the soft palate, and released when it pulls away from the soft palate. Though they are stop consonants, it is less common to drop the release of them at the end of a sentence ("I'll have a little snack") than for other stop consonants. This is also true when they are followed by a consonant ("I think my watch is broken"). Sometimes you'll hear a stop, and sometimes you'll hear a light release.

### Video 5.4 — The G [g] and K [k] Consonants

See illustrations of the tongue position for these sounds, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/akf](http://engl.io/akf)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.4 — The G [g] and K [k] Consonants.

You'll hear these consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is the stop consonant released or unreleased?
gg [g], kk [k]	Released
cut [kʌt]	Released into vowel
go [gəʊ]	Released into vowel
location [ləʊ'keɪʃən]	Released into vowel
ugly ['ʌg lɪ]	Released into consonant
click [klɪk]	Released
dog [dɒg]	Released

### Audio 5.4 — The G [g] and K [k] Consonants



[engl.io/akh](http://engl.io/akh)

You'll see these sounds spelled several ways in American English.

[g]

g: go [gəʊ]

gg: wiggle ['wɪg əl]

[k]

c: can [kæn]

cc: occur [ə'kɜːr]

k: skip [skɪp]

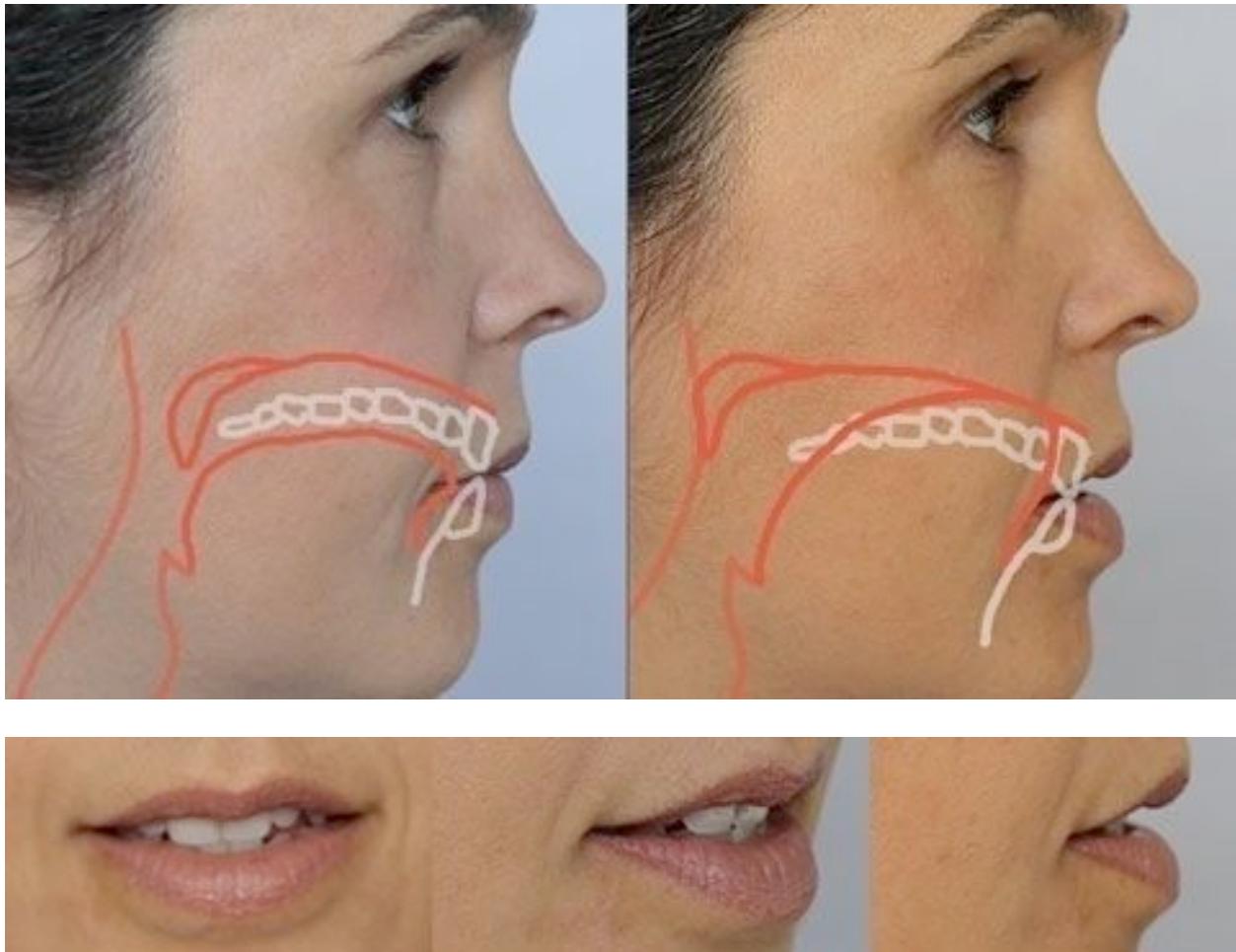
ck: tick [tɪk]

ch: character ['kærə ɪk tər]

x: extra ['ɛk stjuː]

q: quite [kwaɪt]

## The T [t] and D [d] Consonants



T is one of the hardest consonants. This is not because the sound is especially hard to make, like R [ɹ] or TH [θ]. It's because there is *more than one pronunciation* for T [t].

First, let me clarify that we're talking about the *sounds* [t] and [d], not the *letters* T and D. The word 'future' has the letter T in it, but not the T sound. Here it represents the CH [tʃ] sound, ['fju tʃər]. We're talking only about words with the letter T, where the dictionary says the pronunciation is [t].

The thing to know about the True T [t] is that when you look up a word in the dictionary and see [t], it might not actually be the way Americans speak. The IPA in most dictionaries is not right—most Americans use lots of Flap T's and Stop T's, which most dictionaries ignore. Don't worry, in this section you'll learn the rules for how Americans pronounce [t] (and [d]).

The rules below outline how Americans speak most of the time in conversation. However, sometimes they will make a True T instead, especially if trying to speak slower and more clearly. I suggest as a student, that you try to integrate Flap and Stop T's as much as possible to make your speech smoother.

### **Video 5.5 — Contractversation**

Want to know what American English sounds like with no Flap or Stop T's (and no contractions?) It doesn't sound quite right, does it? Topic: Going to Starbucks.



[engl.io/akj](http://engl.io/akj)

### **Ways to pronounce [t]**

#### **1) Stop T [t|]**

##### **Make a Stop T:**

When the next sound is a consonant.

cutback ['kʌt| bæk]

put my [pʊt| mai]

At the end of a thought or sentence.

I knew that. [ɑɪ 'nu ðæt|]

Neat. [nit|]

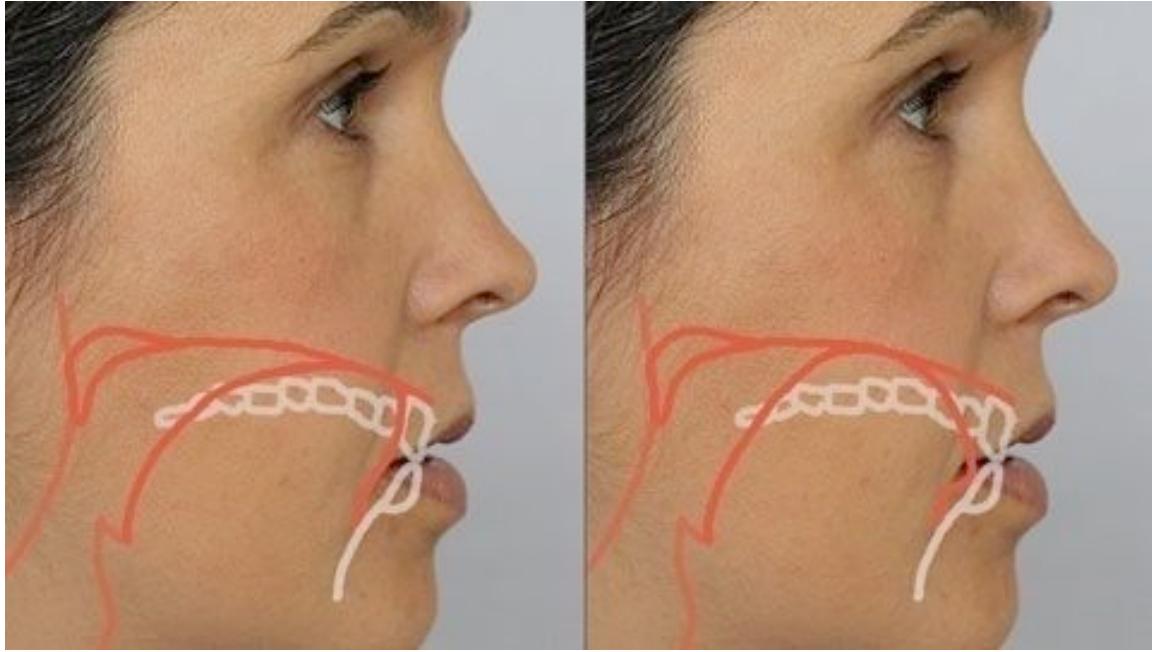
In the T-schwa-N sequence.

important [ɪm'pɔr t| ənt|]

mountain ['maʊn t| ən]

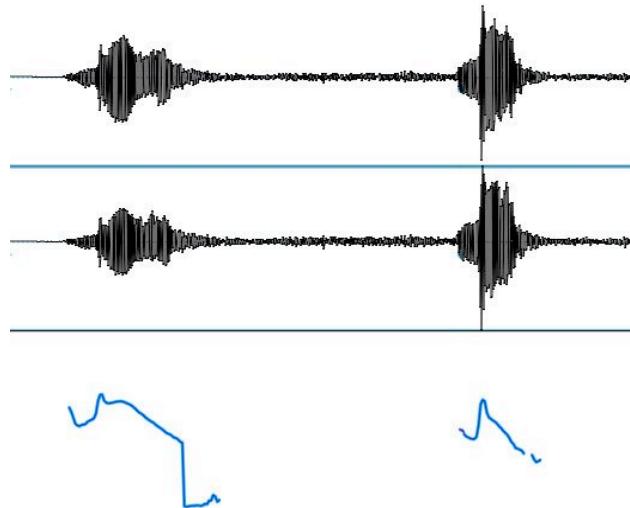
#### **How to make the Stop T [t|]**

The Stop T is made when you stop the air and don't release it before starting the next sound (skipping the release). You don't need to bring your tongue tip to the roof of the mouth. As a shortcut, try leaving the tip down behind the bottom front teeth and touching the roof of the mouth with the middle of the tongue as you cut off the air in your throat. See the photo below: on the left is the True T position, and on the right you can see an alternate tongue position for the Stop T, where you leave your tongue tip down. As you practice words and sentences with the Stop T, exaggerate the stop. Hold the air for two or three seconds. Of all the stop consonants, the T is the clearest and strongest.



Some people think the Stop T is the same as dropping the T, but it's not. The Stop T changes the vocal shape of the word. Words without the Stop T ending, like 'way' [wei], go down in pitch at the end. The sound falls off. Words with a Stop T, like 'wait' [weit], end more abruptly. The melody shape isn't as curved.

In the photo below, you can see the volume of the voice in black, and the pitch in blue. 'Way' is on the left, and 'wait' on the right. Notice how 'way' tapers more at the end. It's longer, and goes down to a lower pitch. 'Wait', on the other hand, is shorter and more abrupt, with less taper. Keep this in mind as you listen to the audio file.



### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.5 — Stop T vs. No T.

Can you hear the difference between words with a Stop T and words that are exactly the same except that they have no Stop T? What is different about these words? Listen for the shape: words without the stop T go down in pitch at the end. Words with the Stop T end more abruptly. The first time, just listen. Then listen and repeat, imitating the shape of the voice.

#### Audio 5.5 — Stop T vs. No T

way [wei] — wait [weɪt̚]  
 bay [beɪ] — bait [beɪt̚]  
 day [deɪ] — date [deɪt̚]  
 fee [fi] — feet [fit̚]  
 she [ʃi] — sheet [ʃɪt̚]  
 pow [paʊ] — pout [paʊt̚]



[engl.io/akm](http://engl.io/akm)

## 2) Flap T [d]

### Make a Flap T:

When the T comes between vowel sounds.

pretty ['prɪɪt̚ i]  
 about it [ə'baʊd\_ɪt̚]

When the T comes after an R before a vowel sound.

party ['rɑɪ dɪ]  
 sort of ['prɔs\_əv̚]

### How to make the Flap T [d]

The Flap T, and the D between vowels, which you'll learn about soon, are the same sound. I use the symbol [d] in my videos and this book because in these cases the T sounds like a D between vowels. But, it sounds like the R [r] in many languages (not the American R [j]!), including Japanese (る), Korean (바람), Portuguese (prato), Spanish (caro), and Arabic (لـ). If one of these is your native language and it makes sense to you to think of the Flap T as your R, go ahead and do that.

To make this flap sound, the very front of tongue bounces against the roof of the mouth quickly. The air does not stop, so it doesn't interrupt the flow of the word. The position of the tongue when it flaps against the roof of the mouth can be the same as the position for the True T, with the tongue all the way forward.

However, it's also possible to make this sound with the tongue flapping a little further back in the mouth.

Many people mispronounce the American R, making instead a Flap T. You'll learn how to make the American R soon.

<p><b>Video 5.6 — The Flap T like in PARTY</b> Study the Flap T after R, before a vowel.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/akp">engl.io/akp</a>
<p><b>Video 5.7 — The Flap T like in PRETTY</b> Study the Flap T between vowels on a beautiful spring day in New York.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/akr">engl.io/akr</a>

### 3) No T at All

#### Drop the T Sound:

Between consonants. *Note: dropping the T altogether, as in both of these cases, is not as strong of a habit for Americans as using the Flap and Stop T.*

exactly [ɪg'zæk li]

kept my [kɛp | maɪ]

After the N sound.

internet ['ɪn ə,rnet|]

wanted ['wan ɪd]

<p><b>Video 5.8 — On the Farm</b> Study T pronunciations, including dropping the T, in real American conversation.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/akt">engl.io/akt</a>
<p><b>Video 5.9 — T and D between Consonants</b> See examples of dropping the T and D between two other consonants.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/akv">engl.io/akv</a>

### 4) True T [t]

#### Make a True T:

At the beginning of a stressed syllable. *Note: this rule overrides previous rules. For example, in 'until', the T comes after the N, which is often dropped.*

*But, since it starts a stressed syllable in this word, it will be a True T. Also, in 'attain', the T sound comes between two vowels, which would be a Flap T. But since it starts a stressed syllable, it's a True T.*

until [ʌn'tɪl]

attire [ə'taiər]

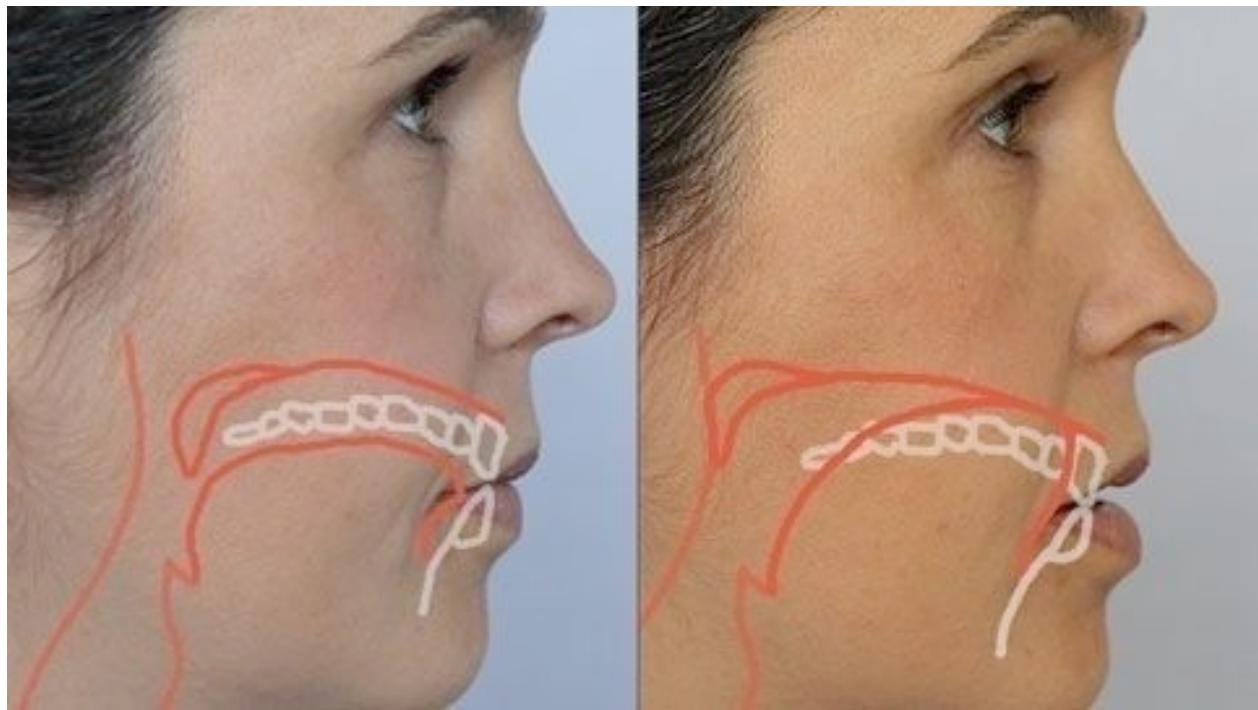
In consonant clusters. Note: this rule does not override previous rules.

Americans may drop the T in a consonant cluster when the next word begins with a consonant, like in 'kept my'.

connect [kə'nɛkt]

stop [stɒp]

### How to make the True T [t]



The True T is a stop consonant. The stop is made when you stop the air in the throat, close your teeth, and bring the tip of the tongue to the roof of your mouth, behind your front teeth. The release happens when you lower your tongue, let your teeth part, and release the air, beginning the next sound. The release is a

burst of air; you should be able to feel it if you put your hand in front of your mouth.

### **Video 5.10 — The T [t] and D [d] Consonants**

See illustrations of the tongue position for these sounds, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position. This video goes over how to make the True T, but also touches on the Flap T and Stop consonants.



[engl.io/akx](http://engl.io/akx)

### **Exceptions**

Even though these rules are pretty strong, there are some exceptions, including:

- into ['ɪn tu]: the T comes after an N and doesn't start a stressed syllable, so the rules say we can drop it. But, we make this a True T.
- seventy ['sev ən di] and ninety ['naɪn di]: the T comes after an N and doesn't start a stressed syllable, so the rules say we can drop it. But, we make these Flap T's.
- politics ['pol ə tɪks]: the T comes between two vowel sounds and doesn't start a stressed syllable, so the rules say it's a Flap T. But, we make this a True T.

### **Video 5.11 — The Word SEVENTY**

This T doesn't follow the rules.



[engl.io/amz](http://engl.io/amz)

Do these rules seem confusing? Don't panic. The more you study them, and the more you pay attention to and imitate native speakers, the more natural they become.

### **Test yourself: Non-Audio 5.1 — How should the T's be pronounced?**

Based on the rules above, how should you pronounce these T's? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. True T   b. Flap T   c. Stop T
1. not alone
  2. thought about
  3. wait for
  4. country

5. time
6. what
7. exact
8. part of
9. attack
10. football

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.6 — The Three T Sounds.**

The first time, just listen to all of the words. Do you hear how the T is different? Then practice. The True T has a sharp escape of air. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	What kind of T is it?
tt [t]	True
time [taɪm]	True
attain [ə'teɪn]	True
party ['paɪ di]	Flap
city ['sɪd i]	Flap
might [maɪt̬]	Stop
definitely ['dɛf ə nɪt̬ lɪ]	Stop

<b>Audio 5.6 — The Three T Sounds</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/anb">engl.io/anb</a>
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<b>Video 5.12 — T Pronunciations</b> This video clarifies some of the rules you just learned about when to make which T.	 <a href="http://engl.io/anc">engl.io/anc</a>
<b>Video 5.13 — T Pronunciations Test</b> This video gives you examples — can you identify which T pronunciation you should use?	 <a href="http://engl.io/ane">engl.io/ane</a>

**Test Yourself: Audio 5.7 — What T do you Hear?**

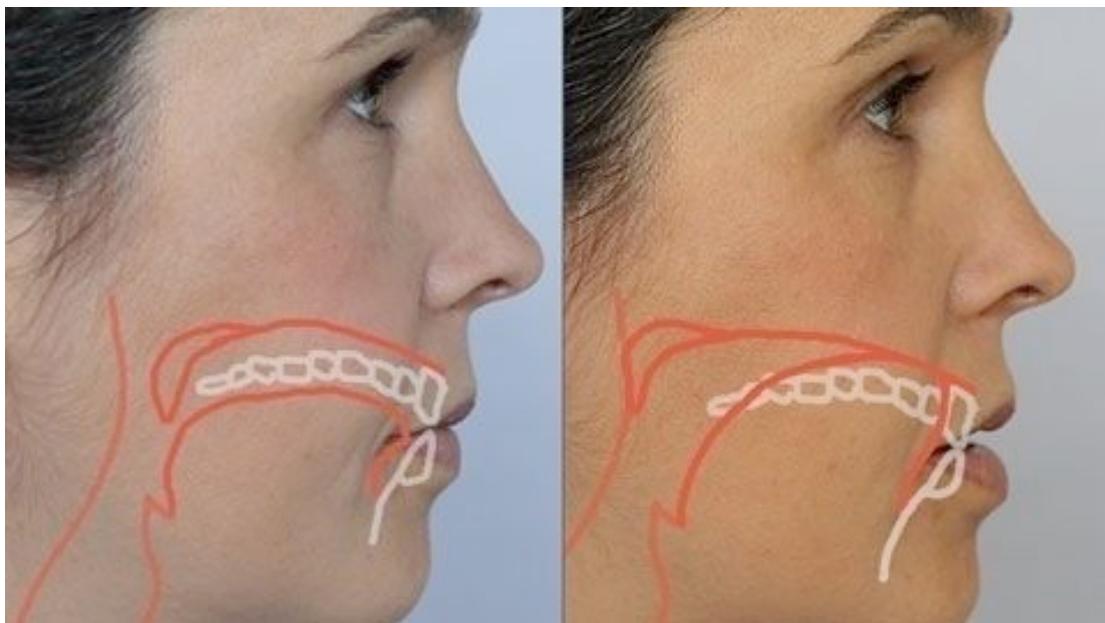
You'll hear eight words or phrases. Each word either has a True T, Flap T, Stop T, or No T at All. What word or phrase do you hear? What kind of T? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 5.7 — What T do you Hear?**[engl.io/ang](http://engl.io/ang)

Note: As you've learned, the pronunciation of a final T depends on the context. Is it the end of a thought, or followed by a consonant? Americans will make that a Stop T most of the time. Is it followed by a vowel or diphthong? Americans will make that a Flap T most of the time. Is someone speaking extra clearly, maybe into a microphone to a larger group? Then maybe that person would make it a True T. In this book, when we're just studying words by themselves, I put the True T symbol. But remember, in a sentence, you'll likely want to make it a Flap T or Stop T to make your sentence smoother.

**The D Sounds**

That was a lot of information on the T sound. What about the D sound? The D sound [d] is similar to the T, but there are fewer rules and students naturally have an easier time with it.





This is the same photo as above, for the True T sound. To make the [d] sound, stop the air in your throat and bring the tongue tip to the roof of the mouth. You can close your teeth, like for the T sound, but you can also make this sound without the teeth closing all the way. Release the tongue with your voice—this is a voiced consonant—and go right into the next sound.

Like with the other stop consonants, the release is often skipped if the next sound is a consonant or at the end of a thought or sentence. Some people ask me the difference between the Stop T and a D that's not released. Great question. They sound almost the same. With the D, however, there is a bit of a voiced sound in the throat, even in the stop. So 'hid' [hid̥] and 'hit' [hit̥] sound different to native speakers, even when the stop is not released. Another tip: when two words are the same but one ending is voiced and the other unvoiced, the vowel before the voiced ending is just a little longer. So 'hid' is a little longer than 'hit', 'buzz' is a little bit longer than 'bus', and so on.

If the D comes between two vowels or diphthongs ("body"), or after an R and before a vowel or diphthong ("hardy"), the air *doesn't* stop. These are the same rules for the Flap T, and it sounds just like the Flap T. It's no longer a stop consonant! The tongue simply flaps against the roof of the mouth. Because the Flap T and the D between vowel sounds the same, these words sound the same:  
 matter ['mæd̥ ə] — madder ['mæd̥ ə]  
 writer ['rɛd̥ ɪər̥] — rider ['rɪd̥ ɪər̥]

Also because the Flap T sounds like the D between vowels, some phrases sound the same:

#### **Video 5.14 — Homophone Phrases**

Learn how phrases can sound the same even though they are made up of different words.



[engl.io/anj](http://engl.io/anj)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.8 — The D [d] Consonant.

You'll hear D [d] at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Is the stop consonant released or unreleased?
dd [d]	Released
do [du]	Released into vowel
die [daɪ]	Released into vowel
lady ['leɪ di]	Released into vowel
medicine ['med ə sɪn]	Released into vowel
need [nid]	Released
add [æd]	Released

### Audio 5.8 — The D [d] Consonant



[engl.io/anm](http://engl.io/anm)

You'll see these sounds spelled several ways in American English.

[t]

t: tap [tæp]

tt: attain [ə'teɪn]

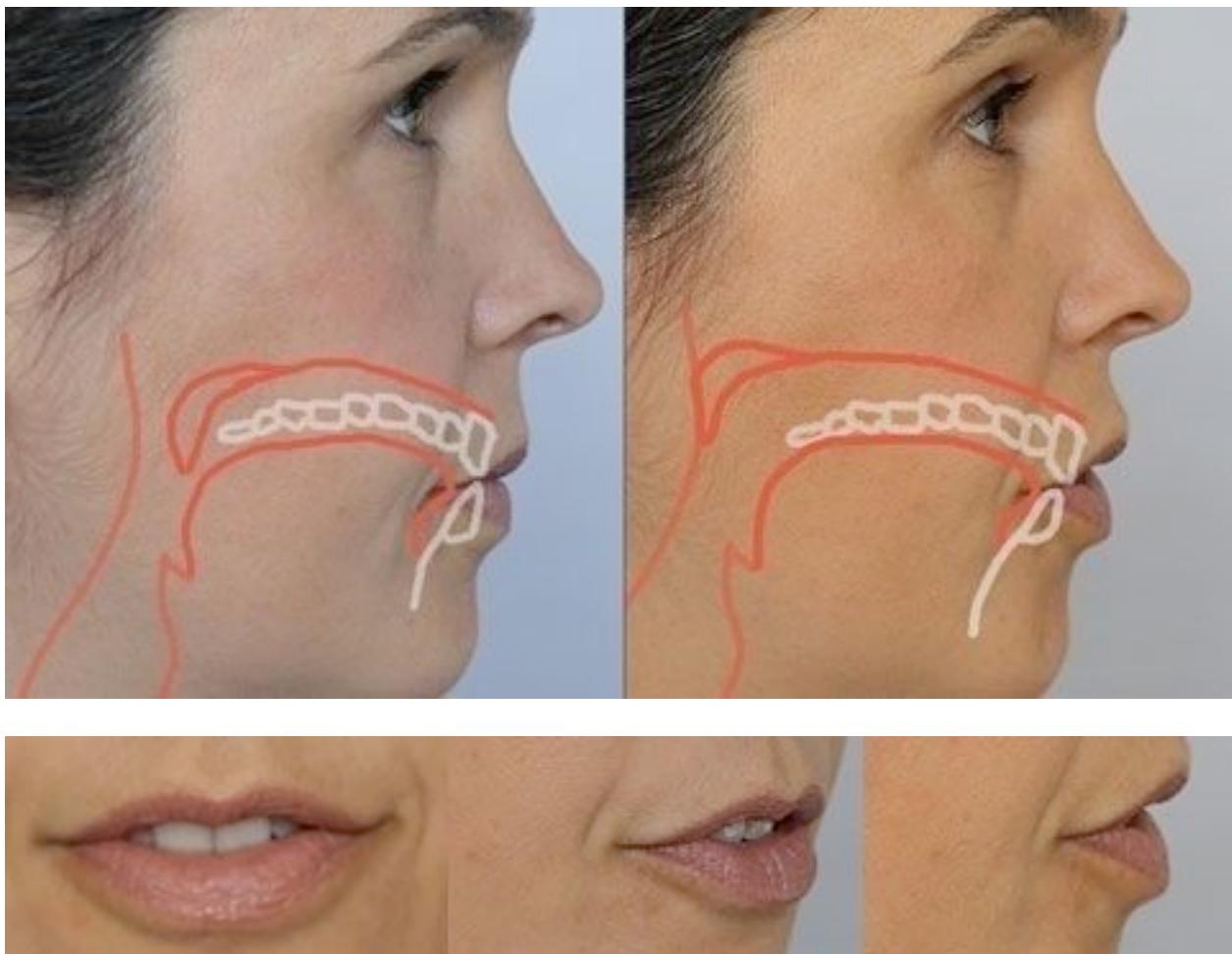
[d]

d: dog [dɒg]

dd: add [æd]

That was a lot of information on the stop consonants. Now we're getting into consonants that aren't stop consonants. These are sounds you can hold out until you run out of breath. It's good to hold the consonant for several seconds as you're practicing it to get your body used to the mouth position and airflow.

## The V [v] and F [f] Consonant Sounds



These consonants are ‘fricatives’, which means we pass the air through a narrow channel made by the lips, tongue, or teeth. In this case, we bring the bottom lip up to touch the bottom of the top front teeth and pass air through this pressed space. The F is unvoiced, and the V is voiced.

A common mistake students make with these sounds is to curl in the bottom lip. We don’t want it to curl in, just lift. It’s the *inside* of the bottom lip that should touch the bottom of the top front teeth. The lips have to be loose, without tension, so they can vibrate with the air. These sounds have no stop like the consonants we studied so far. That means you can hold them out for several seconds as you practice, to fine-tune your mouth position.

**Video 5.15 — The V [v] and F [f] Consonants**

See illustrations of the tongue position for these sounds, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/anp](http://engl.io/anp)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.9 — The V [v] and F [f] Consonants.**

You'll hear these consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)

vv [v], ff [f]

fail [feɪl]

vest [vɛst]

delivery [dɪ'�ɪvərɪ]

differ ['difər]

leave [liv]

leaf [lif]

**Audio 5.9 — The V [v] and F [f] Consonants**

[engl.io/ans](http://engl.io/ans)

In the audio file, pay special attention to the last two words, 'leave' and 'leaf'. There are two things to notice:

- 1) The [v] at the end of 'leave' is weak. It's not as clear or a strong as a beginning V, like the [v] in 'vest'. In these pairs, the voiced consonants are weak at the end of words, and they sound almost unvoiced. But that doesn't mean 'leave' sounds just like 'leaf'. 'Leaf' has a strong voiced sound at the end, where 'leave' has a weak voiced or unvoiced sound at the end.
- 2) 'Leaf' is a little shorter. As we said above, words with a final unvoiced sound can be a little shorter than words that end in a voiced sound. So, 'bet' will sound shorter than 'bed'.

These two points are true of all the paired consonants.

You'll see these sounds spelled several ways in American English.

[f]

f: fun [fʌn]

ff: stuff [stʌf]

ph: phone [fəʊn]

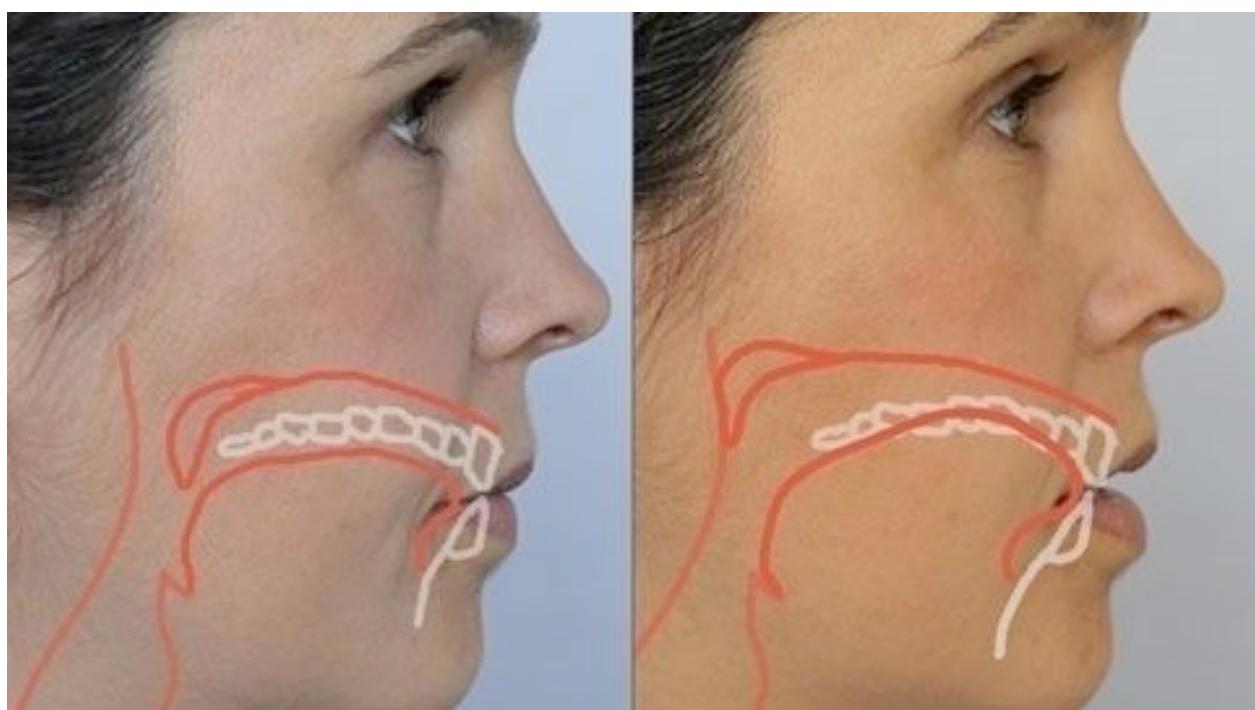
gh: laugh [læf]

[v]

v: love [lʌv]

vv: savvy ['sæv i]

## The Z [z] and S [s] Consonants



These sounds are also fricatives. Here, the air passage is made narrow with the teeth. The teeth come together, and the tongue can take one of two positions. It can either point down, so it presses against the back of the bottom front teeth

(that's how I make it). Or, it can point up, where the tongue tip doesn't touch anything, but is close to the roof of the mouth. The S is unvoiced and the Z is voiced.

### **Video 5.16 — The S [s] and Z [z] Consonants**

See illustrations of the tongue position for these sounds, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/anu](http://engl.io/anu)

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.10 — The Z [z] and S [s] Consonants.**

You'll hear these consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)

zz [z], ss [s]

sun [sʌn]

zoo [zu]

dressy [ˈdrɛs i]

Brazil [b्रə'zil]

lays [leɪz]

lace [leɪs]

### **Audio 5.10 — The Z [z] and S [s] Consonants**



[engl.io/anw](http://engl.io/anw)

Some of my students, especially Spanish speakers, make a very clear S [s] sound for every S they see. But many S's are pronounced as a Z: busy, business, husband, cousin, as, these, president, always. You'll learn about when the letter S is pronounced [z] for plurals in the next chapter. But there are lots of words that aren't plural nouns where the letter S makes the [z] sound, and you just need to learn the pronunciation of them as you learn the word. There is no rule.

**Video 5.17 — Letter S as the [z] Sound**[engl.io/anz](http://engl.io/anz)

You'll see these sounds spelled several ways in American English.

[s]

s: sun [sʌn]

ss: mess [mɛs]

x: extra ['ɛk stuə]

cc: accept [æk'sept]

c: cell [sel]

sc: scent [sɛnt]

[z]

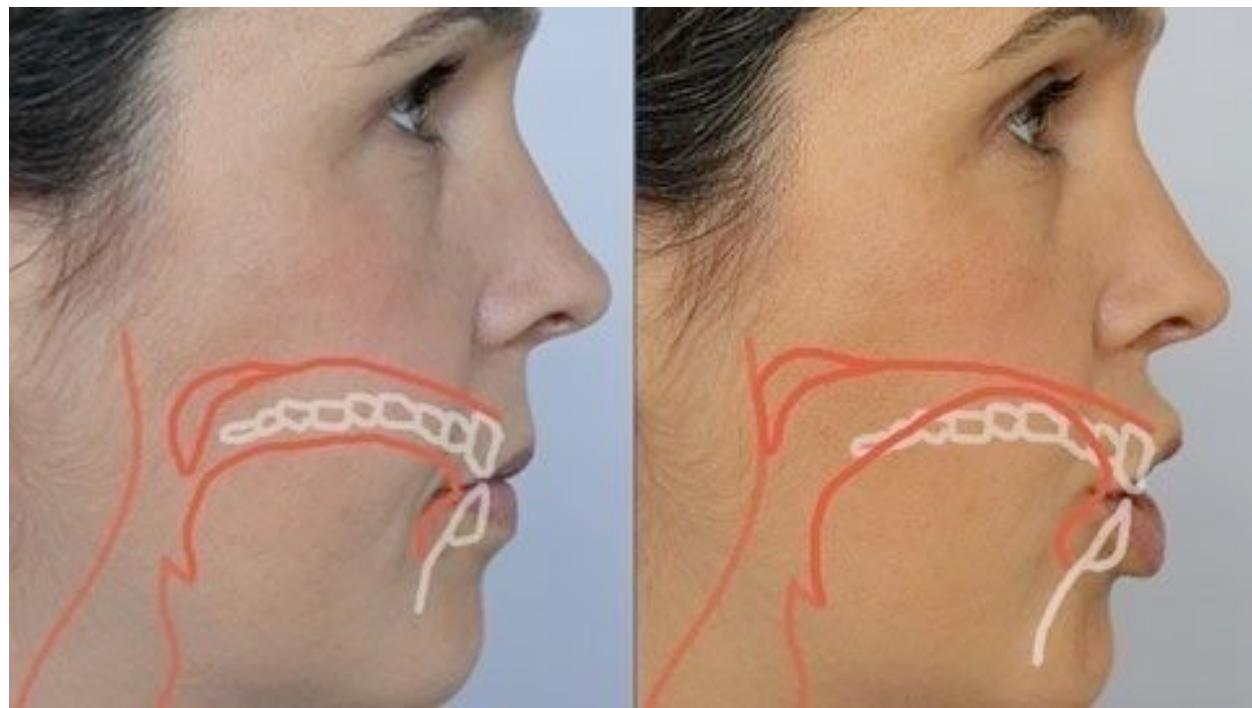
z: zoo [zu]

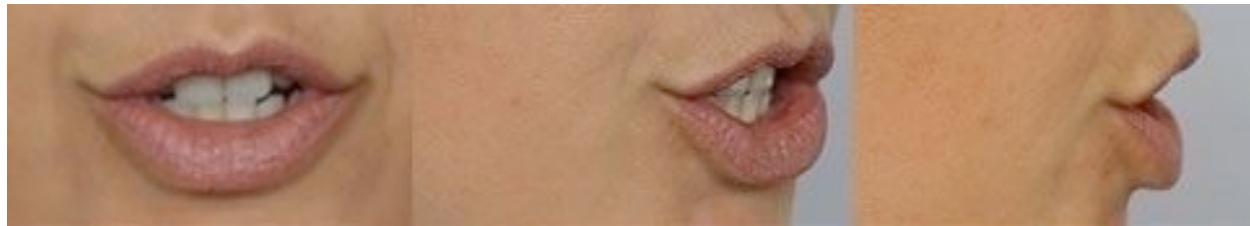
zz: buzz [bʌz]

s: busy ['bɪz i]

ss: dessert [dɪ'zɜrt]

## The SH [ʃ] and ZH [ʒ] Consonants





These sounds are also fricatives. Just like with S and Z, the teeth come together for these sounds to constrict the air passage. The tongue tip lifts so the tip and the front part of the tongue are very close to the front part of the roof of the mouth, but not touching. The lips flare out. SH [ʃ] is unvoiced and ZH [ʒ] is voiced.

