

writing in which each phonetic alphabet represents each sound. English pronunciation cannot be understood by letters; therefore, knowledge of phonetic symbols along with an ability to transcribe them according to sounds may be very helpful in acquiring correct pronunciation along with understanding it. Every good dictionary contains correct pronunciation together with the spelling of a word. Nowadays, these dictionaries are available on CD ROMs as well as online and a learner can not only read the correct pronunciation of the word but may also have a direct access to the audio.

5.3.2 Purpose of Transcription

The purpose of phonetic transcription is to represent the pronunciation of a word, phrase or sentence unambiguously. Most of the dictionaries provide pronunciation of individual words. Phonetic transcription helps in correcting pronunciation and it enables us to compare the sounds of different languages as well as different varieties of the same language.

5.3.3 Guiding Principles for Correct Pronunciation/Transcription

English pronunciation creates a lot of problems for the non-native speakers. Some of these hurdles can be overcome, if we understand some guiding principles related to correct pronunciation, which will automatically lead to correct phonetic transcription of words as well:

5.3.3.1 Silent Letters

- ✓ **b** is silent in a word when it is preceded by 'm' or followed by 't' at the final position:

climb/'klaɪm/	thumb/θʌm/	bomb/bɒm/
crumb/'krʌm/	plumb/plʌm/	succumb/səkʌm/
jamb/dʒæm/	comb/kəʊm/	tomb/tu:m/
dumb/dʌm/	numb/nʌm/	lamb/læm/
womb/wu:m/	doubt/daʊt/	debt/det/
- **b** is also silent in: subtle/sʌtl/, plumber/plʌmə/, bomber/bɒmə/, redoubtable/'rɪdaʊtəbl/.

- ✓ **d** is silent in a word when it is followed by 'j' or 'g' and in some other words like:

adjacent/ədʒeɪsnt/	adjust/ədʒʌst/	adjourn/ədʒɔ:n/
adjudge/ədʒʌdʒ/	adjoin/ədʒɔɪn/	adjunct/ədʒʌŋkt/
adjective/ədʒɪktɪv/	badge/bædʒ/	judge/dʒʌdʒ/
pledge/pledʒ/	fridge/frɪdʒ/	knowledge/nɒlɪdʒ/
edge/edʒ/	porridge/pɒrɪdʒ/	sludge/slʌdʒ/
bridge/brɪdʒ/	handkerchief/hæŋkətʃɪf/	handsome/hænsəm/

- 3. **p** is silent in a word when it is followed by 's', 't' or 'n' at the initial position and in some other words such as:

pneumonia/nju:məʊniə/	psychology/saɪkələdʒi/	psalm/sa:m/
pseudo/su:daʊ/	psyche/saɪki/	ptarmigan/tɑ:mɪgən/
Ptolemaic/tələmeɪɪk/	empty/emti/	cupboard/kʌbəd/

- **p** is also silent when it is followed by 't' at the final position in the word: receipt/rɪsi:t/.

- 4. **g** is silent when it is followed by 'm' or 'n' in the same syllable:

resign/'rɪzaɪn/	foreign/'fɒrən/	gnat/næt/
sign/saɪn/	feign/'feɪn/	assign/ə'saɪn/
campaign/kæmpeɪn/	gnaw/'nɔ:/	champagne/'ʃæmpeɪn/
diaphragm/daiəfræm/	phlegm/'flem/	

- **g** is not silent when it is followed by 'm' or 'n' in different syllables:

signature/'sɪɡnətʃə/	ignore/'ɪɡnɔ:/	ignite/'ɪɡnaɪt/
phlegmatic/'flegmətɪk/	resignation/'rezɪɡneɪʃn/	malignant/'mælɪɡnənt/

- 5. **h** is silent when it is preceded by 'g' and at the final position:

ghost/gəʊst/	aghost/ə'gəʊst/	ghetto/'getəʊ/	ah/a:/	oh/əʊ/
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- h** is also silent in:

hour/ʌʊə/	honest/'ɒnɪst/	heir/eə/	exhaust/'ɪɡzɔ:st/
rhythm/'rɪðəm/	exhibit/'ɪɡzɪbɪt/	annihilate/ə'naɪləteɪt/	

