

Hey everyone, it's Hadar. Thank you so much for joining me. Today we are going back to the whiteboard. And I'm going to teach you everything you need to know about the consonants of English. This is a consonant masterclass where I take you through the consonant chart, explain it, and talk about all the different consonants in American English.

I will teach you what are the things you need to know about each and every consonant in terms of where it's produced, how it's produced, and the quality of the sound – if it's voiced or voiceless. These three elements are really important in determining the actual consonant. So, we're going to talk about that. And we're going to go through the chart where everything is organized in a very, very clear way. And I'm going to prove that to you.

What I'll be using to represent consonants is not the letters of the alphabet, but IPA- International Phonetic Alphabet. And that is what appears on the consonant chart of each language, and of English too. So, I will be using the IPA.

And also, I created for you a PDF that you can download with the consonant chart and the different consonants of English, the IPA of the consonants of English. And word examples, so you can actually know which consonant it is and what does this IPA symbol represent. So that should definitely simplify your pronunciation practice and work. All right? So, what are we waiting for? Let's go to the whiteboard.

Okay. So let's first understand the chart. This is the consonant chart of English. And as you can see, all the consonants are already organized on the chart. So we need to understand the meaning of where they're positioned, why that is the case, and that would also help you understand better as to how consonants are produced and organized in the mouth.

So, there are two, actually three different elements that we want to take into consideration when it comes to the production of consonants. And this is also going to be the key to understanding how this chart works.

First, there is the place of articulation, where the consonant is produced. A consonant is a sound that is stopped, partially stopped, or interrupted. So, we need to understand where it is stopped, partially stopped, or interrupted inside the mouth: in the back, in the middle, up in the front, in the nose.

So, we need to understand where each sound is produced, and this is why we have the columns. The columns actually represent the place of articulation. And actually, the order of the chart is according to the order of the articulation organs. So here, as you'll see in a second, we have the front of the mouth – bilabial, which means the lips.

And as you go back, you also go back in the mouth, right? A little further back, further back, further back, all the way until the end. So, that is the meaning of the columns right here. So

that's the first thing we need to take into consideration – the place of articulation.

The second thing we need to take into consideration is the manner of articulation, the way in which the sound is produced. Is it a stop sound? Is it a nasal sound? Is it a fricative? So the rows here represent the different manner in which the consonant is produced. And the last thing we have is the voicing – whether or not the consonant is voiced or voiceless.

Voicing is all about the question whether or not the consonant is produced with air only or the vocal chords are vibrating, creating a sound, turning it into another consonant, even though we still have the same manner and we still have the same placement. And you will understand all of this in a second as I go through all the consonants and their placement on the chart. Okay. So stick with me, everything is going to be totally clear at the end.

So up until this point, the thing you need to understand is that a consonant is produced by taking three elements into consideration. One – the place of articulation, where the sound is stopped, partially stopped, or interrupted: the lips, the middle of the mouth, the back of the mouth, the teeth.

The second is the manner of articulation. So, to produce a consonant, the air needs to come out – and sometimes it's air with voice – so the air needs to come out. And then it comes out of the mouth or the nose in a certain form. Sometimes it's stopped and released. Sometimes it's gradually released. Sometimes it's released through the sides. So, that is the manner of articulation, and we need to know the manner of each consonant.

First of all, to understand how consonants are organized, but also to be able to produce it effortlessly, if English, in this case, is not your first language. Because we do it pretty intuitively without thinking about it when it's our first language, but when we speak a second language, this is where it starts to get a little tricky. So, understanding the manner, the placement, and – do you remember what the third thing is? – the voicing: whether the consonant is voiced or voiceless – is what is going to help you understand how to produce any consonant in English and in any language.