#### **Video 5.18 — The SH [ʃ] and ZH [ʒ] Consonants**

See illustrations of the tongue position for these sounds, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/an2](http://engl.io/an2)

#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.11 — The SH [ʃ] and ZH [ʒ] Consonants.**

You'll hear these consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
sh [ʃ], zh [ʒ]
shame [ʃeɪm]
genre [ˈdʒenərə]
official [ə'fɪʃəl]
Asia [ˈeɪʒə]
stash [stæʃ]
beige [beɪʒ]

#### **Audio 5.11 — The SH [ʃ] and ZH [ʒ] Consonants**



[engl.io/an4](http://engl.io/an4)

You'll see these sounds spelled several ways in American English.

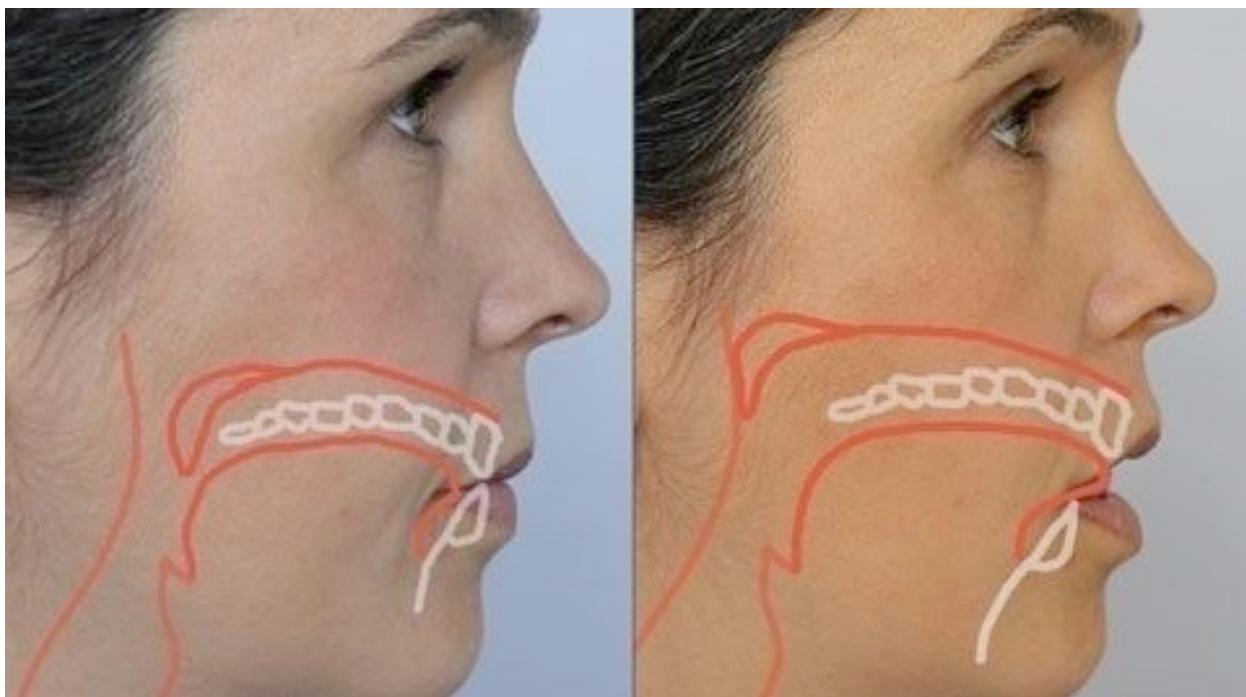
[ʃ]

- sh: ship [ʃɪp]
- sch: schwa [ʃwə]
- ti: action ['ækʃən]
- ci: crucial ['kruːʃəl]
- ssi: mission ['mɪʃən]
- s: sure [ʃʊər]

[ʒ]

- s: usual ['juːʒuəl]
- ge: beige [beɪʒ]
- z: azure ['æʒər]

## The Two TH [θ] and [ð] Consonants



These sounds are also fricatives. Here, the air passage is constricted by the tongue and the teeth. To make these sounds, the tongue tip needs to come through the teeth, just a little bit.

These sounds are not in many common languages, and their unique tongue position can make them a challenge. Students often substitute the F and V, the S and Z, or the T and D sounds. Don't do that, get comfortable with these new sounds. Know their position and how they're different from F and V, S and Z, and T and D.

If you usually substitute F and V: relax your bottom lip down. Lightly bring your tongue tip through the teeth.

If you usually substitute S and Z: your tongue tip is in the wrong place. You're probably putting it behind the bottom front teeth. Instead, lift the tongue tip and push it lightly through the front teeth.

If you usually substitute T and D: your tongue tip is in the wrong place. You're lifting it too high. Lower the tongue tip just a bit so you can lightly push it through the front teeth.

Common mistakes: aside from the substitutions, one frequent problem is that students put too much of their tongue through the teeth. It should just be the tip. Also, some students make this a stop sound, with tension that releases. This should not be a stop, there should be a continuous flow of air. The tongue has to be relaxed for the air to flow freely.

### Video 5.19 — The Two TH [θ] and [ð] Consonants

See illustrations of the tongue position for these sounds, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/an7](http://engl.io/an7)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.12 — The Two TH [θ] and [ð] Consonants.

You'll hear these consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)

th [θ], th [ð]

think [θɪŋk]

this [ðɪs]

something [ˈsʌmθɪŋ]

brother [ˈbrəðə]

with [wɪθ]

loathe [ləʊð]

**Audio 5.12 — The Two TH [θ] and [ð] Consonants**



[engl.io/ap2](http://engl.io/ap2)

These two sounds are only spelled with the letters ‘th’:

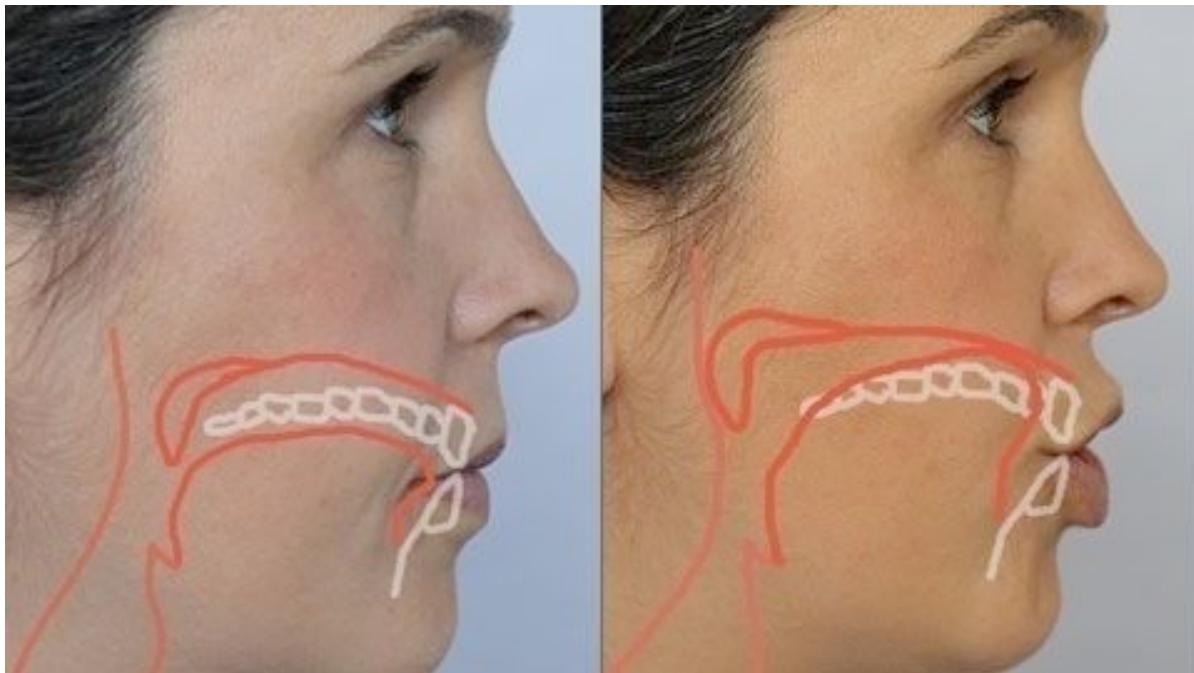
[θ]

th: theme [θim]

[ð]

th: this [ðɪs]

## The CH [tʃ] and JJ [dʒ] Consonants



These sounds are stops and fricatives, combining the tongue position of T [t] and D [d] with the lip position of SH [ʃ] and ZH [ʒ]. The tongue tip is at the roof of the mouth, the teeth are together, and the lips flare. Because they are stop consonants, you cannot hold them out the way you can hold out SH [ʃ] and ZH [ʒ]. Stop the air in the throat with the tongue tip at the roof of the mouth, and release the air by pulling the tongue down. Unlike the stop consonants, *you cannot skip the release* on these words.

### Video 5.20 — The CH [tʃ] and JJ [dʒ] Consonants

See illustrations of the tongue position for these sounds, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/ap5](http://engl.io/ap5)

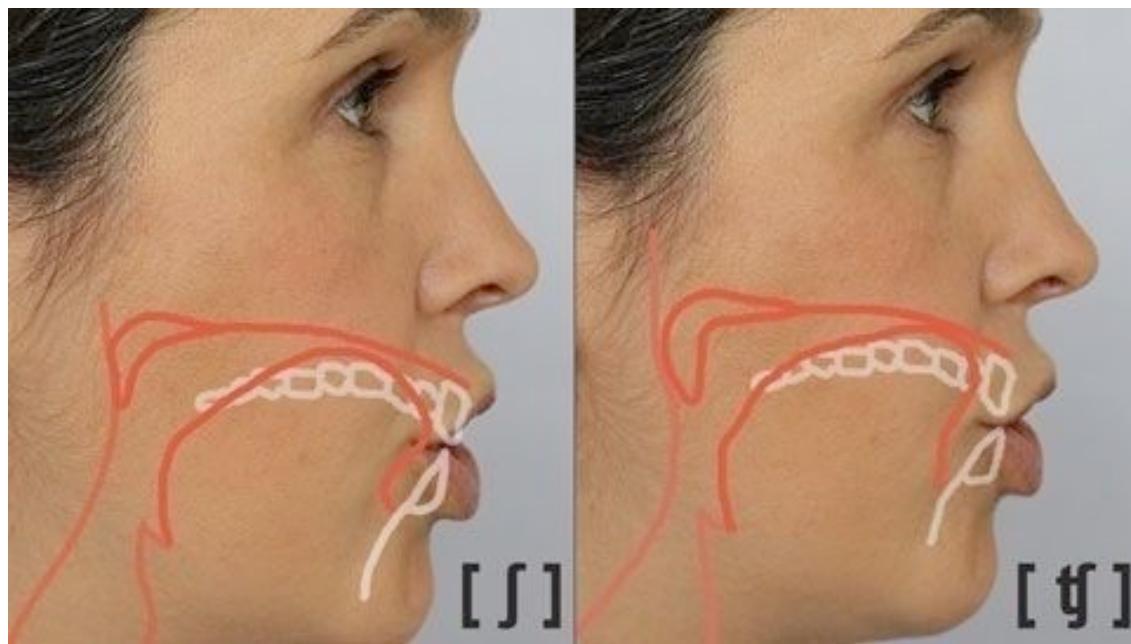
### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.13 — The CH [tʃ] and JJ [dʒ] Consonants.

You'll hear these consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
ch [tʃ], jj [dʒ]
cheap [tʃɪp]
job [dʒab]
kitchen ['kɪtʃ ən]
major ['meɪ ʤər]
much [mʌtʃ]
age [eɪdʒ]

<b>Audio 5.13 — The CH [tʃ] and JJ [dʒ] Consonants</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ap8">engl.io/ap8</a>
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Some students have a hard time making CH [tʃ] and SH [ʃ] sound different. Remember that CH [tʃ] has a stop in it. The lip position is the same, but for CH [tʃ] there is a movement of the tongue: it starts at the roof of the mouth, the position for [t], then pulls down.



**Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.14 — SH [ʃ] vs. CH [tʃ].**

You'll hear these consonants at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
wish [wɪʃ], which [wɪtʃ]
chin [tʃɪn], shin [[ɪn]
batch [bætʃ], bash [bæʃ]
ditch [dɪtʃ], dish [dɪʃ]

**Audio 5.14 — SH [ʃ] vs. CH [tʃ]**


  
[engl.io/apb](http://engl.io/apb)

You'll see these sounds spelled several ways in American English.

[ʃ]

ch: change [tʃeɪndʒ]

tch: match [mætʃ]

[dʒ]

j: jam [dʒæm]

g: gell [dʒel]

dg: budget ['bʌdʒ ɪt]

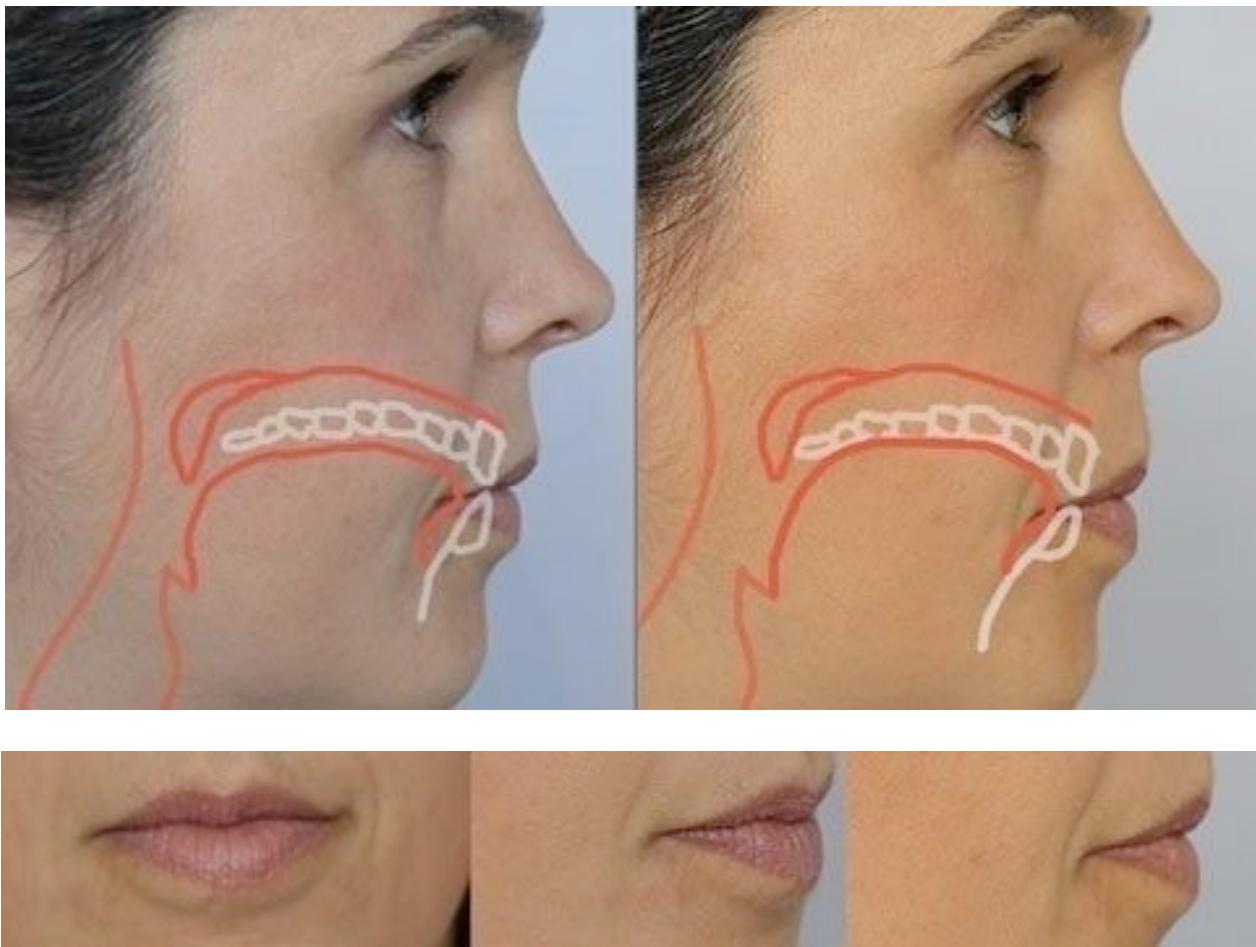
di: soldier ['sɔlɪ dʒər]

dj: adjective ['ædʒ ɪk trɪ]

## Section 2: Non-Paired consonants

The next three consonants are nasal consonants. A consonant is a ‘nasal’ consonant when the soft palate is lowered. This allows air to pass through, into the nasal passages. Many languages (Bengali, French, Hindi, Polish, Mandarin Chinese, Portuguese, to name a few) have some nasal vowels, but English has none. Just these three nasal consonants.

## The M [m] Consonant



The M consonant is rather simple—most students don't have a hard time with it. The lips press lightly together, and likely the jaw will drop just a little to get ready for the next vowel or diphthong sound. You can hold this sound out continuously. When you practice, hold it for 5 seconds and feel the buzz of the voice. This is a voiced consonant.

### Video 5.21 — The M [m] Consonant

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth



[engl.io/apd](http://engl.io/apd)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.15 — The M [m] Consonant.

You'll hear the M consonant at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)

mm [m]

my [maɪ]

human ['hju mən]

some [sʌm]

### Audio 5.15 — The M [m] Consonant



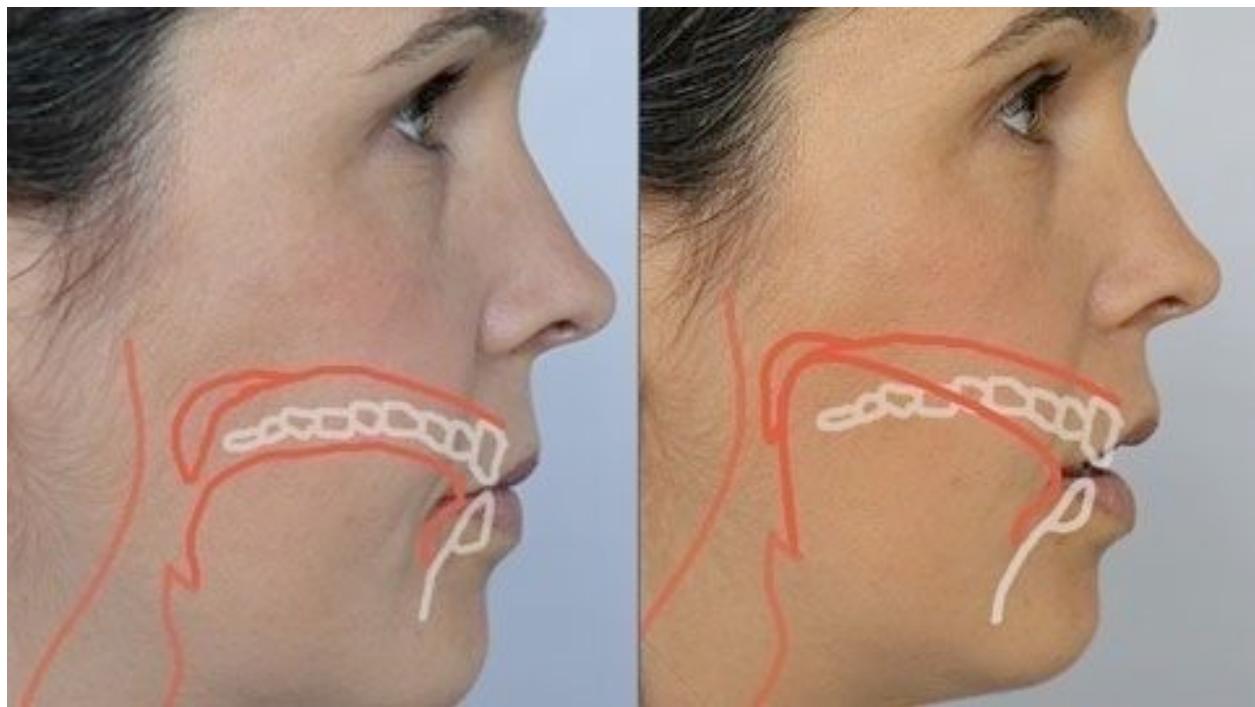
[engl.io/apf](http://engl.io/apf)

You'll see this sound spelled two ways in American English.

m: man [mæn]

mm: yummy ['jʌm i]

## The NG [ŋ] Consonant





This nasal sound is a little different from [m] and [n]: it doesn't start any words in American English. It only comes in the middle ("singer") or at the end of a word ("ring"). It's made by lifting the back part of the tongue to touch the lowered soft palate. The tongue tip stays down in the front, but it might not be quite touching the back of the bottom front teeth. Jaw drop and lip position don't affect this sound, as long as the tongue is in the right position.

Because of the -ing [ɪŋ] form of verbs, this is a very common ending sound. In some regions of the US, people often change the -ing ending from [ɪŋ] to [ɪn]. I suggest my students stick with the [ɪŋ] pronunciation, except in the most casual and common phrases (What are you doing? → Whatcha doin'? ['wʌtʃ\_ə'do ɪn]).

The letters 'ng' can be confusing. We call this the NG [ŋ] sound, but the letters 'ng' often make different sounds. Also, 'n' with 'k' can make the NG [ŋ], but not always:

ng = [ndʒ]: change [tʃeɪndʒ], angel ['eɪn dʒəl]

ng = [ŋ]: unglue [ʌn'glu], engaged [ɛn'geɪdʒd]

ng = [ŋg]: angle ['æŋ gəl], English ['ɪŋ glɪʃ]

nk = [ŋk]: ankle ['æŋ kəl], bank [bæŋk]

nk = [nk]: unkept [ʌn'kept], unkind [ʌn'kaɪnd] ('un' is a prefix)

As with all words in English, you'll have to learn the pronunciation as you learn the word.

### Video 5.22 — The NG [ŋ] Consonant

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/aph](http://engl.io/aph)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.16 — The NG [ŋ] Consonant.

You'll hear the NG consonant at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)

ng [ŋ]

song [sɔŋ]

English ['ɪŋ glɪʃ]

young [jʌŋ]

### Audio 5.16 — The NG [ŋ] Consonant



[engl.io/apk](http://engl.io/apk)

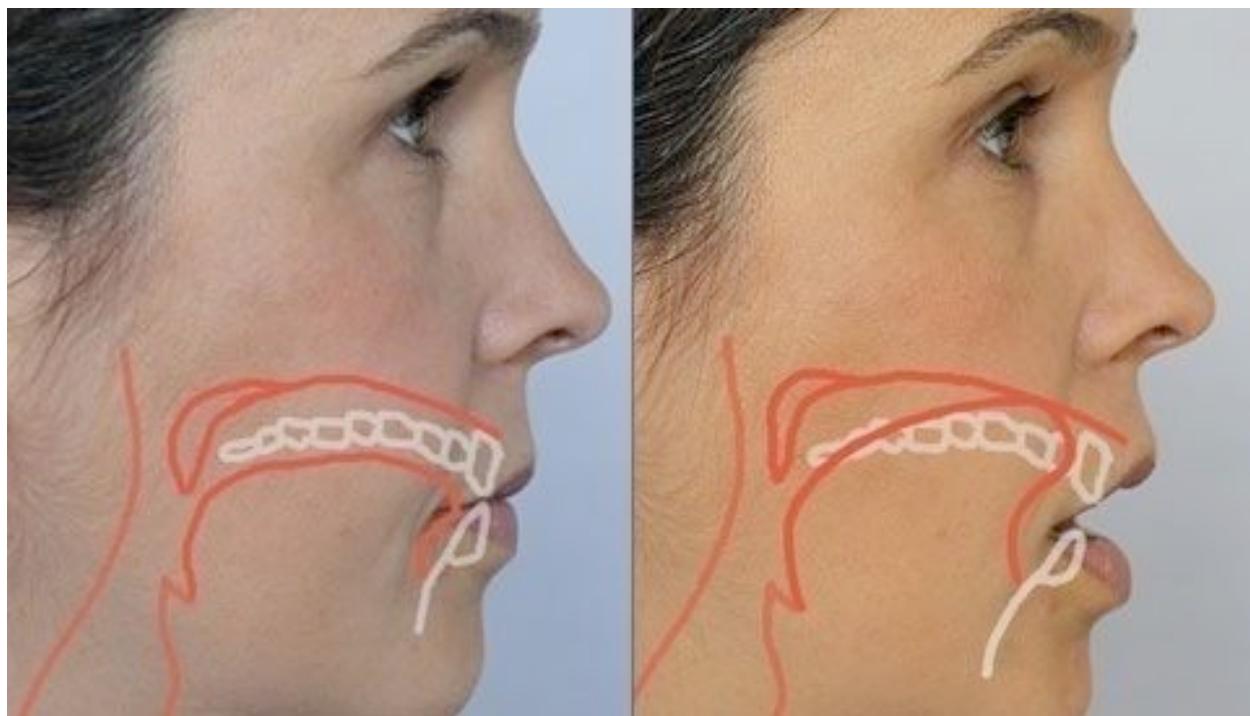
You'll see this sound spelled two ways in American English.

ng: thing [θɪŋ]

n: thank [θæŋk]

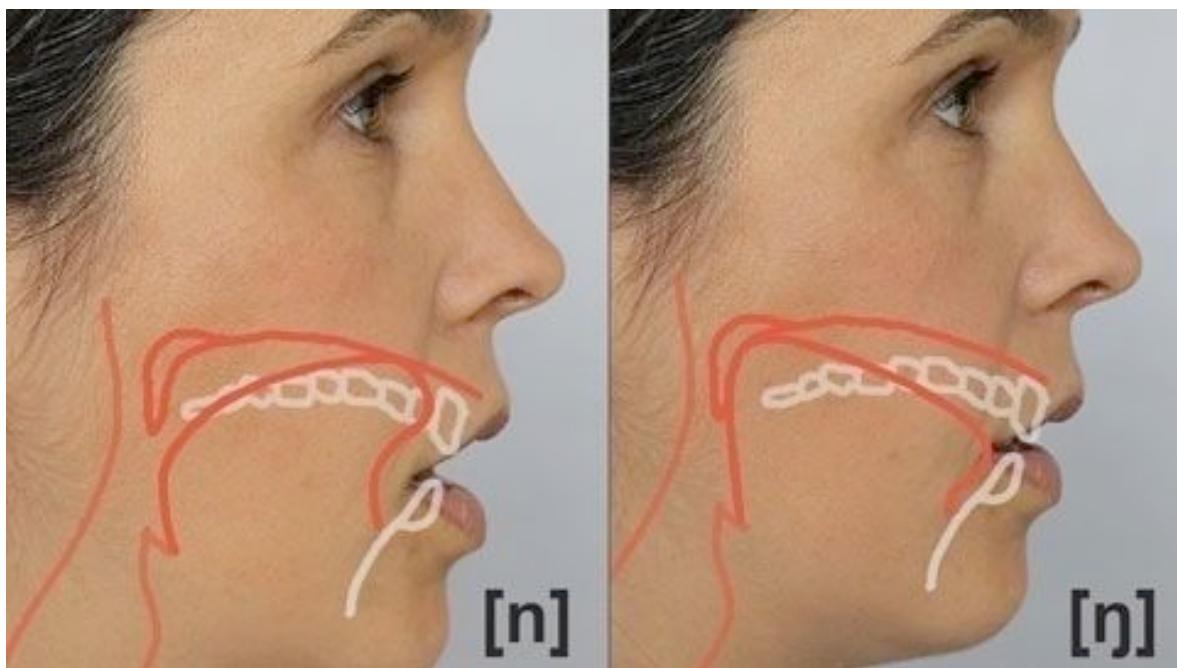
## The N [n] Consonant

This is the hardest of the three nasal consonants for many of my students. When it comes at the end of a word, many students (for example, those from China or Brazil), want to make the NG sound instead.





N is very different from NG. It is made with the front of the tongue at the front of the mouth. Lift the tongue so it is flat and wide—this means the rest of the tongue is relaxed. The top of the front of the tongue, not the tip, will touch the roof of the mouth. The tip of the tongue will be just behind the top front teeth.



N [n] at the end of a word gives students the hardest time. Sometimes students make the N [n] the right way, with the front part of the tongue at the roof of the mouth, but it still sounds like NG [ŋ]. Why? This happens because the back part of the tongue lifts too. Think of keeping the back of the tongue as wide as possible. That will help keep it lower. It can also help to think of the tongue position for the D [d] when making the N [n].

#### **Video 5.23 — The N [n] Consonant**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/apm](http://engl.io/apm)

<p><b>Video 5.24 — How to Make N [n], Relating to D [d]</b>  This method often helps students relax the back of the tongue.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/app">engl.io/app</a>
<p><b>Video 5.25 — N [n] vs. NG [ŋ]</b>  This video explains the difference in tongue positions for these two consonants.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aps">engl.io/aps</a>
<p><b>Video 5.26 — N [n] vs. NG [ŋ] Test</b>  In this video, we test your ability to identify the ending sound based on the position of the tongue.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/apv">engl.io/apv</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.17 — The N [n] Consonant.

You'll hear the N consonant at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
n [n]
need [nid]
down [daʊn]
undone [ʌn'dʌn]

<p><b>Audio 5.17 — The N [n] Consonant</b></p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/apx">engl.io/apx</a>
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### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.18 — N [n] vs. NG [ŋ].

You'll hear minimal pairs for the N and NG consonants. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)

n [n], ng [ŋ]

lawn [lɔn], long [lɔŋ]

sun [sʌn], sung [sʌŋ]

rain [reɪn], rang [ræŋ] (which sounds like [reɪŋ])

### Audio 5.18 — N [n] vs. NG [ŋ]



[engl.io/apz](http://engl.io/apz)

### Test Yourself: Audio 5.19 — N [n] vs. NG [ŋ] Test.

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

### Audio 5.19 — N [n] vs. NG [ŋ] Test

1. [n] or [ŋ]
2. keen [n] or king [ŋ]
3. sane [n] or sang [ŋ]
4. gone [n] or gong [ŋ]
5. run [n] or wrung [ŋ]



[engl.io/ar1](http://engl.io/ar1)

You'll see this sound spelled several ways in American English.

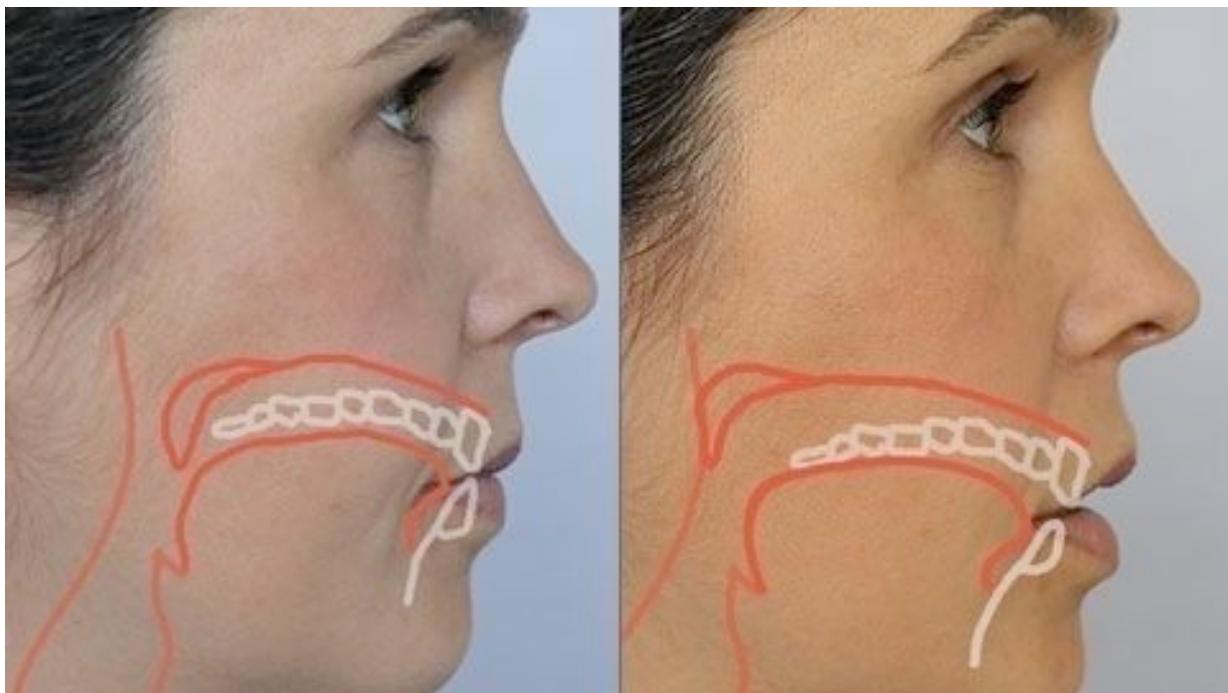
n: no [nəʊ]

nn: inn [ɪn]

kn: know [nəʊ]

gn: gnaw [nəʊ]

## The H [h] Consonant



The H consonant is unique because it will never end a word. Though there are words in American English that end in the *letter* H (fish [fɪʃ], with [wɪθ], high [haɪ], which [wɪtʃ], though [ðoʊv]), no words end in the [h] sound. It only occurs at the beginning of a word ("happy") or in the middle ("unhappy").

The H sound is simply made by passing air through a slightly constricted throat. If you ran hard, you would be breathing hard, panting. This sound is a very light, easy pant.

### Video 5.27 — The H [h] Consonant

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/ar3](http://engl.io/ar3)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.20 — The H [h] Consonant.

You'll hear the H consonant at the beginning and middle of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
h [h]
hi [haɪ]
ahead [e'hed]
neighborhood ['neɪbər,hud]

### Audio 5.20 — The H [h] Consonant



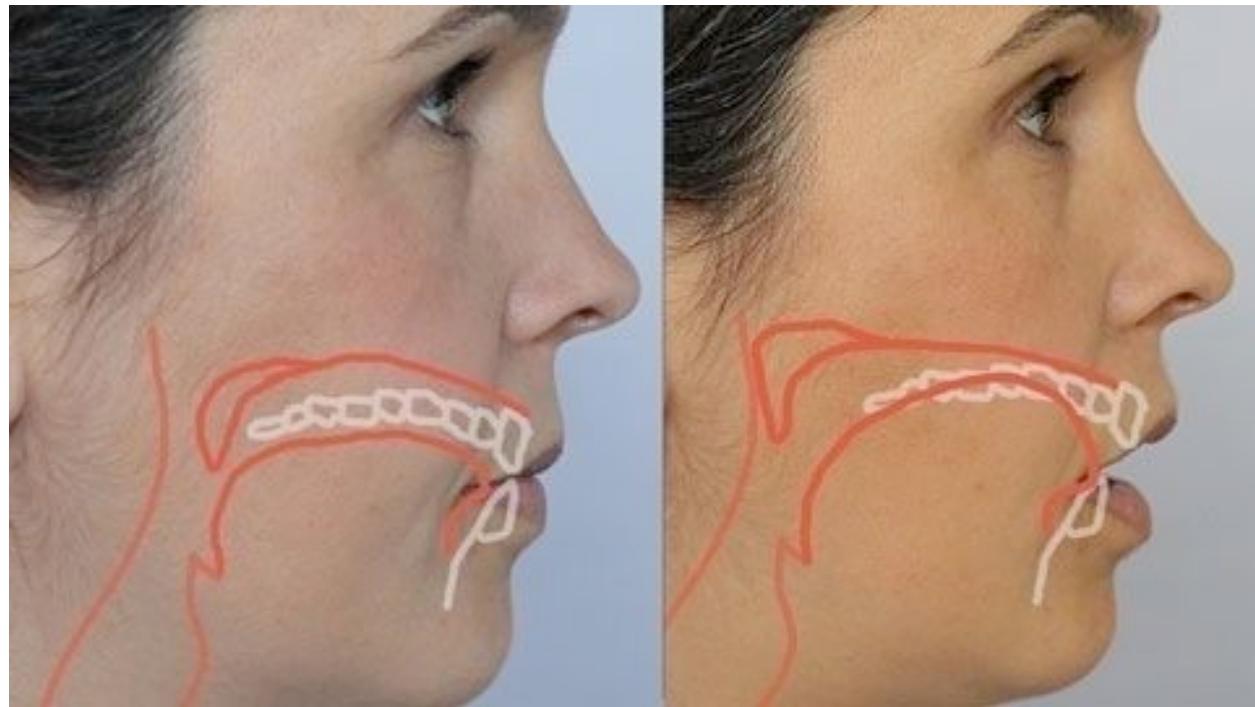
[engl.io/ar5](http://engl.io/ar5)

You'll see this sound spelled two ways in American English.

h: hi [haɪ]

wh: whole [houl]

### The Y [j] Consonant





This sound is unique because it's a part of the EW as in FEW Diphthong ("use"), but it's also a consonant sound ("yes"). This consonant is a 'glide' consonant, which is actually considered a 'semi-vowel'. The glide consonants help in linking, which you'll learn about in Chapter 8. No words in English end in this sound, though many end in the letter Y (they [ðeɪ], by [baɪ], say [seɪ]). This sound is only at the beginning of a word ("your") or, rarely, in the middle ("unyielding").

To make this sound, the tip of the tongue pushes the back of the bottom front teeth. The jaw drops just a little bit and there is a little tightening in the throat. The middle part of the tongue lifts and presses against the roof of the mouth in an up and forward motion.