- ✓ **k** is silent in a word when it is followed by 'n' at the initial position:

know/nəʊ/	knee/ni:/	knelt/ni:l/	knit/nɪt/	knight/naɪt/
knave/neɪv/	knife/naɪf/	knot/nɒt/		
knob/nɒb/	knock/nɒk/	knowledge/nɒlɪdʒ/		

- 7. **l** is silent in a word when it is followed by 'k' or 'm' and in some modal auxiliaries:

chalk/tʃɔ:k/	would/wʊd/	could/kʊd/	should/'ʃʊd/
alms/a:mz/	almond/ɑ:mənd/	half/ha:f/	palm/pɑ:m/
psalm/sa:m/	balm/bɑ:m/	yolk/jɔ:k/	calm/ka:m/
salmon/sæmən/	walk/wɔ:k/	folk/fɔ:k/	talk/tɔ:k/

- 8. **n** is silent after 'm' when both of them occur in the same syllable:

autumn/ɔ:təm/	damn/dæm/	hymn/hɪm/	condemn/kəndem/
autumnal/ɔ:təmnəl/		damnable/dæmnəbl/	
condemnation/kəndemneɪʃn/		hymnal/hɪmnəl	

- When combination of 'n' and 'm' occurs in two different syllables both the letters are pronounced:

castle/ka:sl/	whistle/wɪsl/	bristle/brɪsl/	listen/lɪsn/
apostle/ə'pɒsl/	soften/sɒfn/	often/ɒfn/	fasten/'fa:sn/

- **t** is silent before 'ch' in most of the words:

kitchen/'kɪtʃɪn/	ditch/dɪtʃ/	watch/wɒtʃ/	witch/wɪtʃ/
batch/bætʃ/	catch/kætʃ/	match/mætʃ/	latch/lætʃ/

- **t** is also silent in many words of French origin:

ballet/bæleɪ/bouquet/'bʊkeɪ/	buffet (n)/bʊfet/
depot/depəʊ/	debut/detɪbju:/

- 10. **w** is silent at the final position. It is also silent at the initial position when it is followed by 'r' or sometimes when followed by 'h':

wreath/ri:θ/	wrist/rɪst/	wrinkle/rɪŋkl/	write/raɪt/
wrong/rɒŋ/	wrestle/restl/	wrap/ræp/	wreck/rek/
wrath/rɒθ/	saw/sɔ:/	draw/drɔ:/	flaw/flɔ:/
flow/fləʊ/	snow/snəʊ/	show/'ʃəʊ/	blow/bləʊ/
who/hu:/	whom/'hu:m/	whose/'hu:z/	whole/həʊl/

- 11. **s** is silent before 'l':

island/'aɪlənd/	isle/aɪl/	islet/'aɪlət/	aisle/aɪl/
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5.3.3.2 Pronunciation of the Suffixes

- 1. Word endings -s, -es, -s—are pronounced /s/ after /p/, /k/, /t/ and /θ/:

caps/kæps/	stops/stɒps/	cooks/kʊks/	Mick's/mɪks/
cat's/kæts/	fits/fɪts/	fight's/faɪts/	laughs/la:fs/
chief's/tʃi:fs/	moths/mʊθs/		

- -s, -es, -s—are pronounced /ɪz/ after /s/, /z/, /ʃ/, /ʒ/, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/:

passes/pa:sɪz/	crosses/krɒsɪz/	roses/rəʊzɪz/
organizes/'ɔ:gənəɪzɪz/	washes/wɒʃɪz/	slashes/sləʃɪz/
garages/gæərə:ʒɪz/	churches/tʃɜ:tʃɪz/	benches/bentʃɪz/
judges/dʒʌdʒɪz/	edges/edʒɪz/	