So voicing, just to remind you, is the difference between consonants that are produced where the air is coming out only – /s/. Or air and voice, meaning the vocal chords are vibrating – /z/. And by the way, you can feel the difference here. If you put your hand here, on your neck, and you produce the S sound and then the Z sound, you'll feel the difference here. For the /s/ sound, you won't feel a lot of things. For the /z/, you'll feel a lot of vibrations, that's a signal that your vocal chords are vibrating. And everything, again, is represented here on the chart. So, the way it's organized: place of articulation, manner of articulation, and voicing is within the same box, right, cause it's the same placement, same manner. To the left you'll always

see the voiceless consonant, the voiceless option of this pair. And the voiced is to the right, voiced option of this pair. And sometimes there is only one option – you don't have two options of voiced and voiceless. And you'll see why that is in just a little bit. Okay?

This is in English. It doesn't mean that in other languages you don't have the choice between voiced and voiceless. In English, it means that there isn't if you only see one consonant in a box. But a box helps us understand always the place of articulation and the manner of articulation.

So here's how it's going to work. I'm going to take you through the column (I always confuse columns and rows) I'm going to take you through the columns of the place of articulation.

And then we'll see what are the consonants that are produced at that specific place, based on the different manner, and if it's voiced or voiceless. It's going to be very, very exciting.

Okay. So are you ready? Let's get started with going through all the different consonants of English. We're going to begin with this column. Remember, this is the place of articulation.

And this column is the bilabial consonants. Remember: place of articulation where the consonant is produced, right? And bilabial consonants are consonants that are produced at the lips. That means that the sound is stopped, partially stopped, or interrupted.

So think of what sounds are produced here. Don't look. Okay? So, think of what sounds are produced here. /p/, right? So when you think about it, probably a P sound comes to mind and a B sound, and you're right. Now, the first row is oral stop. Oral stop is when the air, or air with voice, is stopped and released. Okay? All at once. /p/, right? Stopped, air pressure is kind of building up and released. /p/, right? It's very different from a fricative, which we'll talk about in a second, where the air comes out continuously with a friction.

So, /p/. So right here in this box, we're seeing consonants that are produced at the lips and produced with a stop. And, lo and behold, there are two different consonants. There's the P, which is the voiceless consonant, cause it's just air. And there is the B – /b/, which is the voiced consonant. So the air comes out, the vocal chords are vibrating, and the air is released. P – B. Try it with me. P – B.

Now, it's really interesting to see if you are the kind of person who struggles with the pronunciation of these two consonants or one of them, right? You, first of all, have to ask yourself, "Okay, why is it so confusing for me to produce one consonant?" Because you're already doing what it takes to produce the other consonants.

For example, for Arabic speakers, the /p/ sound does not exist. But the /b/ sound does exist. So you're already doing everything right: creating that pressure, stopping the sound and releasing it, doing it with your lips. But you're always activating the vibrations of your vocal

chords. And here, to produce the P, all you need to do is just whisper it. Right? Which means not to activate the vocal chords, it's just the air.

You know how to produce voiceless consonants, you know how to produce a similar consonant, so there is no reason why you shouldn't be able to produce a consonant within this box. Okay? So this is why it's really good to understand how it all works, because then you're like, "Oh, so it's just the brain playing tricks on me. My mouth is perfectly fine and knows how to produce the sounds that need to be produced in English.

Okay, moving on. Cause we have one more consonant here and this is the M sound. /m/. So, the air is stopped in the lips, but this is a nasal stop. So, I stopped the air here, and the air comes out through the nose. It's like, where do I go? Where do I go? Cause the air has to come out. Right? So for the P and B, the air kind of like manages to break out through the lips. But for the M sound, the air can't come out through the mouth, so the air is looking for other places to come out, and then it comes out through the nasal passages and through the nose.

Nasal consonants in English are always voiced. So, you always activate the vocal chords for nasal consonants, as you'll see, always. So we don't have pairs here... something to think about. Okay. No fricatives in the lips, no affricates, I'll talk about those in a second. So for example, a fricative here, there is actually a sound that is a fricative. For example, /v/. But it does not mean that it's going to be empty in other languages as well.

