

CAMBRIDGE

ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION IN USE

Self-study and
classroom use

Advanced

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Contents

Acknowledgements	5
About this book	6

Section A Getting started

1	Accents (1): Varieties of English	8
2	Accents (2): English as an international language	10
3	Finding out about pronunciation (1): dictionaries	12
4	Finding out about pronunciation (2): online resources	14
5	Pronunciation in slow and fast speech (1)	16
6	Pronunciation in slow and fast speech (2)	18

Section B Pronunciation of words and phrases

Consonant clusters

7	play, grow, splash	Consonant clusters at the beginning of words	20
8	jump, next, glimpsed	Consonant clusters at the end of words	22
9	abstract, next Friday	Consonant clusters within and across words	24

Stress in words and phrases

10	,contro'versial and controVERsial	Word stress and prominence	26
11	'comfort and 'comfortable	Suffixes and word stress (1)	28
12	ac'celerate and ac,cele'ration	Suffixes and word stress (2)	30
13	ex'treme and ex'tremity	Suffixes and word stress (3)	32
14	dis'organised and ,recon'sider	Prefixes and word stress (1)	34
15	'subway and 'super,power	Prefixes and word stress (2)	36
16	'news,paper and ,absolute 'zero	Stress in compound nouns	38
17	'hair-,raising and ,hard-'working	Stress in compound adjectives and in abbreviations	40
18	,closed-circuit 'television and 'sell-by date	Stress in longer compound nouns	42
19	'dream of and 'live for	One-stress phrasal verbs	44
20	,hang a'round and ,look 'up to	Two-stress phrasal verbs	46

Stressed and unstressed syllables

21	some, the, from, etc.	Weak forms of function words	48
22	Well, YOU do it then!	Prominent function words	50
23	calcu/ʊ/late and calcu/ə/late	Vowels in unstressed syllables in content words	52
24	listen, bottle, politician, etc.	Syllabic consonants	54

Foreign words

25	déjà vu, angst, tsunami	Foreign words in English	56
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Section C Pronunciation in conversation

Features of fluent speech

26	one_evening, stop_now, go_away, etc.	Linking sounds	58
27	I'll get it, These're mine	Contracted forms	60
28	I'm not sure, Not sure, 'm not sure	Ellipsis and 'near ellipsis'	62
29	last night, I haven't seen her	Leaving out consonant sounds (1): /t/	64
30	an old car, a bottle of water	Leaving out consonant sounds (2): /d/, /h/, /l/, /v/	66
31	average, novelist, happening	Words that lose a syllable	68

Organising information in conversation

32	// we stuck a picture// of an elephant//	Breaking speech into units	70
33	// it's BLUE// DARK blue//	Prominent words in speech units (1)	72
34	// I've always been terrified of SPIDers//	Prominent words in speech units (2)	74
35	// I'll beLIEVE it when I SEE it//	Fixed phrases and idioms in speech units	76
36	she's got an ESSay to write	Non-prominence on final 'empty' content words	78
37	I can't STAND the stuff	Non-prominence on final vague expressions	80
38	just help yourSELF; throw it to ME	Prominence in reflexive and personal pronouns	82

Intonation in telling, asking and answering

39	I'm quite busy at the moment	Falling and rising tones	84
40	They taste great, these biscuits	Tails	86
41	Great film, wasn't it?	Question tags	88
42	What I don't understand is how it got there	Cleft sentences	90
43	Finding out or making sure?	Questions (1)	92
44	Wasn't it terrible? Are you crazy?	Questions (2)	94
45	'I paid €200,000 for it.' 'How much?'	Repeat questions	96
46	Although I was tired, I couldn't get to sleep	Comparisons and contrasts	98
47	'You were asleep in the class!' 'I WASN't asleep.'	Contradictions	100
48	you couldn't carry it upSTAIRS for me?	Requests and reservation	102
49	On the whole, it went very well	Attitude words and phrases (1)	104
50	She just forgot, presumably?	Attitude words and phrases (2)	106
51	How embarrassing!	Exclamations	108

Intonation in managing conversation

52	Mhm, Right, I see	Keeping conversation going	110
53	On top of that...; Anyway...	Adding information and changing topic	112

Section D Pronunciation in formal settings

54	Before she left school// she started her own business	Dividing prepared speech into units (1)	114
55	One of the paintings// he left to his sister	Dividing prepared speech into units (2)	116
56	Lima – as I'm sure you know – is the capital of Peru	Pronunciation of inserts	118
57	We expected profits to drop, but they rose	Step-ups – contrasts and new topics	120
58	The headteacher, Mr Lee, will be talking to parents	Step-downs – adding information and ending topics	122
59	Small, medium, and large	Tones in a series of similar items	124
60	'Politicians are the same all over...'	Level tone in quoting and building suspense	126

Section E Reference

E1	The phonemic alphabet: Practice	128
E2	Consonant clusters: Further practice	132
E3	Word stress: Further practice	136
E4	Glossary	140
E5	Further reading	143
	Key	144
	Key to phonemic and other symbols	192

Pronunciation in slow and fast speech (1)

A

Important
for listening

In different contexts we change the speed at which we speak.

