# Handouts for Conversation Partners: Pronunciation

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The International Phonetic Alphabet

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>I</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>U</th>
<th>Ue</th>
<th>Ei</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>READ</td>
<td>SIT</td>
<td>BOOK</td>
<td>TOO</td>
<td>HERE</td>
<td>DAY</td>
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<tr>
<td>e</td>
<td>e</td>
<td>ǝ</td>
<td>ǝɪ</td>
<td>ǝɪ</td>
<td>ǝʊ</td>
<td>ǝɪ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEN</td>
<td>AMERICA</td>
<td>WORD</td>
<td>SORT</td>
<td>TOUR</td>
<td>BOY</td>
<td>GO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>æ</td>
<td>æ</td>
<td>ʌ</td>
<td>ɑː</td>
<td>ɑː</td>
<td>ee</td>
<td>ai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAT</td>
<td>BUT</td>
<td>PART</td>
<td>NOT</td>
<td>WEAR</td>
<td>MY</td>
<td>HOW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>p</td>
<td>b</td>
<td>t</td>
<td>d</td>
<td>ǝf</td>
<td>dʒ</td>
<td>k</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PIG</td>
<td>BED</td>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>DO</td>
<td>CHURCH</td>
<td>JUDGE</td>
<td>KILO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f</td>
<td>v</td>
<td>θ</td>
<td>ð</td>
<td>s</td>
<td>z</td>
<td>s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FIVE</td>
<td>VERY</td>
<td>THINK</td>
<td>THE</td>
<td>SIX</td>
<td>ZOO</td>
<td>SHORT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>m</td>
<td>n</td>
<td>ŋ</td>
<td>h</td>
<td>l</td>
<td>r</td>
<td>w</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MILK</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>SING</td>
<td>HELLO</td>
<td>LIVE</td>
<td>READ</td>
<td>WINDOW</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Linguistics Vocabulary:

Voiced sounds (usually sounds that vibrate in your throat): v, z, dʒ, ð, ʒ

Nasal sounds (vibrate in your nasal cavities): m, n, ŋ

Labio-dental (teeth touch the bottom lip): f, v

Interdental (teeth touching between the teeth): th, ð

Bilabial (both lips move): m, w, b, p

Flap: “r” as in “butter”
Mouth Movements: A Visual Guide

The vowels below progress from high to low:

/i/ as in “beet” and “sleep”
/e/ (see below; it’s a nearly identical sound in American English)
/ɛ/ as in “bet” and “egg”
/ɑ/ as in “wait” and “play”


Here are some (but not all) vowel and consonant sounds and their corresponding mouth movements:

u as in “boot” or “blue”
ah as in “lot” and “otter” and “water”

Image Source: WikiHow.com
L as in “love” and “live”

R as in “road” or “harbor”

\[\theta\] as in “thin” and “think”

n as in “need” and “bone”

Source: www.learnenglish.de

www.speechtalk.com

www.indiana.edu
**L/r Minimal Pairs List**

*Pronunciation Tip:* For the /l/ sound, the tongue goes on the ridge behind your upper teeth. Your lips do not move. For the /r/ sound, your tongue does NOT touch the roof of your mouth. Your lips move inward.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Advanced</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fleas freeze</td>
<td>Blues bruise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glow grow</td>
<td>Dial dire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lake rake</td>
<td>Leer rear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lip rip</td>
<td>Loaves roves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loot root</td>
<td>Jelly Jerry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laid raid</td>
<td>Holler horror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loyal royal</td>
<td>Splint sprint</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**3 or more syllable words:**

- Hologram
- Allergic
- Allegory
- Gregarious
- Folklore

*Tongue Twister:*

*Rory the warrior and Roger the worrier were reared wrongly in a rural brewery.*
/tʃ/, /ʃ/, and /dʒ/ Minimal Pair List

/tʃ/ ch as in “cheese” or “chop”

/ʃ/ sh as in “she’s” or “shop”

/dʒ/ j or g sound as in “gym” or “judge”

**Pronunciation Tip:** If you are having trouble with /ch/, try saying “meet ship” really fast. Eventually, it will sound like “me chip.”