Okay. Moving on to labiodental. Labiodental: dental, 'dental', like 'dentist', is all about the teeth. So yes, the teeth take part in articulation as well. And 'labio' has to do with lips, right? So lips and teeth. What sounds come out through the combination of lips and teeth? Think about it, I'll let you think about it.

Do we have oral stops in this position? No. Right? /buh/ – that would be an oral stop. /buh/ – it doesn't exist in English. Do we have a nasal stop? Maybe, it's too similar to an M sound. So this is one of those like, "Mmm, no, we're not going to put any consonants here" – the people who invented English. And then... I'm going to erase that because that actually is a consonant, the phonetic symbol of a consonant. So, this is why I'm not going to put it here. But hey, fricative. Fricative is a sound that comes out gradually, that is partially stopped and then it comes out. And here we have two consonants, right? Labiodental – bottom lip, top teeth. This is the voiceless versus voiced. Now, something important to remember: this is a fricative, that means that it's going to take you a little bit of time to pronounce this sound – 'vvvery'.

Now, some people might pronounce it as an oral stop – 'bery', just not letting it flow out for

long enough. Right? And then it's going to sound a little differently. People who are not used to this sound might think that you're just pronouncing a /b/ sound – 'bery', so it's going to sound to them like "berry" instead of "very". So pay attention to the manner of articulation, because the manner of articulation is really important as well.

Okay, moving on. As you can see, the rest of the boxes are empty. So there are no consonants, no other consonants that are produced with the lips and teeth. Dental – teeth, your favorite /f/ and /v/. Fricatives as well, so again, it's a gradual sound. You kind of like slow down the release of the air. This is the voiceless TH: /θ/ as in 'think', voiceless. And this is the voiced TH – /ð/ as in 'they'. The only difference is the vibration of the vocal chords.

By the way, I have a lot of videos about each and every one of those consonants. So, I'm going to link to all my consonant videos in the description. Okay? Just so you know.

Definitely, a lot of videos about the TH cause I know this might be a struggle for many of you. So, voiceless TH – tongue and teeth. Voiced TH /ð/: it's not a stop sound – 'tanks' – right? Because then people might analyze it as another sound. No, it's a fricative. So it's a continuous sound, very similar to /f/-/v/, and later as you'll see, to /s/ and /z/. This is why these are common substitutions for the TH, if that sound is difficult for you.

By the way, let's talk for a second about substitutions. If you are a speaker of English as a second language, and you're trying to pronounce the /θ/ sound, right, and it's hard for you, you are likely to either pronounce a consonant that is in a close place, right? Very close place of articulation, in this case, a T and a D. Or a close manner – F-V: 'fink' instead of 'think'; or S-Z: 'sink' instead of 'think'. Right?

So, when you struggle with a certain consonant, you have to look around and, first, analyze what is the substitution and why you're going there. Because it's either close in articulation placement or in manner. And again, that sheds so much light on pronunciation, and how we organize sounds in our brain, and why we choose to produce certain sounds in place of others.

Moving on. Let's talk about alveolar consonants, a very popular column, very popular place of articulation. So the alveolar ridge is that little bump right behind the teeth. Feel it with your tongue. So, take your tongue, put it on the back of the teeth, and then kind of like bring it up, like brush, or lick the inside of your mouth right through the teeth and then up. And then there is this little bump as your gums, as your tongue starts touching your gums. And that is, that little bump is the alveolar ridge. Okay? So all the consonants that are produced there – many of them – are called tip of the tongue consonants or alveolar consonants.

Now, oral stop sound. The sound is stopped completely and released. So here we have /t/ –

voiceless. Remember, the voiceless is always on the left. And now try it with me. /d/, right? The tip of the tongue is blocking the air here, by connecting with the alveolar ridge, right? Blocking the air completely, that's an oral stop, and releasing it. There's like, thank God I'm out. Okay? So that's a T and a D.