We are likely to speak more slowly, for example, ...

... when we are carefully explaining to someone what we want them to do, when we are talking to a large audience, or when we are talking about an unfamiliar or difficult topic.

We are likely to speak more quickly, for example, ...

... in conversation, when we are talking to friends or relatives, or when we are talking about routine or familiar topics.

In Units 5 and 6 we will introduce some of the changes in pronunciation that take place in fast speech when compared with slow, careful speech. These include linking sounds, leaving out sounds and changing sounds. These changes are looked at in more detail in Units 26 to 31.

B

A11

Important
for listening

Speech is broken up into units, often with a pause between them. Within these *speech units*, words are linked together smoothly. (For more on speech units, see Unit 32.) In fast speech in particular, these units may be quite long and the words spoken quickly. Compare the units (marked with // below) in these examples of slow and fast speech:

Slow speech: A nurse is explaining how to make a sling:

// this goes under the arm// and then over the shoulder// all the time// make sure you support the arm// talk to the patient// and find out what position// is most comfortable for them//

Fast speech: Three friends are in a Chinese restaurant:

A: // is anyone having a starter or not// or are we going straight to the main course//

B: // I'm going to go straight to the main course//

C: // yeah//

B: // but I might have an extra portion of something// you never know//

A: // do they do nice sweets here//

C: // I think it's just lychees//

A: // what's lychees//

B: // they're the funny little white ones// aren't they//

C: // that's right// I'm not terribly keen on them//



Listen again to some of the long units from the restaurant conversation. Notice how the words are run together:

// or are we going straight to the main course//

// but I might have an extra portion of something//

C

A12

Important
for listening

Because words within units are run together, it can sometimes be difficult to understand them. However, one or more word in each unit is emphasised and may be said more clearly than others (see also Units 33 and 34). It is important to focus on these, as they usually carry the most important information in the unit. Listen to these speech units from the restaurant conversation and notice how the words with syllables in large capital letters are emphasised:

// I'm going to go STRAIGHT to the MAIN course//

// I think it's just lyCHEES//

// they're the FUNny little WHITE ones//

// that's RIGHT//

Exercises

5.1 In which three of these situations is slow speech more likely?

- 1 A lecturer is giving details of timetable changes to a group of university students.
- 2 Two friends are discussing what they might do at the weekend.
- 3 You are giving directions to a stranger who has asked how to get to a local hospital.
- 4 A witness in a trial is explaining to a jury what she saw when a robbery was taking place.
- 5 A hairdresser and a customer are talking about their recent summer holidays.
- 6 Members of a family are having dinner and talking about what they have been doing during the day.

5.2 Here are some long speech units taken from fast speech. Listen to each just once and try to write down what you hear.

A13

EXAMPLE What are you doing tomorrow about half past twelve?

- 1 I not.
- 2 She before.
- 3 They well.
- 4 As late.
- 5 We hours.

If you had difficulties, listen again as many times as you need, and then check your answers in the Key.

5.3 First, listen to an extract from a business meeting. Then repeat six single speech units taken from the discussion. If possible, repeat them without looking at the units written out below. Try to run the words in the unit smoothly together.

A14

- 1 // so why did you go for Jensens//
- 2 // and we've done business with them before//
- 3 // and they've still got a pretty good reputation//
- 4 // that the product isn't up to scratch//
- 5 // they've been pretty poor//
- 6 // shall I contact the lawyers about it//



5.4 Listen to these speech units taken from the same conversation. Underline the one word, or sometimes two words, that are emphasised in these units.

A15

EXAMPLE // to supply the machines//

- 1 // but that was years ago//
- 2 // but the management hasn't changed at all//
- 3 // to be honest//
- 4 // we ought to be looking for a different supplier//
- 5 // we'll leave that to you//

Now check your answers in the Key and then say the speech units aloud. Try to run the words in the unit smoothly together and emphasise the underlined words.