#### **Video 5.28 — The Y [j] Consonant**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/ar8](http://engl.io/ar8)

#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.21 — The Y [j] Consonant.**

You'll hear the Y consonant at the beginning and middle of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
y [j]
yes [jɛs]
year [jɪər]
unyielding [ʌn'jil dɪŋ]

#### **Audio 5.21 — The Y [j] Consonant**

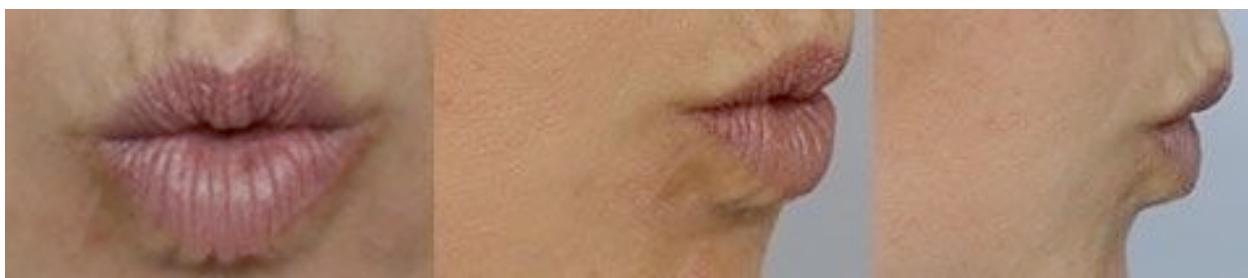
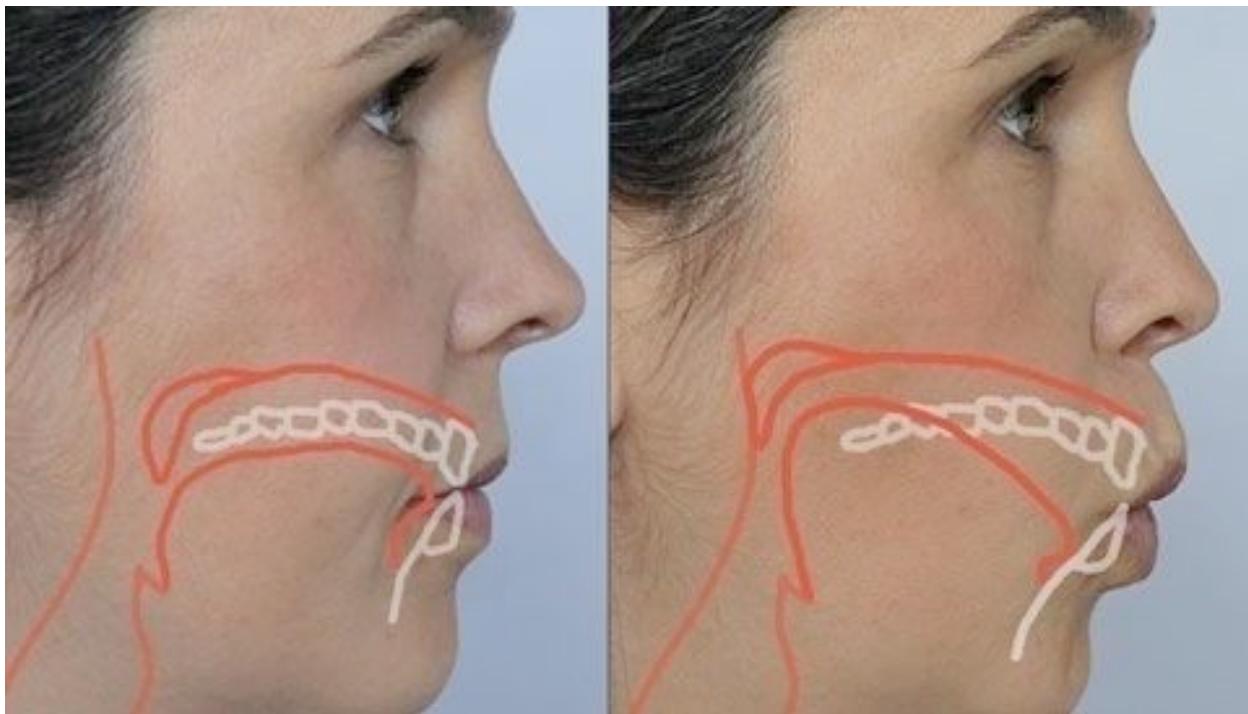


[engl.io/ar8](http://engl.io/ar8)

This sound is only spelled with the letter Y:

y: yes [jɛs]

## The W [w] Consonant



W [w] is the other glide consonant in American English. No words in English end in this sound, though many end in the letter (know [nou], new [nu], law [lɔ]). This sound is only at the beginning of a word ("water"), or in the middle ("unwind").

To make the W [w] consonant, the lips must round. There is a little tightening in the throat, just like the glide consonant Y. The tongue tip is forward, lightly touching the back of the bottom front teeth. The back part of the tongue stretches up towards the soft palate.

**Video 5.29 — The W [w] Consonant**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/are](http://engl.io/are)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.22 — The W [w] Consonant.**

You'll hear the W consonant at the beginning and middle of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
w [w]
west [wɛst]
walk [wɔk]
unwind [ʌn'waɪnd]

**Audio 5.22 — The W [w] Consonant**

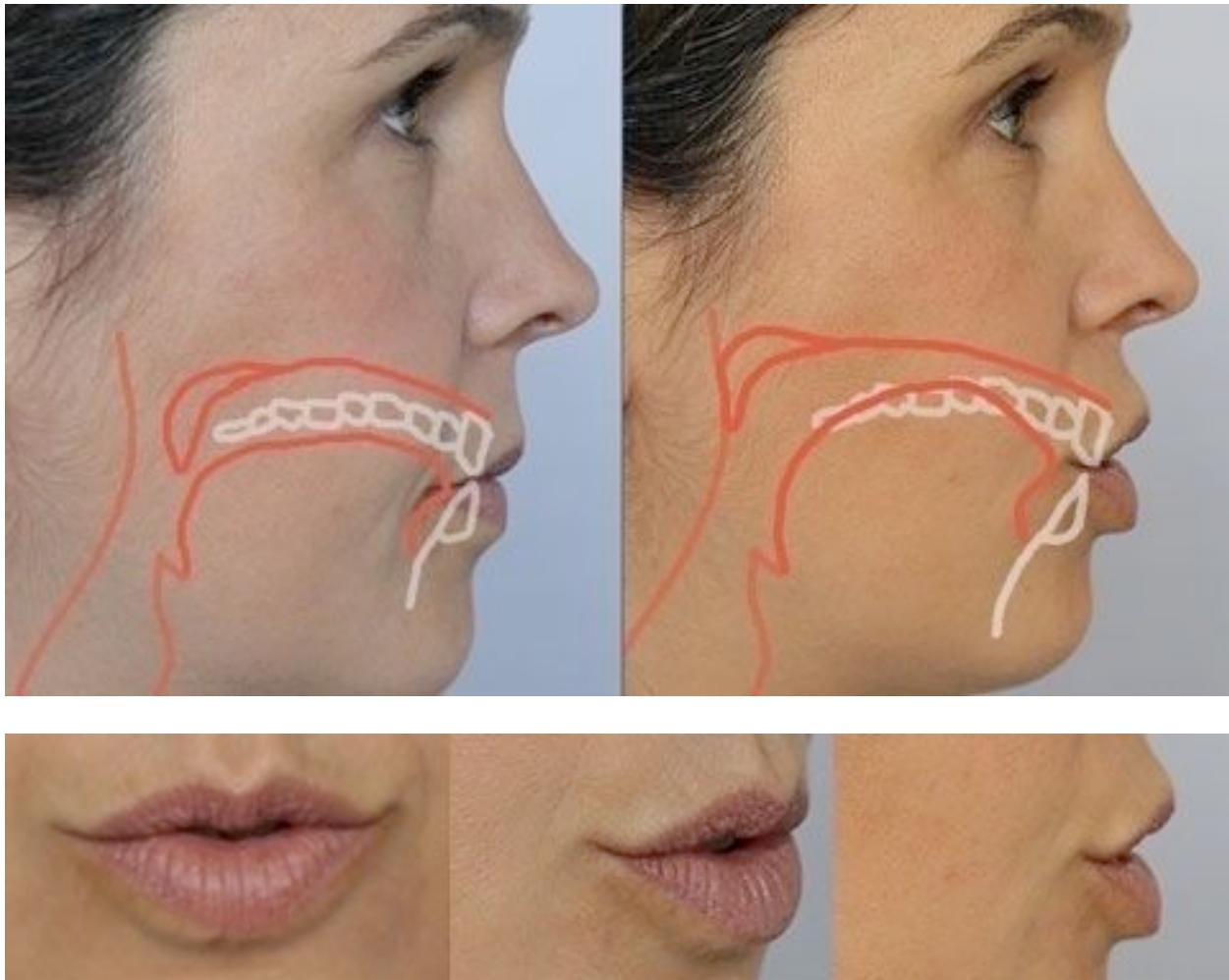
[engl.io/arf](http://engl.io/arf)

You'll see this sound spelled two ways in American English.

w: was [wəz]

o: one [wʌn]

## The R [ɹ] Consonant



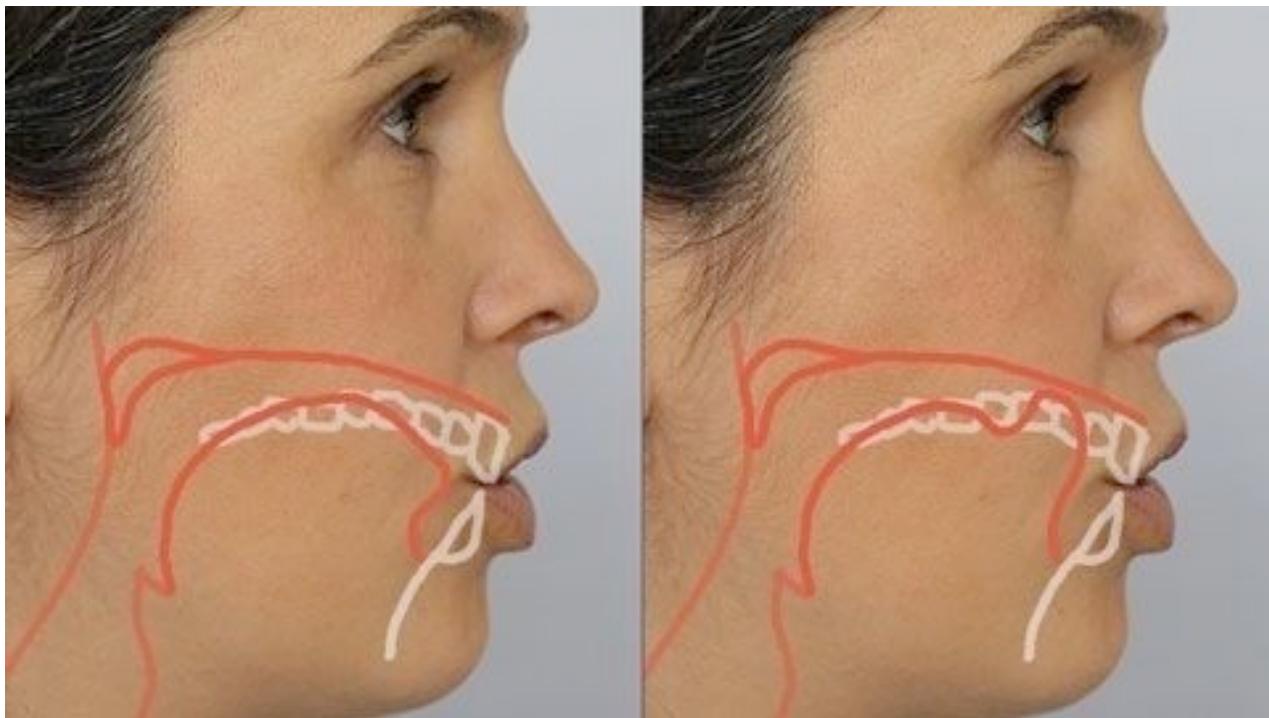
This is one of the hardest sounds for non-native speakers to make. It's also very hard to teach, because the sound is mostly defined by the tongue—but because of the jaw and lip position, you can't see the tongue.

If you stick your tongue out as far as you can, you're making it long and skinnier. For the R, you want to do the opposite, making it short and fatter. Do this by pulling the tongue back and up. The jaw only needs to drop a little bit for this sound: more of a relaxation than a drop, really. The middle part of the tongue can touch the middle part of the roof of the mouth, or the teeth on the upper sides of the mouth. Corners of the lips come in so the lips can flare.

If you're having a hard time with this sound, try starting with the mouth at rest. With your mouth closed, lift the tongue so it's touching the roof of the mouth, but leave the tongue tip down so it's touching the back of the bottom front teeth. You

should feel two contact points: the tongue tip touching the back of the bottom front teeth, and the middle part of the tongue touching the roof of the mouth. Let your jaw relax to drop a little, and slide the part of your tongue that is touching the roof of the mouth back. It's still touching the roof of the mouth, just further back now. This will pull the tip up, so it's no longer touching the back of the bottom front teeth. It won't be touching anything. Hold that position, feel it. Then, flare the lips, and try the sound.

There is another position that can make the R sound. Compare the positions below. The one on the left is the one you just studied (this is the way I make the R). The one on the right is also a correct way to make this sound.



To make the R sound this way, curl the tip of the tongue up. It still shouldn't touch anything. Flare your lips to help shape the sound.

Common mistake: Some students just make the R sound in their own language, and for many languages this sounds like the D or Flap T in American English. It's made by bouncing the front part of the tongue against the roof of the mouth. This is a sound that can't be held out, but the American English R [ɹ] can be held out. Try to make the R sound. Can you hold it out continuously? If not, you might be making it by flapping the front of the tongue on the roof of the mouth. This will affect the character of your English, making it more choppy and less smooth. This will make it sound accented. There will be some exercises for holding out the R in the next chapter on consonant clusters. If you tend to flap the tongue for the R, always practice the R by holding it out in any words you're working on.

### Video 5.30 — The R [ɹ] Consonant

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position.



[engl.io/arh](http://engl.io/arh)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.23 — The R [ɹ] Consonant.

You'll hear the R consonant at the beginning, middle, and end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)

r [ɹ]

right [ɹaɪt]

area [ˈeərə i ə]

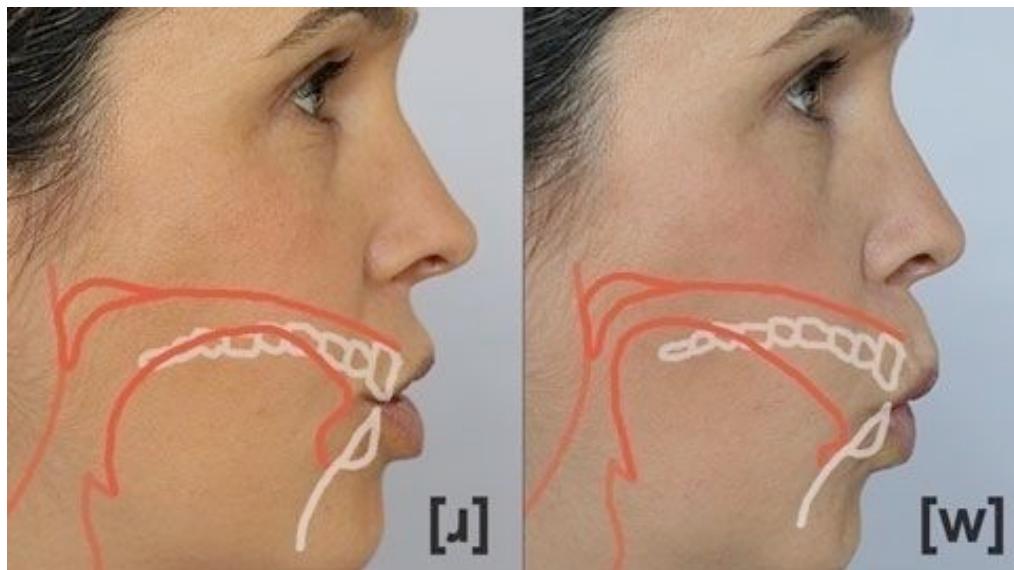
car [kəɹ]

### Audio 5.23 — The R [ɹ] Consonant



[engl.io/arj](http://engl.io/arj)

Sometimes people make a W [w] sound instead of an R [ɹ]. This happens when the front of the tongue stays down and the back lifts. To make the R sound, do the opposite. Lift the tongue tip so it doesn't touch anything.



### Video 5.31 — R [ɹ] vs. W [w]

See the difference in position and hear the difference in sound.



[engl.io/arm](http://engl.io/arm)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.24 — R [ɹ] vs. W [w].

You'll hear minimal pairs for the R and W consonants in the beginning position. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
r [ɹ], w [w]
rest [ɹɛst], west [wɛst]
rag [ɹæg], wag [wæg]
ray [ɹeɪ], way [weɪ]

### Audio 5.24 — R [ɹ] vs. W [w]



[engl.io/arp](http://engl.io/arp)

**Test Yourself: Audio 5.25 — R [ɹ] vs. W [w] Test.** You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

### Audio 5.25 — R [ɹ] vs. W [w] Test

1. [ɹ] or [w]
2. rut [ɹ] or what [w]
3. raid [ɹ] or weighed [w]
4. ring [ɹ] or wing [w]
5. rail [ɹ] or wail [w]



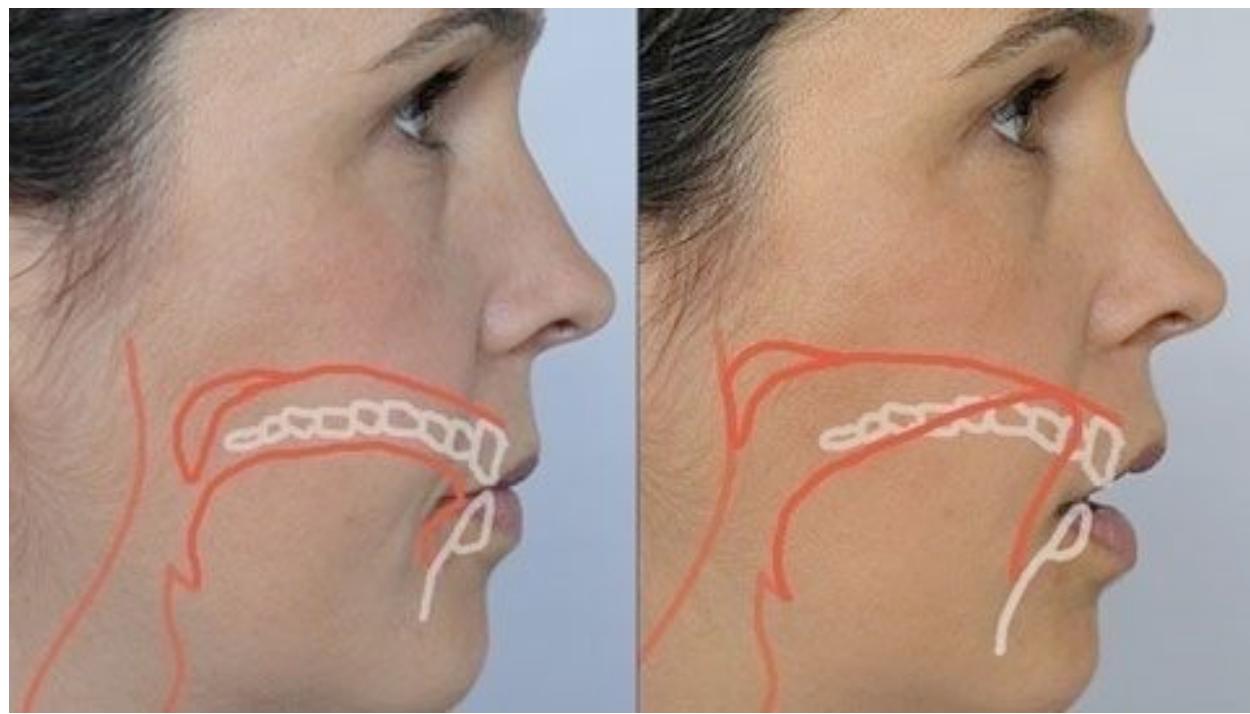
[engl.io/arr](http://engl.io/arr)

You'll see this sound spelled two ways in American English.

r: run [ɹʌn]

rr: array [ɹɪər̩, ɹɪər̩]

## The L [l] Consonant





The L consonant has two types, Dark and Light. Unfortunately, dictionaries use only one IPA symbol [l] for the two kinds, so you'll need to learn when to make a Light L and when to make a Dark L.

If an L comes before the vowel or diphthong in a syllable, then it's a Light L. This applies to the L in 'lie' [laɪ], because it comes before the Aɪ as in BUY diphthong. It also applies to 'glass' [glæs], because it comes before the AA as in BAT sound. It also applies to 'allow' [ə'lau̯], because it is in the second syllable, and comes before the diphthong (OW as in NOW) in that syllable.

The Light L is made by lifting the tongue so the tip is pointed up, touching the roof of the mouth just behind the top front teeth. Alternately, some people make this by pressing the tongue tip up against the bottom of the top front teeth. Then it looks like a TH. In the photo below, the position on the left is the L with the tongue tip at the roof of the mouth. On the right, you can see the tongue tip coming through the teeth so it can press against the bottom of the top teeth. Both will make the same L sound.



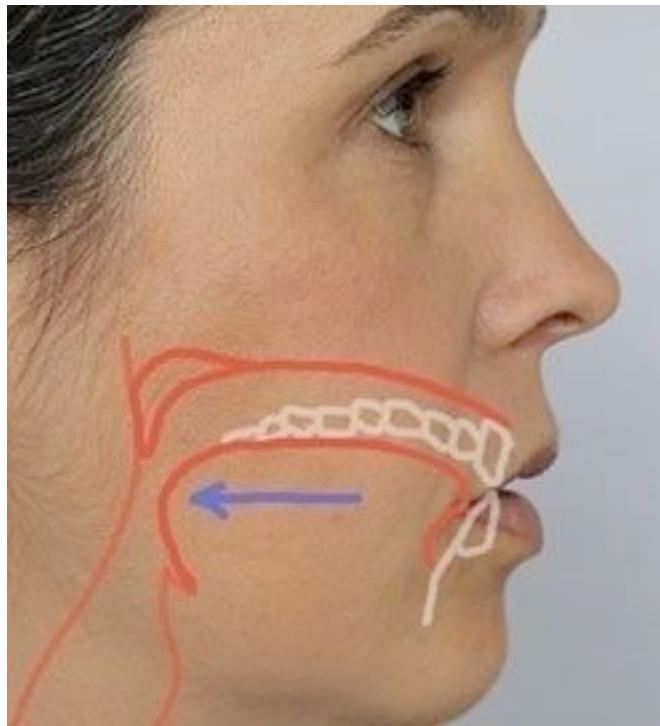
The L is a Dark L if it comes after the vowel or diphthong in a syllable. This applies to the L in 'feel' [fil], which comes after the EE as in SHE vowel, and both L sounds in 'syllable' ['sɪl ə bəl]. In the first syllable, the L comes after the IH as in SIT vowel, and in the last syllable, it comes after the schwa.

The Dark L can get a little confusing because it has two parts:

### **Part 1: The Dark Part.**

This is made by pulling the back part of the tongue back. The tip stays forward, so the tip is touching the back of the bottom front teeth. It's also flat in the mouth,

not lifted. But the back part stretches back. This might feel a little funny, and it makes a funny sound. This is the ‘dark’ sound.



### **Part 2: The Finish.**

This is made just like the Light L, lifting the tongue tip to the roof of the mouth. **Most of the time, Americans will leave this part out** and just make the Dark part. The Dark part defines the Dark L more than the finish. I do this, for example, with my name. I just pull the back part of my tongue back, the tongue tip stays down, Rachel ['rɛl tʃəl]. Leaving out the finish and just making the Dark part of the Dark L will help you make this sound more simply and quickly.

Remember, as you learned in Chapter 3, the L is a syllabic consonant. That means that when it's in a syllable with the schwa, you don't need to make a schwa sound, just make the dark sound (mumble ['mʌm bəl], able ['eɪ bəl]).

#### **Video 5.32 — The L [l] Consonant**

See illustrations of the tongue position for this sound, as well as up-close, slow motion speech to study the mouth position. In it, I discuss both the Light and Dark L.



[engl.io/aru](http://engl.io/aru)

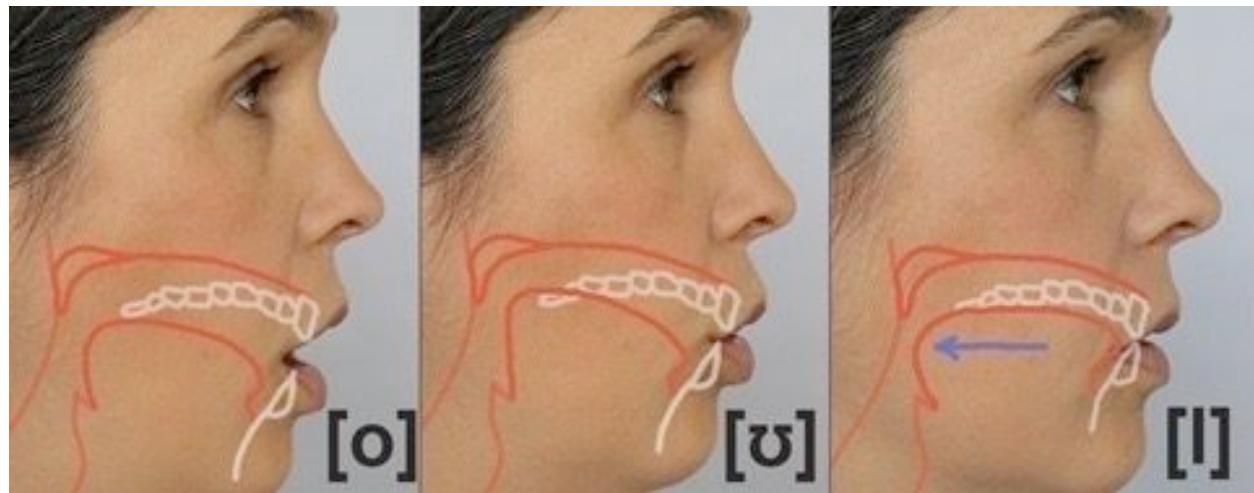
### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.26 — The L [l] Consonant.

You'll hear the L consonant at the beginning and end of words — both light and dark. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Light or Dark L?
I [l], I [l]	Light, Dark
lean [lin]	Light
lip [lip]	Light
pull [pul]	Dark
feel [fil]	Dark

<b>Audio 5.26 — The L [l] Consonant</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/arw">engl.io/arw</a>
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When trying to make a Dark L, some non-native speakers make the OH as in NO [oʊ] diphthong instead. The OH as in NO diphthong is made at the front of the mouth, with the lips rounding. For the Dark L, let the lips relax. This sound is made at the back of the mouth, when the back of the tongue pulls back.



### Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.27 — L [l] vs. OH [oʊ].

You'll hear minimal pairs for the L consonant and OH diphthong in the ending position. There are not many of these minimal pairs in English that involve real words — so the last one is not a word in American English, but a mispronunciation. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)
I [ɪ], oh [oʊ]
real ['ri əl], Rio ['ri oʊ]
kneel [niːl], neo- ['ni oʊ]
special ['speʃ əl], speci-o ['speʃ oʊ](not a word!)

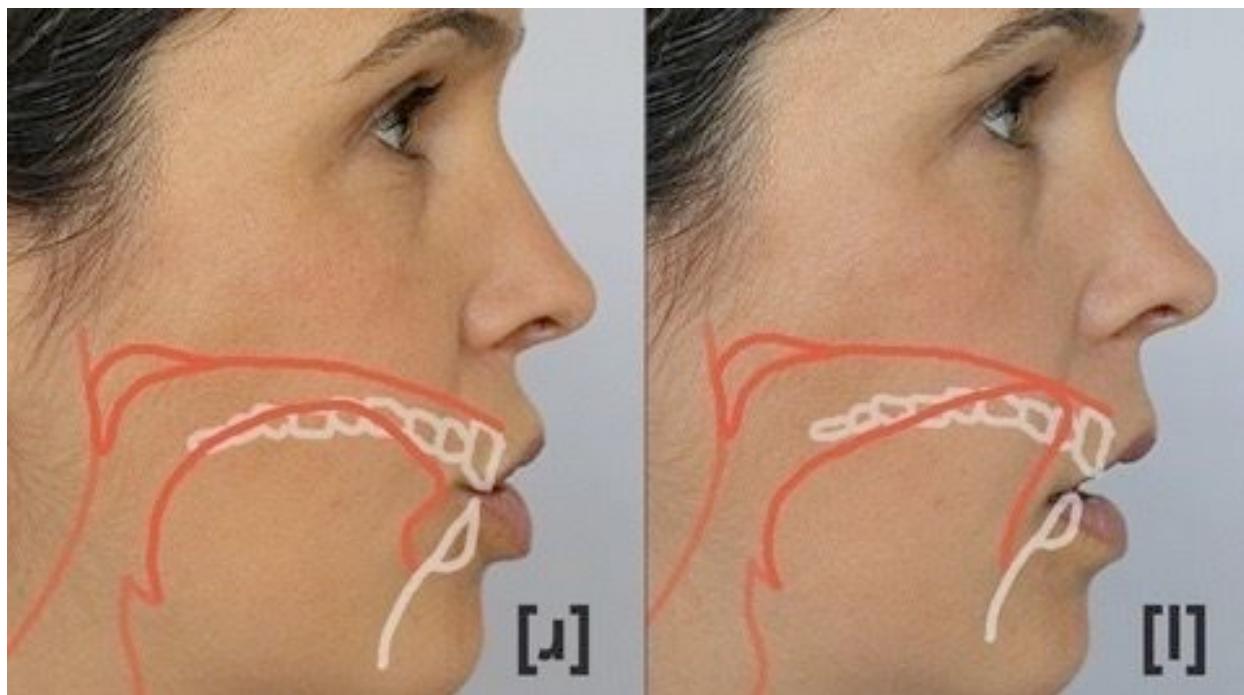
### Audio 5.27 — L [ɪ] vs. OH [oʊ]



[engl.io/arz](http://engl.io/arz)

Another common mistake is mixing up L [ɪ] and R [ʊ]. This happens at the beginning of words, end of words, and in consonant clusters. These sounds look different from both the side and the front, so you can check your mouth position in a mirror.

As you work with words with R's and L's, focus on the tongue position. Both of these sounds can be held out, so always hold them out for 3 or 4 seconds as you're working on complicated words. This will solidify the correct position. Sometimes it even helps to hold your finger up to your cheek and make the shape of the tongue with your finger. Make the connection between the sound and the correct tongue position strong.



**Listen + Repeat: Audio 5.28 — R [ɹ] vs. L [l].**

You'll hear minimal pairs for the R and L consonants, at the beginning of words, in clusters, and at the end of words. What you hear on the file is organized in this chart:

What you hear (each 2 times)	Light or Dark L?
r [ɹ], l [l]	Light L
wrong [rɒŋ], long [lɒŋ]	Light L
road [roʊd], load [ləʊd]	Light L
flame [fleɪm], frame [fleɪm]	Light L, cluster
ply [plaɪ], pry [praɪ]	Light L, cluster
title [ˈtaɪ dəl], tighter [ˈtaɪ dər]	Dark L
male [meɪl], mayor [ˈmeɪər]	Dark L

**Audio 5.28 — R [ɹ] vs. L [l]**
[engl.io/as2](http://engl.io/as2)
**Video 5.33 — Comparing R [ɹ] and L [l]**

See the different positions for making these sounds.


[engl.io/as4](http://engl.io/as4)
**Video 5.34 — Listen and Repeat, R [ɹ] and L [l]**

Test yourself: Can you identify the right sound based on what you see?


[engl.io/as7](http://engl.io/as7)
**Test Yourself: Audio 5.29 — R [ɹ] vs. L [l] Test.**

You'll hear five words or sounds in the minimal pairs below. You're only hearing one of the words (you'll hear it twice), which one is it? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 5.29 — R [ɹ] vs. L [l] Test**

1. [ɹ] or [l]
2. rake [ɹ] or lake [l]
3. fry [ɹ] or fly [l]
4. green [ɹ] or glean [l]
5. litter [ɹ] or little [l]

[engl.io/as9](http://engl.io/as9)

You'll see this sound spelled two ways in American English.

l: love [lʌv]

ll: really [rɪəlɪ]

**Test Yourself: Non-Audio 5.2 — Match the Symbol to the Sound.**

Make sure you're familiar with the symbols of the American consonants. Match the sound with the symbol. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

1. B	a. [tʃ]
2. P	b. [l]
3. G	c. [s]
4. K	d. [ʒ]
5. D	e. [dʒ]
6. T	f. [m]
7. F	g. [h]
8. V	h. [j]
9. S	i. [b]
10. Z	j. [k]
11. SH	k. [θ]
12. ZH	l. [v]
13. Unvoiced TH	m. [n]
14. Voiced TH	n. [p]
15. CH	o. [g]
16. J	p. [w]
17. M	q. [ð]
18. N	r. [d]
19. NG	s. [ʃ]
20. H	t. [t]
21. Y	u. [j]
22. W	v. [f]
23. R	w. [z]
24. L	x. [n]

**Test Yourself: Non-Audio 5.3 — Which are American English IPA Symbols?**

Which symbols do not represent a vowel, diphthong, or consonant sound in American English? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

1. [ɪ] 2. [o] 3. [ŋ] 4. [ɒ] 5. [ɲ] 6. [f] 7. [ɑ] 8. [ɸ] 9. [θ] 10. [i]  
 11. [ʒ] 12. [ʒ] 13. [ʊ] 14. [q] 15. [H] 16. [ɔ] 17. [ç] 18. [e] 19.  
 [ɒ] 20. [ʃ]

**Test Yourself: Audio 5.30 — What Consonant do you Hear?**

You'll hear fifteen consonant sounds, each twice. Can you tell which one your hearing? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 5.30 — What Consonant do you Hear?**[engl.io/asc](http://engl.io/asc)

## Chapter 6

# Consonant Clusters

Consonant clusters (also called consonant blends) are groups of two or more consonant sounds together with no vowel or diphthong between. They can occur at the beginning (street [st्रuit]), middle (extra ['ɛk stুə]), and end of a word (exact [ɪg'zækt]).

It's important to note that we're talking about sounds, not letters. 'Thin' does not begin with a consonant cluster even though it begins with two consonant letters, T and H. Those two letters make just one sound, [θ].

### Beginning Consonant Clusters

Beginning clusters can have two or three sounds.

#### Initial two-sound consonant clusters:

[bl]	blow [bləʊ]
[bj]	break [breɪk]
[dw]	dwell [dwel]
[dʒ]	drip [drɪp]
[kl]	clean [klin]
[kj]	crib [kjib], Christmas ['kjis məs]
[kw]	quick [kwik]
[fl]	flow [fləʊ]
[fj]	friend [fjend], phrase [fueɪz]

[gl]	glass [glæs]
[gɹ]	great [gɹeɪt]
[pl]	please [pliz]
[pɹ]	price [pɹɪs]
[sf]	sphere [sfɪəf]
[sk]	ski [ski], score [skɔɹ], school [skul], square [skwɛɹ]
[sɹ]	slip [sɹɪp]
[sm]	smell [smɛl]
[sn]	snow [snou]
[sp]	speak [spik]
[st]	stem [stɛm]
[sw]	swift [swɪft]
[ʃɹ]	shred [ʃɹeɪd]
[tɹ]	tree [tɹi]
[tw]	twin [tɹɪn]
[θɹ]	three [θɹi]

### Initial three-sound consonant clusters:

[stu]	street [stɹɪt]
[spr]	spring [sprɪŋ]
[sku]	scream [skɹim]
[spl]	splash [splæʃ]
[skw]	square [skwɛɹ]

If any of the clusters are difficult for you, break them down into their two separate sounds and practice them with a pause, for example, ss — ff. Do this several times, and think about what you have to change in your mouth during the pause to make the second sound. Continue to make the sounds, shortening the pause between. Hold out each sound longer than you should. Then practice making the transition with no pause. Do it in slow motion. It's important to always practice tricky transitions slowly, holding out the sound before and after.

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 6.1 — Beginning Clusters.

Imitate all of the beginning two-sound and three-sound clusters. They are in the same order as above, followed by the example word given.

**Audio 6.1 — Beginning Clusters**



[engl.io/at1](http://engl.io/at1)

## Focus: R-Clusters

R [ɹ] is one of the hardest consonants for non-native speakers, so it follows that R-clusters can be challenging. When you begin working with the R-clusters, hold out the R in the word as you practice. That will give you time to adjust if necessary, and feel the right position. Practice holding it out while you slowly count to three in your head: prrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrize. Remember, if you can't do it right slowly, you won't be able to do it right quickly. Slow it down until it's right; give yourself time to perfect the tongue movement and lip rounding.

Another cluster that gives especially my Chinese students difficulty is the TR cluster. The teeth are together and the tongue tip starts forward for the T, then it pulls back for the R as the teeth part. If the tongue doesn't move, it doesn't sound right.

<p><b>Video 6.1 — Holding Out the R Sound</b> You will make a better R sound if you practice holding it out.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/at3">engl.io/at3</a>
<p><b>Video 6.2 — How to Make the SHR Cluster</b> Practice the [ʃɹ] cluster slowly to solidify your R tongue position.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/at6">engl.io/at6</a>
<p><b>Video 6.3 — How to Make the TR Cluster</b> A lot of students, especially from China, tend to drop the R sound in this cluster.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/at8">engl.io/at8</a>

Tree, trial, train. When Americans say these words, they often sound like 'chree', 'chrrial', 'chrain'. 'Drip' and 'drop' can sound like 'jrip' and 'jrop'. Why? It has to do with the lip position of the R. The tongue position for [t] and [d] is very similar to the tongue position for CH [tʃ] and J [dʒ]. The lip position for the [ɹ] is similar to the lip position for [tʃ] and [dʒ]. So when we round the lips for the R early, as we often do, it changes [t] to [tʃ] and [d] to [dʒ].

<p><b>Video 6.4 — TR Sounding like CHR</b> This video shows you why 'train' sounds like 'chrain'.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ata">engl.io/ata</a>
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### Listen + Repeat: Audio 6.2 — R Clusters.

It helps, when working with the R sound and R clusters, to hold out the sound. Hold the R sound for several seconds. There's no such thing as too long! You'll hear each word three times, the second time with a long R. Practice every word with an R this way.

#### Audio 6.2 — R Clusters

brag [bræg]

credit ['kred ɪt]

problem ['prɒb ləm]

free [fri]



[engl.io/atc](http://engl.io/atc)

### Focus: Voiced or Unvoiced Consonants?

Students ask about consonant clusters where the second sound is unvoiced (street [stuit], speak [spik], ski [ski], for example). The question is, is that second sound really unvoiced? Sometimes 'speak' can sound like 'sbeak'. My answer: It's ok for it to sound a little voiced. That's because the 'voice' of the next sound is blending with that consonant, so it no longer sounds like a clear unvoiced consonant. I tell my students to keep that sound light. If you make a clear, strong B sound, instead of P, then it won't sound right. This concept is discussed in the second half of the video above, TR sounding like CHR.

### Focus: [kw] Cluster

Just like with the R-clusters, you really have to round your lips for the second sound of this beginning consonant cluster. Some students skip this step, and words like 'quick' [kwɪk] end up sounding like 'kick' [kɪk]. The tongue tip does not need to move between these two sounds, so you only have to focus on rounding the lips. Exception: it's ok to drop the [w] sound in 'quarter' ['kwɔr tər] so it sounds like ['kɔr dər]. Most Americans do!

#### Video 6.5 — How to Make the [kw] Cluster

Take the time to round your lips.



[engl.io/atf](http://engl.io/atf)

#### Video 6.6 — How to Pronounce Quarter

Learn the shortcut of dropping the [w] sound — but don't do it for other words!



[engl.io/ads](http://engl.io/ads)

## Focus: S-Clusters

Speakers of Spanish and Portuguese can have a tough time with S-clusters. These combinations don't exist at the beginning of words in those languages, and so those students want to put a vowel sound before. If Spanish or Portuguese is your native language, try to break that habit. Words that begin with S + a vowel sound are not uncommon, so I know you can do it!