Now, we also have a nasal stop. The air wants to come out through the nose is blocked because the tongue is like pushing against the alveolar ridge, but the air still wants to come out. So, it comes out through the nose. Try it, blocking here. /n/, right? That's the N. And that's the difference between M and N.

Now, if you tend to confuse those two sounds, notice that the only difference here is the place of articulation. It might be subtle to your ears, but it is still different. Listen: /n/ - the air is stopped here, right behind the teeth, /n/ with the tongue. Versus /m/ - air is stopped with the two lips.

Moving on. Fricative. So here, the tongue is touching... is almost touching the upper palate. Cause, you know, you have to release it slowly. Think of it like a balloon that you're holding the top and releasing air slowly. /sssss/. Right? So that would be the S and the Z - /z/. By the way, as a side note, for a lot of people it's not going to be the tip of the tongue that touches the alveolar ridge or the upper palate, it might be this part of the tongue, the body of the tongue. It doesn't matter. If you hear this sound, you're good to go. S is voiceless, Z is voiced. So we have /t/, /d/, /n/, /s/, /z/. I have to say that the S and Z are slightly to the back, right? The place of articulation is slightly to the back, but it's still considered as an alveolar consonant.

And then we have the /l/ consonant. It's also an alveolar consonant, but here, this is a new manner of articulation. It's a lateral approximate. An approximate is a sound that the quality is not very defined. It's like it's somewhere on the verge of a vowel because you hear the air and sound coming out. It's not fully stopped, like /p/ and /d/ and /g/, right? But it's still considered to be a consonant.

So, this is the L. For the L, the air is stopped here, but it still flows out through the sides of the tongue. /l/, right? The tip of the tongue touches the upper palate, the air is coming out through the sides. That's the approximate, the lateral approximate. Okay? So it's like almost a constant, almost. It's almost a vowel, somewhere in between. Good.

Postalveolar. If you take your tongue and you kind of like lick the inside of your gums, you go through the bump and right behind the bump, right? There is like this little curve. That's called the postalveolar placement or articulation. And here, we don't have any stops, no. At least not in American English. Nasal stop - we don't have that. But we do have a fricative.

Remember, a fricative is when the two organs are almost touching each other, right? It's not fully blocking, almost touching each other, but they're leaving very little room for the air to pass or the air with voice. And that creates this sound: /f/, /s/, /ʃ/. So, the place of articulation of a /ʃ/ sound and a /ʒ/ sound, which is the voiced pair, right? This is voiceless. Try it. /ʃ/ - /ʒ/, right?

So, it's right behind that bump, postalveolar, and it's a fricative. But hey, there is a new... there is a new manner on the block, and that is affricate. Affricate. It's like Africa with the T at the end. Affricate. Affricate is a combination of a stop sound and a fricative. Stop sound and a fricative together. Why? Because we can, so why not? Because it's kind of like another creation of a sound, it's very efficient and very confusing for some people.

So, the affricate: right behind that little bump, but postalveolar affricate would be /tʃ/, right? So you block the sound with a T, but instead of releasing it, you're releasing it into the closest fricative, /tʃ/. So basically, it's like a /t/ and a /ʃ/ sound together. /tʃ/. And that's the voiced... voiceless, I mean, consonant. And the /dʒ/ sound: again, you take the voiced stop sound - /d/, and then you release it gradually to the fricative. /dʒ/ - this is the voiced. Okay?

Now, for many speakers, this is really confusing. 'cash' - 'catch', right? Because they don't have that distinction in their language. They don't have fricative and affricate. Right? So the only have one, so sometimes they might merge it. Merge it, like I just did - 'merge' it. That would be me merging the /ʒ/ and the /dʒ/, right, if it's hard for me to pronounce /dʒ/. So 'merging' - /dʒ/, and, you know, you want to be able to distinguish between the two.