Follow up: Record yourself reading all parts of the business meeting extract used in exercises 5.3 and 5.4 (or act it out in a group of three). Try to divide it into speech units as in the recording, making sure you run the words in the units smoothly together. In the Key you will find the extract with the speech units marked.

Pronunciation in slow and fast speech (2)

A A16

Important
for listening

In fast speech, sounds that are found in words spoken slowly may be missed out. Listen and notice how the highlighted sounds are missed out in this conversation extract:

the two /t/ sounds merge into one

/d/ is missed out

It occurred to me that Terry hadn't been in touch for ages, so I thought I ought to phone him. Well, just then there was a ring on the front door and there he was.

/h/ is missed out /t/ is missed out /t/ is missed out /h/ is missed out

For more details, see Units 8, 9, 29 and 30.

B A17

Important
for listening

As well as sounds, syllables or whole words that we would expect to hear in slow speech may be reduced or missed out in fast speech. Listen and notice how the highlighted parts are reduced or missed out in this conversation:

'it's' is reduced to /s/ 'are' is missed out

'I' is missed out

'Have' is reduced to /v/

'd' is missed out 'I' is missed out

A: Come on, it's time to go. What are you looking for?
B: I don't suppose you've seen my glasses?
A: Have you lost them again?
B: You'd better carry on. I can't go without my glasses.

the vowel /ə/ is missed out and the word is said with one syllable

For more details, see Units 27-30.

C A18

Important
for listening

Sounds in words may also change in fast speech compared with how they are said in slow speech or how they are represented in dictionaries. Listen and notice how the sound /t/ changes in the highlighted parts of this conversation:

/t/ + /j/ ('y') is said /tʃ/ ('ch')

/n/ is missed out and /t/ is said like /p/ before /m/

/t/ is said like /k/ before /g/

A: I want you to paint my kitchen.
B: What colour?
A: A light green.
B: Right.

/t/ is said as a 'glottal stop' (a sound made by stopping the flow of air by closing the vocal cords)

For more details, see Units 26 and 29.



It is not essential to make these changes in your own speech in order to be understood, although they can help your speech sound more natural and fluent.

Exercises

6.1

A19

Listen to these sentences as many times as you need. First you will hear them said slowly and carefully and then at a more normal speed for conversation. Indicate the differences you hear in the 'conversation' versions.

EXAMPLE a 'weak' form (/jə/, not /ju:z/)
 /t/ is missed out
 /t/ is missed out
 You couldn't give me a lift, could you?
 /v/ is pronounced like /b/
 /d/ + /j/ ('y') is pronounced /dʒ/ (as in 'jam')

1 Has he been to see you since Saturday?

2 I asked her for the best tickets they'd got left.

3 Do you mind moving along a bit?

Now check your answers in the Key.



6.2

A20

Listen to these conversations as many times as you need and fill in the spaces. How is the pronunciation of each missing word different from its slow form?

- doesn't
 'n' is said like 'm'
- 1 A: Rick *doesn't* take *one* bit of interest. He
 B: That terrible. Why do that?
 A: Maybe jealous she's so well.
- 2 A: know coming?
 B: Everyone Cathy.
 A: What time they be here?
 B: six.
- 3 A: coming out a walk?
 B: Okay. my coat.
 A: hat.
 gloves, too.

Now check your answers in the Key.

Follow up: Record yourself saying the sentences in exercise 6.1. First say them slowly and carefully, and then at normal speed. Then compare what you said with what you heard in the recording.



play, grow, splash

Consonant clusters at the beginning of words

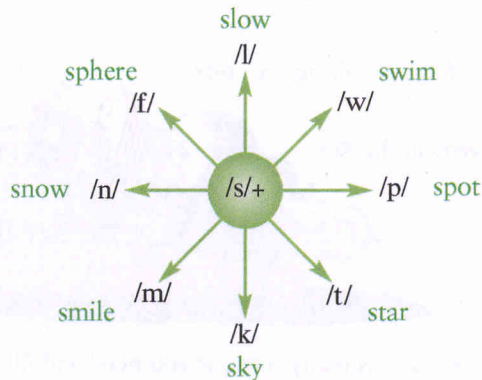
A ^{A21} Combinations of consonant sounds (*consonant clusters*) can be difficult to pronounce for some learners. English words can start with a vowel, or one, two or three consonant sounds. Compare:

am ram cram scam

Here are the possible *two-consonant clusters* at the start of English words:

