

PRONUNCIATION

INTRODUCTION

It is a mistake to think that pronunciation is any less important than reading, writing, listening and speaking skills. Pronunciation is the bridge between you and a native English speaker. It is the first thing that anybody notices about you, when you start to speak. Without clear pronunciation, messages can get lost or confused. The listener might even start to feel frustrated because they don't understand what is being said.

Pronunciation is not about removing your accent. It is about making your English sounds clear and distinct, so there is no confusion about what you are saying.

SPEECH SOUNDS

Phonetics is a branch of linguistics that focuses on the production and classification of the world's speech sounds. The production of speech looks at the interaction of different vocal organs, for example the lips, tongue and teeth, to produce particular sounds. By classification of speech, we focus on the sorting of speech sounds into categories which can be seen in what is called the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA). The IPA is a framework that uses a single symbol to describe each distinct sound in the language .

The 44 English sounds can be divided into two major categories – consonants and vowels. A consonant sound is one in which the air flow is cut off, either partially or completely, when the sound is produced. In contrast, a vowel sound is one in which the air flow is unobstructed when the sound is made.

A. VOWELS

Defintion: Sounds during the production of which air escapes through the mouth freely are called vowels. There are as many as twenty sounds in English. Out of these twenty vowel sounds, twelve are pure vowels and eight of them are diphthongal glides.

A monophthong/pure vowel is where there is one vowel sound in a syllable, and a diphthong is where there are two vowel sounds in a syllable.

i) Pure vowels / Monophthongs

Definition: A sound whose quality does not change over the duration of the vowel is called a pure vowel. There are 12 pure vowel sounds in English which are given below with examples:



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NO	Sounds	EXAMPLES
1	/ɪ/	It, ticket, beauty
2	/i:/	Each, feel, see
3	/ə/	Ago, again
4	/ɜ:/	Girl, third
5	/æ/	Sat, bat, cat
6	/e/	Get ,bet ,set, head
7	/ʌ/	But, gun, does
8	/ɑ:/	Card, chart, class
9	/ɒ/	Cot, sorry, hot
10	/ɔ:/	Door, four
11	/ʊ/	Sugar, push
12	/u:/	Moon, boot

ii) Gliding vowels /Diphthongs

Definition: Combination of two sounds. They are eight in number.

No:	IPA Symbol	Examples
1	/eɪ/	Mail,paste,date
2	/aɪ/	Ice,fine,kind,height
3	/ɔɪ/	Spoil,boy,toil
4	/ɪə/	Here,clear,real
5	/aʊ/	Sound,about,around
6	/oʊ/	Now,town
7	/eə/	Their,hair,dare
8	/ʊə/	Poor,tour

B. CONSONANT SOUNDS

Definition: A consonant is a speech sound that is articulated with complete or partial closure of the vocal tract.

There are as many as forty four sounds in English, and as we have already. We are obviously left with twenty four consonant sounds.

No:	IPA SYMBOL	EXAMPLE
1	/b/	Bit, jumble
2	/d/	din,leader
3	/f/	Fat,feather,half



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4	/g/	Gut,girl,eager
5	/h/	Harm,house
6	/k/	Cut,character,leak
7	/l/	Left,relate,detail
8	/m/	Map,remind,mime
9	/n/	Nap,near
10	/p/	Pit,spill,keep
11	/r/	Run,ruin,craze
12	/t/	Tin,after,what
13	/w/	We,wicked,watch
14	/v/	Vat,wave,velvet
15	/s/	Sap,sound,cross
16	/z/	Zap,zing,gaze
17	/ dʒ/	Jeep,judge
18	/j/	Yes,yell,yesterday
19	/ ʒ/	Measure,treasure
20	/ tʃ/	Cheap,nature,watch
21	/ ʃ/	She,nation,shout
22	/ θ/	Thin,thank,wrath
23	/ ð/	Then,feather,breathe
24	/ ŋ/	Bang,song,singing

WHAT IS WORD STRESS?

In English words that have more than one syllable, we usually don't pronounce every syllable with the same weight, so each syllable in a word can be stressed or unstressed. Word stress is the emphasis we place in a specific syllable of a word when pronouncing it.

For example, there are three syllables in the word "beautiful" /BEAU-ti-ful/ and the word stress falls on the first one /BEAU/. So to learn word stress we need to know syllable.

IDENTIFYING SYLLABLES TO UNDERSTAND WORD STRESS

A syllable is a basic unit of spoken language, consists of an uninterrupted sound that can be used to make up words. A syllable always has one vowel sound. So a word has as many syllables as there are vowel sounds.

A word might have one syllable (like "an" or "can") or more, such as "po-lice" (two syllables), "com-pa-ny" (three syllables), "ne-ce-ssa-ry" (four syllables), etc.

Remember that syllables aren't similar to letters. For example, "scratch" has seven letters but one syllable, while "umami" has five letters but three syllables. Whatever the word, pay attention to the vowels because one of them will be where you find the stress of a word.

Now, let's see the various word stress rules with examples. In English there are a large number of words with two syllables and in these words the stress depends on whether the word is used as a noun or a verb.

- a) When the word is used as a noun or adjective, the stress is on the first syllable. When the word is used as a verb, the stress is on the second syllable. Here are a few examples:

NOUN/ADJECTIVE	VERB
'produce	Pro'duce
'record	Re'cord
'subject	Sub'ject
'perfect	Per'fect
'object	Ob'ject

- b) Words with weak prefixes are generally accented on the root.

Examples: a'go, de'velop, be'low, a'bout, be'neath.

- c) Words ending in -ion are stressed on the penultimate syllable.

Examples: appli'cation, repe'tition, pro'duction, simplifi'cation

d) Words that end in -ic, -ical, -ically, -ial, -ially and -ian are stressed on the syllable preceding the suffix.

subs'tantial, arti'ficial, e'lectric

- e) Words ending with the suffix -eer and -ee are often accented on the suffix.

Example: pay'ee, exami'nee, absen'tee, engin'eer