A quick tip that I can give you is, really, one - is just, you know, there is no stop, it flows out freely. /ʃ/ - /ʒ/. And this one is completely stopped. So you really start with a T sound, you block the air, and then you think of pronouncing as a /ʃ/ sound. All the air comes out. Same thing here: pronouncing a D - I hope you're doing it with me - /dʒ/ releasing air. Okay? So that is the affricate.

And then we have an approximate. And that, my friends, is the R. Postalveolar, the tongue is coming up, but it's not as close as the /ʃ/ and /ʒ/, it's further back, but the tongue still directs towards the postalveolar position. This is why it's like similar between a consonant and a vowel. /r/.

I have a lot of videos about the R. I'm not going to teach you how to pronounce the R, I'm just going to tell you: it's a postalveolar consonant, and it's an approximate. So, you know that it's somewhere between a vowel and a consonant. It's not the scientific linguistic term, okay? So don't use it if you have a test about consonants at the university. But it's just my way of explaining the difference between, you know, the /r/ sound and the /ʃ/ sound, and why this is

a little harder to pronounce because it's more vague.

And by the way, when I try to teach how to pronounce the R sound, a lot of times I start with a /ɜ/ sound, /ɜ/. Because all you need to do is pull the tongue away a little bit. Because they're very similar in terms of placement. Food for thought. Okay. So that is the /r/, the American /r/ sound. No lateral approximate. Actually, there is only one in American English, which is the L.

Moving on to palatal. Palatal is the hard palate, that roof in the back, before we get to the uvula that is hanging there, right – the soft part and the back, the velum. So, the palate, the hard palate is up here in the back. So, palatal. What do we have here? No stop sounds, no fricatives, no nasals. I feel like a teacher right now. No affricates. But we do an approximate. Okay?

And this is, even though it looks like a J, it's not a J, it's a /j/ sound. This is the /j/. I'll put like little 'y' here, just so you remember it. Because the letter Y is usually associated with the /j/ sound as in "yes" or "yay". But this is the IPA, the IPA of the /j/ sound. So, yes, it's where the tongue goes very, very close, but not close enough, not too close to the hard palate.

So the back of the tongue rises up, it's not touching. It's not 'gya', that would be a stop sound here – 'gya', that sound does not exist. It's not a fricative – 'yyya', okay? Not a nasal sound. So, this is an approximate. /j/.

Then we have velar consonants. That's, basically, the throat. I want you to think of it as the throat. That's the soft part in the throat and the back of the tongue that usually come together, right? This is how we close the back of the tongue. So, for a stop sound, we bring the back of the tongue up, the roof of the mouth – the soft part of the roof of the mouth down, /k/, right? This is a voiceless consonant. And /g/ – this is a voiced consonant, right? The air is stopped and released. /k/ – /g/. Okay?

We actually have a nasal sound here, where we block the air. So think of you trying to pronounce the /g/ sound, but the air can't come out. So, it's going to come out through the nose – /ŋ/. The back of the tongue is up, you're closing, the air comes out through the nose. That's the NG consonant, as in 'sing', 'sing'. 'sing' – one word, versus 'sin', where the tip of the tongue is touching the upper palate, the air is blocked here. Versus 'sim', like 'SIM card'. 'sim', where the air is blocked here. Right? So, placement matters. We need to start a movement- #placement\_matters. So, NG /ŋ/: the air comes out through the nose.

We also have an approximate here. The /w/ sound. /w/. Now, observant people here might say, "Wait a minute, you're doing something with your lips for the /w/, it's produced here. But in fact, the consonant is really produced in the back of the mouth, right, as the back of the



tongue goes up. But it's not blocking the air completely, it's coming close enough until that consonant – semi-consonant, semi-vowel is produced. /w/, right? And the lips are also involved in the pronunciation of this sound. Yes, it's true. But mainly, what creates that sound – /w/ – is the back of the tongue. And the lips too. So, the lips are also a part of it. Okay, that's it.