	/p/	/t/	/k/	/b/	/d/	/g/	/m/	/n/	/f/	/v/	/θ/	/ʃ/	/h/
+/l/	play	×	class	black	×	glass	×	×	fly	×	×	×	×
+/r/	pray	trip	crime	brown	drop	grow	×	×	fry	×	three	shrink	×
+/w/	×	twins	queen	×	dwell	×	×	×	×	×	×	×	×
+/j/	pure	tube	queue	beauty	due	×	music	news	few	view	×	×	huge

In addition, the following two-consonant clusters are possible with /s/:



B ^{A22} Here are the possible *three-consonant clusters* at the start of English words:

	/sp/	/st/	/sk/
+/l/	splash	×	×
+/r/	spray	straw	scream
+/w/	×	×	squeak
+/j/	×	stew	skewer



Note: Some consonant clusters marked × in A and B are used in a few uncommon words, for example *schwa* (the name of the sound /ə/) and people's names.

C

In order to be understood clearly you should –

- avoid changing a consonant in a cluster to a different consonant.
For example: saying 'present' for 'pleasant' or saying 'queue' for 'crew'
- avoid leaving out one of the consonant sounds.
For example: saying 'poblem' for 'problem' or saying 'foo' for 'few'
- avoid adding an extra vowel between consonants.
For example: saying 'tewin' for 'twin' or saying 'faree' for 'free'
- avoid adding an extra vowel at the beginning of the word.
For example: saying 'estop' for 'stop' or saying 'escream' for 'scream'



You can find more practice of consonant clusters at the beginning of words in Section E2.

Exercises

7.1

A23

You will hear some short definitions. After each definition, press 'pause', tick (✓) the word you think is being defined and say it aloud. When you press 'play' again you will hear the correct answer. Repeat it and then continue in the same way.

EXAMPLE 'to cook in hot oil' fly / fry ✓

- | | | | | |
|------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1 string / sting | 3 strain / stain | 5 slum / sum | 7 slip / sip | 9 scare / square |
| 2 clean / queen | 4 Spain / sprain | 6 pain / plain | 8 kick / quick | 10 grass / glass |

7.2

A24

You will hear some words. After each word, press 'pause' and underline the correct definition. When you press 'play' again you will hear the correct answer.

EXAMPLE 'stray' to not leave / to move away from the intended route

- 1 to produce a continuous light / to increase in size
- 2 to shake with fear / a sweet food
- 3 to move through water / attractively thin
- 4 dried stalks of wheat / another word for shop
- 5 watery liquid in your mouth / to divide into two
- 6 activity done for enjoyment / to give money for something
- 7 a border around a picture / burning gas
- 8 not mixed / not rich

7.3

A25

Listen and underline the sentence you hear.

EXAMPLE The band isn't very popular. / The band isn't very popular.

- 1 Just across the road. / Just cross the road.
- 2 The cat was following its tail. / The cat was following its trail.
- 3 Before that I had tried a motorbike. / Before that I had to ride a motorbike.
- 4 It's Michael's twin. / It's Michael's to win.
- 5 He fell into a deeper sleep. / He fell into a deep sleep.
- 6 I thought it was a terrible slight (= insult). / I thought it was a terrible sight.
- 7 Just blow your nose. / Just below your nose.
- 8 This one is a pear. / This one is spare.

Now check your answers in the Key. Then listen again and repeat the sentences.

7.4

Try building words by adding consonant sounds. Start with a vowel sound, and then add one consonant sound at a time before or after the vowel, in any order, to build new words. (Note: (i) a consonant sound may consist of more than one letter; (ii) don't add any new vowel sounds.) Then say aloud the words you have written. For example:

/eɪ/: ache ⇒ lake ⇒ flake ⇒ flakes (2 consonants before the vowel and 2 after)

/aɪ/: rye ⇒ rife ⇒ rifle ⇒ trifle ⇒ trifles (2 before and 3 after)

/iː/: sea ⇒ seem ⇒ scheme ⇒ scream ⇒ screamed (3 before and 2 after)

Now try with other vowels. You might find it helpful to use a dictionary. (Note: There is a list of vowels on page 192.)

Follow up: Are there any consonant clusters at the beginning of words that you have special problems with? Collect a list of words that start with these, record yourself saying them, and listen. Repeat this often. See Unit 3, exercise 3 for an idea on how to collect words starting with a particular consonant cluster.