- -s, -es, -s—are pronounced /z/ after the rest of the sounds:

he's/hi:z/	buds/bʌdʒ/	bulbs/bʌlbz/	leaves/li:vz/
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- bags/bægz/ signs/saɪnz/ loves/lʌvz/ boys/bɔɪz/
pulls/pʊlz/ keys/ki:z/ names/neɪmz/ goes/gəʊz/
2. Word endings—*-d, -ed*—are pronounced /ɪd/ after /t/ and /d/:
wanted/wɒntɪd/ chanted/tʃɑ:ntɪd/ mended/mendɪd/
→ *-d, -ed*—are pronounced /t/ after /p/, /k/, /tʃ/, /tʃ/, /s/, /ʃ/:
capped/kæpt/ shaped/ʃeɪpt/ cooked/kʊkt/
lacked/lækt/ laughed/lɑ:ft/ coughed/kʊft/
earthed/ɜ:θt/ berthed/bɜ:θt/ thatched/θætʃt/
watched/wɒtʃt/ passed/pɑ:st/ cursed/kɜ:st/
pushed/pʊʃt/ blushed/blʌʃt/
→ *-d, -ed*—are pronounced /d/ after the rest of the sounds:
rubbed/rʌbd/ pulled/pʊld/ bagged/bægd/
judged/dʒʌdʒd/ annoyed/ənoɪd/ seized/si:zd/
wronged/rɒŋd/ loathed/ləʊθd/ frayed/freɪd/
3. Word endings—*-cial, -sial* and *-tial*—are pronounced /ʃl/:
crucial/kru:ʃl/ racial/reɪʃl/ official/əfɪʃl/
controversial/kɒntrəvɜ:ʃl/ substantial/səbstənʃl/ potential/pətenʃl/
4. Word ending—*-cian*—is pronounced /ʃn/:
Magician/mædʒɪʃn/ technician/teknɪʃn/
beautician/bju:tɪʃn/ electrician/ɪlektrɪʃn/
5. Word endings—*-cious* and *-tious*—are pronounced /ʃəs/:
delicious/dɪlɪʃəs/ judicious/dʒʊdɪʃəs/ ambitious/æmbɪʃəs/
6. Word ending—*-sion*—is pronounced /ʃən/:
suggestion/sədʒestʃən/ question/kwestʃən/
digestion/dɪdʒestʃən/ exhaustion/ɪgzɔ:stʃən/
7. Word ending—*-age*—is pronounced /ɪdʒ/:
hostage/hɒstɪdʒ/ breakage/breɪkɪdʒ/ carriage/kærɪdʒ/
8. Word ending—*-ate*—is pronounced /ət/ in adjectives:
fortunate/fɔ:tʃənət/ incarnate (Adj)/ɪnkɑ:nət/ immediate/ɪmɪdɪət/
passionate/pæʃənət/ temperate/temperət/ moderate/mɒdərət/
→ However, in verbs—*-ate*—is pronounced /eɪt/:
educate/edʒukeɪt/ hesitate/hezɪteɪt/ fascinate/fæʃneɪt/
celebrate/selɪbreɪt/ associate/əsəʊʃeɪt/
9. Word ending—*-tain*—is pronounced /teɪn/ in verbs:
retain/ri:teɪn/ sustain/səsteɪn/ maintain/meɪnteɪn/ attain/əteɪn/
→ *-tain*—is pronounced /tən/, /tɪn/ or /tn/ elsewhere:
fountain/faʊntən/ mountain/maʊntən/ captain/kæptɪn/
certain/sɜ:tn/ curtain/kɜ:tn/
10. Word endings—*-ance* and *-ence* are pronounced /əns/ whereas endings—*-ant* and *-ent* are pronounced /ənt/:
distance/dɪstəns/ resistance/rɪzɪstəns/ reference/refrəns/
preference/prefrəns/ instant/ɪnstənt/ distant/dɪstənt/
different/dɪfrənt/ current/kʌrənt/
11. Word endings—*-est* and *-et* are pronounced /ɪst/ and /ɪt/, respectively when they occur in an unstressed syllable:
safest/seɪfɪst/ hardest/hɑ:dɪst/ ticket/tɪkɪt/ pocket/pɒkɪt/