### Video 6.7 — How to Pronounce S-Clusters

Begin with a clean S sound, no vowel before it.



[engl.io/atk](http://engl.io/atk)

## Middle and Ending Consonant Clusters

Though we can list the beginning consonant clusters, there are too many possibilities for clusters in the middle of and at the end of a word. They can be two-sound clusters (felt [f<sub>ɛ</sub>lt]), three-sound clusters (restroom [r<sub>ɛ</sub>st̩\_rum]), four-sound clusters (offspring [ɔ:f spriŋ<sub>ɛ</sub>l]), five-sound clusters (silkscreen [s<sub>ɪ</sub>lk skru:n]). You can see how, especially as we get into compound words like 'offspring' and 'silkscreen', the consonants can really add up.

What makes them even more difficult is that some of these clusters involve stop consonants. As you learned in the previous chapter, we often leave off the release of these sounds, especially [t], so they sound like stops of air more than actual sounds. The rule is, if the stop consonant is followed by another consonant, we tend to not release it. So 'meltdown' will sound like 'mel'—[quick stop of air]—'down'. There's no clear L-T-D cluster there.

I've not seen a complete list of all possible middle and ending consonant clusters in American English in any resource I checked. Below is a list of many, but surely not all.

- [dθ] — width [wɪdθ]
- [dv] — advance [æd'væns]
- [kp] — backpack ['bæk,pæk]
- [kt] — fact [fækt]
- [ft] — left [lɛft]
- [lb] — bulb [bʌlb]
- [ld] — hold [hoʊld]
- [ldʒ] — bulge [bʌldʒ]
- [lf] — self [sɛlf]
- [lk] — milk [mɪlk]
- [lm] — film [fɪlm]

[lɒ]	— help [hɛlp]
[ls]	— pulse [pʌls]
[lt]	— melt [melt]
[ltʃ]	— mulch [mʌltʃ]
[θ]	— filth [fɪlθ]
[v]	— solve [solv]
[mf]	— triumph ['truːf əmf]
[mp]	— limp [lɪmp]
[nd]	— mind [maɪnd]
[ndʒ]	— change [tʃeɪndʒ]
[nt]	— mint [mɪnt]
[ntʃ]	— pinch [pɪntʃ]
[nθ]	— month [mʌnθ]
[nz]	— lens [lɛnz]
[nzm]	— transmission [tuəns'mɪʃən]
[ŋk]	— pink [pɪŋk]
[ŋgl]	— English ['ɪŋglɪʃ]
[ŋθ]	— length [lɛŋθ]
[rb]	— yearbook ['jɪərbʊk]
[rtʃ]	— fortune ['fɔːrtʃən]
[ps]	— snaps [snæps]
[pt]	— depth [dɛpθ]
[rθ]	— birth [bɜːrθ]
[sk]	— risk [rɪsk]
[sp]	— grasp [græsp]
[st]	— least [list]
[stʃ]	— question ['kwes tʃən]

### Video 6.8 — Practice Tip: NTH Cluster

Tom teaches you how to work on this cluster.



[engl.io/atm](https://engl.io/atm)

### Video 6.9 — How to Make the TS Sound

Learn a shortcut to make these two sounds together, like in the words: let's, what's, that's, it's



[engl.io/atp](https://engl.io/atp)

<p><b>Video 6.10 — Dropping T and D between Consonants</b> Have you ever noticed how most people don't say the D in 'grandma'?</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/akv">engl.io/akv</a>
<p><b>Video 6.11 — Study: Ending T Clusters in Real English</b> Notice when the T in an ending cluster is dropped and when it's pronounced.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/atu">engl.io/atu</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 6.3 — Middle and Ending Clusters.

You'll hear all of the middle and ending consonant clusters in the list above. They are in order, followed by the example word given.

<p><b>Audio 6.3 — Middle and Ending Clusters</b></p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/atw">engl.io/atw</a>
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### Plural Nouns & -ed Endings

Making a plural noun, or adding an -ed ending to make a regular verb past tense, often makes a consonant cluster at the end of the word. Very few concepts in American English pronunciation have clear rules, but here, you're in luck. We have firm pronunciation rules for adding -s/-es and -ed.

#### Regular Plural Nouns

When is the 's' pronounced [s] and when [z]? There are three cases to know. The chart below separates the word endings by voiced, unvoiced, and special cases. **Remember that all vowels and diphthongs are voiced**, so they all follow the rule for a voiced ending, where the plural adds a [z] sound.

We're talking about final *sounds*, not final *letters*. What's important is that the word 'tube' [tub], ends in the consonant sound [b], not the vowel letter 'e'.

If the final sound is...	Then the plural pronunciation is...
<b>Voiced</b> [b] [d] [g] [v] [m] [n] [ŋ] [l] [ɹ] [ð]	<b>s = [z]</b> cube + s [kjubz] bed + s [bɛdz] egg + s [ɛgz] executive + s [ɪg'zɛk jə dɪvz] bomb + s [bamz] son + s [sʌnz] song + s [sɔŋz] pill + s [pɪlz] flower + s ['flaʊərəz] lathe + s [leɪðz]
<b>Unvoiced</b> [p] [t] [k] [f] [θ]	<b>s = [s]</b> tip + s [tɪps] bit + s [bits] trick + s [trɪks] roof + s* [jufs] month + s [mʌnθs]
<b>Special Cases</b> [s] [z] [ʃ] [ʒ] [tʃ] [dʒ]	<b>s or es = [ɪz]</b> glass + es ['glæs ɪz] size + s ['saɪz ɪz] wish + es ['wɪʃ ɪz] garage + s [gə'reɪʒ ɪz] match + es ['mætʃ ɪz] page + s [peɪ dʒɪz]

\* Note: Plurals of words that end in -f or -fe usually change: drop the -f or -fe, add -ves. Example: leaf [lif] — leaves [livz].

In the ‘Special Cases’ category, notice how the ending is not just a consonant sound [s] or [z], but a vowel sound as well: [ɪz]. This means that the plural ending does not just add a sound, but a new syllable. This syllable is always unstressed, so make it very short.

<b>Video 6.12 — How to Pronounce Plural Nouns</b> The rules for regular plural nouns.	 <a href="http://engl.io/atz">engl.io/atz</a>
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### Listen + Repeat: Audio 6.4 — Plural Nouns.

You'll hear example words from each of the categories above, twice. Notice how the ending in 'glasses' and 'sizes' adds an extra syllable. Notice also how the [z] ending is not a strong [z] like at the beginning of a word, but a weak sound.

#### Audio 6.4 — Plural Nouns

- [z]: cubes, beds
- [s]: tips, bits
- [ɪz]: glasses, sizes



[engl.io/au2](http://engl.io/au2)

Remember these rules are for *regular* plural nouns, where you add -s or -es. There are, of course, some irregular nouns that do their own thing. For example:

child	— children
man	— men
moose	— moose
nucleus	— nuclei
mouse	— mice

### Test Yourself: Non-Audio 6.1 — How is the Plural Ending Pronounced?

Using the rules above, figure out the right plural ending. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. [z]    b. [s]    c. [ɪz]

1. rose
2. track
3. town
4. plant
5. plough
6. bath
7. sofa
8. wage
9. house
10. room

### Regular -ed Endings

You'll notice this chart looks similar to the chart above, but some of the sounds have moved. Again, all vowels and diphthongs are voiced, so any verb ending in those sounds will follow the rule for voiced sounds, and the -ed ending is pronounced [d]. The rules here are based on the final *sound* of the verb in *infinitive* form.

If the final sound is...	Then the regular -ed ending is...
<b>Voiced</b> [ <b>b</b> ] [ <b>g</b> ] [ <b>v</b> ] [ <b>m</b> ] [ <b>n</b> ] [ <b>ŋ</b> ] [ <b>l</b> ] [ <b>ɹ</b> ] [ <b>dʒ</b> ] [ <b>ʒ</b> ]	<b>d or ed = [d]</b> rob (+ b) + ed [rɒbəd] wrong + ed [rɒŋɡəd] love + d [lʌvd] claim + ed [kleɪmd] lean + ed [lɪnd] long + ed [lɔːnd] stumble + d [ˈstʌm bəld] dare + d [dɛərd] bathe + d [beɪð] gaze + d [geɪzd] manage + d [mæn ɪdʒd] camouflage + d [kæməflaʒd]
<b>Unvoiced</b> [ <b>p</b> ] [ <b>k</b> ] [ <b>f</b> ] [ <b>s</b> ] [ <b>tʃ</b> ] [ <b>ʃ</b> ] [ <b>θ</b> ]	<b>ed = [t]</b> camp + ed [kæmpt] pick + ed [pɪkt] sniff + ed [snɪft] miss + ed [mɪst] snatch + ed [snætʃt] wash + ed [wɔʃt] sleuth + ed [sluθt]
<b>Special cases</b> [ <b>t</b> ] [ <b>d</b> ]	<b>ed = [ɪd]</b> hunt + ed [hʌntɪd] land + ed [lændɪd]

Again, the ‘Special Cases’ category has a different ending. Here the -ed is not just a sound, [t] or [d], but an additional syllable.

### Video 6.13 — How to Pronounce -ed Endings

The rules for regular verbs in the past tense.



[engl.io/au4](http://engl.io/au4)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 6.5 — Regular Past Tense.**

You'll hear example words from each of the categories above, twice. Notice how the ending in 'hunted' and 'landed' adds an extra syllable.

**Audio 6.5 — Regular Past Tense**

- [d]: loved, robbed
- [t]: camped, picked
- [ɪd]: hunted, landed

[engl.io/au7](http://engl.io/au7)**Test Yourself: Non-Audio 6.2 — How is the -ed Ending Pronounced?**

Based on the rules above, figure out the right -ed ending for these words. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. [d]    b. [t]    c. [ɪd]

1. stuff
2. wish
3. stay
4. hand
5. lift
6. care
7. rush
8. wander
9. match
10. bunt

We've covered a lot already, but now it's time to dive into my favorite part of American English pronunciation: rhythm and intonation!

## Chapter 7

# Rhythm and Intonation: Multi-Syllable Words

So far we have covered only very basic words, mostly 1-2 syllables. Many of the most common words in English are only 1-2 syllables. (Actually, in that last sentence, only ‘syllables’ had more than two syllables!) Even so, being comfortable with longer words and saying them smoothly and with the right rhythm and intonation is important for being easily understood and communicating in American English.

You’ve already seen this chart in Chapter Two, but it’s important. Remember, stress is more complex than just long and short syllables.

	Stressed	Unstressed
symbol	[']	[.] or no marking
length	longer	shorter
intonation (or ‘pitch’ or ‘melody’)	Curve up, then down	Flatter pitch, generally lower than stressed syllables
energy	Full engagement of voice, can be a little louder	Less energy/air in the voice (can sound crackly at the end of a sentence)
In the text of this book	↗	.
On-screen text in videos	DA	da

As you start to practice your pronunciation on longer words and sentences, it's important to keep in mind the idea of intonation and flow. The pitch of an unstressed syllable should flow into the stressed syllable, and vice versa. So a three-syllable word, with stress on the second syllable, should feel like this:



not like this:



Smooth and connected. Some languages are angular, but English is not. Think instead of softness. The voice is always moving up or down, never flat. That's where exercises like the 'uh' patterns from Chapter Two come in handy—to practice a smooth vocal line.

Let's start with three-syllable words. As you already know, multi-syllable words in English can only have one syllable that has primary stress. That means we have three options for stress: DA-da-da, da-DA-da, da-da-DA.

First syllable stress: DA-da-da



Middle syllable stress: da-DA-da



Last syllable stress: da-da-DA



You can see the intonation of the voice rises smoothly towards and falls away from a stressed syllable. Have these images in mind as you practice 3-syllable words. When I have students that tend towards choppy and disconnected speech, I have them move their arm in this smooth gesture as they practice words out loud. It really does help!

### **Video 7.1 — Three-Syllable Words**

Study the three kinds of three-syllable words, and hear several examples for each.



[engl.io/av1](http://engl.io/av1)

### **Video 7.2 — Three-Syllable Words Listening Comprehension**

When you hear a three-syllable word, can you identify which syllable is stressed?



[engl.io/av3](http://engl.io/av3)

Some words have syllables that have secondary stress, marked by this symbol: [.] . These aren't nearly as important as the syllable with primary stress. The syllable with primary stress anchors the word. A syllable with secondary stress will have a little of the up-down shape of the voice, but it's not so different from an unstressed syllable. If you're not sure what to do about them, just make them like the unstressed syllables.

If you come from a language where every syllable is the same length, it will help to practice stressed and unstressed syllables separately. You already know from Chapter Two how to stress a syllable: a little curve up then down in the voice, more length, more volume.

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 7.1 — 3-Syllable Words.**

You'll hear the words on the UH pattern and 'da'. Then you'll hear the stressed syllable on its own, and the unstressed syllables on their own. Notice how the unstressed syllables are much shorter, less clear, and quieter. At the end, put all of the parts together for a perfectly pronounced word! Practice all of the words below the same way, separating out the syllables. Make sure your stressed

syllables are clear, and your unstressed syllables are very fast. This will mean simplifying the movements of the mouth, allowing the unstressed syllables to be less clear.

<b>Audio 7.1 — 3-Syllable Words</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. absolute [ə'bəl'jut]</li> <li>2. everyday ['evrɪ'deɪ]</li> <li>3. computer [kəm'pjutər]</li> <li>4. beautiful ['bjūtɪfl]</li> <li>5. comfortable ['kʌmfərəbəl]</li> </ol>	 <a href="http://engl.io/av5">engl.io/av5</a>
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da-da-DA (or Da-da-DA)	3 <sup>rd</sup> syllable	da-DA-da	2 <sup>nd</sup> syllable	DA-da-da	1 <sup>st</sup> syllable
absolute	[ə'bəl'jut]	burrito*	[bə'rɪtəʊ]	beautiful*	[bjūtɪfl]
eighty-one	[eɪ̯dɪ'wʌn]	computer	[kəm'pjutər]	comfortable*	[kʌmfərəbəl]
everyday	[,evrɪ'deɪ]	December	[dɪ'sɛm bər]	definite	[dɪ'fɪnit̩]
fianceé	[fi'ɑ̯nsi]	imagine	[ɪ'mæ̯ʒɪn]	general	[dʒenərəl]
overcook	[,o'ver'kʊk]	important	[ɪm'pɔ̯rtnt̩]	graduate*	[grædʒueɪt̩]
overflow (v.)	[,o'ver'flau̯]	November	[,nəʊ'vembər]	interview*	[,ɪn'tvju̯]
recommend	[,rek'mend̩]	October	[,ok'tɔ̯bər]	neighborhood	[,neɪbər'hʊd̩]
referee	[,rɪ'fɪər̩]	procedure*	[prə'edʒʊər̩]	president	[,prezɪdənt̩]
thirty-nine	[θɜ̯'naɪn̩]	September	[sep'tɛmber]	privacy	[,prɪ'vesi]
understand	[,ʌn'dər'stænd̩]	tomorrow*	[tə'mɔ̯rəʊ]	probably*	[,prɔ̯ba'bli]
volunteer	[,valən'taɪn̩]	vacation*	[veɪ'keɪʃən̩]	yesterday*	[,je'stər'deɪ]

Note: All words in this chapter followed by \* are part of the Word of the Week series. This means there is a video that goes over, in depth, the pronunciation of each of these words. See the chart at the end of the chapter for links to those videos.

When I work with advanced students, one of the final adjustments that we make is making their short syllables really short. Often that is the last thing they need to do to sound really natural when speaking American English. Keep this in mind every time you drill a multi-syllable word. How short can you make the short syllables? How simple? Remember, the more relaxed your mouth and neck are, the more easily and quickly you can make these unstressed syllables. Practicing the unstressed syllables on their own, like in Audio 7.1, is valuable.

### Test Yourself: Audio 7.2 — 3-Syllable Words Test.

Which syllable is most stressed in the ten 3-syllable words you hear? You'll hear each word twice. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. first — DA-da-da      b. second — da-DA-da      c. third — da-da-DA

### Audio 7.2 — 3-Syllable Words Test



[engl.io/av8](http://engl.io/av8)

Now that you know how to practice the rhythm of words by breaking down the syllables, let's learn some **rules** to help you know which syllable has primary stress in a word.

### Two-Syllable Words

Most two-syllable **nouns and adjectives** will have stress on the **first** syllable:

Nouns: present [ˈprezənt], coffee\* [ˈkɔfi], money [ˈmʌni], Google\* [ˈguɡəl]

Adjectives: present [ˈprezənt], sorry\* [iˈrɔ:s], funny [ˈfʌni], awkward [ˈɔ:kwərd]

Most two-syllable **verbs** will have stress on the **last** syllable:

Verbs: present [prezənt], decide [dɪ'saɪd], arrange [ə'raɪn], divide [dɪ'veɪd]

Did you notice how 'present' was listed for all three? There are words that can be a noun, verb, and sometimes an adjective too! Stress helps determine which meaning is correct. Other examples:

Address — noun — ['ædres]  
address — verb — [ə'dres]

produce — noun — [prəʊdus]  
produce — verb — [er'dus]

object — noun — ['ɒbjɛkt]  
object — verb — [ə'bɒdʒɛkt]

record — noun — [prekərd]  
record — verb — [prəkɔɪr]

perfect — noun — ['redfɪkt]  
perfect — verb — [pər'fekt]

project	— noun — [prədʒɛkt]
project	— verb — [prə'dʒekt]

This is not limited to two-syllable words. Did you notice that above, for three-syllable words with stress on the last syllable, I put (v.) after ‘overflow’? That’s because the stress is different for the noun:

overflow — verb — [əʊvə'fləʊ]

overflow — noun — [əʊvər'fləʊ]

These are **heteronyms**. Heteronyms are words that are spelled the same, but have different meanings and pronunciations.

### Video 7.3 — Heteronyms

Study other heteronyms to get used to this concept.



[engl.io/ava](http://engl.io/ava)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 7.3 — Verbs vs. Nouns.

Listen to the two examples on the audio file below. You’ll hear each set twice. Can you hear the different stress?

### Audio 7.3 — Verbs vs. Nouns

present (noun - first syllable stress), present (verb - second syllable stress)

overflow (noun - first syllable stress), overflow (verb - second syllable stress)



[engl.io/avd](http://engl.io/avd)

## Suffixes

There are several word endings (suffixes) that determine the stress of a word. Below, some of these are organized into tables that tell you where the stress falls.

Primary stress is **on the suffix**:

-ee	trustee [tɹʌst̩i] guarantee [gærən̩ti] referee [rɪfɜːr̩i] <i>notable exception:</i> committee [kə'mɪd̩i]
-----	---

-eer	career [kə'reər] engineer [,en'dʒɪnɪər] volunteer [,və'ləntɪər]
-ese	Chinese [tʃaɪ'niz] Japanese [,dʒæpən'iz] legalese [,li'gɛlɪz]
-ette	cigarette [,sɪg'ət̩] kitchenette [,kɪt̩'eñet̩] silhouette [,sɪl'u̩et̩] <i>notable exceptions:</i> etiquette ['etɪk'et̩], omelette ['oməlɪt̩] (also spelled 'omelet')
-ique	technique [tɛk'nik] unique [ju'nik] critique [kjü'tik]

Primary stress is **on the syllable just before the suffix**. Note some of these suffixes can be either one or two syllables.

-cious (1 syllable)	delicious [dɪ'lɪʃəs] precious [,prɛsɪʃəs] suspicious [sə'spɪʃəs]
-eous (1 or 2 syllables)	spontaneous (suffix is two syllables) [spa'nət̩niəs] outrageous (suffix is one syllable) [au'trægəs] gorgeous (suffix is one syllable) [,gɔr'gəs]
-graphy (2 syllables)	geography [dʒɪ'ɑgrəfi] biography [baɪ'ɑgrəfi] photography [fə'tɔgrəfi]
-ial (1 or 2 syllables)	official (suffix is one syllable) [ə'fɪʃəl] material (suffix is two syllables) [mə'tɪəriəl] potential (suffix is one syllable) [pə'tenʃəl]
-ian (1 or 2 syllables)	politician (suffix is one syllable) [,polɪt̩'ɪʃən] guardian (suffix is two syllables) [,gaʊdiən] historian (suffix is two syllables) [hɪ'stɔriən]
-ible (2 syllables)	possible ['pasəbəl] responsible [,rɪ'spɒnsəbəl] terrible [,tɜrləbəl] <i>notable exception:</i> words with -ligible, like eligible ['elɪgəbəl], negligible [,nɛglɪgəbəl], intelligible [,ɪntɪ'ɡəbəl]

-ic (1 syllable)	economic [ə'kɔmɪk] metallic [mɛ'tælɪk] poetic [pəʊ'etɪk] <i>notable exception:</i> Catholic can be pronounced [kæθəktɪk]
-ical (2 syllables)	political [pə'lɪtɪkəl] physical ['fɪzɪkəl] practical ['præktrɪkəl]
-ience (1 or 2 syllables)	experience (suffix is two syllables) [ɪk'spiərɪəns] audience (suffix is two syllables) ['dɪəns] convenience (suffix is one syllable) [kən'veinəns]
-ient (1 or 2 syllables)	patient (suffix is one syllable) ['peɪʃənt] sufficient (suffix is one syllable) [sə'fɪʃənt] recipient (suffix is two syllables) [rɪ'sipɪənt]
-ify (2 syllables)	identify [aɪ'den təfaɪ] clarify ['klærɪəfai] notify ['nəʊvɪdəfai]
-ily (2 syllables)	voluntarily [vələntə'retərɪli] luckily ['lʌklɪ] momentarily [mo'məntə'retərɪli] <i>notable exception:</i> satisfactorily [sædɪsfæk'terɪli]
-inal (2 syllables)	marginal ['mɑːgɪnl̩] medicinal [mɛdɪ'sɪnl̩] spinal ['spaɪnl̩]
-ion (1 syllable)	religion [rɪ'lɪdʒən] union ['juːnɪən] region ['ri:dʒən]
-ional (2 syllables)	professional [prəfə'sʃənl̩] international* [ɪntə'næʃənl̩] educational [edʒə'keɪʃənl̩]
-ious (1 or 2 syllables)	various (suffix is two syllables) [və'riəs] serious (suffix is two syllables) ['sɪriəs] religious (suffix is one syllable) [rɪ'lɪdʒəs]
-itude (2 syllables)	attitude ['ætɪtud] gratitude ['grætɪtud] solitude ['solɪtud]

-itute (2 syllables)	institute ['ɪn stɪ, tüt]* constitute ['kən stɪ, tüt] substitute ['sʌb stɪ, tüt]
-ity (2 syllables)	community [kə'mju nɪ di] opportunity* ['ɔp ə'tu nɪ di] responsibility [rɪ'spɒn sə'bɪl ɪ di]
-logy (2 syllables)	technology [tɛk'nal ə dʒi] apology [ə'pɔl ə dʒi] terminology [tɜm'ɒnəl ə dʒi]
-sion* (1 syllable)	decision [dɪ'sɪʒ ən] version ['vɜr ʒən] permission [pərmɪ'siʃ ən]
-tion (1 syllable)	vacation* [veɪ'keɪ ʃən] pronunciation* [prə,nʌn si'eɪ ʃən] application* [æp'lɪkeɪ ʃən]
-ual (2 syllables)	individual [,ɪn də'veɪdʒ ə əl] gradual [,grædʒ ə əl] casual [,kæʒ ə əl] <i>notable exception: spiritual ['spɪritʃu əl]</i>
-uous (2 syllables)	continuous [kən'tɪn ju əs] ambiguous [æm'bɪg ju əs] virtuous [,vɜr tʃu əs]

Primary stress is **two syllables before the suffix:**

-al (1 syllable)	industrial [ɪn'dʌs tɪ əl] animal ['æn ə məl] hospital ['hɒp ɪ dəl]
-ary (2 syllables)	secretary ['sek tɪ ri] i contemporary [kən'tem pərəri] i secondary ['sek ənd əri] i
-ate (1 syllable)	separate ['sep ə ræt] i celebrate ['sel eb'reit] i appreciate [ə'pri ðeit] i

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 7.4 to 7.6 — Word Stress and Suffixes.

The first audio file has stress on the suffix. Notice the shape of the suffix: it's the shape of a stressed syllable, with a curve up, then down in the voice. You'll hear

the whole word, then the suffix two times, then the whole word again. Practice all of the words in the table the same way, working on the suffix on its own, and making it stressed.

For the next two audio files, stress is NOT on the suffix. Hear how those suffixes are very fast, flat, lower in pitch and volume. Practice the rest of the words in those tables just like the audio files, focusing on making the suffixes unstressed and fast.

<p><b>Audio 7.4 — Suffixes: Stress on the Suffix</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-ee — trustee</li> <li>-eer — career</li> <li>-ese — Chinese</li> <li>-ette — cigarette*</li> <li>-ique — technique</li> </ul>	 <a href="engl.io/avf">engl.io/avf</a>
<p><b>Audio 7.5 — Suffixes: Stress just before the Suffix</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-cious — delicious</li> <li>-eous — spontaneous</li> <li>-graphy — geography</li> <li>-ial — official</li> <li>-ian — politician</li> <li>-ible — possible</li> <li>-ic — economic</li> <li>-ical — political</li> <li>-ience — experience</li> <li>-ient — patient</li> <li>-ify — clarify</li> <li>-ily — voluntarily</li> <li>-inal — marginal</li> <li>-ion — religion</li> <li>-ional — professional</li> <li>-ious — various</li> <li>-itude — attitude</li> <li>-itute — institute*</li> <li>-ity — community</li> <li>-logy — technology</li> <li>-sion — decision</li> <li>-tion — vacation</li> <li>-ual — individual</li> <li>-uous — continuous</li> </ul>	 <a href="engl.io/avf">engl.io/avf</a>

### Audio 7.6 — Suffixes: Stress two syllables before the Suffix

- al — industrial
- ary — secretary
- ate — separate\*



[engl.io/avf](http://engl.io/avf)

\* ‘Cigarette’, ‘separate’, and ‘institute’ have Stop T’s on the audio. Though, in a sentence followed by a vowel or diphthong, most Americans will often make a Flap T.

### Test yourself: Non-Audio 7.1 — Which Syllable has Stress?

All of these words follow the pattern of the suffixes above (none of them are exceptions). Which syllable has primary stress (first, second, third, etc.)? Because they all follow the rules above, you will know the stress based on the suffix even if you don’t know the word! Answers in the Answers Appendix.

1. annotate
2. biology
3. commodify
4. barrette
5. anxious
6. acrylic
7. addressee
8. conditional
9. conspicuous
10. consideration

If you want more words to practice with for any suffix, use the internet. I actually used it to write this section, to make sure I was using some of the most common examples. Search “words that end in ary”, for example. I like the MoreWords.com website because you can sort by how common the words are, by length, or alphabetically.

### Compound Words

Nouns that are compound words generally have stress on the first word. That’s easy if the compound word is just two syllables, like ‘boathouse’ ['bəʊt̬haʊs] (‘boat’ [bəʊt̬] + ‘house’ [haʊs]).

But what if the first or second word in the compound word has more than one syllable? You should put the stress on the *stressed syllable* of the first word. So the unstressed syllable of the stressed word will still be unstressed. For

example, ‘basketball’ ['bæs kɪt̪l̪ bɔl̪] is ‘basket’ ['bæs kɪt̪l̪] + ‘ball’ [bɔl̪]. The second syllable of ‘basket’ is unstressed, even though it’s part of the stressed word of the compound word.

Let’s take a word that can be in both positions of a compound word: mother ['mʌð ər̪]. In ‘motherboard’, where it’s the first word, it will be stressed. But in ‘grandmother’, where it’s the second word, it won’t sound stressed. ‘Mother’ should not sound the same in these two words. In ‘grandmother’, it will be quieter, have less shape and energy in the voice, and be lower in pitch, just like the video ‘Download’ below.

The compound rule is stronger than the suffix rules above. Take the word ‘outpatient’ for example. It ends in the –ient suffix. That rule says the stress would be on the syllable before, ‘-pa-’. But it’s a compound word: out·patient, so the stress is on the first word, ‘out’: ['aʊt̪ pər̪ ʃənt̪].

Watch the video on the compound word ‘download’, which you already saw in Chapter 2. In this video, there is a comparison of ‘-load’, stressed and unstressed. Notice the difference between ‘-load’, unstressed in ‘download’, and ‘load’, the stressed word.

#### **Video 7.4 — How to Pronounce DOWNLOAD**

Compare ‘load’ as an unstressed and stressed syllable.



[engl.io/acf](http://engl.io/acf)

#### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 7.7 — Compound Words.**

The stress is always on the first word. You’ll hear the stressed syllable first, then the whole word.

#### **Audio 7.7 — Compound Words**

airport  
anyone  
babysitter  
background



[engl.io/acvp](http://engl.io/acvp)

More compound words to work with: Just like we’ve been doing with all the words in this chapter, practice the stressed and unstressed syllables separately first. This will help you clarify the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables in speaking.

airport [ˈaɪərpɔrt]	grasshopper [ˈgræs̚ həpər]
anyone [əˈnʌw ən̩]	honeymoon [ˈhʌn̩ i̩,mʌn̩]
babysitter [ˈbeɪ bɪ sɪtər]	household [ˈhaʊs̚ haʊld̩]
background [ˈbæk̚ grɑʊnd̩]	keyboard [ˈki̩bɔrd̩]
baseball [ˈbeɪs̚ bɔl̩]	lifeboat [ˈlaɪf̚ boʊt̩]
basketball [ˈbæs̚ kɪt̩,bɔl̩]	lifetime [ˈlaɪf̚ taɪm̩]
boathouse [ˈbɔθ̚ haʊs̩]	newsroom [ˈnjuːz̚ ruːm̩]
bookcase [ˈbʊk̚ keɪs̩]	passport [ˈpɑs̚ t̩]
bookstore [ˈbʊk̚ stɔːr̩]	peppermint [ˈpeɪpər̚ mɪnt̩]
bypass [ˈbaɪ̩,pæs̩]	popcorn [ˈpɒp̚ kɔrn̩]
carload [ˈkaɪ̩,lɔd̩]	railroad [ˈreɪl̚ rɔd̩]
commonplace [ˈkam̚ ən̩,pleɪs̩]	raincheck [ˈreɪn̚ tʃeɪk̩]
crosswalk [ˈkrɔs̚ ,wɔk̩]	rattlesnake [ˈrætl̚ ,snɛɪk̩]
dishwasher [ˈdɪʃ̚ ,waʃ̚ ər̩]	something [ˈsɪθ̚ ,θɪŋ̩]
download* [ˈdaʊn̚ ,ləud̩]	sometimes [ˈsʌv̚ ,taɪm̩z̩]
earthquake [ˈɜr̚ θ̩,kweɪk̩]	sunflower [ˈsʌn̚ ,flaʊər̩]
everything [ˈev̚ ,ɪr̚ ɪŋ̩]	teacup [ˈti̩,kʌp̩]
eyeball [ˈaɪ̩,bɔl̩]	thunderstorm [ˈθʌnd̚ ,rəʊm̩]
firefighter [ˈfaɪ̩,fɪər̚ tər̩]	underdog [ˈʌnd̚ ,drəg̩]
grandmother [ˈgræm̚ ,mʌðər̩]	weekend [ˈwiːk̚ ,ɛnd̩]

## Initials

There is also a rule for word stress and initials. Famous people are sometimes referred to by their initials, like MLK (Martin Luther King, Jr.) or JFK (John Fitzgerald Kennedy). Additionally, many businesses or organizations are known almost exclusively by their initials, like HBO (Home Box Office) and PBS (Public Broadcasting Service). In these cases, the last letter is stressed:

PBS [pi̩ bi̩'ɛs̩]

JFK [dʒeɪ̩ ɛf̩'keɪ̩]

Some letter names have more than one syllable, like W ['dʌb əl̩,ju]. In these cases, only the stressed syllable is stressed: BMW [bi̩ ɛm̩ 'dʌb əl̩,ju].

Watch this video for more examples.

### Video 7.5 — Word Stress and Initials

No matter how many letters there are, stress is on the last one.



[engl.io/avr](http://engl.io/avr)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 7.8 — Initials.

The last letter is stressed. You'll hear that first, then the whole set. Practice the same way, thinking about making the last letter stressed and the letter(s) before unstressed.

#### Audio 7.8 — Initials

CVS [si vi'ɛs]

PBS [pi bi'ɛs]

LA [ɛl'ɛɪ]

DHL [di eɪtʃ'ɛl]



[engl.io/avt](http://engl.io/avt)

More initials to work with: Just like we've been doing with all of the words in this section, practice the stressed and unstressed syllables separately first. This will help you clarify the difference between stressed and unstressed syllables in speaking.

HBO [eɪtʃ bi'ou]

JFK [dʒeɪ ɛf'keɪ]

RFK [ɑr ɛf'keɪ]

ING [aɪn ɛn'dʒɪ]

PNC [pi ɛn'si]

ABC [eɪ bi'si]

TV [ti'veɪ]

AARP [eɪ eɪ ɑr'pi]

Note some names that are abbreviated like this aren't pronounced by saying the letters, but by making a word out of the letters, like NASA. This is pronounced "nasa" rather than N-A-S-A: ['næsə]. Which way should you pronounce these kinds of names? It varies from organization to organization. You'll have to learn which is which as you learn the names of organizations that use these kinds of abbreviated names.

There were lots of words to work with in this section. Did you learn the main point? **Practice the stressed and unstressed syllables separately so you can focus on how they're different.** Then put the whole word back together. When you break something down into smaller parts to practice, it's always beneficial.

Word of the Week Videos featured above:

<p><b>Video 7.6 — Burrito</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/avv">engl.io/avv</a>
<p><b>Video 7.7 — Should Burrito have an American Pronunciation?</b> The first video on How to Pronounce Burrito sparked a debate!</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/avx">engl.io/avx</a>
<p><b>Video 7.8 — Procedure</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/avz">engl.io/avz</a>
<p><b>Video 7.9 — Tomorrow</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aw1">engl.io/aw1</a>
<p><b>Video 7.10 — Vacation</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aw4">engl.io/aw4</a>
<p><b>Video 7.11 — Beautiful</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aw5">engl.io/aw5</a>
<p><b>Video 7.12 — Comfortable</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aw8">engl.io/aw8</a>
<p><b>Video 7.13 — Graduate</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/awb">engl.io/awb</a>
<p><b>Video 7.14 — Interview</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/awd">engl.io/awd</a>

<b>Video 7.15 — Probably</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/awg">engl.io/awg</a>
<b>Video 7.16 — Yesterday</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/awk">engl.io/awk</a>
<b>Video 7.17 — Coffee</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/awm">engl.io/awm</a>
<b>Video 7.18 — Google</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/awn">engl.io/awn</a>
<b>Video 7.19 — Sorry</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/awp">engl.io/awp</a>
<b>Video 7.20 — International</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/aws">engl.io/aws</a>
<b>Video 7.21 — Opportunity</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/awt">engl.io/awt</a>
<b>Video 7.22 — Pronunciation</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/aww">engl.io/aww</a>
<b>Video 7.23 — Application</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/awx">engl.io/awx</a>

## Chapter 8

# Linking

You've just learned how to say multi-syllable words like a native speaker, making the stressed syllables sound different from the unstressed syllables. Wasn't that fun? Soon we'll move on to doing the same thing with sentences. But first, we need to talk about linking words together.

Have you ever noticed how words in American English run together? Most of the time they don't feel like separate words. This is exactly what you want to do to sound more American. For some of you, like Spanish speakers, this won't be too hard. The words in your native language flow together quickly too. For others, like Mandarin speakers, it will be a little harder. You're used to fully pronouncing each word, which might mean separating it just a bit from the other words. In your experience, this is the best and most clear way to speak. However, when you do this in English, it will not sound natural or American.

### When to link

A general rule for linking is to link all the words together in the same **thought group**. You can think of a thought group as words that will be separated when written, for example, with a comma or a period. The following sentence has two thought groups, one before the comma and one after:  
And then I thought, how's that going to work?

You'll want to link the words 'and then I thought' so that they flow together and sound like one word, one thought. Put a small pause, and then link 'how's that going to work'.

### **Listen: Audio 8.1 — Thought Groups.**

You'll hear a sentence with two thought groups. Can you hear the small pause between the thought groups?

#### **Audio 8.1 — Thought Groups**

And then I thought, how's that going to work?



[engl.io/ax1](http://engl.io/ax1)

It's true that many Americans, myself included, sometimes ignore these pauses in speaking. Where they would write a comma or period, they might put no break in speaking. Think of 'thought groups' as a general guideline to help you structure linking and pauses.

There are three ways you can link words.

#### **1. Linking Vowel to Vowel**

Linking Vowel to Vowel refers to words that link where the first one ends in a vowel (or diphthong) and the next one begins with a vowel (or diphthong). Here are some examples:

my own [maɪ\_əʊn]

stay awhile [steɪ\_ə'waɪl]

why is [waɪ\_ɪz]

Remember, we're always talking about sounds and not letters. Let's look at 'three hours'. The first letter of 'hours' is a consonant, H. But the first sound is a diphthong, OW as in NOW [aʊ]. So linking these two words is a Vowel to Vowel link: [θrɪ\_əʊərz].

#### **Video 8.1 — Linking Vowel to Vowel**

Vowel to vowel linking is an easy way to make your speech more smooth and American.



[engl.io/ax4](http://engl.io/ax4)

## Glide Consonants to Help Link

You may find it works well to think of putting a glide consonant (Y or W) between an ending vowel and a beginning vowel when linking. This will help you connect the two words. Americans do it without thinking about it.

If the first sound is [i], [aɪ], [eɪ], or [ɔɪ], add a Y sound [j] to connect:

- [i]: the apple [ði\_ 'jæ pəl]
- [ɔɪ]: toy airplane [tɔɪ\_ 'jɛər pleɪn]
- [aɪ]: my uncle [maɪ\_ 'jʌŋ kəl]
- [eɪ]: say it [seɪ\_ jɪt]

If the first sound is [u], [aʊ], [oʊ], or [ju] add a W sound [w] to connect:

- [u]: blue automobile [blu\_ 'wɔ də mə bil]
- [aʊ]: how about [haʊ\_ wə 'baʊt]
- [oʊ]: slow animal [sloʊ\_ 'wæ nə məl]
- [ju]: few others [fju\_ 'wʌð ərz]

What does the symbol \_ mean? That's something I use to show two words that link together. Of course, all words in a thought group should link together! I use it for the cases where it's extra easy to feel the link, like in a linking vowel to vowel or linking consonant to vowel case.

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 8.2 — Linking Vowel to Vowel.

You'll hear the phrase, then the vowel to vowel link three times, the second time in slow motion. Feel the link through the glide, which has been added in IPA, in slow motion. Then you'll hear the phrase again. Repeat in the pauses.

#### Audio 8.2 — Linking Vowel to Vowel

The apple is fresh: the apple [ði\_ 'jæ pəl]

The toy airplane broke: toy airplane [tɔɪ\_ 'jɛər pleɪn]

My uncle is funny: my uncle [maɪ\_ 'jʌŋ kəl]

Say it quickly: say it [seɪ\_ jɪt]

The blue automobile is the fastest: blue automobile  
[blu\_ 'wɔ də mə bil]

How about this one: how about [haʊ\_ wə 'baʊt]

The slow animal was caught: slow animal [sloʊ\_ 'wæ nə məl]



[engl.io/ax7](http://engl.io/ax7)

In all other cases, just connect the vowel sounds, without a glide consonant.