**Intermediate**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/ch/</th>
<th>/ʃ/</th>
<th>/dʒ/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>chore</td>
<td>shore</td>
<td>George</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chop</td>
<td>shop</td>
<td>job</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chip</td>
<td>ship</td>
<td>jip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheap</td>
<td>sheep</td>
<td>Jeep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>batch</td>
<td>bash</td>
<td>badge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chair</td>
<td>share</td>
<td>Jared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cheer</td>
<td>shear</td>
<td>jeer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>leach</td>
<td>leash</td>
<td>ledge (vowel sound is different)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>watch</td>
<td>wash</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advanced**

2 or more syllables: satchel shackled jackal

cherry sherry Jerry
cheese  she’s  jeez (slang used to show annoyance or surprise; sometimes spelled “geez”)

Difficult Words: In the words below, /ʃ/ acts as /ʃ/ (in other words, the “ch” becomes an “sh” sound)

- Crochet
- Niche
- Pistachio
- Quiche
- Michigan
- Michelle

Ch as /k/:

- Chemistry
- Choir
- Psychology
- Ache
- Chrome

Other Exceptions: Loan words from foreign languages (such as Italian) might not follow typical English pronunciation patterns.

Sh:

Parmesan (cheese)  Cello

Parisian  cappuccino

Tongue Twister:

If Charlie chews shoes, should Charlie choose the shoes he chews?
/b/ and /p/ Minimal Pair List

**Pronunciation Tip:** Hold a piece of paper lightly in front of your face. When you say “b,” the paper should not move. When you say “p,” which is a voiced sound, the paper will move.

**Intermediate**

Braille  pail  
Batch  patch  
Bit  pit  
Bunch  punch  
Bore  pore  
Bowl  poll  
Bane  pane  

**Advanced**

2 ore more syllables:  
Barbara  Penelope  
Embezzled  puzzled  
Able  apple  

**Tongue Twister:**

*Betty Botter had some butter,*  
"But," she said, "this butter's bitter.  
If I bake this bitter butter,  
it would make my batter bitter.  
But a bit of better butter--  
that would make my batter better.
/θ/, /ð/, and /t/ Minimal Pairs List

/θ/ “th” as in “thin” or “think”

/ð/ “th” as in “there” or “brother”

Pronunciation Tip: The “t” sound requires you to place your tongue on the ridge of your mouth. The “th” sound requires you to put your tongue on the edges of your top front teeth.

Intermediate
- Thank  tank
- Path  pat
- Panther  banter
- Three  tree
- Thought  taught

Advanced
- Voiced and unvoiced /th/:
  - (al)though  through
  - This  thistle
  - Rather  wrath
Double “t” (hard and soft “t“ in English): How does the sound change for double “t”?

Let letter
Bet better
But butter
Set setter

_The hard “t” sound_ usually happens if the “t” is next to a consonant or at the beginning or end of a word
- After
- Actor
- Practice
- Shift
- Can’t
- Take
- Tint
- Lift

_The soft “t” sound_ usually happens if words are linked together or if the /t/ is between vowels, especially in words with “er” endings.

Do you want to come over? Want to ➔ wan’to or wanna

Waiter
Water
Cater
S, Z, and /ʒ/ sounds in English

The English /s/ sound can also occur with /c/ as in words like lice, mice, science, or cyst.