granted/gra:ntɪd/

 allowed/əlaʊd/
sawed/sɔ:d/
crammed/kræmd/

cautious/kɔ:ʃəs/

package/pækɪdʒ/

- 'ng' is pronounced /ŋ/ at the medial position also if the word has been derived from a verb:
longing/lɒŋɪŋ/ hanger/hæŋə/ singing/sɪŋɪŋ/ bringing/bɪŋɪŋ/
→ 'ng' is pronounced /ŋ/ only when the plural maker 's' is added to nouns ending in /ŋ/:
songs/sɒŋz/ rings/rɪŋz/ things/θɪŋz/ cuttings/kʌtɪŋz/
→ 'ng' at the medial position are pronounced as /ŋg/ if the words are not derived from verbs:
longer/lɒŋgə/ finger/fɪŋgə/ anger/æŋgə/ hunger/hʌŋgə/
→ The sound /ŋ/ does not occur at the initial position. It occurs at the final position only after the short vowels: /ɪ/, /e/, /ə/, /æ/ and /ʌ/:
throng/θrɒŋ/ hung/hʌŋ/ blank/blæŋk/ drink/drɪŋk/
2. 'th': Spelling 'th' is pronounced /θ/ or /ð/ but in English names it is pronounced as /t/:
Thames/temz/ Thailand/taɪlənd/ Thomas/tɒməs/ Thompson/tɒmpsn/
3. 'ch': Spelling 'ch' may be pronounced /tʃ/, /k/ or /ʃ/:
change/tʃeɪndʒ/ chamber/tʃeɪmbə/ chord/kɔ:d/
chorus/kɔ:rəs/ chef/ʃef/ machine/məʃɪn/
4. 'ss': Spelling 'ss' may be pronounced /s/, /z/ or /ʃ/:
assert/əʃɜ:t/ assist/əsɪst/ dissolve/dɪzɒlv/
classes/kla:sɪz/ mission/mɪʃn/ aggression/əɡreʃn/ session/seʃn/
dessert/dɪzɜ:t/ mission/mɪʃn/ aggression/əɡreʃn/ session/seʃn/

5.3.4 Letters

1. 'r':
→ r is silent when it is preceded by a vowel:
park/pɑ:k/ occur/əkɜ:/ church/tʃɜ:tʃ/ charm/tʃɑ:m/
→ r is pronounced when it follows a vowel:
drive/draɪv/ crave/kreɪv/ marine/məri:n/ curry/kʌrɪ/
→ r is also silent at the final position:
car/kɑ:/ sir/sɜ:/ near/nɪə/ meter/mi:tə/
→ r is pronounced at the final position in phrases or compound words when the first element ending with 'r' is followed by a word beginning with a vowel sound:
far off/fa:ɒf/ care of/keəɒv/ runner-up/rʌnəɒp/
commander-in-chief/kəmə:ndərɪntʃi:f/ teacher-in-charge/ti:tʃərɪntʃɑ:dʒ/
2. 'g': 'g' may be pronounced /g/, /dʒ/ or /ʒ/:
gain/geɪn/ green/gri:n/ generous/dʒenərəs/
gym/dʒɪm/ mirage/mɪrɑ:ʒ/ rouge/ru:ʒ/
3. 't': 't' may be pronounced as /t/, /tʃ/ or /ʃ/:
late/leɪt/ stale/steɪl/ nature/neɪtʃə/
capture/kæptʃə/ mention/menʃn/ edition/ɪdɪʃn/
4. 's': 's' is pronounced as /s/, /z/ or /ʃ/:
scene/si:n/ system/sɪstəm/ busy/bɪzi/
these/ði:z/ vision/vɪʒn/ pleasure/pleʒə/

5.3.5 Double Consonants

- All double consonants except 'cc' are pronounced as single consonant sounds:
rubber/rʌbə/ dimmer/dɪmə/ letter/leɪtə/ running/rʌnɪŋ/
'cc' may be pronounced as /ks/ when followed by 'e', 'i', or 'y' or /k/ when followed by the rest of the letters:
accord/əko:d/ accurate/ækjəreɪt/ account/əkaʊnt/
accent/æksnt/ access/ækses/ accident/æksɪdənt/

5.3.3.3 Spelling Sequence

1. 'ng':
→ Spelling sequence 'ng' is pronounced as /ŋ/ at the final position:
sing/sɪŋ/ wrong/rɒŋ/ ring/rɪŋ/ long/lɒŋ/