[ɑ]: grandpa eats ['g्रænd pɑ\_ɪts]

[ɔ]: law is [lɔ\_ɪz]

[ə]: idea Anna [aɪ'di ə\_æn ə]

Notice some vowels don't come at the ends of words in American English: AA as in BAT [æ], UR as in BIRD [ɜ], EH as in BED [ɛ], IH as in SIT [ɪ], UH as in PUSH [ʊ], UH as in BUTTER [ʌ].

## 2. Linking Consonant to Vowel

Linking consonant to vowel refers to words that link where the first one ends in a consonant and the next one begins with a vowel (or diphthong) sound. These are really fun. It's my favorite kind of linking because it makes new 'words' that aren't words at all:

Ten hours a day → Teh\_nower\_zuh\_day [tɛ\_ˈnaʊər\_ər\_zeɪ\_dɪ]

'Nower' isn't a word, but if you think of it as a word, it will help link 'ten' to 'hour' so it will be wonderfully linked and smooth!

Another example: Forget about it. → forgeh\_duh\_bou\_dit [fər'gɜ\_də\_ˈbaʊ\_dɪt]

Wait. What?! How did the T's in 'Forget about it' turn into D's? Remember, the letter T will be pronounced like a Flap T when it comes between two vowel or diphthong sounds (like 'pretty'), or after an R and before a vowel or diphthong sound (like 'party'). That rule works not only within a word, but also within a sentence when an ending T links into another word.

That means when a word ends in a vowel or diphthong + T, and the next word in the thought group begins with a vowel or diphthong, make the T a Flap T [d] and link the words: about it [ə\_ˈbaʊ\_dɪt]

Also, when a word ends in R + T, and the next word in the thought group begins with a vowel or diphthong, make the T a Flap T [d] and link the words: sort of [əp\_rɔs].

### Video 8.2 — Linking Consonant to Vowel

Consonant to vowel linking is an easy way to make your speech more smooth and American.



[engl.io/ax9](http://engl.io/ax9)

<p><b>Video 8.3 — Using a Flap T to Link Words</b> The Flap T connects words in many common phrases in American English.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/axa">engl.io/axa</a>
<p><b>Video 8.4 — My Summer Vacation</b> See examples of linking consonant to vowel in real American English conversation.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/axd">engl.io/axd</a>
<p><b>Video 8.5 — Got it</b> Study how the Flap T links ‘got’ and ‘it’ in this phrase.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/axf">engl.io/axf</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 8.3 — Linking Consonant to Vowel.

You'll hear the sentence, then the link of consonant to vowel 4 times and the sentence two more times.

<p><b>Audio 8.3 — Linking Consonant to Vowel</b> That's what I thought: what I [wʌ_dai] I thought about it: thought about [θo_də'baʊt], about it [e'baʊ_dɪt] Is it time?: is it [ɪ_zɪt]</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/axh">engl.io/axh</a>
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### 3. Linking Consonant to Consonant

Linking consonant to consonant refers to words that link where the first word ends in a consonant and the next word begins with a consonant. This kind of linking is the hardest because some consonants don't link well. Just think of making them with no gap or release in between. Practice the two sounds separately first, then go straight from one sound to the next, thinking about what has to change—just like with the consonant clusters we studied in Chapter 6.

Remember: we're talking about sounds and not letters.

Example: tough one [tʌf\_wʌn]

First practice the F, fffff, then the W. What changes? The lip position changes. First, the top lip lifts so the bottom lip can touch the bottom of the top front teeth: fffff. Then the lips round into a tight circle. What about the tongue? It's relaxed

for the [f] sound, but for the [w] sound, the tongue lifts in the back. Think about these changes as you say the two sounds together with no break. Then say the two words, ‘tough one’. Practice this way, slowly, for all consonant combinations that give you trouble.

### **Video 8.6 — Linking Consonant to Consonant**

This kind of linking is the least clear, but you can practice any combination slowly.



[engl.io/axk](http://engl.io/axk)

When it comes to linking consonant to consonant, I get the most questions on the TH. As you already know, the tongue position for the TH is unlike any other, the tongue tip comes through the teeth. If linking a TH sound is tough for you, it's important to slow things down as you practice it. Some people say “this is hard” or “I don't understand how to do this” so they rush through it. Do the opposite! It will only become comfortable if you slow it down and understand the movement that needs to happen to move from one sound to the next. Since the tongue tip doesn't come far out of the teeth for the TH, often the movement is quite small. Doing it over and over will help make it more natural, and with more relaxation.

### **Video 8.7 — Linking and the TH**

The TH is hard, but slow practice will make it easier to link this sound to others.



[engl.io/axm](http://engl.io/axm)

If the ending consonant of one word is the same as the beginning consonant of the next word, you don't have to make two separate sounds.

Examples: bus stop, stuff for, mom makes, phone number

### **Video 8.8 — Road Trip**

You'll hear the example ‘gas station’ in this video, linked together with just one S sound.



[engl.io/axp](http://engl.io/axp)

How do stop consonants fit into linking? As you know, stop consonants stop the airflow. There's a little pause or lift in the vocal line; there's no connection into the next sound. However, it's not a big break. Even with the small pause, the flow of the voice can still move forward.

**Video 8.9 — What time?**

Study connecting words with a Stop T in this phrase study.



[engl.io/axr](http://engl.io/axr)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 8.4 — Linking the Stop T to a Consonant.**

You'll hear each sentence, then the Stop T consonant to consonant 'link' three times, then the sentence again twice. Notice there is a very small gap between the words, but the flow of the sentence still moves forward.

**Audio 8.4 — Linking the Stop T to a Consonant**

It was raining: it was [ɪt| wəz]

Wait for me: wait for [weɪt| fər]

Let me see that: let me [lɛt| mi]

I got Dad a gift: got Dad [gɔt| dæd]



[engl.io/axu](http://engl.io/axu)

**Test yourself: Non-Audio 8.1 — Which kind of linking is it?**

Remember to think about sounds, not letters. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. Vowel to Vowel    b. Consonant to Vowel    c. Consonant to Consonant

1. feel like
2. shut up
3. I'm on
4. some more
5. now I
6. although I
7. raise a
8. gave my
9. need a
10. stay around

**Test Yourself: Audio 8.5 — Which Phrase is Linked?**

You'll hear five phrases. Some are linked, and some are not. Which phrases are linked? Listen to the whole audio file once first and think about the difference in what you're hearing. Do you hear the smooth quality in the linked phrases? Keep this in mind as you practice anything out loud. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

- a. linked    b. not linked

**Audio 8.5 — Which Phrase is Linked?**[engl.io/axw](http://engl.io/axw)

When you speak American English, you want all the words of a thought group to flow together. They should not feel like separate words, but one long word of connected sounds. Linking words together is an important part of the character of American English. Keep this in mind as you work through the next chapter, where you'll be putting words together.

## Chapter 9

# Rhythm and Intonation: Stressed Words

Now you're ready to study the rhythm and intonation of sentences. You've already learned some important points:

- linking and flow: the melody of English is smooth, not angular or choppy, with a forward flow of the voice.
- intonation: the melody or shape of a stressed syllable goes up and then down in a curve, like this: ↗. Unstressed syllables will be flatter and lower in pitch.
- rhythm: stressed syllables are longer, louder, and have more energy in the voice. Unstressed syllables are very quick and are less clear.

All of these points apply to whole phrases. In fact, by working on three-syllable words in Chapter Seven, you've already laid the groundwork for three-syllable phrases.

Let's look at the example da-DA-da. This is the stress pattern of 'computer', 'example', 'another'. It's also the stress pattern for the phrases 'I want it,' 'I need it', 'I saw you', and 'You know it'. Actually, the flow, rhythm, and intonation of these words and phrases should be exactly the same. The words are made up of three syllables, and the phrases are made up of three syllables, three 1-syllable words. Even though they are three separate words, they should flow together just as much as the three syllables of the longer words.

**Video 9.1 — Three-Syllable Phrases**

Three-syllable words and three-syllable phrases should feel the same.



[engl.io/ay2](http://engl.io/ay2)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 9.1 — Three-Syllable Words and Phrases.**

You'll hear the three different stress patterns for three-syllable words and phrases, then an example word and phrase for each. Notice how the intonation and stress, the character of the phrases, is the same as for the words: the "uh" and da-da-DA patterns sound the same. The phrases should feel the same as the words: connected and flowing together. The stressed syllable is higher in pitch—with the up and down shape—and more fully pronounced.

The other syllables either lead up to or fall away from it.

**Audio 9.1 — Three-Syllable Words and Phrases**

1. da-DA-da: example [ɪg'zæm pəl], I saw you [aɪ'so ju]
2. da-da-DA: recommend [,rɛk ə'mend], I don't know [aɪ dəʊ'nou]
3. DA-da-da: yesterday ['jɛs tər'deɪ], stay with me ['steɪ wɪθ mi]



[engl.io/ay5](http://engl.io/ay5)

You know how to find out which syllable is stressed in a word: look it up in a dictionary and look for the ['] symbol, or listen to a native speaker and listen for the syllable that is the most clear, longest, and highest in pitch. But how do you know which words should be stressed in a sentence? This is where knowing some grammar will come in handy.

We can break words in American English into two categories: Content Words and Function Words. Generally, content words will be stressed in American English, and function words unstressed.

**Content Words**

Content words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. They carry the most important information, the most meaning. Since they are the stressed words in a sentence, that means their stressed syllables should be the longest, loudest, clearest syllables of the sentence. They should have the up-down shape of a stressed syllable ↗.

For example, “When can we go?” *When* is an adverb, a content word. *Can* is a helping verb, not a main verb, so it’s a function word (you’ll learn more about that in the next chapter). *We* is a pronoun, a function word. *Go* is the main verb, so it’s a content word. We have two content words: *when* and *go*. If I said just the words “When go”, the meaning would still be clear, because they are the words with the content of my thought. If I said “Can we”, the meaning is less clear: I’m hoping we can do something, but what? Function words, rather than including actual content, relate content words to each other within the sentence.

Some common content words are:

<b>Nouns</b>	<b>Verbs</b>	<b>Adjectives</b>	<b>Adverbs</b>
books [buks]	run [rʌn]	blue [blu]	quickly ['kwɪk li]
school [skul]	sat [sæt]	old [əuld]	always ['ɔl weɪz]
dinner ['dɪnə]	eat [it]	happy ['hæp i]	often ['ɔfən]
store [stɔr]	walk [wɔk]	used [juzd]	really* ['ri li]
people [pi:pəl]	tell [tel]	helpful* ['hɛlp fəl]	definitely* ['dɛf ə nɪtl̩ li]
report [rɔ:tɔrpɔ:t]	whisper ['wɪsəpər]	sorry* ['sɔri]	finally ['faɪnlɪ]
subway ['sʌbweɪ]	slept [slɛpt]	disappointed [ <sup>ə</sup> dɪspɔɪntɪd]	usually ['juʒuəlɪ]
table ['teɪbəl]	read [rid]	excited [ɪk'saɪdɪd]	very* ['vɛri]
door [dɔ:r]	heard [hərd]	favorite* ['feɪvərit]	probably* ['prɒbrəbl̩i]
shoes [ʃuz]	know [nəʊ]	beautiful* ['bju:dəfəl]	occasionally [ə'keɪʒənlɪ]

Note: All words in this chapter followed by \* are part of the Word of the Week series. This means there is a video that goes over, in depth, the pronunciation of each of these words. See the chart at the end of the chapter for links to those videos.

As you probably noticed in the chart above, many content words have more than one syllable. That means they have an unstressed syllable. What does it mean to have an unstressed syllable in a stressed word?

Unstressed syllables, even in stressed words, are just unstressed syllables. Nothing special! They should still be very quick, flatter, quieter, and with less energy in the voice.

<p><b>Video 9.2 — Content Words</b> See a video explanation of the four kinds of content words: verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ay8">engl.io/ay8</a>
<p><b>Video 9.3 — Verbs</b> This video goes over one type of content words, verbs.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aya">engl.io/aya</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 9.2 — Content Words.

You'll hear each word twice. Many of them are just one syllable. Notice how that syllable is clear and has the melodic shape of a stressed syllable, an up-down shape ↗. The other words are two-syllable words. Again, the stressed syllable is clear and has the up-down shape of a stressed syllable—stressed syllables in content words must be clear. Imitate this shape of the voice. The unstressed syllables are noticeably shorter and less clear.

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 9.3 — Content Words, Slow Motion.

You'll hear each word once, slowed down to 50% speed. The slower speed makes it easier to study the intonation: the curve up then down in the voice ↗.

The downward curve is more obvious and longer. Repeat the words back in slow motion and feel the shape of the voice. Do this several times, then go back and work on the previous audio file where the words are at regular pace. Keep the right intonation, just do it a bit faster. When you go back to regular pace, try not to think 'now I'm talking normally' — you want to break your habits of how you talk. Think of it as a melodic exercise that you're going to do faster.

<p><b>Audio 9.2 — Content Words</b> books, school, dinner, run, sat, eat, blue, old, happy, quickly, always, often</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ayc">engl.io/ayc</a>
<p><b>Audio 9.3 — Content Words, Slow Motion</b> books, school, dinner, run, sat, eat, blue, old, happy, quickly, always, often</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/aye">engl.io/aye</a>

Sentences can have more than one stressed word. For example: They're already here. This sentence has two content words, the adverb *already* and the noun *here*. The syllables '-read-' and 'here' are stressed, so they are longer, clearer, and have the shape of a stressed syllable.

Sometimes one stressed word in a sentence will be clearer than others. A native speaker might say "I need to leave at three," and make *three* the loudest and most clear word. Or, a native speaker might say "I need to leave at three," and stress *need* the most. That might signal a clarification:

>> Do you want to leave at *three*? [Is that convenient?]

>> I *need* to leave at three. [I don't have any other options, if I leave after that I'll be late for an important meeting.]

*There is no one right way to stress a sentence.* It depends on what piece of information is most important to the speaker.

#### Video 9.4 — Which word is the most stressed?

Can you identify which word is the most stressed? Which one do you think is the clearest, the longest?



[engl.io/ayh](http://engl.io/ayh)

#### Test Yourself: Audio 9.4 — Which Word is the Most Stressed?

You'll hear ten sentences. Which word do you think is the most stressed of all the stressed words? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

#### Audio 9.4 — Which Word is the Most Stressed?

It's time to go.

How was it?

We're gonna be late.

What are you doing this weekend?

That's too bad.

It's too early to tell.

I need the report by end-of-day tomorrow.

Excuse me.

We heard you bought a new house.

Class starts at 3:30.



[engl.io/ayk](http://engl.io/ayk)

Though there is no one right way to stress a sentence, we can make a **generalization** about intonation and statements. **The melody of a sentence will fall from the beginning to the end.** Though stressed words will ‘pop out’ from the melodic line of a sentence ↗, stressed words at the beginning of a sentence will generally be more stressed, clearer, and more energized than stressed words at the end of a sentence. By the end of a sentence, even for a stressed word, the volume can be quiet and some of the energy of the voice gone, just like in an unstressed syllable.

### Video 9.5 — Word Stress and Sentence Position

See how stressed words at the end of a sentence are different from stressed words at the beginning of a sentence using speech analysis software. When two words are compared, the difference in volume and energy is great.



[engl.io/aym](http://engl.io/aym)

Lots of words can be either content words or function words, depending on how they work in the sentence. For example, the word ‘by’ can be a preposition, like in the phrase “Stand by the edge.” But, it can also be an adverb: “She lives close by.” In the first sentence, the word ‘by’ will be very fast. It’s unstressed:

↗ · · ↗

Stand by the edge.

But in the second sentence, it will be longer and have shape in the voice:

· ↗ ↗ ↗

She lives close by.

How can you know if you should be stressing ‘by’ or not, or other words like it? Don’t worry about that too much — it’s not necessary to be a grammar guru. The more English you listen to and imitate, the better you’ll be at doing it naturally. I would say most of my students actually know intuitively which syllables should be the most stressed. The problem is that they stress them the wrong way: flat and harsh, instead of with a softer curve up and down in the voice. The other main problem is making the unstressed syllables too long and clear. Again, this isn’t a problem with knowing *which* syllables are unstressed, but with not making them fast enough to contrast with the stressed syllables.

### Intonation of Sentences: Up or Down?

Most statements follow this trend of decreased pitch, volume, and energy. You just learned this by seeing how words at the end of a sentence are lower in pitch and less clear than words at the beginning of a sentence.

But some sentences don't go down in pitch. Sentences or parts of sentences that lead into another thought often go up in pitch, to signal that there's more to say.

For example:

We found out the flight was cancelled, so everyone got upset.

In the first thought group, the part before the comma, I may make the pitch of my voice go up to lead into the second thought: ↑, ↗

### Listen: Audio 9.5 — One Thought Leading to Another.

You'll hear a phrase where the first half goes up in pitch, leading to the next. Then you'll hear just that first part of the phrase three times. To Americans, it sounds like there is more to say, it sounds like the speaker is not finished, that the thought is unresolved. Then you'll hear the second half of the sentence three times. This half goes down in pitch. It sounds complete.

#### Audio 9.5 — One Thought Leading to Another

We found out the flight was cancelled, so everyone got upset.



[engl.io/ayp](http://engl.io/ayp)

Also, lists will have words or phrases that go up in pitch. Each item on the list goes up in pitch to signal there's more to come; the list isn't done. The last item goes down in pitch to show that the thought is complete.

For example:

We went for a run, ↑  
we ate breakfast, ↑  
and we started to work. ↗

#### Video 9.6 — Intonation and Lists

Each item of the list goes up in pitch except the last one, which goes down.



[engl.io/ays](http://engl.io/ays)

Along with statements, questions that can't be answered with 'yes' or 'no' follow this trend of decreasing pitch, volume, and energy.

For example:

How are you? ↘

What are you doing? ↘

What's your name? ↘

What time? ↘

Questions that can be answered with a 'yes' or 'no', however, go up in pitch at the end.

Are you okay? ↑

Are you sure? ↑

Were you there? ↑

Are you hungry? ↑

### **Video 9.7 — Intonation and Questions**

Learn several examples of pitch going up at the end of yes/no questions.



[engl.io/ayu](http://engl.io/ayu)

### **Video 9.8 — What time?**

This is not a yes/no question, so the pitch goes down at the end.



[engl.io/axr](http://engl.io/axr)

### **Video 9.9 — Are you okay?**

This is a yes/no question, so the pitch goes up at the end.



[engl.io/ayz](http://engl.io/ayz)

### **Video 9.10 — Are you sure?**

This is a yes/no question, so the pitch goes up at the end.



[engl.io/az2](http://engl.io/az2)

Tag questions are little questions we add to the end of statements. They are always yes/no questions, so they go up in pitch:

It's nice out ↗, isn't it? ↗  
 You're done ↗, right? ↗

The intonation of a sentence does affect the meaning. If the intonation goes up, it means you're expecting an answer or response. For example, "They're leaving now?" ↗ When the pitch goes up at the end, it shows that you don't know if they're leaving now, and you're asking someone. If you said it with the pitch going down, it shows that you do know and you're telling someone: "They're leaving now." ↘

### **Test Yourself: Audio 9.6 — Up or Down?**

Which phrases go up in pitch (question), and which down (statement)? The final punctuation is left out — just go by what you hear. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

#### **Audio 9.6 — Up or Down?**

You  
 Yes  
 What time  
 Are you hungry  
 No  
 This one  
 They're late  
 No  
 This one  
 They're late



[engl.io/az4](http://engl.io/az4)

This chapter has focused on the words that we stress in a sentence, the content words. The next chapter does the opposite — words that are not only unstressed, but reduced.

#### **Video 9.11 — Helpful**

Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.



[engl.io/az7](http://engl.io/az7)

#### **Video 9.12 — Sorry**

Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.



[engl.io/awp](http://engl.io/awp)

<b>Video 9.13 — Favorite</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/azb">engl.io/azb</a>
<b>Video 9.14 — Beautiful</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/aw5">engl.io/aw5</a>
<b>Video 9.15 — Really</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/azg">engl.io/azg</a>
<b>Video 9.16 — Definitely</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/azj">engl.io/azj</a>
<b>Video 9.17 — Very</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/azn">engl.io/azn</a>
<b>Video 9.18 — Probably</b> Study the pronunciation of this word in depth.	 <a href="http://engl.io/awg">engl.io/awg</a>

## Chapter 10

# Unstressed Words and Words that Reduce

In the previous chapter, you learned about the general intonation of phrases, and which words should be stressed. Now it's time to study words that are unstressed: function words. Good American English includes function words that are said extremely quickly. Often, for the most advanced students, shortening the short syllables is one of the last things we have to work on. Some people can't believe how short they can or should make a word — but please believe it! These words should be short, short, short. They don't need to be clear. As you drill them, keep as much relaxation in your face and neck as possible. The more relaxed you are, the more easily you can make these words quickly.

Function words are articles, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, particles, and helping verbs. These will generally be unstressed, so they will be faster, lower in volume, and flatter in pitch than stressed syllables. They will be less clear than the stressed syllables in a sentence.

### **Listen: Audio 10.1 — Stressed vs. Unstressed.**

You'll hear the words 'if' and 'on' stressed and unstressed. These words don't reduce—none of the sounds change or are dropped—but they still sound quite different when stressed than unstressed. The unstressed version is quieter, shorter, and has less energy and shape in the voice. It's little more mumbled. You'll hear each pair, stressed then unstressed, twice.

**Audio 10.1 — Stressed vs. Unstressed**

if [ɪf] stressed, [ɪf] unstressed  
on [ən] stressed, [ən] unstressed



[engl.io/a12](http://engl.io/a12)

Notice the IPA is the same for the stressed and unstressed versions. That is because no sounds change—but they still sound so different. The IPA doesn't capture qualities like the shape or energy of the voice, or extremely quick syllables. Don't worry, as you work through this chapter, you'll start to get a feel for how these unstressed and reduced words should sound.

There are several kinds of function words. The words below are just examples for each category, not full lists.

**pronouns** — I, we, she, me, us, myself, herself, my, your, our, mine, theirs

**prepositions** — on, in, at, below, to, through, from, till, since, by

**conjunctions** — and, but, or, for, while

**auxiliary verbs** — am, are, can, will, has, have, did, do, could, should, would, might

**particles** — no, not, as

**determiners** — the, a, an, some, this, that, these, those

Remember, some words can be either a function word or a content word, depending on how it works in the sentence. For example, the word 'some' can be a determiner, a function word, like in the phrase "I need some money." It can also be an adjective, or a content word, like in the phrase "Some people think so." In the first sentence, the word 'some' will be very fast:

· ↗ · ↗ ·

I need some money.

But in the second sentence, it will be longer and have shape in the voice:

↗ ↗ · ↗ ·

Some people think so.

How can you know if you should be stressing 'some' or not, or other words like it? Don't worry about that too much—it's not necessary to be a grammar guru. The more English you listen to and imitate, the better you'll be at doing it naturally.

Some words go further than being unstressed: they're reduced. When something **reduces**, that means **a sound will change or be dropped**. Generally, only function words will reduce. Content words are too important. So, a reduced syllable is a kind of unstressed syllable.

Reductions are, hands down, one of my favorite things to teach about American English pronunciation.

What does 'hands down' mean? It means unquestionably, easily, obviously. This idiom comes from horse racing. If a jockey is so sure that he'll win a race, if he's so far ahead, he can drop his hands and loosen the reigns on the horse. He can relax because he's so far ahead, and he will unquestionable win the race.

This is because it can make such a big difference in a student sounding American. Comfortably reducing words, and linking them into the sentence, will transform the character of your speech.

**Example:**

for [fɔːr] — how the word is pronounced by itself; fully pronounced

for [fər] — how the word is pronounced in a sentence, reduced

them [ðɛm] — how the word is pronounced by itself; fully pronounced

them [əm] — how the word is pronounced in a sentence, reduced

'For' reduces because a sound changes: the vowel becomes the schwa [ə]. Changing a full vowel to the schwa is a common reduction for many words.

'Them' reduces because a sound changes and a sound is dropped: the vowel changes to the schwa [ə], and the TH sound [ð] is dropped.

### **Listen: Audio 10.2 — Stressed vs. Reduced.**

You'll hear the words 'for' and 'them', stressed and reduced. The reduced version is quieter, shorter, and has less energy and shape to the voice. It's a little more mumbled. You'll hear each pair, stressed then reduced, twice.

#### **Audio 10.2 — Stressed vs. Reduced**

for [fɔːr], [fər]

them [ðɛm], [əm]



[engl.io/a14](http://engl.io/a14)

Having listened to both audio samples above, I think you know: reduced or unstressed words sound quite different from the same word stressed. The challenge will be for you feel comfortable making these words unstressed or reduced. You might feel that they're not clear enough, or 'good English'. Some students think, "If I pronounce everything fully and clearly, that will be better." I cannot say it too many times: **that is not true**. Perfect American English is about the **contrast** between clear stressed syllables, and quicker, less important, less clear unstressed syllables. If you fully pronounce every word, you can't sound American. And, you might be harder to understand.

If you don't make the right syllables unstressed or reduced, important contrast with stressed syllables will be missing. I hope I've convinced you how important this is! The good news is, speech becomes easier when you reduce common function words because you get to simplify them.

### **ARE, OR, FOR, and YOUR**

ARE fully pronounced: [aɹ]; reduced [əɹ]

Let's start with *are*. Remember, the R will overtake the schwa, it's a syllabic consonant. This means you don't need to think of making a separate schwa sound, just a very quick R sound. So, *are* is three letters, but you only need to make one sound!

Don't reduce *are* if it's the last word of the sentence. For example:  
I don't know where they are.

<p><b>Video 10.1 — ARE Reduction</b> Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a16">engl.io/a16</a>
<p><b>Video 10.2 — Are you Sure?</b> We studied this in the last chapter when studying intonation. Now pay attention to the reduction of <i>are</i>.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/az2">engl.io/az2</a>
<p><b>Video 10.3 — Are you Okay?</b> We studied this in the last chapter when studying intonation. Now pay attention to the reduction of <i>are</i>. Lots of questions in conversation start with this word!</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/ayz">engl.io/ayz</a>

OR fully pronounced: [ɔr]; reduced: [ər]

Fully pronounced, *or* does not sound like *are*. But reduced, they sound exactly the same, the schwa-R sound made very quickly. It's ok that these two words sound the same. Because of the context the sentence provides, it will be clear which word you're saying.

#### **Video 10.4 — OR Reduction**

Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.



[engl.io/a1c](http://engl.io/a1c)

FOR fully pronounced: [fɔr]; reduced: [fər]

*For*, fully pronounced, sounds just like the number *four* [fɔr]. But, in a sentence, we reduce *for* by changing the vowel to the schwa. Now the word is extremely fast. The number *four* won't reduce in a sentence—the vowel doesn't change. This is because *four* is a noun, and nouns are content words. Content words don't reduce. Start with an F, and pull the tongue quickly back for the R.

Don't reduce *for* if it's the last word of the sentence. For example:  
That's what it's for.

#### **Video 10.5 — FOR Reduction**

Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.



[engl.io/a1f](http://engl.io/a1f)

#### **Video 10.6 — For Sure**

Study the reduction in this in-depth phrase study. You can also study linking consonant to consonant.



[engl.io/a1g](http://engl.io/a1g)

YOUR fully pronounced: [jɔr] (or [jʊər] or [jouə], slight variations); reduced: [jər]  
Both fully pronounced and in reduction, this word sounds just like the contraction *you're*. You don't need to think of a vowel sound here, just the Y sound going straight into the R sound. Like all reduced words, this word should be said very quickly!

**Video 10.7 — YOUR Reduction**

Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.



[engl.io/a1k](http://engl.io/a1k)

Just like in Chapter 6, where we practiced unstressed syllables by themselves, practice these function words by themselves. Challenge yourself: how quickly can you make them? Then put them back into the sentences you're working on. Remember to always link your function words to the words around them. They shouldn't feel separate.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.3 — ARE, OR, FOR, YOUR.**

You'll hear each word fully pronounced, then a sample sentence fragment where it is reduced. Then you'll hear the reduced word three times. How short can you make the word? Don't forget, you don't have to fully energize the voice; experiment with using less air. Then you'll hear the sentence fragment again. Try to make the word just as short in the sentence as it was on its own.

**Audio 10.3 — ARE, OR, FOR, YOUR**

are, are you there? [ər jə ðeər]  
 or, small or large? [smɔ:l ər lɑ:rg]  
 for, for school [fɔ:r skul]  
 your, your paper [yɔ:r pɛr]



[engl.io/a1m](http://engl.io/a1m)

Sometimes you do want to fully pronounce a word that normally reduces. You might stress for clarity.

Example:

>> You broke Sara's phone?  
 >> No, YOUR phone. Sorry!

**AT and THAT**

These two words have the AA as in BAT [æ] vowel when fully pronounced, but that often reduces to the schwa sound [ə] instead. The pronunciation of the final T depends on the next word. If it links into a vowel or diphthong, it's a Flap T like in *at a* or *that a*. If it links into a word that begins with a consonant, or it doesn't

link into anything (at the end of a thought group), it will be a Stop T. For example *at my* or *that my*. As always, these words should be very fast!

AT fully pronounced: [æt]; reduced: [ət]

THAT fully pronounced: [ðæt]; reduced: [ðət]

*At* is a preposition, which is a function word. But *that* can be used many different ways. It can be a pronoun, adjective, adverb, or a conjunction. In some cases we'll reduce it, and in others, not.

Don't reduce *that* if:

- You're using *that* with *after* or *before*, to show a sequence in time. Examples: After that, we went to the movie. Before that, I had never even heard of him.
- You're comparing with *this*. Examples: This one works better than that one. This is hers and that's mine.
- You're using it as an adverb. Here *that* is indicating an amount, a degree of something, and will come before an adjective or adverb: that much, that big, that small, that important, that hard.
- It's at the end of a sentence.

For other uses of *that*, you can reduce it.

Examples where you can reduce *that*:

I thought that you knew.

This is the one that I got.

That's hard.

Turn it up so that we can all hear.

<p><b>Video 10.8 — AT Reduction</b> Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a1p">engl.io/a1p</a>
<p><b>Video 10.9 — THAT Reduction</b> Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a1s">engl.io/a1s</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.4 — AT and THAT.

First you'll hear a sample sentence, but don't repeat yet. Next you'll hear just the word, twice. It's very fast when it's reduced! Make it just as fast as you hear it. Then you'll hear a sentence fragment linking the word into other words, twice. Can you understand what you're hearing? Say it like you hear it, not like you *think* the words should be pronounced. These function words are incredibly fast. Then you'll hear the whole sentence. Can you put it all together?

#### Audio 10.4 — AT and THAT

that [ðət]

that it (Flap T to link!) [ðə\_dɪt]

thought that it [θɔt] ðə\_dɪt]

We thought that it would work. [wi θɔt] ðə\_dɪt] wʊd wɜk]

at [ət]

at the (Stop T!) [ət] ðə]

we're at the [wɪə\_ət] ðə]

We're at the movies. [wɪə\_ət] ðə 'mu viz]

that [ðət]

that I (Flap T!) [ðə\_dai]

bad that I [bæd] ðə\_dai]

The movie was so bad that I left. [ðə 'mu vi wəz sou bæd]  
ðə\_dai lɛft]



[engl.io/a1v](http://engl.io/a1v)

#### Dropping the H, THEM, and OF

Some function words reduce by dropping the first sound. This applies to function words that begin with H that are pronouns (him, her, his, he), function words that begin with H that are helping verbs (have, has, had), and the word *them*.

The words *them* and *him* will sound the same in reduction, both reducing to [əm]:

I made him a card. [aɪ'meɪd\_əm ə'kaɪd]

I made them a card. [aɪ'meɪd\_əm ə'kaɪd]

The words *have* and *of* also sound the same when reduced. There are two reductions for them, one with and one without the V sound. Either reduction is ok, you'll hear native speakers do both. Because they sound the same in speech, sometimes native speakers write them incorrectly, for example, "I should of." With *should*, *would*, and *could*, the following word is always *have*, not *of*.

Notice that many of the vowels reduce to the schwa [ə] sound:

Word	Full Pronunciation	Reduction
of	[ʌv]	[əv] or [ə]
have	[hæv]	[əv] or [ə]
had	[hæd]	[əd]
has	[hæz]	[əz]
he	[hi]	[i]
his	[hɪz]	[iz]
her	[hɜː]	[ər]
him	[hɪm]	[əm]
them	[ðəm]	[əm]

When you drop a beginning sound, make sure to link that word to the word before. It should just sound like an extra syllable at the end of that word. “Give her” should sound just like “giver” ['gɪv ə].

With all of the dropped H reductions, and the *them* reduction, we’ve changed the word so it starts with a vowel instead of a consonant. Keep that in mind when linking to the word before—if it ends with a T, it will make a Flap T:

got her ['gɑ\_dər]

met them ['mɛ\_dəm]

<b>Video 10.10 — Dropping the H Reduction</b> Hear several example sentences to practice this kind of reduction.	 <a href="http://engl.io/a1x">engl.io/a1x</a>
<b>Video 10.11 — I have a Cold</b> Study the dropped H in this phrase study video. Also, study the difference between ‘cold’ and ‘code’ — the difference is the Dark L!	 <a href="http://engl.io/a1z">engl.io/a1z</a>
<b>Video 10.12 — I have to Go</b> Study the dropped H in this phrase study video.	 <a href="http://engl.io/a21">engl.io/a21</a>

<p><b>Video 10.13 — THEM Reduction</b> Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.</p>	 <a href="engl.io/a23">engl.io/a23</a>
<p><b>Video 10.14 — OF Reduction</b> Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.</p>	 <a href="engl.io/a27">engl.io/a27</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.5 — Dropping the H.

First you'll hear the word separated from the word before, fully pronounced. Then you'll hear it reduced, with the H dropped, linked to the word before four times. The H-word should sound like an unstressed syllable. The sound flows forward, no break between words.

<p><b>Audio 10.5 — Dropping the H</b></p> <p>him: tell him [tel_əm] have: would have [wud_əv] his: on his [ɔn_iz] her: by her [baɪ_ɪə] (sounds just like ‘buyer’!)</p>	 <a href="engl.io/a2b">engl.io/a2b</a>
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### Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.6 — THEM.

First you'll hear a sentence fragment. Then it will be broken down, each part twice: just the word *them* reduced, then the link (the consonant before with the reduced *them*). Then you'll hear the whole phrase again. Keep it linked. *Them* should just feel like an unstressed syllable at the end of the word before.

<p><b>Audio 10.6 — THEM</b></p> <p>gave them [geɪv_əm] need them [nid_əm]</p>	 <a href="engl.io/a2e">engl.io/a2e</a>
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### Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.7 — OF.

You'll hear both reductions here. First you'll hear the phrase with the V sound at the end. You'll hear just the reduced *of* twice, then the phrase again twice. Next you'll hear the phrase without the V sound. You'll hear the reduced *of* twice, here

it's just the schwa sound! Then the phrase two more times. Remember, with the *of* reduction, it's ok to leave the V on, or not. Both will sound nice if you link them to the words before and make them as fast as you can.

### Audio 10.7 — OF

sort of [sɔ̄\_pr̄s]

sort of [sɔ̄\_pr̄s\_ə]

kind of [kaind\_əv]

kind of [kaind\_ə]



[engl.io/a2g](http://engl.io/a2g)

### CAN

CAN fully pronounced: [kæn]; reduced [kən]

The word *can* can be a function word or a content word; most of the time it's a function word. When it's a function word, we reduce it. *Can* is a function word when it's a helping verb, or auxiliary verb. That means it's not the main verb in the sentence:

"I can help you."

The main verb here is *help*, so *can* is the helping verb. That means it will reduce.

>> Who can help?

>> I can.

Here, in "I can," it's the main verb, so it doesn't reduce.

"We can tomatoes every summer."

Here, it's the main verb, so it doesn't reduce. In this case, it means to put something in a can, not able to do something.

Usually *can* is a helping verb. When we reduce *can*, we change the vowel from the AA as in BAT [æ] vowel to the schwa [ə]. The N consonant [n] is a syllabic consonant, which means it takes over the schwa sound. You don't need to try to make a separate schwa sound, just go straight from [k] to [n].

### Video 10.15 — CAN Reduction

Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.



[engl.io/a2i](http://engl.io/a2i)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.8 — CAN.

You'll hear *can* fully pronounced, then the reduction. Then you'll hear the word before with *can*. Again, it just sounds like an unstressed syllable at the end of the word before: very quick, not fully or clearly pronounced. We just need a quick [k] sound and [n] sound to know it's *can*. Then you'll hear the whole sentence. The main verbs will be much more clearly pronounced.

#### Audio 10.8 — CAN

I can be there. [aɪ kən bi ðεər]

We can try. [wi kən tuəɪ] ('We can' sounds like 'weaken'!)



[engl.io/a2k](http://engl.io/a2k)

### TO, YOU, DO, and DOES

TO fully pronounced: [tu]; reduced [tə] or [də]

To will almost always be reduced by changing the vowel to the schwa [ə]. The T can be a True T or a Flap T. If you don't want to bother with thinking about the T, just always make a True T. It will still be a great reduction with the schwa [ə]. If you want to smooth out your speech even more, use the Flap T when the sound before is voiced, like in "I'm running to the store" or "I'm taking Anna to the party."

#### Video 10.16 — TO Reduction

Hear several example sentences to practice reducing 'to'.



[engl.io/a2n](http://engl.io/a2n)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.9 — TO.

You'll hear a longer phrase with a *to* reduction. Don't try to imitate yet, first let's break it up. You'll hear just the word *to* with the word before three times. Listen to see if the T is a True T or a Flap T. The words should flow together with no break. *To* should sound unstressed, less important. Then try the whole phrase.

#### Audio 10.9 — TO

going to ['gou ɪŋ tə] (this can reduce further to 'gonna' - you'll learn more about that soon), I'm going to be late. [aɪm 'gou ɪŋ tə bi leɪt]

about to [ə'baut| tə], I'm about to leave. [aɪm ə'baut| tə liv]  
it to [ɪt| tə], Give it to my assistant. [gɪ\_vɪt| tə maɪ\_je'sɪs tənt]



[engl.io/a2p](http://engl.io/a2p)

YOU fully pronounced: [ju]; reduced [jə]

This reduction is so common that you've probably seen it written: ya. See ya! You gets reduced in common phrases like "What do you\_\_\_": "What do you want to do?" "What do you think?" Simply change the OO as in BOO [u] vowel to the schwa [ə].

### Video 10.17 — See You

Study the *you* reduction in this in-depth phrase study. This is a very common phrase we use when saying good-bye to a friend.



[engl.io/a2s](http://engl.io/a2s)

DO fully pronounced: [du]; reduced [də]

DOES fully pronounced: [dʌz]; reduced [dəz]

The words *do* and *does* can be reduced in a question. For example, "Do you want to go?", "Does she know?"

Exception: 'Do' is not reduced in questions if it is the main verb. For example, "What does she do?" 'Do' is the main verb, and it should be fully pronounced.

In a statement, 'do' or 'does' can be the main verb or added for emphasis. This means we want to stress it, not reduce it:

I do want to know.