The English “zh” sound is represented in the phonetic alphabet as /ʒ/

S patterns:

vowel-consonant-vowel (sometimes)

Ice, lice, mice, vice

Before or after unvoiced (non-vibrating) consonants:

Books: /k/ is unvoiced

Spoke: /p/ is unvoiced

At the beginning of most words before a vowel:

Sat, save, set, see, sit, site, sod, soap, soup, sunk

Before “c”:

Science, scissors

Other exceptions:

Receive, deceive, perceive, reception, deception, perception

Center, cycle, civics, cyber

Z patterns:

Usually with plurals after a vowel sound or “s” after a vowel sound:

Ties, lies,

surprise, rise, demise

After voiced (vibrating) consonants (especially vowel-consonant-vowel pattern):

Judges: /dʒ/ is a voiced sound

Loves: /v/ is a voiced sound and it follows the vowel-consonant-vowel pattern (O-V-E). So does drives and lives.

After vowels (except for silent “e”):

Buys, cries, snows, has, etc.
/ʒ/ patterns:

“ual” endings
Visual, casual (but NOT sensual)

“ure” endings
Measure, pleasure, treasure, closure, seizure

Some “ge” endings (particularly French loan words):
Beige, rouge, garage (but not age, rage, or cage)

“sion” endings:
Delusion, illusion, vision, derision, supervision

Advanced:

Note that these are not minimal pairs, but words with similar vowel sounds or vowel-consonant-vowel patterns.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>/s/</th>
<th>/z/</th>
<th>/ʒ/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>caustic</td>
<td>causal</td>
<td>casual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vice</td>
<td>visor</td>
<td>visual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mace</td>
<td>maze</td>
<td>measure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lace</td>
<td>laze</td>
<td>leisure</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Tongue Twisters

She uses scissors to construct visual illusions.

You can choose beige, rouge, or azure colors for your drivers.
Short and Long vowels

*Short and long “e”*
Help       heap
Bet        beat
Bled       bleed

*Short and long “I”*
Pick       pike
Lift       alive
Rift       rife

*Short and long “a”*
Lack       lake
Rack       rake
Black       brake

*Short and long “o”*
Hog        home
Bond       bone
On         own

*Short and long “u”*
Cut        cute
But        brute
Hug        huge
/w/ and /v/ Minimal Pairs List

Pronunciation Tip: For /v/, the two front teeth should touch the bottom lip (similar to /f/, but with vibration). For /w/, the teeth do not touch anything.

wail  veil
wane  vane
wiper  viper
wine  vine
while  vile

Tongue Twisters:

Wild vines make fine vintage wines.

Which is worse verse, Wendy’s verse or Wayne’s verse?
“rl” sounds

Other common words with “rl”:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carl</th>
<th>curl</th>
<th>earl</th>
<th>girl</th>
<th>gnarl</th>
<th>hurl</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>pearl</td>
<td>snarl</td>
<td>squirrel</td>
<td>surly</td>
<td>twirl</td>
<td>unfurl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>world</td>
<td>whorled</td>
<td>whirled*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Whorl usually refers to a swirling pattern, such as a fingerprint. “Whirl” refers to movement, such as a dancer whirling around on the dance floor.

Other tongue twisters:

She whirled around the world.

Which wristwatches are Swiss wristwatches?

Freshly fried flying fish.

Clean clams crammed in a tin can.

A big black bug bit a big black bear, made the big black bear bleed blood.

Please pay promptly.
Homonyms
Homonyms include words that are identical in spelling and/or pronunciation but have different meanings.

Homophones are words that sound exactly the same but are spelled differently. Below are some common examples from each letter of the alphabet:

- bear/bare  hear/here  meet/meat  see/sea
- dear/deer  I/eye  pear/pair  too/two/to
- eight/ate  jeans/genes  Q/queue  where/wear
- fur/fir  know/no  read/red  you/ewe

Homographs are words that are spelled the same. Many of them share the same pronunciation, but some do not.