5.3.3.6 Sounds

1. /θ/ and /ð/:

- Many words have sound /θ/ but with suffixes 's/es' /θ/ becomes /ð/:
- mouth /maʊθ/ → mouths /maʊðz/
- youth /ju:θ/ → youths /ju:ðz/
- cloth /klɒθ/ → clothes /klaʊðz/
- wreath /ri:θ/ → wreaths /ri:ðz/
- Some words have /θ/ sound but their derivatives have /ð/ sound:
- north /nɔ:θ/ → northern /nɔ:ðən/
- south /saʊθ/ → southern /saʊðən/
- breath /breθ/ → breathe /bri:ð/
- mouth (n) /maʊθ/ → mouth (v) /maʊð/
- heath /hi:θ/ → heathen /hi:ðən/

2. /f/:

- /f/ does not occur at the final position and after /dʒ/, /tʃ/ and /r/:
- juice /dʒu:s/ jute /dʒu:t/ chew /tʃu:/
- rule /ru:l/ grew /gru:/
- /f/ does not occur after /l/ when it is preceded by a consonant:
- blue /blu:/ flew /flu:/ glue /glu:/
- /f/ is pronounced when /l/ is preceded by an accented vowel:
- failure /'feɪljə/ value /'vælju:/

Task

Transcribe the following words using IPA symbols:

Woman, bright, raise, address, deserve, palm, design, indict, twelfth, once, women, flower, waist, grams, fragile, cloud, aim, sheep, like, chalk, acquire, career, hurt, oblige, flake, authority, short, rhyme, record (v), single, thumb, deserve, wives, berth, guide, crowd, savage, mother, young, shoes, coil, long, tomb, title, cyst, relate, scarce, army, apple, home, clear, choice, boat, day, foot, give, saw, tour, good, slapped, bouquet, doubt, murder, gaining, liberate, coffee, pudding, school, applaud, polite, chapter, virtue, bird, family, wealth, hurry, hate, crawl, queen, running, single, wives, savage, export (v), battle, pool, shout.

5.4 IPA Transcription of Words Often Mispronounced

The following is the IPA transcription of words which are often mispronounced:

Ability /əbɪləti/
 Academician /əkədəmiʃn/
 Accommodation /əkəmpədeɪʃn/
 Advantage /ədva:ntɪdʒ/
 Advertise /ədvaɪtɪz/
 All /ɔ:l/
 Analysis /ə'næləsɪs/
 Apology /əpɒlədʒɪ/
 Assistance /ə'sɪstəns/

Academic /ækədemɪk/
 Accept /əksept/
 Adequate /ædɪkwət/
 Advantageous /ədva:ntetʃəs/
 Advertisement /ədvaɪtɪsmənt/
 Always /ɔ:lweɪz/
 Analytical /ənə'lytɪkl/
 Apple /æpl/
 Association /ə'səʊʃɪeɪʃn/

Atmosphere /ætə'sfɪə/
 Bear /beə/
 Breakfast /brekfəst/
 Breathe /bri:ð/
 Buffalo /bʌfələʊ/
 Calendar /kælɪndə/
 Captain /kæptɪn/
 Carrier /kæriə/
 Celebrity /sə'lebrəti/
 Choreography /kɔ:riɒgrəfi/
 Clarity /kleriəti/
 Committee /kə'mi:ti/
 Compete /kəmpeə/
 Competitive /kəmpe'tetɪv/
 Concept /kənsəpt/
 Continue /kən'tɪnju:/