She does odd jobs for us.

### Video 10.18 — DO and DOES Reduction

Hear several example sentences to practice reducing these words.



[engl.io/a2v](http://engl.io/a2v)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.10 — DO and DOES.

You'll hear a longer phrase with *do* or *does*. Don't try to imitate yet, first let's break it up. You'll hear just the reduced word on its own, twice. Then you'll hear it with the word after, twice—make sure the two words link and flow together. Imitate it just as you hear it. Then try the whole phrase.

**Audio 10.10 — DO and DOES**

do: do you [də jə], Do you want to go? [də jə 'wʌn ə gou]  
 does: does she [dəz ʃi], Does she know? [dəz ʃi nou]



[engl.io/a2w](http://engl.io/a2w)

**A, AN, and AND**

A fully pronounced: [eɪ]; reduced [ə]

A is another word that will reduce to just the schwa, just like *have* and *of*. It's an article; always link it to the next word for smoother speech. So, 'a cross' should sound just like 'across' [ə'kros].

AN fully pronounced: [æn]; reduced [ən]

AND fully pronounced: [ænd]; reduced [ən]

The D sound is dropped in the *and* reduction, so *and* and *an* sound the same. Remember that N is a syllabic consonant, so it absorbs the schwa—just think of making an N sound. Writing can reflect this reduction. You've probably seen something like "Cookies 'n Cream". It's not appropriate in professional writing, but it's always appropriate in speech.

**Video 10.19 — AND Reduction**

Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.



[engl.io/a32](http://engl.io/a32)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.11 — AND.**

You'll hear a sentence with the word *and*, but don't try to repeat it yet. First let's break it down. You'll hear just the word *and* three times. Then you'll hear *and* with the word before three times. It's linked; *and* should just feel like an unstressed syllable at the end of the word before. Then you'll hear *and* with the word before it and after it, three times. Hear how it links those two words together with an N sound. This is an important idea: you can use these function words to link other words together, making the sentence smoother. Then you can try the whole sentence.

**Audio 10.11 — AND**

And, cold and, cold and windy [kould‿ən 'wɪn di], It's cold and windy.

and, cats and, cats and dogs [kæts‿ən dɒgz], It's raining cats and dogs.

and, Peter and, Peter and Kelly ['pi dər‿ən 'kel i], Peter and Kelly are moving in.



[engl.io/a34](http://engl.io/a34)

**THE**

THE fully pronounced: ði

reduced: ði or ðə

The word *the* has two possible pronunciations. If the next word begins with a vowel or diphthong, use this pronunciation: [ði]. For example, “the olives”, “the other”. If the next word begins with a consonant, then the pronunciation is [ðə]: “the last”, “the best”.

**Video 10.20 — How to Pronounce THE**

Hear several example sentences that go over the two different pronunciations for this word.

[engl.io/a37](http://engl.io/a37)

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.12 — THE.**

For both pronunciations, you'll first hear the word *the*, then two phrases with *the*. You'll hear each part three times. Make the article as short as you can.

**Audio 10.12 — THE**

the [ði], the other [ði‿jʌz ər], the earth [ði‿jɜːθ]

the [ðə], the best [ðə‿bɛst], the worst [ðə‿wɜːst]



[engl.io/a38](http://engl.io/a38)

**AS, WAS, and BECAUSE**

AS fully pronounced: [æz]; reduced [əz]

WAS fully pronounced: [wʌz]; reduced [wəz]

BECAUSE fully pronounced: [bɪ'kɔz]; reduced [bɪ'kəz] or [kəz]

All of these words reduce to end in a very quick [əz]. Some students from Asia have a habit of pulling the tongue back for *was*, making it sound like there's an R mixed in. The tongue tip should be forward for all of these words.

The word *because* can reduce two ways. Either one is ok to use; they are interchangeable.

<p><b>Video 10.21 — BECAUSE Reduction</b> Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a3c">engl.io/a3c</a>
<p><b>Video 10.22 — The AS and WAS Reductions</b> Hear several example sentences to practice reducing this word.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a3e">engl.io/a3e</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.13 — AS, WAS, BECAUSE.

You'll hear a phrase, but don't practice it yet. First break it down. You'll hear the reduced word three times. Make it as short as you hear it. Then you'll hear it linked to the next word. Again, make it quick, a smooth transition to the next word. Then try the whole phrase.

<p><b>Audio 10.13 — AS, WAS, BECAUSE</b></p> <p>as, as I [əz‿aɪ], as I thought.      as, as good [əz gʊd], You're as good as her.      was, was he [wəz‿i], Was he there?      was, was good [wəz gʊd], It was good.      because, because I'm [bɪ'kəz‿aɪm], because I'm tired      because, because they [bɪ'kəz ðeɪ], because they live too far out of town.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a3g">engl.io/a3g</a>
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### SHOULD, WOULD, and COULD

SHOULD fully pronounced: [ʃʊd]; reduced [ʃəd] or [ʃə]

COULD fully pronounced: [kʊd]; reduced [kəd] or [kə]

WOULD fully pronounced: [wʊd]; reduced [wəd] or [wə]

These three words can all be reduced by changing the vowel to the schwa and saying the word quickly. You'll notice some Americans go even further, reducing more by dropping the D sound. Dropping the D only works when the next sound is a consonant, for example: "could we", "should see", "would John". If the next

sound is a vowel or diphthong, make a quick flap of the tongue for the D and connect the words.

### **Video 10.23 — Should, Would, and Could**

Hear several example sentences to practice reducing these words.



[engl.io/a3j](http://engl.io/a3j)

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 10.14 — SHOULD, WOULD, and COULD.**

You'll hear several examples, some where you'll want to keep the D, because the next word begins with a vowel or diphthong, and some where you can drop the D. You'll hear sentence fragments, then the whole sentence, each twice.

### **Audio 10.14 — SHOULD, WOULD, and COULD**

should, should I [ʃəd\_aɪ], should I try?  
 should, should we [ʃə\_wi], should we leave?  
 could, could I [kəd\_aɪ], could I try?  
 would, would we [wə\_wi], would we be late?  
 would, would he [wəd\_i], would he care?



[engl.io/a3k](http://engl.io/a3k)

### **Test yourself: Audio 10.15 — Is the Word Reduced?**

You'll hear fourteen words. They are all words studied in this chapter, but some are reduced and some are not. Which words are reduced? All the words are listed in alphabetical order below — that is **not the order on the audio file**. First, just write down if the word is reduced, 'yes' or 'no'. Then listen several more times, and try to write down which word you're hearing. Answers in the Answers Appendix.

### **Audio 10.15 — Is the Word Reduced?**

and, as, at, because, can, could, do, for, or, should, them,  
 to, your, was



[engl.io/a3n](http://engl.io/a3n)

### **A Note on Speaking and Writing**

In some styles of writing, you'll see some of these spoken English reductions written. For example, you might see 'sorta' instead of 'sort of'. Though it's

important to use spoken reductions like ‘sorta’, I recommend not using these writing reductions as they are very informal and not appropriate for most situations.

## Chapter 11

# Contractions

A contraction is when we take two words and condense them down into one: did not → didn't.

They're used in writing and speech, both professional and casual. Some students don't want to use them because they think they aren't clear enough. That's not true! They're very clear, and they're necessary to use if you want to sound American. (Look, that paragraph had six contractions!)

Why do we use contractions? Contractions allow us to smooth out speech and make some function words shorter. They serve the same purpose as the function words that reduce—they allow us to have shorter words to contrast with the longer, more important words and syllables.

### N'T Contractions

Contractions with 'not' are common: didn't, shouldn't, wouldn't, won't, couldn't, isn't, aren't, wasn't, weren't, haven't, hasn't, hadn't, doesn't. Each of these words is a contraction of the word before the N'T and 'not': didn't = did not. There is one exception: Will not = won't, not willn't. Willn't isn't a word. I don't know how or why this happened!

The N'T sound is interesting: combine the nasality of the N with the stop of the T. The last syllable should feel really abrupt because of this stop quality. There is no release of the T.

You'll also hear Americans reduce further, and drop the stop quality of the T when the contraction is not at the end of a thought group. Then it's just an N sound linking right into the next word:

I wasn't there. [aɪ 'wʌz ən'θeər]

However, I encourage students to try to put the stop quality into the nasal N sound to make the N'T contractions clearer, at least at the beginning of your work on contractions.

<p><b>Video 11.1 — N'T Contractions</b> See the n't sound in action in all of the N'T contractions.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a41">engl.io/a41</a>
<p><b>Video 11.2 — Interview a Broadcaster: Rehema Ellis</b> NBC Newscaster Rehema Ellis uses many N'T contractions in this interview. A great example of how important they are in real life, conversational American English.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a44">engl.io/a44</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.1 — N'T Contractions.

You'll hear each N'T contraction (except for *can't*, which comes next) and a sample sentence. Notice how there is no ending T sound, just a shortened, cut-off N sound. Try it yourself.

<p><b>Audio 11.1 — N'T Contractions</b></p> <p><b>is not</b> = isn't ['iz ənt  ]: Isn't it nice?</p> <p><b>are not</b> = aren't [aʊnt  ]: We aren't late.</p> <p><b>was not</b> = wasn't [wʌz ənt  ]: It wasn't bad.</p> <p><b>were not</b> = weren't [wɜːnt  ]: We weren't there.</p> <p><b>have not</b> = haven't ['hæv ənt  ]: I haven't seen it.</p> <p><b>has not</b> = hasn't ['hæz ənt  ]: He hasn't seen it.</p> <p><b>had not</b> = hadn't ['hæd   ənt  ]: We hadn't heard that.</p> <p><b>will not</b> = won't [wount  ]: I won't go.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a48">engl.io/a48</a>
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**would not** = wouldn't ['wʊd|ənt|]: I wouldn't say that.  
**could not** = couldn't ['kʊd|ənt|]: I couldn't see.  
**should not** = shouldn't ['ʃʊd|ənt|]: I shouldn't say this.  
**do not** = don't [dəʊnt|]: Don't say that.  
**does not** = doesn't ['dʌz ənt|]: It doesn't say.  
**did not** = didn't ['dɪd|ənt|]: We didn't know.

### Can vs. Can't

*Can't* (cannot) is one of the hardest contractions ... if we don't really pronounce the T, how is it different from *can*?

There are two ways to tell *can* and *can't* apart.

1. Often, *can* is reduced. That means the vowel changes from the AA as in BAT [æ] vowel to the schwa [ə] sound, [kən]. The vowel in *can't* [kænt|] never reduces.
2. Just like with the other N'T contractions above, we can identify *can't* by how abrupt it is. *Can't* is shorter and more abrupt than *can* when *can* is not reduced and has a full vowel.

CAN unreduced [kæn] reduced [kən]	CAN'T [kænt ]
---	------------------

These differences are subtle and can be really confusing when English isn't your native language. Even native speakers need to ask for clarification on *can* and *can't* at times. It's ok if you have to do this too.

### Video 11.3 — CAN vs. CAN'T

Though it can be really hard to hear the difference in these two words, this video will help.



[engl.io/a4a](http://engl.io/a4a)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.2 — Can vs. Can't.

You'll hear each set of phrases, then just *can* vs. *can't* twice, and the phrases again. *Can* is reduced—the vowel changes to the schwa just like you learned in the last chapter. It's very fast. Can you hear the difference?

**Audio 11.2 — Can vs. Can't**

I can hear you, I can't hear you.  
 We can come, we can't come  
 I can come, I can't come.  
 They can leave, they can't leave.



[engl.io/a4c](http://engl.io/a4c)

**TO BE and TO HAVE Contractions**

These two sets of contractions go together because sometimes they make the same word.

For example:

she is → she's [ʃiz]  
 she has → she's [ʃiz]

Question words can use 'does'. Then there are *three* contractions that sound the same:

who is → who's [huz]  
 who has → who's [huz]  
 who does → who's [huz]

These contractions, except for the question word contractions, will be unstressed in sentences. That means you want to say them quickly. This means Americans will sometimes reduce certain contractions by changing the vowel to the schwa. In the case of *he's*, many Americans will reduce by dropping the H [h] consonant (except when it begins a thought group). In a couple of cases, *it's*, *that's*, and *what's*, Americans might drop the vowel and beginning consonant completely and just use the [ts] cluster. In these cases, *What's up?* can sound like *tsup?*

	TO BE	HAVE + HAS	
I	I am = I'm [aɪm] or [əm] I'm late.	I have = I've [aɪv] or [əm] I've been there.	
you	you are = you're [juər], [rə], or [rə] You're late.	you have = you've [juv] or [jəv] You've been there.	
he	he is = he's [hiz] or [iz] He's late.	he has = he's [hiz] or [iz] He's been there.	
she	she is = she's [ʃiz] She's late.	she has = she's [ʃiz] She's been there.	

it	it is = it's [ɪts] or [ts] It's late.	it has = it's [ɪts] or [ts] It's got to be on time.	
noun	the dog is = the dog's [ðə dəgz] The dog's hungry.	the dog has = the dog's [ðə dəgz] The dog's been fed.	
proper noun	Mary is = Mary's ['mɛər_iz] Mary's late.	Mary has = Mary's ['mɛər_iz] Mary's been there.	
we	we are = we're [wər] We're late.	we have = we've [wiv] We've been there.	
they	they are = they're [ðeɪr] or [rəd̩] They're late.	they have = they've [ðeɪv] They've been there.	
plural noun*	the dogs are = the dogs're [ðə 'dəgz_ər] The dogs're hungry.	the dogs have = the dogs've [ðə 'dəgz_əv] The dogs've been fed.	
that	that is = that's [ðæts] or [ðəts] or [ts] That's okay.	that has = that's [ðæts] or [ðəts] or [ts] That's been a problem.	<b>Question Word Bonus: DOES</b>
who	who is = who's [huz] Who's late? who are = who're ['hu ər] Who're those people?	who has = who's [huz] Who's been there? who have = who've [huv] The people who've left didn't want to stay.	who does = who's [huz] Who's he like?
what	what is = what's [wʌts] What's going on? what are = what're ['wʌt ər] What're you doing?	what has = what's [wʌts] What's been going on? what have = what've What've you been doing?	What does = what's [wʌts] What's he need?
when	when is = when's [wɛnz] When's it going to be over? when are = when're ['wɛn_ər] When're they arriving?	when has = when's [wɛnz] When has he seen it? when have = when've ['wɛn əv] When've you tried?	When does = when's [wɛnz] When's he leaving?

where	where is = where's [wɛərz] Where's the bathroom? where are = where're Where're you going?	where has = where's [wɛərz] Where's she been? where have = where've Where've you been?	Where does = where's [wɛərz] Where's he keep it?
why	why is = why's [waɪz] Why's he leaving? why are = why're Why're you crying?	why has = why's [waɪz] Why's he given up? why have = why've Why've they stopped coming?	why does = why's [waɪz] Why's he need it?
how	how is = how's [haʊz] How's it going? how are = how're How're things?	how has = how's [haʊz] How's it been going? how have = how've How've they already finished?	how does = how's [haʊz] How's that sound?

Three things to note about these contractions:

1. Some contractions are the same. That's ok. Context is how native speakers know what is being said, just like with any homophone (there/their/they're). It's rare that there would be confusion in these cases.
2. \*The plural noun contractions aren't really contractions. They would never be written, though they are spoken.

Example: The dogs're

This is really an 'are' reduction. The word ARE will reduce to the schwa-R [ər] sound, and it will sound like a contraction.

Example: The dogs've

This is really a 'have' reduction. The word HAVE reduces to [əv], and it will sound like a contraction.

3. It's = it is, which is different from "its" (though it's pronounced the same, [ɪts]). "Its" shows possession: "The bird build its nest."

Mary's = Mary is, but can also show possession: Mary's books, or, the books that belong to Mary.

<p><b>Video 11.4 — TO BE Contractions</b>  Study many of these contractions in this real life English video. Notice how the TO BE contractions are often followed by <i>gonna</i> — you'll learn more about that in the next chapter.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a4e">engl.io/a4e</a>
<p><b>Video 11.5 — I'm Coming</b>  Study the <i>I'm</i> contraction and reduction in this in-depth phrase study.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a4g">engl.io/a4g</a>
<p><b>Video 11.6 — YOU'RE Contraction</b>  This contraction sounds just like the function word we studied in the last chapter, <i>your</i>.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a1k">engl.io/a1k</a>
<p><b>Video 11.7 — Interview a Broadcaster: Erica Hill</b>  NBC Newscaster Erica Hill uses lots of contractions in her speech.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a4m">engl.io/a4m</a>
<p><b>Video 11.8 — That's / It's / What's Reduction</b>  These can all reduce to just the [ts] sound. What's up [tsʌp]?</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a4p">engl.io/a4p</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.3 — TO BE and TO HAVE Contractions.

You'll hear some of the contractions in the chart above with a sample sentence. You'll hear the contraction twice. Make sure you're still saying the contraction in the sentence, and not pronouncing both words.

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.3 — TO BE and TO HAVE Contractions

I'm — I'm sorry.  
 I've — I've been there.  
 You're — You're right.  
 You've — You've seen it?  
 He's — He's okay. [he is]  
 We're — We're going.  
 We've — We've tried.  
 They're — They're great.  
 They've — They've known a while.  
 Who's — Who's there? [who is]  
 What's — What's it say? [what does]  
 When's — When's it been better? [when has]  
 Where's — Where's the report? [where is]  
 Why's — Why's she here? [why is]  
 How's — How's it going? [how is]



[engl.io/a4s](http://engl.io/a4s)

### LET'S Contraction

This one doesn't get to be in a group because there's nothing else quite like it! Let us = let's. Just add the S sound at the end: [lets]. This contraction is unique because, unlike the others, we generally don't use it in its two-word form, 'let us'.

Example Sentences:

Let's try again.  
 Let's go.  
 Let's wait and see

### Modal Verb Contractions

We can also make modal verb contractions with *have*:  
 would've, should've, could've, might've, must've

They can be pronounced two different ways. The first way is to reduce *have* to [əv]. Just add that syllable at the end of the word. This means the T in *might* will become a Flap T because it comes between two vowels. But the T in *must* stays a True T because it is not between two vowels.

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.4 — Modal Verb Contractions.

You'll hear each contraction twice, then the sentence once.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.5 — Modal Verb Contractions, Slow Motion.**  
 You'll hear each contraction once in slow motion. Notice how the first syllable is stressed in all of these contractions. They all have the pattern DA-da. After working with this audio file, go back to the audio file with the contractions at regular pace. How short can you make the second, unstressed syllable [əv]?

#### Audio 11.4 — Modal Verb Contractions

would've ['wʊ\_dəv]  
 I would've been there.  
 should've ['ʃʊ\_dəv]  
 I should've left.  
 could've ['kʊ\_dəv]  
 You could've gotten hurt.  
 might've ['maɪ\_dəv]  
 That might've been better.  
 must've ['mʌs\_təv]  
 That must've been hard.



[engl.io/a4u](http://engl.io/a4u)

#### Audio 11.5 — Modal Verb Contractions, Slow Motion

would've ['wʊ\_dəv]  
 should've ['ʃʊ\_dəv]  
 could've ['kʊ\_dəv]  
 might've ['maɪ\_dəv]  
 must've ['mʌs\_təv]



[engl.io/a4w](http://engl.io/a4w)

The second way to pronounce these contractions is to reduce them further by dropping the V sound. This means you just add the schwa to the end of each word:

must've ['mʌs\_tə]

You can pronounce them either way, both reductions sound natural to Americans.

### Video 11.9 — Shoulda, Woulda, Coulda

Study examples and reductions of these modal contractions:  
should have, would have, could have.



[engl.io/a4y](http://engl.io/a4y)

### WILL Contractions

These contractions are straightforward: just add 'll to the end of the word when writing. For pronunciation, just add a Dark L to the end. If the word before ended in a vowel or diphthong, like *she*, then just add the Dark L sound. It does not make a new syllable. But if the final sound of the word before was a consonant, the Dark L does feel like a new syllable. Think of it as [əl] if you were to write it in IPA, and make it as quick as possible.

I will — I'll [aɪl], [ɔɪl], or [əl] — I'll see you later.

you will — you'll [jʊl] or [jəl] — You'll see.

he will — he'll [hɪl], [hɪl], or [həl] — He'll be here. If *he'll* isn't at the beginning of the sentence, then you can reduce the vowel and drop the H: [ɪl] or [əl]

she will — she'll [ʃɪl], [ʃɪl], or [ʃəl] — She'll try.

it will — it'll [ɪd\_əl] — It'll be great.

Mary will — Mary'll\* ['mɛər i əl] — Mary'll be there.

we will — we'll [wɪl], [wɪl], or [wəl] — We'll see.

they will — they'll [ðeɪl] or [ðəl] — They'll be ok.

the dogs — the dogs'll\* [dɒgz\_əl] — The dogs'll be hungry.

that will — that'll [ðæd\_əl] — That'll be nice.

who will — who'll [huɪl] — Who'll be there?

what will — what'll [wʌd\_əl] — What'll they say?

where will — where'll [wɛər\_əl] — Where'll it be?

when will — when'll [wɛn\_əl] — When'll you know?

why will — why'll [waɪ\_əl] — Why'll they think that?

how will — how'll [haʊ\_əl] — How'll you get home?

\*Note: it's not grammatically correct to write a 'll contraction with a noun, singular (Mary'll) or plural (the dogs'll), but it happens frequently in spoken English.

Some of these contractions will reduce even further, just like *you're*. Not only do you reduce 'will' to the dark L and add it to the end, but change the vowel.

*I'll*, fully pronounced, sounds just like the word 'aisle' [aɪl]. But it's much more common to reduce *I'll* to make it shorter. Then it sounds like the word 'all' [ɔɪl], or

even ‘all’ reduced, [əl]. In this case it’s very fast and even unclear. Just think of adding a Dark L consonant to the beginning of the next word: I’ll try = ltry.

You’ll fully pronounced has the OO as in BOO vowel [ju]. But when we speed it up in conversational speech, it changes to the schwa: [jə].

*He’ll* [hil], *she’ll* [fi], and *we’ll* [wil], fully pronounced, have the EE as in SHE vowel [i]. That means that *he’ll* sounds like ‘heal’ and *we’ll* sounds like ‘wheel’. But when we speed it up in everyday speech, this vowel relaxes into the IH as in SIT vowel [ɪ], or maybe even the schwa [ə].

*They’ll* will also reduce, so the AY as in SAY diphthong [eɪ] becomes the schwa [ə].

*It’ll* [ɪd\_əl], *what’ll* [wʌd\_əl], and *that’ll* [ðæd\_əl] are interesting because the final T changes to a Flap T. This is because it comes between two vowels: the T, and the vowel-like sound of the Dark L. Flap T followed by the Dark L is a combination that’s very hard for some students, appearing also, for example, in the word ‘little’. When you lift the tongue to the roof of the mouth, don’t let it bounce off the roof of the mouth like you normally will for the Flap T. Instead, you can leave the front part of the tongue where it is and engage the back part of the tongue, tightening it up a little or shifting it back. That makes the dark part of the Dark L. As soon as the front part of the tongue hits the roof of your mouth, make a Dark L sound with the back of the tongue.

<p><b>Video 11.10 — We’ll see</b> Study <i>we’ll</i> in this in-depth phrase study.</p>	 <a href="https://engl.io/a51">engl.io/a51</a>
<p><b>Video 11.11 — I’ll think about it</b> Study <i>I’ll</i> in this in-depth phrase study. Also, notice the Flap T to link the words <i>about</i> and <i>it</i>.</p>	 <a href="https://engl.io/a53">engl.io/a53</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.6 — ‘LL Contractions.

You’ll hear several ‘LL contractions, twice, with a sample sentence. Focus on the back of the tongue making the Dark L sound. Make sure you’re still saying the contraction in the sentence, and not pronouncing both words.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.7 — ‘LL Contractions, Slow Motion.**

You'll hear the same 'LL contractions in slow motion. Notice the shape of the voice. The Dark L sound happens on the downward movement of pitch, the curve down.

**Audio 11.6 — ‘LL Contractions**

I'll — I'll see you later.  
 You'll — you'll see.  
 He'll — He'll be here.  
 She'll — She'll try.  
 It'll — It'll be great.  
 Mary'll — Mary'll be there.  
 We'll — We'll see.  
 They'll — They'll be okay.  
 The dogs'll — The dogs'll be hungry.  
 That'll — That'll be nice.  
 Who'll — Who'll be there?  
 What'll — What'll they say?  
 Where'll — Where'll it be?  
 When'll — When'll you know?  
 Why'll — Why'll they think that?  
 How'll — How'll you get home?



[engl.io/a56](http://engl.io/a56)

**Audio 11.7 — ‘LL Contractions, Slow Motion**

[engl.io/a58](http://engl.io/a58)

**WOULD, HAD, and DID Contractions**

Take a look at the following chart. You'll notice that just like some of the To Be and Have/Has contractions, ALL of these contractions are the same:

I would = I'd

I had = I'd

We also contract DID, but only in questions. In these cases, again, it's the same contraction:

why would = why'd

why had = why'd

why did = why'd

Mostly, to pronounce these contractions, you simply add the D sound to the end of the word. But for some words we add [əd] or [ɪd], which adds an extra syllable. See the chart below. The phrase ‘what did’ ['wʌd\_ɪd] is especially common—and one that can reduce further. We often drop the second syllable and just say [wʌd]. For example:

What did he say? ['wʌd\_ɪ'seɪ]

### Video 11.12 — WHAT DID Reduction

Study the different ways this common phrase can be reduced.



[engl.io/a5a](http://engl.io/a5a)

Even though the different contractions sound the same, people will know your meaning from the context.

These contractions, except for the question word contractions, will be unstressed in sentences. That means you want to say them quickly. This means Americans will sometimes reduce the vowel in certain contractions to the schwa. In the case of *he'd*, many Americans will reduce by dropping the H [h] consonant (except when it begins a thought group).

	WOULD	HAD	
I	I would = I'd [aɪd] or [əd] I'd like that.	I had = I'd [aɪd] or [əd] I'd seen it already.	
you	you would = you'd [jud] or [jəd] You'd like it.	you had = you'd [jud] or [jəd] You'd already done it.	
he	he would = he'd [hid] or [ɪd] He'd like it.	he had = he'd [hid] or [ɪd] He'd already done it.	
she	she would = she'd [ʃɪd] or [ʃəd] She'd like it.	she had = she'd [ʃɪd] or [ʃəd] She'd already been there.	
it	it would = it'd [ɪd_əd] It'd seem like it.	it had = it'd [ɪd_əd] It'd already ended.	

noun	the dog would = the dog'd [ðə_ 'dɔg_ əd] The dog'd The dog'd get sick.	the dog had = the dog'd [ðə_ 'dɔg_ əd] The dog'd been sick for a week.	
proper noun	Mary would = Mary'd ['mɛrɪ id] Mary'd like it.	Mary had = Mary'd ['mɛrɪ id] Mary'd already been there.	
we	we would = we'd [wid] or [wəd] We'd like to see it.	We had = we'd [wid] or [wəd] We'd seen it before.	
they	they would = they'd [ðeɪd] They'd like to see it.	they had = they'd [ðeɪd] they'd seen it before	
plural noun	the dogs would = dogs'd ['dɔg zəd] The dogs'd like to be walked.	the dogs had = dogs'd ['dɔg zəd] The dogs'd been walked already.	
that	that would = that'd ['ðæd əd] That'd be nice.	that had = that'd ['ðæd əd] That'd been over for an hour.	<b>Question Word Bonus: DID</b>
who	who would = who'd [hud] Who'd like to see it?	who had = who'd [hud] Who'd already seen it?	who did = who'd [hud] Who'd he like?
what	what would = what'd ['wʌd əd] * we don't actually use this contraction in speech	what had = what'd ['wʌd_ əd] I thought what'd been said was the truth.	what did = what'd ['wʌd_ id] or [wʌd] What'd you think?
when	when would = when'd [wənd] When'd you like it by?	when had = when'd [wənd] When'd he seen it?	when did = when'd [wənd] When'd she leave?
where	where would = where'd [wɛərd] Where'd you like it?	where had = where'd [wɛərd] Where'd he seen it?	where did = where'd [wɛərd] Where'd they go?
why	why would = why'd [waɪd] Why'd I lie?	why had = why'd [waɪd] Why'd he been there?	why did = why'd [waɪd] Why'd they leave?

how	how would = how'd [haʊd] How'd you like that?	how had = how'd [haʊd] How'd he already known?	how did = how'd [haʊd] How'd she know?
-----	---	---	---

Notice that for the WHAT contractions, I've spelled them differently in IPA. I've made the contraction for 'what would' and 'what had' with the schwa ['wʌd\_əd], and 'what did' with the IH as in SIT vowel ['wʌd\_ɪd]. Why is this? Usually when we reduce vowels, we think of them as reducing to the schwa. But for the word 'did', it already has the IH as in SIT vowel [ɪ], so it seems natural to just make that unstressed in the 'what did' contraction. Do the schwa [ə] and the unstressed [ɪ] sound the same? I think so. I've played around with this a lot over the years, saying unstressed syllables both ways, and they sound the same.

### Video 11.13 — Contractions

This is the main contractions video, covering WOULD, HAD, and DID contractions, as well as others we studied in this chapter.



[engl.io/a5c](http://engl.io/a5c)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.8 — WOULD, HAD, and DID Reductions.

You'll hear several WOULD, HAD, and DID contractions, twice, with a sample sentence. If the next word begins with a vowel (like *already*, or when you drop the H on *he*), try to link the D into that sound. Make sure you're still saying the contraction in the sentence, and not pronouncing both words.

### Audio 11.8 — WOULD, HAD, and DID Reductions

I'd — I'd already left. [I had]

You'd — You'd like it. [you would]

He'd — He'd already done it. [he had]

We'd — We'd like it. [we would]

They'd — They'd be okay. [they would]

Who'd — Who'd think that? [who would]

When'd — When'd he leave? [when did]

Where'd — Where'd she go? [where did]

Why'd — Why'd she say that? [why did]

How'd — How'd he know? [how did]



[engl.io/a5f](http://engl.io/a5f)

In this chapter you've studied a lot of contractions with question words. Many question words start with 'wh': what, when, where, why. There are two ways to pronounce words like these, either with a clean [w] sound at the beginning, or a light H sound at the beginning: [h<sup>w</sup>]. I use the first pronunciation, [w].

### Video 11.14 — Pronunciation of WH Words

My mom helped me film this video — she makes a clear [h<sup>w</sup>] sound!



[engl.io/a5h](http://engl.io/a5h)

### Using Contractions and Reductions Together

Reductions can be used with contractions.

It's for mom [ɪts fər'mam]

As you learned in Chapter 9, when you drop the H or TH at the beginning of a word, the rest of the word should feel like it's part of the word before. That can feel like a double contraction. In these cases, we drop the T part of the T contractions for a smoother link into the next word

wouldn't have ['wʊd ən\_əv] or ['wʊd ən\_ə]

didn't her ['dɪd ən\_ər]

That's exactly what we want: short, linked together function words.

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 11.9 — Contractions with Reductions.

You'll hear the contraction with the reduction four times. The third time will be in slow motion. Then you'll hear the sentence. In both cases, you'll hear an N'T contraction with a dropping the H reduction. Think of the contraction and reduction all as being one word, flowing together without breaks. The contraction with the reduction together may feel really fast to you, hard to understand and hard to say. Try not to think of saying the words, but just of imitating what you hear. Don't think of it as English, but just sounds and melodies to imitate.

### Audio 11.9 — Contractions with Reductions

wouldn't have ['wʊd\_ən\_ev], I wouldn't have said that.

didn't her ['dɪd\_ən\_ər], Didn't her team win?



[engl.io/a5k](http://engl.io/a5k)

### Test yourself: Audio 11.10 — What contraction are you hearing?

You'll hear 15 different contractions. Write down what you hear, and check your answers in the back. You'll hear each one only once. Listen as many times as you need to to get all the answers. Answers are in the Answers Appendix.

**Audio 11.10 — What contraction are you hearing?**
[engl.io/a5m](http://engl.io/a5m)
**When NOT to Use Contractions**

There are some cases when we don't want to use contractions for emphasis and clarity. In these cases the word that would normally be contracted will be stressed. For example:

I do NOT want to go in there.

>> You don't want to see this, do you?

>> I WOULD like to see that.

Even in situations where clarity is not needed, all contractions, except *let's*, can and will appear as both words rather than a contraction. You certainly don't need to use every contraction every time. However, I do encourage you, especially in speaking, to use them frequently to increase the contrast between stressed and unstressed words. As you listen to the radio, podcasts, or watch TV, write down every contraction you hear. You'll notice you're writing down a lot! If you never used contractions, your speech wouldn't sound natural at all.

To help convince you how important contractions are for sounding natural and American, here are three more contractversation videos.

**Video 11.15 — Contractversation**

Topic: My Trip to Florida


[engl.io/a5n](http://engl.io/a5n)
**Video 11.16 — Contractversation**

Topic: Going to the Store


[engl.io/a5p](http://engl.io/a5p)
**Video 11.17 — Contractversation**

Topic: Going on a Date


[engl.io/a5s](http://engl.io/a5s)

## Chapter 12

# Gonna, Wanna, and Gotta

In this chapter, we keep building your skills to make function words less important, and increase the difference between your stressed and unstressed syllables.

The reductions ‘gonna’, ‘wanna’, and ‘gotta’ fill our everyday speech. Don’t worry, it’s not just for casual conversation, and it’s not considered uneducated to use these reductions. These reductions can find their way into important speeches, too.

### Video 12.1 — Presidential Speeches

Even the President of the United States uses  
gonna/wanna/gotta in important speeches!



[engl.io/a62](http://engl.io/a62)

### GONNA

Going to → gonna ['gʌnə]

The ‘gonna’ contraction is a two-syllable word with stress on the first syllable. The second syllable is just the schwa [ə]—you’ll want to make that very short!

You just learned the TO BE contractions in Chapter 11, so you know that the contraction itself can often be pronounced more than one way, with varying levels of reduction. For example, it is = it’s [ɪts] or [ts]. I’ve chosen just one for each example below.

I

I am going to = I'm gonna [aɪm'gʌn ə]  
*I'm gonna be late.*

**you**

you are going to = you're gonna [jər'gʌn ə]  
*You're gonna be sorry.*

**he**

he is going to = he's gonna [hiz'gʌn ə]  
*He's gonna stop by.*

**she**

she is going to = she's gonna [ʃiz'gʌn ə]  
*She's gonna try to be here.*

**it**

it is going to = it's gonna [ɪts'gʌn ə]  
*It's gonna rain today.*

**Mary**

Mary is going to = Mary's gonna [ˈmɛər iz'gʌn ə]  
*Mary's gonna do well.*

**we**

we are going to = we're gonna [wər'gʌn ə]  
*We're gonna have fun.*

**they**

they are going to = they're gonna [ðe'θeɪr'gʌn ə]  
*They're gonna drive.*

**the dogs**

the dogs are going to = the dogs're\* gonna [ðə 'dɒgz ər'gʌn ə]  
*The dogs're\* gonna love it.*

\*Note: it's not grammatically correct to write the *are* contraction with a plural noun (the dogs're), but it happens frequently in spoken English.

<p><b>Video 12.2 — How to Pronounce GONNA and WANNA</b>        Learn the pronunciations, and example sentences for these reductions.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a63">engl.io/a63</a>
<p><b>Video 12.3 — Pronunciation Focus: Gonna</b>        Analyze three real life examples of <i>gonna</i> in-depth.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a66">engl.io/a66</a>

### Video 12.4 — Real Life English: Wedding Venue

In this video, I walk around our wedding venue getting ready for our big day. As I talk, I use a lot of *gonna* phrases. We do this a lot when talking about the future.



[engl.io/a68](http://engl.io/a68)

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 12.1 — Gonna.

First you'll hear just the subject contraction (I'm, you're) with 'gonna' three times, the second time in slow motion. Then you'll hear the whole phrase.

### Audio 12.1 — Gonna

I'm gonna. I'm gonna be late.  
 You're gonna. You're gonna be sorry.  
 He's gonna. He's gonna stop by.  
 We're gonna. We're gonna have fun!  
 They're gonna. They're gonna drive.



[engl.io/a6b](http://engl.io/a6b)

You might hear Americans reduce the first person, I'm gonna, even more. Sometimes Americans drop the [g] sound, so it ends up sounding like "Imunna" ['ai\_mʌn\_ə], where the stress switches over to 'I' from the first syllable of 'gonna'. They will even drop 'I', so it just sounds like "muh" [mə].

### Video 12.5 — I'm Gonna Reduction

*I'm gonna* is already a reduction. But you know Americans love to shorten familiar phrases! You'll hear it reduced even more. Can you still understand it?



[engl.io/a6d](http://engl.io/a6d)

## WANNA

Want to → wanna ['wan ə] or ['wʌn ə]

Just like 'gonna', 'wanna' is two syllables with stress on the first syllable. You'll hear 'wanna' two different ways, with the AH as in FATHER [ɑ] vowel or the UH as in BUTTER [ʌ] vowel. I tend to use the UH as in BUTTER vowel.

I

I want to = I wanna [aɪ'wan ə] or [aɪ'wʌn ə]  
*I wanna see.*

**you**

you want to = you wanna [jə'wan ə] or [jə'wʌn ə]  
*Do you wanna head out?*\*

**he**

he wants to = WAIT! Now we have ‘wants’ instead of ‘want’. Remember, ‘wanna’ = ‘want to’, not ‘wants to’. That means we can’t use ‘wanna’ with the third person singular. We cannot say ‘He wanna’, ‘She wanna’, ‘Mary wanna’, etc. For these cases, we will say ‘He wants to’, ‘She wants to’, etc. Remember to reduce ‘to’, as you learned in Chapter 10.

**we**

we want to = we wanna [wi'wan ə] or [wi'wʌn ə]  
*We wanna move to Philadelphia.*

**they**

they want to = they wanna [ðei'wan ə] or [ðei'wʌn ə]  
*They wanna come with us.*

**the dogs**

the dogs want to = the dogs wanna [ðə dɔgz'wan ə] or [ðə dɔgz'wʌn ə]  
*The dogs wanna go outside.*

<p><b>Video 12.6 — Interview a Broadcaster: Chris Jansing</b>      Hear NBC Newscaster Chris Jansing’s perfect American English — and yes, that includes <i>wanna</i>.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a6f">engl.io/a6f</a>
<p><b>Video 12.7 — Vacation 2012</b>      More examples of <i>gonna</i> and <i>wanna</i> in real conversational English—and the beauty of being on vacation! Also, learn the reduction ‘let me’. Have you ever heard someone say <i>lemme</i>?</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/axd">engl.io/axd</a>

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 12.2 — Wanna.**

First you’ll hear just the subject (I, you, etc.) with ‘wanna’ three times, the second time in slow motion. Then you’ll hear the whole phrase. Notice there are fewer here—no 3<sup>rd</sup> person singular (he/she/it). Remember not to use ‘wanna’ in these cases.

**Audio 12.2 — Wanna**

I wanna. I wanna see.

You wanna. Do you wanna head out?\*

We wanna. We wanna move to Philadelphia.

They wanna. They wanna come with us.



[engl.io/a6k](http://engl.io/a6k)

\*The idiom ‘to head out’ means to leave, depart. I use it often when leaving friends:

I’m gonna head out.

I gotta head out.

Should we head out?