Shared spelling and pronunciation:
- baseball bat  bat (animal)
- bank (building)  riverbank
- left (verb)  left (direction)

Same spelling and different pronunciation:
- Tie your shows in a bow. (“bow” sounds like “low”)
- Please bow to your hosts. (“bow” sounds like “cow”)
- The Sahara Desert receives minimal rainfall. (stress on first syllable: desert)
- If a soldier deserts the army, it is considered a grave offense. (stress on second syllable: desert)
- He didn’t shed a tear at the funeral. (“tear” sounds like “ear”)
- If you tear that dress, you can’t return it. (“tear” sounds like “wear”)

Exercise 1: Which words are homophones or homographs? Which words are neither? (answers on p. 18)

whirled—world  hair—hare  breathe—breath  peer—pair
fought—thought  set—seat  rare—rear  threw—through
Exercise 2: In each sentence, change the incorrect words to their correct homonyms. (Answers on p. 18)

1. Read Riding Hood stopped and picked sum flours.

2. Snow White eight the read apple.

3. The princess could knot sleep at knight on the lumpy mattress.

4. The Prince kissed Sleeping Beauty and asked her if she wood merry him.

5. Independence Hall is the cite where the original Declaration of Independence was signed hear in Philadelphia.

6. The Emperor was to vane two admit he could knot sea his knew close.

7. The which tried to fatten up Hansel and Gretel two put sum meet on there bones.

8. The wolf blue down the houses of the first too pigs.

9. Their was a bare sitting on root 95.

10. The peace of pi is four my grandmother.
Answers to Exercise 1:

Homonyms include: whirled/world, hair/hare, threw-through

These words are not homonyms because one sound is different in each pair: fought and thought, breathe and breath, set and seat, rare-rare, peer-peer

Answers to Exercise 2:

1. red, some, flowers
2. ate, red
3. not, night
4. would, marry
5. site, here
6. too, vain, to, not, see, new, clothes
7. witch, to, some, meat, their
8. blew, two
9. there, bear, route
10. piece, pie, for
Syllable Stress

Some words look the same and have the same pronunciation, but the stress changes. Below are some common examples.

For nouns: stress on first syllable

For verbs: stress on second syllable

- convict (noun): He’s an ex-convict.
- convict (verb): He was convicted of a crime.

- Convert (noun): He’s a Jewish convert.
- Convert (verb): He converted from Christianity to Judaism.

- Conflict (noun): the Syrian conflict, the drug conflict, etc.
- Conflict (verb): He has conflicting priorities.

- Record (noun): He keeps the employee records in a filing cabinet.
- Record (verb): Are you going to record the opera on TV tonight?

- Permit (noun): Do you have a driver’s permit?
- Permit (verb): I can’t permit anyone beyond this area due to safety hazards.

- Object (noun): The object was round and small, but I couldn’t identify it.
- Object (verb): Does anyone object to me eating the last slice of cake?

Other examples:

Rebel  recall  insult  combat  compress  insert
Reject  contract  project  extract  commune  refuse
Produce  contest  present  desert  indent  subject
Suspect  content*(adjective)

*Read these sentences for practice. Most of them don’t make real sense, but they are good for understanding meaning and syllable stress.*

1. They will rebel against the rebels.

2. She contracted a virus at the workplace, but she can’t sue the company due to their contract.

3. They projected that the project would be finished in three months.
4. I **object** to her being the *object* of your affections.

5. This country can’t **produce** enough *produce* to keep up with the demand.

Now, try without the stress in italics.

6. I can’t present a present at Christmas this year.

7. I recalled that her memory recall was superb.

8. The results of the contest were contested.

9. Vanilla extract is made by extracting the flavors from vanilla beans.

10. The soldier deserted the army in the desert after engaging in hand-to-hand combat.

11. She lives in a hippie commune, where she regularly communes with artists and freethinkers.

12. Throw the old papers in the refuse pile.

13. I suspected that she was a suspect in the crime.

14. Did you insert this sales insert in the newspaper?

**Other Resources:**

Sounds of English ([www.soundsofenglish.org](http://www.soundsofenglish.org))


Alphabetical List of Tongue Twisters: [http://thinks.com/words/tonguetwisters.htm](http://thinks.com/words/tonguetwisters.htm)