Balcony /bælkəni/
 Birthday /bɜ:θdeɪ/
 Breath /breθ/
 Bowl /bəʊl/
 Calcium /kælsɪəm/
 Call /kɔ:l/
 Career /kæriə/
 Cassette /kaset/
 Character /kærəktə/
 Cigarette /sɪgəret/
 Colleague /kəli:ɡ/
 Compare /kəmpeə/
 Competition /kəmpe'tɪʃn/
 Competitor /kəmpe'tɪtə/
 Confusion /kən'fju:ʒn/
 Continuous /kən'tɪnjuəs/
 Correspondence /kɔ:rsə'pɒndəns/
 Cricket /kriki:t/
 Data /deɪtə/
 Determination /dɪ'tɜ:mɪneɪʃn/
 Develop /dɪveləp/
 Direction /dɪ'rekʃn/
 Dramatic /drə'mætɪk/
 Embarrass /ɪm'bærəs/
 Enthusiasm /ɪnθju:zɪzəm/
 Envelope /envə'ləʊp/
 Ethics /eθɪks/
 Example /ɪɡzɑ:mpəl/
 Expect /ɪkspekt/
 Extempore /ekstempərɪ/
 Formality /fɔ:mə'ləti/
 Gigantic /dʒə'gæntɪk/
 Guarantee /gærənti:/

Crèche /krefʃ/
 Crush /krʌʃ/
 Demonstrate /demə'streɪtɪ/
 Determine /dɪ'tɜ:mɪn/
 Dialogue /dɪ'ælɒɡ/
 Director /dɪ'rektə/
 Echo /ekəʊ/
 Enough /ɪnəf/
 Envelop /ɪnveləp/
 Environment /ɪnvə'ɪrənmənt/
 Exact /ɪgzækt/
 Except /ɪksept/
 Executive /ɪgzekjətɪv/
 Faculty /fæklti/
 Garage /gæ'rɑ:ʒ/
 Government /gə'vənmənt/
 Guardian /gɑ:diən/
 Hare /heə/
 Here /hɪə/
 Interrogative /ɪntə'rɒɡetɪv/
 Loose /lu:s/
 Loss /lɒs/
 Measure /meʒə/
 Memory /meməri/
 Mutual /mju:tʃʊəl/
 Observe /əbɜ:zɪv/
 Olympic /ə'lɪmpɪk/
 Onion /ʌnjən/
 Oven /ʌvn/
 Pan /pæn/

Hair /heə/
 Heart /hɑ:t/
 Indecisive /ɪndɪ'sɪsɪv/
 Leisure /leɪzə/
 Lose /lu:z/
 Maroon /məru:n/
 Memento /məmentəʊ/
 Menace /menəs/
 Negative /negətɪv/
 Obvious /əbvɪəs/
 Omelette /ə'mleɪt/
 Opportunities /ɒpə'tju:nəti:
 Pain /peɪn/
 Parents /peərənts/

Patriotism /peɪtrɪətɪzəm/
Pen /pen/
Photograph /fəʊtəgrɑːf/
Photography /fəʊtəgrəfi/
Plumber /plʌmə/
Political /pəliːtɪkl/
Positive /pɒzətɪv/
Potential /pətenʃl/
Preference /prefrəns/
Priority /praɪəreɪtɪ/
Pronunciation /prənʌnsɪeɪʃn/
Psychologist /saɪkələdʒɪst/
Quality /kwɒlətɪ/
Quiet /kwaɪət/
Receipt /rɪsiːt/
Resume (n) /rezjumeɪ/
Said /sed/
Says /sez/
Sewing machine /səʊɪŋ məʃiːn/
Shoulder /ʃəʊldə/
Success /səkses/
Thorough /θʌrə/
Vehicle /viːəkl/
Wallet /wɒlɪt/
Wool /wʊl/

Patron /peɪtrən/
People /piːpl/
Photographer /fəʊtəgrəfə/
Pizza /piːtsə/
Police /pəliːs/
Pollution /pəluːʃn/
Posture /pɒstʃə/
Precious /preʃəs/
Pretty /prɪti/
Privacy /praɪvəsi/
Psychological /saɪkələdʒɪkl/
Psychology /saɪkələdʒɪ/
Question /kwestʃən/
Quite /kwaɪt/
Repetition /repətiʃn/
Resume (V) /rɪzuːm/
Saturday /sætədeɪ/
Secretary /sekrətri/
Shepherd /ʃepəd/
Soldier /səʊldʒə/
Suggestion /sədʒestʃən/
Tortoise /tɔːtəs/
Village /vɪlɪdʒ/
Want /wɒnt/
Wednesday /wenzdeɪ/