**GOTTA**

Got to → gotta ['gad ə]

‘Gotta’ is also two syllables with stress on the first syllable. It’s important to use a Flap T here: don’t stop the air flow, just a quick flap of the tongue as it bounces off the roof of the mouth. We use ‘gotta’ with a subject + ‘have’ or ‘has’ + gotta. You’ll hear some Americans drop ‘have’ (though not has). For example: ‘I gotta go’, ‘you gotta see this’, ‘they gotta stop doing that’, ‘we gotta go’. Again, since the second syllable is just the schwa, it should be very short.

You just learned the HAVE and HAS contractions in Chapter 11, so you know that the contraction itself can often be pronounced more than one way, with varying levels of reduction. For example, it has = it’s [ɪts] or [ts]. I’ve chosen just one for each example below.

I

I have got to = I’ve gotta [aɪv'gad ə] or I gotta [aɪ'gad ə]  
*I gotta go.*

you

you have got to = you’ve gotta [jəv'gad ə] or you gotta [jə'gad ə]  
*You’ve gotta see this.*

he

he has got to = he’s gotta [hiz'gad ə]  
*He’s gotta know that.*

she

she has got to = she’s gotta [ʃiz'gad ə]  
*She’s gotta stop doing that.*

**it**

it has got to = it's gotta [ɪts'gad ə]

*It's gotta be tough.*

**Mary**

Mary has got to = Mary's gotta ['mɛər iz'gad ə]

*Mary's gotta leave.*

**we**

we have got to = we've gotta [wiv'gad ə] or we gotta [wi'gad ə]

*We've gotta do this more often.*

**they**

they have got to = they've gotta [ðeɪv'gad ə] or they gotta [ðeɪ'gad ə]

*They gotta work late.*

**the dogs**

the dogs have got to = the dogs've gotta [ðə dɔgz\_əv'gad ə]

*The dogs've gotta be quiet.*

<p><b>Video 12.8 — Thanksgiving 2011</b>        See <i>gotta</i> in real life English conversation as we cook Thanksgiving dinner!</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a6m">engl.io/a6m</a>
<p><b>Video 12.9 — How to Pronounce GONNA and GOTTA</b>        In this real life English video, you'll see <i>gonna</i> and <i>gotta</i> in real English conversation, and learn many other points, while getting hungry for Ramen noodles!</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a6p">engl.io/a6p</a>

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 12.3 — Gotta.

You'll hear sentence fragments both ways, with the have/has contraction, and without. Remember, both are common in American English. You'll hear each fragment three times, the second time in slow motion. Then you'll hear a sample sentence.

**Audio 12.3 — Gotta**

I gotta / I've gotta  
 I've gotta go.  
 you gotta / you've gotta  
 You've gotta see this.

He's gotta — **remember you can't drop the 'has' contraction**

He's gotta know that.  
 we gotta / we've gotta  
 We've gotta do this more often.  
 they gotta / they've gotta  
 They gotta work late.



[engl.io/a6s](http://engl.io/a6s)

**Test yourself: Non-Audio 12.1 — Used Correctly?**

Which sentences do not use gonna/wanna/gotta correctly? Answers in the Answers Appendix.

I wanna see her later.  
 They've gotta see it.  
 He wanna win.  
 We're gonna get it.  
 He's gonna stop by?  
 We gotta go.  
 She gotta know that.

**A Note on Speaking and Writing**

As you've heard, even President Obama would use a reduction like 'wanna' in an important speech. But would he ever use it in an important piece of writing? Absolutely not. While it is absolutely a part of our culture to use these reductions in speech, it is not acceptable to use them in any kind of formal writing. It has been used here only because it is a chapter *about* 'gonna', 'wanna', and 'gotta'. I recommend not using the written form 'gonna', 'wanna', or 'gotta' in *any* writing.

## **Chapter 13**

### **Putting it All Together**

If you've come this far, you know a lot about pronunciation! Now it's time to start putting it all together with some concrete training that will improve your listening comprehension and pronunciation.

Bridging the gap between study and conversation with natives can be difficult. Set aside time for regular pronunciation practice, and make sure you're doing a variety of exercises.

Now we'll take everything we learned and apply it to sentences and conversations. Make sure you think about rhythm and how to simplify the unimportant words.

We'll do several Ben Franklin Exercises together. This is an exercise I developed where you study in depth everything you hear: reductions, the most stressed syllables, contractions, gonna/wanna/gotta, Flap or Stop T's, and so on. Identify what you really hear, not what you think you might hear based on the words. When you study real conversation like this, you'll get used to the reductions Americans use quickly, and the linking and intonation of sentences.

### Video 13.1 — Ben Franklin Exercise

Get familiar with Ben Franklin exercises and how you might take notes on pronunciation. Topic: Breakfast.



[engl.io/a72](http://engl.io/a72)

You've already heard some audio in slow motion in this book, in this section you'll hear a lot. Why all the slow motion? Changing the speed of the conversation does a couple of things. First, it makes the intonation easier to identify: the constant up and down of the voice. The voice is always changing pitch, it's not flat. Work on imitating the speech in slow motion, your voice will feel like waves going up and down. When it's time to speed it up, just do those waves faster. Don't switch back into 'talking', or you might lose that wonderful, connected character.

Second, it makes it easier to identify the quality of unstressed words and syllables. It's clear that they're quieter and have less energy in the voice.

Third, it's always good to slow something down and really drill it until it feels comfortable. Your body connects to it in a different way—and remember, your accent isn't just about your mind, it's about engaging your body and retraining your muscle memory.

There are two voices in this section: a female voice, Rachel, and a male voice, Tom. This is helpful not only because both genders are represented, but also because two different interpretations are given. You'll see that in some cases, Rachel and Tom have made different choices about thought groups, pacing, and pronunciation. They are both always right ... with English pronunciation, many different choices can be made within the overall character of American English.

## Topic 1: Directions

### Sentence: Do you know where Penn Station is?

You find yourself looking for Penn Station in New York. You lost your map, but don't worry, there are hundreds of people walking by you every minute. All you have to do is ask for help!

One of the most useful phrases in American English is 'excuse me'. This is the best phrase to use to get someone's attention whom you don't know. (If you know the person, you'll just say his or her name.)

**Video 13.2 — Excuse Me**

There are lots of uses for this phrase. See many of them in real life situations.



[engl.io/a74](http://engl.io/a74)

Here we need the help of a stranger, so we use ‘excuse me’ to get his or her attention, then ask the question.

**Listen: Audio 13.1 — Penn Station.**

You’ll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You’ll hear the sequence twice, first in Rachel’s voice, then in Tom’s. Don’t repeat yet, just listen.

**Audio 13.1 — Penn Station**

Excuse me, do you know where Penn Station is?



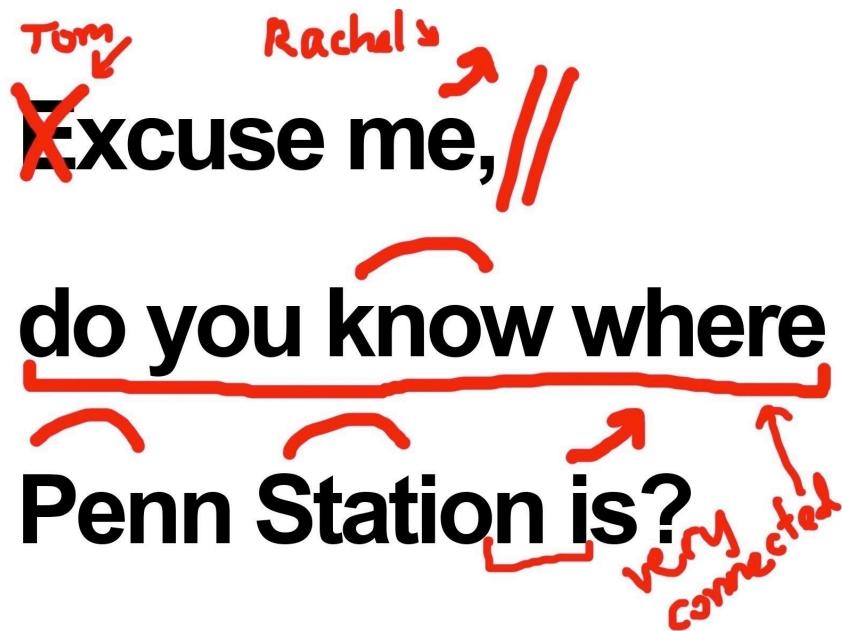
[engl.io/a77](http://engl.io/a77)

**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? There are two here: ‘excuse me’, and ‘do you know where Penn Station is?’ . We can easily hear a little break in sound on the audio file for both the male and female speakers. All the other words flow together. At the end of *me*, Rachel goes up in pitch, signaling that she will say more. Tom goes down in pitch—both are ok.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Excuse*, *know*, *Penn*, and *Station* are the most stressed. If you listen to a sentence but don’t understand everything, chances are the words that you do understand are the stressed words, the most important in the sentence. Hear how these four words are clearest. They all have full engagement of the voice. They are the longest and loudest.
- 3) What words are reduced? Tom doesn’t fully pronounce the first syllable of *excuse*. This is a stressed word, how is that possible? He does make the stressed syllable very clear. It’s not uncommon to hear this word as Tom said it. Can you hear the difference in the way the Rachel and Tom pronounced *excuse*? *Do you*: both of these words are very fast, but for this sentence, neither Tom nor Rachel reduced them to have the schwa vowel. They both have [u].

- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? All of the words in each of the two thought groups really glide together smoothly. Notice we have a clear consonant to vowel link in *Station is*; it sounds ‘station\_nis’.
- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? As discussed, Rachel brings the intonation up at the end of *me*, and Tom makes it go down. The intonation for the second thought group, however, is very similar for both Tom and Rachel. *Know*, the first stressed word, has the highest pitch. Then the pitch falls, and both *Penn* and *Station* have a little curve up, then back down. *Is* ends with a curve up in pitch because this is a yes/no question.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?



#### Practice it:

#### Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.2 — Penn Station Practice.

You'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times. Repeat each time; try to match the intonation exactly. The first few times, just do this on ‘uh’. Practice the smooth connection and forward motion of the voice. Then put the words in. The first time through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. You'll hear it this way once with Rachel's voice and once with Tom's voice.

**Audio 13.2 — Penn Station Practice**

slower: Excuse me / do you know / where Penn Station is?

regular: Excuse me / do you know where Penn Station is?


<engl.io/a79>
**Sentence: Can you tell me where the closest subway stop is?**

Now you know where you're going, you just have to get started. If you need to get someone's attention before asking this question, remember to say 'excuse me'.

**Listen: Audio 13.3 — Subway Stop.**

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

**Audio 13.3 — Subway Stop**

Can you tell me where the closest subway stop is?


<engl.io/a7c>
**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? This sentence has just one. All of the words flow together in one smooth line.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Tell*, *close-*, and *sub-* are the most stressed syllables. In the slower audio, they sound exaggerated, don't they? They are longer and clearer than the rest, the voice is fully engaged.
- 3) What words are reduced? *Can*, a helping verb here (not the main verb), is reduced just like you learned in Chapter 10. Tom's version is much faster than Rachel's, but in both cases 'can' is pronounced [kən]. *The* is pronounced [ðə] because the next word begins with a consonant. The word *where* is very fast.
- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? Rachel releases the T in *closest*, Tom does not. As you learned, Americans often drop the T between two consonants, like in *closest stop* ['klou sis\_stop]. That means these two words can be linked together with the S sound, as Tom did.

- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? Because this is a yes/no question, the intonation went up at the end. The content word ‘tell’, which is the closest to the start of the sentence, is the highest in pitch, while the rest of the sentence tapers down before the curve up at the end.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

The lyrics are written in a large, bold, black font. Red annotations include:

- A red 'kn' above the first 'C' in "Can".
- A red curved line above the words "you tell me".
- A red curved line above the words "where the closest".
- A red curved line above the words "subway stop is?".
- A red arrow pointing down from the word "closest" to the letter 'e'.
- A red arrow pointing down from the word "closest" to the letter 's'.
- A red arrow pointing up from the word "subway" to the letter 'y'.
- A red arrow pointing up from the word "stop" to the letter 'o'.
- The word "Tom" with a red arrow pointing down to the letter 'o' in "Tom".

#### Practice it:

#### Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.4 — Subway Stop Practice.

Just like with the Penn Station exercise, you'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times.

#### Audio 13.4 — Subway Stop Practice

slower: Can you tell me / where the closest / subway stop  
is?

regular: Can you tell me where the closest / subway stop  
is?



[engl.io/a7f](http://engl.io/a7f)

#### Directions Dialog

This happened to me recently. David and I weren't using a map and were trying to find one of the major highways in a town we weren't familiar with. When it became obvious we needed help, we asked someone at a gas station.

**Listen: Audio 13.5 — Directions Dialog.**

You'll hear the dialog twice. Once at normal pace, and once in slow motion.

**Rachel:** Excuse me.

**Gas Station Attendant:** Yes?

**Rachel:** We're looking for 94. Do you know where it is?

**Gas Station Attendant:** Yes. Keep going down this road, and at the next intersection turn left. In a couple of miles you'll see signs for it.

**Rachel:** Thank you so much!

**Gas Station Attendant:** No problem.

<b>Audio 13.5 — Directions Dialog</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a7g">engl.io/a7g</a>
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**Now it's up to you:**

Just like we did above with the two sentences, write down the text on a piece of paper, study the audio, and mark down what you hear. What syllables sound stressed — the loudest, clearest, with the up-down shape of the voice? The first time you listen, just put an up/down curve over these syllables. What words are reduced? Maybe you can hardly hear them. Are there pauses as one speaker is talking? What about the intonation of the phrase? Listen several times and mark everything you notice. The better you know what you're hearing, the better you'll be able to imitate it.

Things to look for:

- The two 'yes' phrases: the intonation goes up for the question and down for the statement.
- The *of* reduction—it links the word before it and after it together.
- Stop T at the end of *it* in *signs for it*.

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.6 — Directions Dialog Practice:**

Now, try it yourself. You'll hear the phrases, at regular pace, broken up into smaller fragments. You'll hear each fragment three times, repeat each time.

<b>Audio 13.6 — Directions Dialog Practice</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a7k">engl.io/a7k</a>
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## Topic 2: At a Restaurant

**Sentence:** Hi, I have a reservation for two under ‘Smith’.

This is what you might first say to the host or hostess at a restaurant. You’ve made the reservation several days ago, and so you need to let the staff know who you are and that you’ve arrived.

**Listen: Audio 13.7 — Reservations.**

You’ll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You’ll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don’t repeat yet, just listen.

### Audio 13.7 — Reservations

Hi, I have a reservation for two under ‘Smith’.



[engl.io/a7m](http://engl.io/a7m)

### Study it:

- 1) What are your thought groups? There are two. First *Hi*, then *I have a reservation for two under ‘Smith’*. Notice that Rachel goes right through the comma that separates the two thought groups with no pause. Tom, on the other hand, puts a noticeable pause between thought groups.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Hi*, *two*, and *Smith* are the longest and clearest words. *Two* and *Smith* are all I would need to say to communicate what I mean. The stressed syllable of *reservation*, -va-, is also stressed.
- 3) What words are reduced? *For* is clearly reduced, just like you learned in Chapter 10. The vowel has changed to the schwa and the word is very fast, even in slow motion. It is quiet and low in pitch.
- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? There are a couple of sounds and sound combinations that can be difficult here. The SM cluster in *Smith*, for example. Make sure you make that with no vowel in front, the word *under* should link right into it. Also, the TH sound that ends *Smith*. Make sure the tongue is through the teeth with air lightly releasing, no pressure. As you work on these examples and any others, keep your own problem sounds in mind. You might have to drill those words separately before working on a whole phrase.

- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? The highest pitch is the stressed syllable of *reservation*. Both *two* and *Smith* got quite a bit of attention—they were longer and rounded (the curve down is very clear), stressed shape to the pitch. This shape is clear in the slow motion sentences. This is especially true for Tom's sentence. The pitch ends going down because this is a statement.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

Hi // I have a  
 reservation for two  
 under 'Smith'.  
 no vowels

Tom

"fr"

ə

θ

### Practice it:

#### Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.8 — Reservations Practice.

You'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times. Repeat each time; try to match the intonation exactly. The first few times, just do this on 'uh'. Then put the words in. The first time through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. Then you'll hear it broken up again the same way with the male voice.

#### Audio 13.8 — Reservations Practice

slower: Hi, I have a reservation / for two / under 'Smith'.

regular: Hi, I have a reservation for two / under 'Smith'.



[engl.io/a7p](http://engl.io/a7p)

**Sentence: How long is the wait for a party of four?**

This time, you didn't make a reservation. The restaurant looks crowded, and you're not sure there is room for you and your three friends. Here, the word 'party' means group. It does not mean you are celebrating, throwing a party, or going to a party.

**Listen: Audio 13.9 — Wait Time.**

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

**Audio 13.9 — Wait Time**

How long is the wait for a party of four?



[engl.io/a7s](http://engl.io/a7s)

**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? There is just one thought group.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Wait* and *four* are the most stressed, but the stressed syllable of *party*, par-, is also clear and with an up/down shape of a stressed syllable. They are longer, clearer, the 'biggest' or most obvious words.
- 3) What words are reduced? The word *for* is reduced. It's interesting in this sentence in particular because we also have the word *four*, which is stressed. Some people want to fully pronounce *for* so it sounds like *four*, but in this sentence they are clearly different because *for* is reduced.

The word *of* is also reduced to just the schwa [ə] sound. So, *party* of sounds like 'party-uh'. This helps link *party* and *four* smoothly.

- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? I notice a clear Stop T at the end of the stressed word *wait*. This is because the next word begins with a consonant, [f]. Because the T is not fully pronounced, it allows the speaker to move into the next sound more quickly, making a smoother sentence. Instead of a released burst of air, there is just a small pause or lift in the vocal line.

There is a Flap T in *party* because the T comes after an R and before a vowel. Just flapping the tongue instead of making a fully released T makes the line smoother.

- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? This is a question, but it can't be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. So the intonation goes down at the end. The stressed word *wait* is higher in pitch than the stressed word *four*, which is at the end of the sentence. The general direction if pitch is down across the whole sentence.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

## How long is the

*wait* | *for a party of*  
*four?*

**Practice it:**

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.10 — Wait Time Practice.**

You'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times. Repeat each time; try to match the intonation exactly. The first few times, just do this on 'uh'. Then put the words in. The first time through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. Then you'll hear it broken up again the same way with the male voice.

**Audio 13.10 — Wait Time Practice**

slower: How long is the wait / for a party of four?  
 regular: How long is the wait / for a party of four?



[engl.io/a7v](http://engl.io/a7v)

## At a Restaurant Dialog

Here Rachel and her friend Dawn are at a restaurant. The server Mark is taking the order.

Someone asked me a question recently: why do servers tell their names, and what are you supposed to say in response? Are you to introduce yourself to them, too? The answer is no. You don't need to introduce yourself when servers introduce themselves. This is something that some servers do to be more friendly and professional. When a server tells you his or her name, it will often be followed by something like "And I'll be your server today." You can respond with "thank you".

**Listen: Audio 13.11 — At a Restaurant Dialog.** You'll hear the dialog twice. Once at normal pace, and once in slow motion.

**Rachel:** We're going to start with the cheese plate.

**Mark:** Great.

**Rachel:** And I would like the mushroom pasta.

**Mark:** Wonderful.

**Dawn:** I'll have the steak, medium.

**Mark:** And what two vegetables would you like with that?

**Dawn:** Um, potatoes and carrots.

**Mark:** Great. I'll put this order in right away, and my name's Mark if you need anything.

**Rachel:** Great, thank you.

<b>Audio 13.11 — At a Restaurant Dialog</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a7x">engl.io/a7x</a>
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[engl.io/a7x](http://engl.io/a7x)

**Now it's up to you:**

Just like we did above with the two sentences, write down the text on a piece of paper, study the audio, and mark down what you hear. What syllables sound stressed — the loudest, clearest, with the up-down shape of the voice? The first time you listen, just put an up/down curve over these syllables. What words are reduced? Maybe you can hardly hear them. Are there pauses as one speaker is talking? What about the intonation of the phrase? Listen several times and mark everything you notice. The better you know what you're hearing, the better you'll be able to imitate it.

Things to look for:

- Lots of Stop T's here. How does *great*, with a Stop T, sound different than the word *gray* would?
- The pause separating the thought groups *I'll have the steak and medium*. (This is how she wants it cooked. You can get meat prepared rare, which is the least cooked, medium, and well-done.)
- *And* reductions, at the beginning of a sentence and in the middle.
- Contractions.

### **Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.12 — At a Restaurant Dialog Practice.**

Now, try it yourself. You'll hear the phrases, at regular pace, broken up into small fragments. You'll hear each fragment three times, repeat each time.

#### **Audio 13.12 — At a Restaurant Dialog Practice**



[engl.io/a82](http://engl.io/a82)

## **Topic 3: Shopping**

### **Sentence: Excuse me, do you have this in another size?**

You're trying something on—shoes, jeans—and the size isn't right. You've looked at the others and don't see your size. This can also apply to other objects as well, for example, a small bowl that you like, but you need a larger bowl. You can insert that into the question:

Excuse me, do you have this in a smaller size?

Excuse me, do you have this in a larger size?

Excuse me, do you have this in a size 4?

### **Listen: Audio 13.13 — Another Size.**

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

#### **Audio 13.13 — Another Size**

Excuse me, do you have this in another size?



[engl.io/a84](http://engl.io/a84)

**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? Just like in the Penn Station sentence, we have *Excuse me* as a thought group separated from the rest of the sentence.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Excuse*, *have*, and *size* have the longest syllables. They have the up-down shape of a stressed syllable and are the clearest parts of the sentence.
- 3) What words are reduced? Especially in the slow motion version, it sounds like *do* and *you* are both reduced, not a whole [u] vowel, but something more like the schwa [ə]. Try this—rush through ‘do you’ and get to the verb: *do you have*, *do you know*, *do you need*. *Have* is not reduced here, as it sometimes is with a dropped H.
- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? *In another* links together with an ending consonant and beginning vowel. Those words together are very quick, and almost have a bouncy feel. The tongue is doing a lot of work here, against the roof of the mouth for the two N sounds, while the tip comes through for the TH, but it’s always relaxed. Practice this and other difficult passages slowly.
- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? Rachel’s voice goes up at the end of *Excuse me*, and Tom’s does not. Both are ok. When the voice goes up in pitch at the end, it’s a signal that the speaker is going to say more. This is a yes / no question, so the pitch will go up at the end of *do you have this in another size*. Tom’s upward intonation is very clear.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

**Excuse me, //**

**do you have this**  
very fast

**in another size?**

Rachel

**Practice it:****Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.14 — Another Size Practice.**

You'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times. Repeat each time; try to match the intonation exactly. The first few times, just do this on 'uh'. Then put the words in. The first time through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. Then you'll hear it broken up again the same way with the male voice.

**Audio 13.14 — Another Size Practice**

slower: Excuse me / do you have this / in another size?

normal: Excuse me / do you have this / in another size?



[engl.io/a85](http://engl.io/a85)

**Sentence: What's your return policy?**

Once when I was shopping for a dress in Europe, I asked what the exchange policy was, and they told me there wasn't one. I had to keep what I bought! This is quite unusual in America. You can take almost anything back to the store within a given amount of time as long as you haven't used it. Different stores have different policies, 14 days, 30 days, or 90 days, for example.

**Listen: Audio 13.15 — Return Policy.**

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

**Audio 13.15 — Return Policy**

What's your return policy?



[engl.io/a88](http://engl.io/a88)

**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? Just one in this sentence.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *What's* and *return* have the clearest stressed syllables. *Policy* is also stressed, but since it is the last word in the sentence, the pitch isn't as high, and there is less energy in the voice.
- 3) What words are reduced? *Your* is clearly reduced, [jəʊ]. It's very fast. We also have the contraction *What's*, which reduces the word 'is'.

- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? Some students have a hard time with the TS [ts] cluster like in *What's*. It's very clear here, with a crisp sound.
- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? This is a question, but it can't be answered with 'yes' or 'no', so it goes down in pitch, and the energy diminishes towards the end like a statement.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

*[ts]* *jə* → *very quick!*

**What's your**

**return policy?**

*pitch goes down*

**Practice it:**

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.16 — Return Policy Practice.**

Again, you'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times.

**Audio 13.16 — Return Policy Practice**  
 slower: What's your / return policy?  
 normal: What's your / return policy?



[engl.io/a8a](http://engl.io/a8a)

## Shopping Dialog

You've just walked into a store, and one of the sales clerks walks over to you. Since you're not looking for anything in particular and you don't need help with anything, you say you're just looking around.

### Listen: Audio 13.17 — Shopping Dialog.

You'll hear the dialog twice. Once at normal pace, and once in slow motion.

**Sales Clerk:** Can I help you?

**You:** I'm just looking around, thank you.

**Sales Clerk:** Let me know if you have any questions.

**You:** I will, thanks.

### Audio 13.17 — Shopping Dialog



[engl.io/a8b](http://engl.io/a8b)

### Now it's up to you:

Just like we did above with the two sentences, write down the text on a piece of paper, study the audio, and mark down what you hear. What syllables sound stressed — the loudest, clearest, with the up-down shape of the voice? The first time you listen, just put an up/down curve over these syllables. What words are reduced? Maybe you can hardly hear them. Are there pauses as one speaker is talking? What about the intonation of the phrase? Listen several times and mark everything you notice. The better you know what you're hearing, the better you'll be able to imitate it.

Things to look for:

- *Can* reduction
- Intonation of the first question: does it go up or down?
- *I'm* contraction: saying *I'm* instead of *I am* helps smooth out the sentence
- Stop T in *let me*.
- Thought groups: are there pauses in the audio where you see commas in the text?

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.18 — Shopping Dialog Practice.

Now, try it yourself. You'll hear the phrases, at regular pace, broken up into small fragments. You'll hear each fragment three times, repeat each time.

**Audio 13.18 — Shopping Dialog Practice**
<engl.io/a8d>
**Topic 4: At Work**

**Sentence: The meeting's been moved to three.**

You're all ready for a meeting at 11am when a colleague comes to tell you the meeting will now be at 3pm. Good—that gives you extra time to prepare!

We have a contraction in this sentence. As you know, 's can be the contraction of two different words in this context. Which one is it:

The meeting is been moved to three.

The meeting has been moved to three.

The answer is 'has' — this is called the present perfect (has + been). The other sentence is grammatically incorrect.

**Listen: Audio 13.19 — Meeting Moved.**

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

**Audio 13.19 — Meeting Moved**

The meeting's been moved to three.


<engl.io/a8f>
**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? There is just one thought group.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Meeting's*, *moved*, and *three* are the words with the clearest syllables. *Three*, though it has a stressed length, is a little weaker sounding because it is at the end of the sentence, when there is less energy in the voice.
- 3) What words are reduced? The word *to* is reduced. Rachel makes a stronger True T sound, while Tom makes a more reduced Flap T sound.

Both reduce the vowel to the schwa [ə]. This means the word can be very quick, giving nice contrast to the longer, stressed syllables.

- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? Rachel releases the D of *moved*, then makes the T sound of *to*. Tom combines this into one D sound for a smoother line. The T in *meeting's* is a Flap T.
- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? This is a statement, and the pitch has a general movement downward throughout the phrase, with little curves up and down for the stressed syllables.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

The meeting's  
been moved to  
three. *at the end*

*pitch tapers off*

#### Listen: Audio 13.20 — Stressed Words and Sentence Position.

We've already talked about this a lot, but now let's hear it. We'll take the opening words, including a stressed word, *The meeting's*. Then we'll take the last stressed word, *three*. Even though they are both stressed, you can clearly hear that the words at the beginning of the sentence is louder, higher in pitch, and has more energy in the voice. The last word, though it's quieter and has less energy in the voice, is still quite clear. You'll hear these two words next to each other eight times. As you work on this and *any* sentence, try to make your final words like this one. This will give your sentences the right shape—coming down in pitch and energy over a statement.

**Audio 13.20 — Stressed Words and Sentence Position**

The meeting's / three.



[engl.io/a8g](http://engl.io/a8g)

**Practice it:****Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.21 — Meeting Moved Practice.**

You'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times. Repeat each time; try to match the intonation exactly. The first few times, just do this on 'uh'. Then put the words in. The first time through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. Then you'll hear it broken up again the same way with the male voice.

**Audio 13.21 — Meeting Moved Practice**

slower: The meeting's been moved / to three.

regular: The meeting's been moved / to three.



[engl.io/a8i](http://engl.io/a8i)

**Sentence: Have you seen a draft of the report?**

You're working hard on a project with a colleague, and you're waiting for a report from another department to move forward with your project. You've heard a draft of the report is ready, but you haven't seen it yet. You ask if your colleague has.

**Listen: Audio 13.22 — Report.**

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

**Audio 13.22 — Report**

Have you seen a draft of the report?



[engl.io/a8k](http://engl.io/a8k)

**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? There is just one.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Draft* and *report* stick out as the longest words (for *report*, it's just the stressed syllable that is long). This is especially true in Tom's sentence, in which the other words are faster.

- 3) What words are reduced? Tom reduces *of* by dropping the V sound, but Rachel makes a quick V. Little differences like this add up to Tom's sentence being faster. Tom also reduced *you* to [jə].
- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? By dropping the V in *of*, Tom is able to link *of* and *the* a little quicker than Rachel. However, because there is no break between the two words in Rachel's sentence, it still sounds smooth and American!
- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? This is a question that can be answered by 'yes' or 'no'. This means the intonation should go up at the end, just as it does. Notice the rising pitch on *-port*.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

**Have ~~you~~ seen  
a draft ~~of the~~  
report?**

**Practice it:**

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.23 — Report Practice.**

You'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times. Repeat each time; try to match the intonation exactly. The first few times, just do this on 'uh'. Then put the words in. The first time through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. Then you'll hear it broken up again the same way with the male voice.

**Audio 13.23 — Report Practice**

slower: Have you seen a draft / of the report?

regular: Have you seen a draft / of the report?



[engl.io/a8m](http://engl.io/a8m)

## At Work Dialog

John and Kim are chatting while in line at the company cafeteria about a project that John is working on.

### Listen: Audio 13.24 — At Work Dialog.

You'll hear the dialog twice. Once at normal pace, and once in slow motion.

**Kim:** How's the project going?

**John:** Slowly moving along. The client keeps changing his mind.

**Kim:** Oh, that's frustrating!

**John:** Yeah, it is. But next week we're going on vacation so I'm going to try to forget all about it!

**Kim:** Nice!

### Audio 13.24 — At Work Dialog



[engl.io/a8p](http://engl.io/a8p)

### Now it's up to you:

Just like we did above with the two sentences, write down the text on a piece of paper, study the audio, and mark down what you hear. What syllables sound stressed — the loudest, clearest, with the up-down shape of the voice? The first time you listen, just put an up/down curve over these syllables. What words are reduced? Maybe you can hardly hear them. Are there pauses as one speaker is talking? What about the intonation of the phrase? Listen several times and mark everything you notice. The better you know what you're hearing, the better you'll be able to imitate it.

Things to look for:

- Contractions
- Dropping the H reduction in *his*.
- Going to = gonna reduction.
- Intonation: the opening question isn't a yes/no question, so the pitch goes down at the end.

### Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.25 — At Work Dialog Practice:

Now, try it yourself. You'll hear the phrases, at regular pace, broken up into small fragments. You'll hear each fragment three times, repeat each time.

**Audio 13.25 — At Work Dialog Practice**
<engl.io/a8r>
**Topic 5: Making Plans**

**Sentence: Do you want to do something tomorrow night?**

You're free tomorrow night and want to do something social. You ask a friend if she wants to hang out.

**Listen: Audio 13.26 — Tomorrow Night.**

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

**Audio 13.26 — Tomorrow Night**

Do you want to do something tomorrow night?


<engl.io/a8s>
**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? There's just one thought group in this sentence.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Do* and *night* are the most clear and stressed, but the stressed syllables of the *want to* reduction and *tomorrow* are also stressed.
- 3) What words are reduced? We have a great *want to* reduction: 'wanna'.
- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? The first syllable of *tomorrow* is so short, there is almost no vowel in it. This is especially clear in Rachel's slow motion sentence.
- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? This is a question that can be answered with 'yes' or 'no', so the intonation goes up in pitch at the end.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

Do you want to  
wanna  
do something  
tomorrow night?  
very short!

**Practice it:**

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.27 — Tomorrow Night Practice.**

You'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times. Repeat each time; try to match the intonation exactly. The first few times, just do this on 'uh'. Then put the words in. The first time through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. Then you'll hear it broken up again the same way with the male voice.

**Audio 13.27 — Tomorrow Night Practice**

slower: Do you want to / do something / tomorrow night?

normal: Do you want to / do something / tomorrow night?



[engl.io/a8v](http://engl.io/a8v)

**Sentence: I'd love to.**

This is one possible response to the question you just asked. Your friend is free, and she'd really like to do something with you!

**Listen: Audio 13.28 — Love To.**

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

**Audio 13.28 — Love To**  
I'd love to.



[engl.io/a8y](http://engl.io/a8y)

**Study it:**

- 1) What are your thought groups? There is just one thought group in this sentence.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? *Love* is the only stressed syllable in this sentence. Since the sentence is so short, we can really see how the unstressed word *I'd* leads up to the stressed word, and the unstressed word *to* falls away from the stressed word. They are all a part of the same smooth line, a curve up and a curve down.
- 3) What words are reduced? We have the contraction *I'd*, which is a reduction of 'I would.' What about *to*? This word normally reduces, but here we can still hear the OO [u] vowel. Why doesn't it reduce to the schwa? Because it's the last word in the sentence. Most people won't reduce words in this situation, but it's still unstressed.
- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? *Love* has the letter "O", but it makes an UH [ʌ] sound!
- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? This is a statement, so the pitch goes down at the end.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

I'd love to.  
[ʌ]



**Practice it:**

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.29 — Love To Practice.**

This sentence is too short to break up. You'll hear the full sentence, three times. The first few times, just do this on 'uh'. Then put the words in. The first time

through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. Then you'll hear it broken up again the same way with the male voice.

### Audio 13.29 — Love To Practice

I'd love to.



[engl.io/a92](http://engl.io/a92)

### Sentence: I can't, we'll be out of town.

This is another possible answer to the question you asked. Unfortunately, your friend is unavailable to hang out tomorrow night.

### Listen: Audio 13.30 — Out of Town.

You'll hear the phrase 4 times: normal pace, slow motion, half slow motion, and normal pace. You'll hear the sequence twice, first in a female voice, then male. Don't repeat yet, just listen.

### Audio 13.30 — Out of Town

I can't, we'll be out of town.



[engl.io/a93](http://engl.io/a93)

### Study it:

- 1) What are your thought groups? There are two, *I can't* and *we'll be out of town*.
- 2) What are the most stressed words or syllables? How do they sound? In the first thought group, *can't* is stressed. In the second, *out* and *town* have the most shape and are longer.
- 3) What words are reduced? *Of* is reduced simply to the schwa sound. It helps link the words *out* and *town* together. Also, the contraction *we'll* is not pronounced with the [i] vowel, but something more like the schwa [ə]. It's very fast.
- 4) Do you notice anything interesting about any of the sounds, or linking? The word *can't* ends with an abrupt stop, the T isn't released in Rachel's sentence. However, Tom does release the T in *can't*.
- 5) What about the intonation of the phrase? This is a statement, and the pitch heads downward throughout the phrase.

Here are some of these points notated on the text. Listen to the audio file several times. What else do you hear?

I can't, / we'll be  
 out of town. very fast

### Practice it:

**Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.31 — Out of Town Practice.** You'll hear the phrase broken up into sections, each played three times. Repeat each time; try to match the intonation exactly. The first few times, just do this on 'uh'. Then put the words in. The first time through the sentence will be slowed down a bit, then it will be at regular pace. Then you'll hear it broken up again the same way with the male voice.

#### Audio 13.31 — Out of Town Practice

slower: I can't / we'll be / out of town.

normal: I can't / we'll be out of town.



[engl.io/a95](http://engl.io/a95)

### Making Plans Dialog

Zack will be visiting Brooklyn for the weekend and hopes to see his friends Ray and Maria. They have a toddler named Charlie whose bedtime routine they don't want to interrupt.

**Listen: Audio 13.32 — Making Plans Dialog.** You'll hear the dialog twice. Once at normal pace, and once in slow motion.

**Zack:** Anna and I will be in town next weekend. Do you guys want to try to get together?

**Maria:** Yeah, we'd love to. Do you want to come over for an early dinner on Saturday?

**Zack:** Sure.

**Maria:** We usually start putting Charlie to bed around 7.

**Zack:** Ok, no problem. We'll be out of your hair by then.

**Maria:** Great.

### Audio 13.32 — Making Plans Dialog



[engl.io/a98](http://engl.io/a98)

#### Now it's up to you:

Just like we did above with the three sentences, write down the text on a piece of paper, study the audio, and mark down what you hear. What syllables sound stressed — the loudest, clearest, with the up-down shape of the voice? The first time you listen, just put an up/down curve over these syllables. What words are reduced? Maybe you can hardly hear them. Are there pauses as one speaker is talking? What about the intonation of the phrase? Listen several times and mark everything you notice. The better you know what you're hearing, the better you'll be able to imitate it.

Things to look for:

- Reductions: and, for, to, wanna, of.
- Stop T in *great*.
- Dropped D in *around*. This is common for *around*, especially when followed by a word that starts with a consonant.
- Idiom *out of your hair*. Can you guess what this means?
- Linking *out* and *of* with a Flap T.

#### Listen + Repeat: Audio 13.33 — Making Plans Dialog Practice:

Now, try it yourself. You'll hear the phrases, at regular pace, broken up into small fragments. You'll hear each fragment three times, repeat each time.

### Audio 13.33 — Making Plans Dialog Practice



[engl.io/a9a](http://engl.io/a9a)

## Video Exercises

Breaking down what you hear isn't always easy. As you do more and more Ben Franklin exercises, you'll find you become a more active listener. Here are more videos to practice with:

<p><b>Video 13.3 — How to Sound like a Native Speaker</b>  This video goes over a short Ben Franklin exercise, and an imitation exercise as well. See more imitation exercises below.</p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9c">engl.io/a9c</a>
<p><b>Video 13.4 — Where I live</b></p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9d">engl.io/a9d</a>
<p><b>Video 13.5 — What did you do today?</b></p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9f">engl.io/a9f</a>
<p><b>Video 13.6 — Free Time</b></p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9h">engl.io/a9h</a>
<p><b>Video 13.7 — Evening Plans</b></p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9k">engl.io/a9k</a>
<p><b>Video 13.8 — Stressed</b></p>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9m">engl.io/a9m</a>

## Imitation Exercises

These exercises are for practicing the character of American English: placement, linking, rhythm, and intonation. In fact, you don't even need to use words, you can just use 'uh' like we have several times in this book. These are imitation exercises. You hear part of a phrase three times, then there's time for you to repeat. Practice just on 'uh', imitating the rhythm and melody of the line you hear. After you've done the same exercise many times, if you feel confident, try it with the words. Try doing this with your eyes closed, focusing on what you hear.