Lastly, we have the glottal consonant. And this something that cannot be erased. So, this is the glottal consonant. A glottal consonant is produced in the glottis. The glottis is basically where your voice is produced it's the vocal box, you can even feel it. For men it's a little more visible, right behind your Adam's apple. And the glottis is this opening, through which the air is coming out and where the vocal chords exist and live and vibrate. So, you have the ability to close it and open it, close it and open it. So the consonant that we have, that is a glottal consonant, is /h/ as in "Hi". Where the air is restricted here, in the glottis, right? Coming out slowly for an H sound.

Now, just so you know, we also have a stop sound. It's not a phoneme, it's not like a legit consonant in American English. So, it's not marked on the chart in standard American, but just so you know, there's this thing called – you might've heard it – glottal stop. This is how it looks like – /ʔ/. And it sounds something like this. Where you close the glottis, right, the air is stopped and then released. Like in the word ['wɔ:ʔə], right? "water" in some dialects. Where the T is replaced with a glottal stop.

Actually, when there is a word that starts with a vowel, like "I", usually there is a very small glottal stop at the beginning of the word. Cause you're not really saying '[a]I', right? You're not saying '[h]I'. A lot of times you're adding a little glottal stop. So, this exists in different English dialects, like the example that I gave you, even in American English in the word 'Manhattan', 'Manhattan'. A lot of times people use the glottal stop instead of the T before an N.

So this is why I wanted to introduce you to this consonant, because it might be useful. But technically speaking, it's not a part of the phonemes – the sounds that are represented in the brain of standard American. What can I do?

So, okay. I think that's it. I think we covered everything. Let's go through all the consonants together. And I want you to pronounce them with me, and think about the placement, the manner, and the voicing. Bilabial. Oral stop: /p/ – /b/, voiceless – voiced. Nasal – /m/. Then we have labiodental. Fricative: /f/ – /v/, voiceless and voiced. Then we have dental, tongue and teeth: /θ/ – /ð/, voiceless and voiced. Then we have alveolar. Stop: /t/ – voiceless, /d/ – voiced. /m/ – nasal. /s/ – fricative, voiceless. /z/ – fricative, voiced. The L – /l/, lateral approximate.

Then we have postalveolar. Fricative: /ʃ/ – voiceless, versus /ʒ/ – voiced. /tʃ/ – affricate, stop, and then a fricative, voiceless. /dʒ/ – voiced. And then we have the approximate – /r/, where the tongue is kind of pointing towards the postalveolar position. Palatal. We only have an approximate and that is the /j/ sound. Then we have velar. A few consonants here: /k/ and /g/, the stop sounds, right? /k/ is voiceless, /g/ is voiced.

/ŋ/ – NG: the air is blocked as the back of the tongue goes up against the roof of the mouth, and the air comes out through the nose. And /w/: we also incorporate the lips here. And finally, we have the /h/ sound, a glottal fricative. We also have the glottal stop – /ʔ/, where you stop the air and release.

That's it. These were the consonants. Now, the question I have for you is, which consonant is the most difficult for you to pronounce? And whether or not understanding how it's organized, where it's supposed to be placed, what's the closest consonant that you have in your native language or that is easy for you to produce? And can you understand how to shift from that consonant to the consonant that you want to pronounce? I don't know, maybe it's going to make your life a little easier.

So let me know in the comments, which one of those consonants is the most difficult one, and if this lesson – the consonant masterclass – has helped you understand the consonants of English even better.

Now, I want to remind you that you can download the consonant chart that I've created for you. Just click the link below and download it. It's totally free. So you can practice with it and write some notes. And, um, and that's it. If you want to learn about vowels, the vowels of English, I also have a masterclass about that, with a downloadable vowel chart. So, I'm going to link to that below.

Thank you so, so much for being here with me throughout this entire masterclass. If you've come this far, it means that there is something about this that is intriguing and interesting to you. Which is great. And I'm happy to help and support you. By the way, come say 'hi' on Instagram and tell me how things are going for you. I'm @hadar.accentway. Have a beautiful, beautiful rest of the day. And I'll see you here next week in the next video. Bye.