<b>Video 13.9 — Brooklyn Neighborhoods</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9r">engl.io/a9r</a>
<b>Video 13.10 — Don't Keep a Secret</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9s">engl.io/a9s</a>
<b>Video 13.11 — I Shouldn't be Bragging</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9u">engl.io/a9u</a>
<b>Video 13.12 — Pan Am</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9x">engl.io/a9x</a>
<b>Video 13.13 — What's going on?</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a9z">engl.io/a9z</a>
<b>Video 13.14 — Call Ignored</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/a91">engl.io/a91</a>
<b>Video 13.15 — People Change</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1a2">engl.io/1a2</a>
<b>Video 13.16 — Terminator</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1a4">engl.io/1a4</a>
<b>Video 13.17 — Big Love</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1a5">engl.io/1a5</a>
<b>Video 13.18 — Carousel</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1a8">engl.io/1a8</a>

<b>Video 13.19 — 500 Days of Summer</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1ab">engl.io/1ab</a>
<b>Video 13.20 — The Art of Getting By</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1ad">engl.io/1ad</a>
<b>Video 13.21 — Eavesdrop</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1af">engl.io/1af</a>
<b>Video 13.22 — Peggy's New Office</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1ah">engl.io/1ah</a>
<b>Video 13.23 — Midnight in Paris</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1ak">engl.io/1ak</a>
<b>Video 13.24 — Bored to Death</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1am">engl.io/1am</a>
<b>Video 13.25 — Let's Do Lunch</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1ap">engl.io/1ap</a>
<b>Video 13.26 — Thanksgiving 2012</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1as">engl.io/1as</a>
<b>Video 13.27 — What did you do today?</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1au">engl.io/1au</a>
<b>Video 13.28 — Is Tom Stressed?</b>	 <a href="http://engl.io/1aw">engl.io/1aw</a>

**Video 13.29 — Is Rachel Stressed?**[engl.io/1ax](http://engl.io/1ax)

## Chapter 14

# Continuing to Work

In this book, you've built a foundation for the sounds of American English. You know how to listen for stressed words and reduced words. You know what a Stop T sounds like, and contractions. You know Americans use gonna/wanna/gotta and reductions all the time. The more you pay attention to these things as you watch TV or listen to a conversation, the more you'll notice them. This will build your intuition, and you'll start to get a feel for what's 'right'.

But, because of what you've learned in this book, you don't have to rely on intuition. Until that gets stronger, you can study phrases and know how they should sound: pick out the stressed words, identify contractions, look at words that will link together with an ending consonant to beginning vowel, and so on. You have all the tools you need to keep practicing. But what material should you use to keep practicing?

### Vocabulary Lists and Phrase Drilling

This sounds boring, but it doesn't have to be! You might be working from a book or website that gives you word lists. That's a good base, but it's easier to remember words and phrases by picking them up in context. Read in English and watch TV for vocabulary and useful phrases. Keep a list with you that you add to when you find words, ways of using those words, or phrases that are new to you. Write down the words or phrases and the context, and practice them out loud.

Write out the IPA, or any other system that works for you, for each word and phrase. Know where the stress is, and practice words just like in Chapter 9, thinking about the shape of the stressed syllable and making the unstressed syllables really fast. You might even want to practice stressed and unstressed syllables separately. For the phrases, look for words you can reduce, and practice them on their own. Then link them back into the phrase, just like in Chapter 10. Notice everything, like contractions and ‘gonna’.

If any of the words or phrases are difficult, slow down. Don’t say them at a normal speaking pace. Make sure you’re going slow enough so you know it’s right. Practice the same word or phrase 10 times in a row, really paying attention to what you hear and the movement of the mouth. Then a little faster 10 more times.

Talk out loud as much as you can. It doesn’t matter if no one is listening. Sometimes that’s even better because you don’t need to worry about making mistakes. Pick a topic and talk about it as if someone was there. **Record yourself**, then pick out some of the vocabulary you used and drill those words or phrases.

If you live in the US, or have the opportunity to have conversation with native speakers, **record that conversation**. Listen to it later. Are you happy with your pronunciation? What would you do differently? Maybe it sounds choppy. Write down what you said and practice it slowly, with a smooth connection between words. Use your body: move your arms smoothly too. Slowly speed up ... can you keep a smooth connection?

Record yourself and listen to it everyday. Get familiar with how you talk, and what you’d like to change about it. Doing this and a Ben Franklin exercise every day will help you understand what you need to change about your accent, and how to change it.

### **Ben Franklin Exercises**

In the last chapter, you saw some videos where I did a Ben Franklin exercise for you. Those videos are to show you *how to do them on your own*. They are named after Benjamin Franklin because they use a method he came up with to improve his own writing. Study an original, take good notes, try to reproduce it yourself, compare with the original.

Take a short clip (audio or video) that you can listen to over and over. Luckily there are lots of news, drama, comedy, and vlog clips on the internet. Just pick a

small section of it, 15 or 20 seconds. Write out or get a copy of the transcript, and mark it with everything you hear: what syllables are most stressed? What words reduce? Where are Flap T's, Stop T's, contractions, 'gonna'? Does the pitch go up at the end of a phrase? Listen over and over again.

Looking at your notes, practice speaking the text out loud, as slowly as you need. Do each phrase over and over until it starts to feel more comfortable. Record yourself and listen to it. Then listen to the original. How does it compare? What do you still need to work on?

If you don't know where to find good videos to practice with, try [ted.com](https://www.ted.com). They have videos from many disciplines, and you can turn on the subtitles or work with a clickable transcript. Plus, you'll usually learn something cool.

There are some websites, like [livemocha.com](https://livemocha.com), where you can record yourself and native speakers will comment on your recording, for free. I have actually used it myself when studying a foreign language.

### **Daily Practice**

Daily practice is the best way to move forward. Drill the same concept (the AH vowel, or reducing 'for', for example) for a week or more. Once you make a breakthrough on a word or sound and 'get it', it's time to really work. Think of all the times you've done it the wrong way. That's your habit. To break the habit, you have to practice the new way not once or twice, but many times. Try 20 times a day, at different paces (really slow, then normal speaking speed), for 7 days in a row.

Repetition and consistency are the most important factors to your practice. That doesn't mean you have to spend hours a day. I remember a student from many years ago. He was working on the ending [n] sound. It always sounded like [ŋ] because of tongue tension. The next week, every word I gave him with an ending [n] sounded perfect—sounded native! I said, how much did you work on this? He said, "Just 10 minutes a day, but I practiced every day."

Be patient with yourself and work hard. With daily practice you can improve dramatically.

### **Lessons and Evaluations**

Rachel's English offers one-time accent evaluations. This can be a great way to learn what you need to work on, and how to do it. If you want a coach every step of the way, then lessons, also offered by Rachel's English, are a great option.

Currently, teacher Tom Kelley, who you've heard on the audio files in this book and seen in some videos, offers both lessons and evaluations through Rachel's English. He has trained as a singer and professional actor, getting a Master's Degree in Acting from Harvard University. He is an exceptional accent coach and has been working with Rachel's English students since 2012.

**Lessons and Evaluations**

Learn more about Tom and the evaluations and lesson packages available from Rachel's English.

[engl.io/lessons](http://engl.io/lessons)

Thank you for joining me on the pronunciation journey in this book. To keep in touch with Rachel's English, please sign up for the mailing list: [engl.io/nl](http://engl.io/nl)

I wish you the best as you continue to work on your spoken English! I hope every one of you will achieve your goals!

## Appendix 1: Answers

### Chapter 2 — Introduction to Stress

#### Test Yourself: Audio 2.1 — Which Syllable is Stressed?

- about — second syllable stress
- window — first syllable stress
- yellow — first syllable stress
- until — second syllable stress
- along — second syllable stress
- aside — second syllable stress
- running — first syllable stress
- harder — first syllable stress
- simple — first syllable stress
- because — second syllable stress

#### Test Yourself: Audio 2.3 — Identify the Rhythmic Pattern

1. da-DA-da-DA-da
2. DA-da
3. da
4. da-DA-da-DA
5. DA-DA
6. da-DA-DA-da-da
7. da-DA
8. da-DA-da
9. da-da-DA
10. DA-da-DA

## Chapter 3 — Vowels

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.5 — AH [ɑ] vs. UH [ʌ] Test

1. UH as in BUTTER [ʌ]
2. sung
3. pop
4. crossed
5. rubber

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.9 — AH [ɑ] vs. AA [æ] Test

1. AA as in BAT [æ]
2. bomb
3. bag
4. rock
5. last

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.13 — EH [ɛ] vs. AA [æ] Test

1. AA as in BAT [æ]
2. had
3. leapt
4. guess
5. cattle

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.17 — IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i] Test

1. EE as in SHE [i]
2. hill
3. it
4. living
5. ream

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.19 — EH [ɛ] vs. IH [ɪ] Test

1. IH as in SIT [ɪ]
2. strep
3. wet
4. will
5. knit

### Test Yourself: Audio 3.23 — UH [ʊ] vs. OO [u] Test

1. OO as in BOO [u]
2. wooed
3. full
4. kooky
5. pool

**Test yourself: Non-Audio 3.1 — Match the Sound with the Symbol**

1. h
2. g
3. i
4. f
5. d
6. b
7. j
8. a
9. e
10. k
11. c

**Test Yourself: Audio 3.27 — Vowel Test** 1. g — IH as in SIT

2. d — AA as in BAT
3. i — UH as in PUSH
4. a — UH as in BUTTER
5. b — AH as in FATHER
6. k — UR as in BIRD
7. j — UH as in SUPPLY (Schwa)
8. g — EE as in SHE
9. e — EH as in BED
10. h — OO as in BOO
11. c — AW as in LAW

**Test Yourself: Audio 3.28 — Stressed or Unstressed?**

1. unstressed
2. stressed
3. stressed
4. unstressed
5. stressed
6. stressed
7. unstressed
8. unstressed
9. unstressed
10. stressed

## Chapter 4 — Diphthongs

### Test Yourself: Audio 4.4 — OH [oʊ] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [ɑ] Test

1. OH as in NOW [oʊ]
2. toad
3. taupe
4. bossed
5. toast

### Test Yourself: Audio 4.7 — OW [aʊ] vs. AW [ɔ] or AH [ɑ] Test

1. AW as in LAW [ɔ]
2. out
3. moth
4. foul
5. brown

### Test Yourself: Audio 4.11 — AY [eɪ] vs. IH [ɪ] vs. EE [i] Test

1. hail, heel, hill
2. knit, neat, Nate
3. wheel, whale, will
4. grin, grain, green
5. nail, nil, kneel

### Test yourself: Non-Audio 4.1 — Match the Symbols with the Sound

1. c
2. a
3. d
4. f
5. b
6. e

### Test yourself: Non-Audio 4.1 — Match the Symbols with the Sound

1. c
2. a
3. d
4. f
5. b
6. e

**Test yourself: Audio 4.14 — What diphthong are you hearing?**

1. d — AY as in SAY
2. f — EW as in FEW
3. a — OH as in NO
4. b — OW as in NOW
5. e — OY as in TOY
6. c — AI as in BUY

**Test yourself: Audio 4.15 — Mixed Minimal Pairs, Vowels and Diphthongs**

1. wrong — hale, hill, heal
2. wrong — lane, Lynne, lean
3. wrong — out, ought
4. right
5. wrong — bog, bag
6. right
7. right
8. wrong — stuck, stock
9. wrong — bed, bad
10. right
11. wrong — fill, fell
12. right
13. wrong — wood, wooed
14. wrong — full, fool

**Chapter 5 — Consonants****Test yourself: Non-Audio 5.1 — How should the T's be pronounced?**

- a. True T   b. Flap T   c. Stop T
1. b
  2. b
  3. c
  4. a
  5. a
  6. c
  7. a
  8. b
  9. a
  10. c

**Test Yourself: Audio 5.7 — Which T do you Hear?**

1. hot — Stop T
2. task — True T
3. a lot of — Flap T
4. interview — No T
5. connect — True T
6. partake — True T
7. water — Flap T
8. bottom — Flap T

**Test Yourself: Audio 5.19 — N [n] vs. NG [ŋ]**

1. NG [ŋ]
2. king
3. sane
4. gong
5. run

**Test Yourself: Audio 5.25 — R [ɹ] vs. W [w]**

1. W [w]
2. rut
3. weighed
4. ring
5. rail

**Test Yourself: Audio 5.29 — R [ɹ] vs. L [l]**

1. R [ɹ]
2. rake
3. fly
4. glean
5. litter

**Test Yourself: Non-Audio 5.2 — Match the Symbol to the Sound**

1. i
2. n
3. o
4. j
5. r
6. t
7. v
8. l
9. c
10. w
11. s

12. d
13. k
14. q
15. a
16. e
17. f
18. x
19. m
20. g
21. u
22. p
23. h
24. b

**Test Yourself: Non-Audio 5.3 — Which are American English IPA Symbols?**

2, 4, 5, 8, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20

**Test Yourself: Audio 5.30 — What Consonant do you Hear?**

1. M [m]
2. T [t]
3. W [w]
4. R [ɹ]
5. H [h]
6. NG [ŋ]
7. Y [j]
8. B [b]
9. K [k]
10. Z [z]
11. S [s]
12. SH [ʃ]
13. TH [θ]
14. ZH [ʒ]
15. CH [tʃ]

**Chapter 6 — Consonant Clusters****Test Yourself: Non-Audio 6.1 — How is the Plural Ending Pronounced?**

1. c
2. b
3. a
4. b
5. a

6. b
7. a
8. c
9. c
10. a

### **Test Yourself: Non-Audio 6.2 — How is the -ed Ending Pronounced?**

1. b
2. b
3. a
4. c
5. c
6. a
7. b
8. a
9. b
10. c

## **Chapter 7 — Rhythm and Intonation: Multi-Syllable Words**

### **Test Yourself: Audio 7.2 — 3-Syllable Words Test**

- a. first b. second c. third
1. a. rectangle — first
2. a. fortunate — first
3. b. abandon — second
4. c. guarantee — third
5. b. determine — second
6. c. magazine — third
7. b. horizon — second
8. b. subconscious — second
9. a. video — first
10. c. cigarette — third

### **Test yourself: Non-Audio 7.1 — Which Syllable has Stress?**

1. annotate — first — ['æn ə,teɪt] (-ate, two syllables before the suffix)
2. biology — second — [baɪ'ɒl ə dʒi] (-logy, one syllable before suffix)
3. commodify — second — [kə'mad ə,fai] (-ify, one syllable before suffix)
4. barrette — second — [bə'rɛt] (-ette, stress on the suffix)
5. anxious — first — ['æŋkʃəs] (-ious, one syllable before suffix)
6. acrylic — second — [ə'kriɪlk] (-ic, one syllable before suffix)
7. addressee — third — [,æd'res'si] (-ette, stress on the suffix)

8. conditional — second — [kən'dɪʃənəl] (-inal, one syllable before suffix)
9. conspicuous — second — [kən'spɪkjuəs] (-uous, one syllable before suffix)
10. consideration — fourth — [kən'sɪdə'reɪʃən] (-tion, one syllable before suffix)

## Chapter 8 — Linking

### Test yourself: Non-Audio 8.1 — Which kind of linking is it?

1. c
2. b
3. b
4. c
5. a
6. a
7. b
8. c
9. b
10. a

### Test Yourself: Audio 8.5 — Which Phrase is Linked?

1. a: on a — linked
2. b: for the — not linked
3. b: fly all — not linked
4. a: had a — linked
5. b: over there — not linked

## Chapter 9 — Rhythm and Intonation: Stressed Words

### Test Yourself: Audio 9.4 — Which Word is the Most Stressed?

1. go
2. was
3. late
4. doing
5. that's
6. early
7. report
8. excuse
9. bought
10. class

**Test yourself: Audio 9.6 — Up or Down?**

1. You — up — question
2. Yes — down — statement
3. What time — down — question, but not a yes/no question
4. Are you hungry — up — question
5. No — up — question
6. This one — up — question
7. They're late — down — statement
8. No — down — statement
9. This one — down — statement
10. They're late — up — question

**Chapter 10 — Unstressed Words and Words that Reduce****Test yourself: Audio 10.15 — Is the Word Reduced?**

1. yes — at
2. yes — for
3. yes — should
4. no — or
5. yes — and
6. no — because
7. yes — to
8. no — can
9. yes — was
10. yes — do
11. no — them
12. no — your
13. yes — as
14. no — could

**Chapter 11 — Contractions****Test yourself: Audio 11.10 — What contraction are you hearing?**

1. you'd
2. what's
3. haven't
4. won't
5. I'll
6. can't

7. he'll
8. aren't
9. you're
10. should've
11. we're
12. he's
13. where'll
14. might've
15. I'd

## Chapter 12 — Gonna, Wanna, Gotta

### Test yourself: Non-Audio 12.1 — Used Correctly?

Only two sentences do not use gonna/wanna/gotta correctly:

He wanna win. — 3rd Person (he, she, Mary, etc.) cannot use 'wanna'. Correct:  
He wants to win.

She gotta know that. — You can't drop the 'has' contraction for the 3rd Person  
(he, she, it, etc.). Correct: She's gotta know that.

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 5.26 — Listen + Repeat: The L [l] Consonant — [engl.io/arw](http://engl.io/arw)  
 5.27 — Listen + Repeat: L [l] vs. OH [oʊ] — [engl.io/artz](http://engl.io/artz)  
 5.28 — Listen + Repeat: R [ɹ] vs. L [l] — [engl.io/as2](http://engl.io/as2)  
 5.29 — Test Yourself: R [ɹ] vs. L [l] Test — [engl.io/as9](http://engl.io/as9)  
 5.30 — Test Yourself: What Consonant do you Hear? — [engl.io/asc](http://engl.io/asc)

## Chapter 6 — Consonant Clusters

- 6.1 — Listen + Repeat: Beginning Clusters — [engl.io/at1](http://engl.io/at1)  
 6.2 — Listen + Repeat: R Clusters — [engl.io/atc](http://engl.io/atc)  
 6.3 — Listen + Repeat: Middle and Ending Clusters — [engl.io/atw](http://engl.io/atw)  
 6.4 — Listen + Repeat: Plural Nouns — [engl.io/au2](http://engl.io/au2)  
 6.5 — Listen + Repeat: Regular Past Tense — [engl.io/au7](http://engl.io/au7)

## Chapter 7 — Rhythm and Intonation: Multi-Syllable Words

- 7.1 — Listen + Repeat: 3-Syllable Words — [engl.io/av5](http://engl.io/av5)  
 7.2 — Test Yourself: 3-Syllable Words Test — [engl.io/av8](http://engl.io/av8)  
 7.3 — Listen + Repeat: Verbs vs. Nouns — [engl.io/avd](http://engl.io/avd)  
 7.4 — Listen + Repeat: Suffixes: Stress on the Suffix — [engl.io/avf](http://engl.io/avf)  
 7.5 — Listen + Repeat: Suffixes: Stress just before the Suffix — [engl.io/avf](http://engl.io/avf)

7.6 — Listen + Repeat: Suffixes: Stress two syllables before the Suffix — [engl.io/avf](#)

7.7 — Listen + Repeat: Compound Words — [engl.io/avp](#)

7.8 — Listen + Repeat: Initials — [engl.io/avt](#)

## **Chapter 8 — Linking**

8.1 — Listen: Thought Groups — [engl.io/ax1](#)

8.2 — Listen + Repeat: Linking Vowel to Vowel — [engl.io/ax7](#)

8.3 — Listen + Repeat: Linking Consonant to Vowel — [engl.io/axh](#)

8.4 — Listen + Repeat: Linking the Stop T to a Consonant — [engl.io/axu](#)

8.5 — Test Yourself: Which Phrase is Linked? — [engl.io/axw](#)

## **Chapter 9 — Rhythm and Intonation: Stressed Words**

9.1 — Listen + Repeat: Three-Syllable Words and Phrases — [engl.io/ay5](#)

9.2 — Listen + Repeat: Content Words — [engl.io/ayc](#)

9.3 — Listen + Repeat: Content Words, Slow Motion — [engl.io/aye](#)

9.4 — Test Yourself: Which Word is the Most Stressed? — [engl.io/ayk](#)

9.5 — Listen: One Thought Leading to Another — [engl.io/ayp](#)

9.6 — Test Yourself: Up or Down? — [engl.io/az4](#)

## **Chapter 10 — Unstressed Words and Words that Reduce**

10.1 — Listen: Stressed vs. Unstressed — [engl.io/a12](#)

10.2 — Listen: Stressed vs. Reduced — [engl.io/a14](#)

10.3 — Listen + Repeat: ARE, OR, FOR, YOUR — [engl.io/a1m](#)

10.4 — Listen + Repeat: AT and THAT — [engl.io/a1v](#)

10.5 — Listen + Repeat: Dropping the H — [engl.io/a2b](#)

10.6 — Listen + Repeat: THEM — [engl.io/a2e](#)

10.7 — Listen + Repeat: OF — [engl.io/a2g](#)

10.8 — Listen + Repeat: CAN — [engl.io/a2k](#)

10.9 — Listen + Repeat: TO — [engl.io/a2p](#)

10.10 — Listen + Repeat: DO and DOES — [engl.io/a2w](#)

10.11 — Listen + Repeat: AND — [engl.io/a34](#)

10.12 — Listen + Repeat: THE — [engl.io/a38](#)

10.13 — Listen + Repeat: AS, WAS, BECAUSE — [engl.io/a3g](#)

10.14 — Listen + Repeat: SHOULD, WOULD, and COULD — [engl.io/a3k](#)

10.15 — Test yourself: Is the Word Reduced? — [engl.io/a3n](#)

## **Chapter 11 — Contractions**

11.1 — Listen + Repeat: N'T Contractions — [engl.io/a48](#)

- 11.2 — Listen + Repeat: Can vs. Can't — [engl.io/a4c](#)
- 11.3 — Listen + Repeat: TO BE and TO HAVE Contractions — [engl.io/a4s](#)
- 11.4 — Listen + Repeat: Modal Verb Contractions — [engl.io/a4u](#)
- 11.5 — Listen + Repeat: Modal Verb Contractions, Slow Motion — [engl.io/a4w](#)
- 11.6 — Listen + Repeat: 'LL Contractions — [engl.io/a56](#)
- 11.7 — Listen + Repeat: 'LL Contractions, Slow Motion — [engl.io/a58](#)
- 11.8 — Listen + Repeat: WOULD, HAD, and DID Reductions — [engl.io/a5f](#)
- 11.9 — Listen + Repeat: Contractions with Reductions — [engl.io/a5k](#)
- 11.10 — Test Yourself: What contraction are you hearing? — [engl.io/a5m](#)

## **Chapter 12 — Gonna, Wanna, Gotta**

- 12.1 — Listen + Repeat: Gonna — [engl.io/a6b](#)
- 12.2 — Listen + Repeat: Wanna — [engl.io/a6k](#)
- 12.3 — Listen + Repeat: Gotta — [engl.io/a6s](#)

## **Chapter 13 — Putting it all together**

- 13.1 — Listen: Penn Station — [engl.io/a77](#)
- 13.2 — Listen + Repeat: Penn Station Practice — [engl.io/a79](#)
- 13.3 — Listen: Subway Stop — [engl.io/a7c](#)
- 13.4 — Listen + Repeat: Subway Stop Practice — [engl.io/a7f](#)
- 13.5 — Listen: Directions Dialog — [engl.io/a7g](#)
- 13.6 — Listen + Repeat: Directions Dialog Practice — [engl.io/a7k](#)
- 13.7 — Listen: Reservations — [engl.io/a7m](#)
- 13.8 — Listen + Repeat: Reservations Practice — [engl.io/a7p](#)
- 13.9 — Listen: Wait Time — [engl.io/a7s](#)
- 13.10 — Listen + Repeat: Wait Time Practice — [engl.io/a7v](#)
- 13.11 — Listen: At a Restaurant Dialog — [engl.io/a7x](#)
- 13.12 — Listen + Repeat: At a Restaurant Dialog Practice — [engl.io/a82](#)
- 13.13 — Listen: Another Size — [engl.io/a84](#)
- 13.14 — Listen + Repeat: Another Size Practice — [engl.io/a85](#)
- 13.15 — Listen: Return Policy — [engl.io/a88](#)
- 13.16 — Listen + Repeat: Return Policy Practice — [engl.io/a8a](#)
- 13.17 — Listen: Shopping Dialog — [engl.io/a8b](#)
- 13.18 — Listen + Repeat: Shopping Dialog Practice — [engl.io/a8d](#)
- 13.19 — Listen: Meeting Moved — [engl.io/a8f](#)
- 13.20 — Listen: Stressed Words and Sentence Position — [engl.io/a8g](#)
- 13.21 — Listen + Repeat: Meeting Moved Practice — [engl.io/a8i](#)
- 13.22 — Listen: Report — [engl.io/a8k](#)
- 13.23 — Listen + Repeat: Report Practice — [engl.io/a8m](#)
- 13.24 — Listen: At Work Dialog — [engl.io/a8p](#)
- 13.25 — Listen + Repeat: At Work Dialog Practice — [engl.io/a8r](#)

- 13.26 — Listen: Tomorrow Night — [engl.io/a8s](http://engl.io/a8s)
- 13.27 — Listen + Repeat: Tomorrow Night Practice — [engl.io/a8v](http://engl.io/a8v)
- 13.28 — Listen: Love To — [engl.io/a8y](http://engl.io/a8y)
- 13.29 — Listen + Repeat: Love To Practice — [engl.io/a92](http://engl.io/a92)
- 13.30 — Listen: Out of Town — [engl.io/a93](http://engl.io/a93)
- 13.31 — Listen + Repeat: Out of Town Practice — [engl.io/a95](http://engl.io/a95)
- 13.32 — Listen: Making Plans Dialog — [engl.io/a98](http://engl.io/a98)
- 13.33 — Listen + Repeat: Making Plans Dialog Practice — [engl.io/a9a](http://engl.io/a9a)

## Appendix 4: Sound Chart

If was any confusion about whether or not English is a phonetic language, this list should make you sure! *English is not phonetic.* See that the letter "A" can represent seven different vowel and diphthong sounds.

### The Letter A

a ... 'aa' as in 'bat' ... [æ] ... exact  
 a ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] ... father  
 a ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... fall  
 a ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... about  
 a ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... base, able  
 a ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... share  
 a ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... private  
 aa ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] ... bazaar, aardvark  
 ai ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... said  
 ai ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... aisle  
 ai ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... maid  
 ai ... 'aa' as in 'bat' ... [æ] ... plaid  
 au ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... cause  
 au ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... gauge  
 au ... 'aa' as in 'bat' ... [æ] ... aunt  
 au ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... chauffeur  
 ay ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... says  
 ay ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... pay  
 ay ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... quay  
 aye ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... aye

augh ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... daughter  
 aw ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... shawl  
 ea ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... heat  
 ea ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... ocean  
 ea ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... head  
 ea ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] ... heart  
 ea ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... great  
 eau ... 'ew' as in 'few' ... [ju] ... beauty  
 eau ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... beau  
 ea[r] ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... learn  
 oa ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... oat

### **The Letter B**

silent ... thumb  
 b ... 'b' as in 'bit' ... [b] ... bone

### **The Letter C**

c ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... casserole  
 c ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... cello  
 ce ... 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... ice  
 ce ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... ocean  
 cc ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... with 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... accent  
 ch ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... choir, schedule  
 ch ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... chance  
 ch ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... machine  
 chs ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... fuchsia  
 ci ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... ancient  
 ci ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... special  
 ck ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... back  
 cz ... 't' as in 'time' ... [d] with 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... czar (one of two possible pronunciations)  
 sch ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... schmuck  
 sc ... 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... science  
 sci ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... conscience  
 tch ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... watch

### **The Letter D**

d ... 'd' as in 'dime' ... [d] ... dark  
 d ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... individual  
 dge ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... judge  
 dj ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... adjective  
 ed ... 't' as in 'time' ... [d] ... tripped

## The Letter E

e ... silent ... there  
 ce ... 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... ice  
 ce ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... ocean  
 dge ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... judge  
 e ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... shed  
 e ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... be  
 e ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... anthem  
 e ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... pretty  
 e ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] ... sergeant  
 e ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... suede, cafe  
 ea ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] ... heart  
 ea ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... heat  
 ea ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... head  
 ea ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... ocean  
 ea ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... great  
 ea[r] ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... learn  
 eau ... 'ew' as in 'few' ... [ju] ... beauty  
 eau ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... beau  
 ed ... 't' as in 'time' ... [t] ... tripped  
 ee ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... been  
 ee ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... weep  
 ee ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... puree  
 ei ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... receive  
 ei ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... veil  
 eig ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... foreign (can also be 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ])  
 eig ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... reign  
 eigh ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... weigh  
 eigh ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... height  
 eo ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... leopard  
 eo ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... people  
 eu ... 'ew' as in 'few' ... [ju] ... feud  
 eu ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... chauffeur  
 eu ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... sleuth  
 eu(r) ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... chauffeur  
 ew ... 'ew' as in 'few' ... [ju] ... few  
 ew ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... blew  
 ey ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... key  
 ey ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... they  
 ie ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... friend  
 ie ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... brief  
 ie ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... lie  
 oe ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... foe

oe ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] ... does  
 oe ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... shoe  
 ue ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... blue  
 ye ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... bye

### The Letter F

f ... 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... fear  
 f ... 'v' as in 'van' ... [v] ... of  
 f ... 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... off

### The Letter G

silent ... sign  
 augh ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... daughter  
 dge ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... judge  
 eig ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... foreign (can also be 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ])  
 eig ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... reign  
 eigh ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... weigh  
 eigh ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... height  
 igh ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... sigh  
 g ... 'g' as in 'gap' ... [g] ... go  
 g ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... gem  
 ge ... 'dj' as in 'measure' ... [ʒ] ... beige  
 gg ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... exaggerate  
 ng ... 'ng' as in 'sing' ... [ŋ] ... ring  
 ng ... 'ng' as in 'sing' ... [ŋ] with 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... angst  
 ng ... 'ng' as in 'sing' ... [ŋ] with 'g' as in 'gap' ... [g] ... anger  
 ough ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... though  
 ough ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... thought  
 ough ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... through  
 ough ... 'ow' as in 'now' ... [aʊ] ... bough  
 ough ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] OR 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] with 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ...  
 cough  
 ough ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] with 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... enough

### The Letter H

silent ... honor, thyme, rhythm  
 augh ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... daughter  
 ch ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... choir  
 ch ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... chance  
 ch ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... chartreuse  
 chs ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... fuchsia  
 h ... 'h' as in 'hi' ... [h] ... happy  
 igh ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... sigh

eigh ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... weigh  
 eigh ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... height  
 ough ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... though  
 ough ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... thought  
 ough ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... through  
 ough ... 'ow' as in 'now' ... [aʊ] ... bough  
 ough ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] OR 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] with 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ...  
 cough  
 ough ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] with 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... enough  
 ph ... 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... phone  
 pph ... 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... sapphire  
 sch ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... schmuck  
 sh ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... shame  
 tch ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... watch  
 th ... 'th' as in 'thin' ... [θ] ... thanks  
 th ... 'th' as in 'this' ... [ð] ... those

### The Letter I

ai ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... said  
 ai ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... aisle  
 ai ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... maid  
 ai ... 'aa' as in 'bat' ... [æ] ... plaid  
 ci ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... ancient  
 ci ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... special  
 ei ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... receive  
 ei ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... veil  
 eig ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... foreign (can also be 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ])  
 eig ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... reign  
 eigh ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... weigh  
 eigh ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... height  
 i ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... him  
 i ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... time  
 i ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... police  
 i ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... possible  
 i ... 'aa' as in 'bat' ... [æ] ... timbre  
 i ... 'y' as in 'yes' ... [j] ... senior  
 ie ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... friend  
 ie ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... grieve  
 ie ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... lie  
 igh ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... sigh  
 i[r] ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... bird  
 oi ... 'oy' as in 'toy' ... [ɔɪ] ... moist  
 oi ... 'w' as in 'will' ... [w] with 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... choir

ui ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... build  
 ui ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... juice  
 sci ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... conscience  
 si ... 'dʒ' as in 'measure' ... [ʒ] ... vision  
 ti ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... motion  
 ti ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... mention

### The Letter J

dj ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... adjective  
 j ... 'j' as in 'jar' ... [dʒ] ... joy  
 j ... 'y' as in 'yes' ... [j] ... fjord  
 j ... 'h' as in 'hi' ... [h] ... junta

### The Letter K

silent ... know  
 ck ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... back  
 k ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... king  
 L silent ... palm  
 l ... 'l' as in 'lap' ... [l] ... love  
 ll ... 'l' as in 'lap' ... [l] ... million  
 M m ... 'm' as in 'map' ... [m] ... mine  
 mm ... 'm' as in 'map' ... [m] ... summer  
 N silent ... autumn  
 n ... 'n' as in 'nap' ... [n] ... name  
 n ... 'ng' as in 'sing' ... [ŋ] ... think  
 nn ... 'n' as in 'nap' ... [n] ... funny  
 ng ... 'ng' as in 'sing' ... [ŋ] ... ring  
 ng ... 'ng' as in 'sing' ... [ŋ] with 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... angst  
 ng ... 'ng' as in 'sing' ... [ŋ] with 'g' as in 'gap' ... [g] ... anger

### The Letter O

eo ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... leopard  
 eo ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... people  
 o ... 'w' as in 'will' ... [w] with 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] ... one  
 o ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... women  
 o ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] ... body  
 o ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... do  
 o ... 'uh' as in 'push' ... [ʊ] ... wolf  
 o ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... go  
 o ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] ... love  
 o ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... bottom  
 oa ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... oat  
 oe ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... foe

oe ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] ... does  
 oe ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... shoe  
 oi ... 'oy' as in 'toy' ... [ɔɪ] ... moist  
 oi ... 'w' as in 'will' ... [w] with 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... choir  
 oo ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... too  
 oo ... 'uh' as in 'push' ... [ʊ] ... wood  
 oo ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] ... blood  
 oo ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... brooch  
 ou ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... you  
 ou ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... jealous  
 ou ... 'uh' as in 'push' ... [ʊ] ... could  
 ou ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] ... trouble  
 ou ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... soul  
 ou ... 'ow' as in 'now' ... [aʊ] ... round  
 ou[r] ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... journey  
 o[r] ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... word  
 ough ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... though  
 ough ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... thought  
 ough ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... through  
 ough ... 'ow' as in 'now' ... [aʊ] ... bough  
 ough ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] OR 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] with 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ...  
 cough  
 ough ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] with 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... enough  
 ow ... 'ow' as in 'now' ... [aʊ] ... cow  
 ow ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... row  
 oy ... 'oy' as in 'toy' ... [ɔɪ] ... joy  
 wo ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... two

### **The Letter P**

silent ... psychology, pneumonia  
 p ... 'p' as in 'pit' ... [p] ... pear  
 ph ... 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... phone  
 pph ... 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... sapphire

### **The Letter Q**

q ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] ... quiet

### **The Letter R**

r ... 'r' as in 'run' ... [ɹ] ... rat

### **The Letter S**

silent ... island  
 chs ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... fuchsia

s ... 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... some  
 s ... 'z' as in 'zip' ... [z] ... his  
 s ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... sugar  
 s ... 'dj' as in 'measure' ... [ʒ] ... measure  
 sc ... 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... science  
 sch ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... schmuck  
 sci ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... conscience  
 si ... 'dj' as in 'measure' ... [ʒ] ... vision  
 sh ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... shame  
 ss ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... issue  
 ss ... 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... miss  
 ss ... 'z' as in 'zip' ... [z] ... possession

### The Letter T

silent ... fasten  
 t ... 't' as in 'time' ... [t] ... tap  
 t ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... future, righteous  
 tch ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... watch  
 th ... 'th' as in 'thin' ... [θ] ... thanks  
 th ... 'th' as in 'this' ... [ð] ... those  
 ti ... 'sh' as in 'ship' ... [ʃ] ... motion  
 ti ... 'ch' as in 'char' ... [tʃ] ... mention

### The Letter U

silent ... plague (it signals a hard G without being pronounced)  
 au ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... cause  
 au ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... gauge  
 au ... 'aa' as in 'bat' ... [æ] ... aunt  
 au ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... chauffeur  
 augh ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... daughter  
 eau ... 'ew' as in 'few' ... [ju] ... beauty  
 eau ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... beau  
 eu ... 'ew' as in 'few' ... [ju] ... feud  
 eu ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... chauffeur  
 eu ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... sleuth  
 eu(r) ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... chauffeur  
 ou ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] ... trouble  
 ou ... 'uh' as in 'push' ... [ʊ] ... could  
 ou ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... you  
 ou ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... jealous  
 ou ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... soul  
 ou ... 'ow' as in 'now' ... [aʊ] ... round  
 ough ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [oʊ] ... though

ough ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... thought  
 ough ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... through  
 ough ... 'ow' as in 'now' ... [aʊ] ... bough  
 ough ... 'ah' as in 'father' ... [ɑ] OR 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] with 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ...  
 cough  
 ough ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] with 'f' as in 'fan' ... [f] ... enough  
 ou[r] ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... journey  
 u ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... autumn  
 u ... 'uh' as in 'butter' ... [ʌ] ... up  
 u ... 'ew' as in 'few' ... [ju] ... union  
 u ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... bury  
 u ... 'uh' as in 'push' ... [ʊ] ... sugar  
 u ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... flute  
 u ... 'w' as in 'will' ... [w] ... quiet, suite  
 u ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... minute  
 ue ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... blue  
 ui ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... build  
 ui ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... juice  
 u[r] ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... burn  
 uy ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... buy

### The Letter V

v ... 'v' as in 'van' ... [v] ... voice

### The Letter W

silent ... answer, write  
 aw ... 'aw' as in 'law' ... [ɔ] ... shawl  
 ew ... 'ew' as in 'few' ... [ju] ... few  
 ew ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... blew  
 ow ... 'ow' as in 'now' ... [aʊ] ... cow  
 ow ... 'oh' as in 'no' ... [aʊ] ... row  
 w ... 'w' as in 'will' ... [w] ... wise  
 wo ... 'oo' as in 'boo' ... [u] ... two

### The Letter X

x ... 'k' as in 'cap' ... [k] with 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... ax, expert  
 x ... 'z' as in 'zip' ... [z] ... xylophone  
 x ... 'g' as in 'gap' ... [g] with 'z' as in 'zip' ... [z] ... exhibit

### The Letter Y

ay ... 'eh' as in 'bed' ... [ɛ] ... says  
 ay ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... pay  
 ey ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... key

ey ... 'ay' as in 'say' ... [eɪ] ... they  
oy ... 'oy' as in 'toy' ... [ɔɪ] ... joy  
uy ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... buy  
y ... 'ih' as in 'sit' ... [ɪ] ... symbol  
y ... 'uh' as in 'supply' ... [ə] ... syringe  
y ... 'y' as in 'yes' ... [j] ... you  
y ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... rhyme, my  
y ... 'ee' as in 'she' ... [i] ... melody  
ye ... 'ai' as in 'buy' ... [aɪ] ... bye  
y[r] ... 'ur' as in 'her' ... [ɜ] ... myrtle

### The Letter Z

cz ... 't' as in 'time' ... [t] with 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... czar (one of two possible pronunciations)  
z ... 'z' as in 'zip' ... [z] ... lazy  
z ... 'dj' as in 'measure' ... [ʒ] ... azure  
z ... 't' as in 'time' ... [t] with 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... Nazi  
z ... 's' as in 'sip' ... [s] ... ritz  
zz ... 'z' as in 'zip' ... [z] ... buzz