8

jump, next, glimpsed

Consonant clusters at the end of words

A



There are many more combinations of consonant sounds possible at the end of English words than at the beginning (see Unit 7). There can be up to four consonant sounds in a final consonant cluster:

Words with...	2 final consonants	3 final consonants	4 final consonants
	<u>honest</u> /st/ <u>jump</u> /mp/ <u>wrapped</u> /pt/	<u>helped</u> /lpt/ <u>next</u> /kst/ <u>crisps</u> /sps/	<u>prompts</u> /mpts/ <u>glimpsed</u> /mpst/ <u>texts</u> /ksts/

B



Some final clusters with three or four consonants can be difficult to pronounce even for native English speakers, so in some words these are commonly simplified. For example, the middle consonant of the clusters /kts/, /mps/, /mpt/, /nts/, /ndz/ and /skt/ is hardly heard or sometimes even left out (see also Unit 29A):

products → products /prɒdʌks/
 camped → camped /kæmpt/
 hands → hands /hændz/

jumps → jumps /dʒʌmpz/
 clients → clients /klaɪənts/
 asked → asked /ɑːst/

Notice also:

twelfth → twelfth /twelfθ/

fifths → fifths /fɪθs/ or fifths /fɪfs/

C

Leaving *final* consonants out of consonant clusters at the end of words can cause misunderstanding, and you should avoid this. For example, say:

product (not: product~~ɪ~~) jump (not: jump~~ɪ~~) hand (not: hand~~ɪ~~)

In particular, avoid leaving out /z/ or /s/ in plurals and third person singular verb forms, and /t/ or /d/ in *-ed* verbs and adjectives:

jobs (not: job~~s~~) sleeps (not: sleep~~s~~)
 laughed (not: laugh~~ed~~) curved (not: curv~~ed~~)

D

Don't be tempted to add vowels to consonant clusters in order to make them easier to say, as this can also cause misunderstanding. You should –

- avoid adding an extra vowel (usually /ɪ/ or /ə/) between consonants:
 watched (not: watch^ɪd) health (not: heal^əth) dogs (not: dog^əs)
- avoid adding an extra vowel (usually /ə/ or /uː/) at the end of the word:
 last (not: last^ə) announce (not: announce^ə) attempts (not: attempt^{uː}s)
- avoid adding an extra vowel at the end of an adjective, as this can sound like a comparative form:
 fast (not: fast^ə because it sounds like 'faster')
 damp (not: damp^ə because it sounds like 'damper')

You can find more practice of consonant clusters at the end of words in Section E2.

Exercises

- 8.1** How many final consonant *sounds* – 1, 2, 3 or 4 – do the words in the box have when they are spoken slowly and carefully? (Note that the number of consonant *sounds* may be different from the number of consonant *letters*.) Write the words in the appropriate row.

accents against aspects **attempts** axe catch contexts diamonds ears
earth grasped laughed ledge next risked sculpts stamps tempts touched

1 final consonant sound	
2 final consonant sounds	
3 final consonant sounds	<i>accents /nts/</i>
4 final consonant sounds	<i>attempts /mpts/</i>



Now check your answers, listen and say the words.

- 8.2** Listen to some of the words from exercise 8.1 (in **bold**) used in conversation. Some final clusters are simplified. Underline the words which are simplified and show which sound is left out or reduced.



EXAMPLES It was a long jump, but he **risked** it. ✗ (the /k/ sound is left out)
He **helped** us a lot. (no simplification)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 It's my turn next . | 5 The question has a number of aspects . |
| 2 It's a recording of regional accents . | 6 She loved diamonds . |
| 3 Don't forget to buy some stamps . | 7 It was taken out of context . |
| 4 I've always been against it. | 8 They grasped it easily. |

- 8.3** Listen and underline the word you hear.



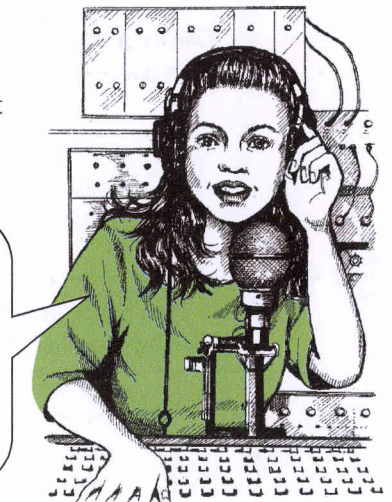
EXAMPLE I *accept* / *accepted* the award gratefully.

- I couldn't go on without more *paint* / *pain*.
- The company has some innovative *designers* / *designs*.
- I couldn't go *faster* / *fast* in my old car.
- The factory makes *trays* / *trains*.
- We wore heavy boots with thick, *ridged* / *rigid* soles.
- They're one of Brazil's main *exports* / *exporters*.

- 8.4** Anna failed her test to become a newsreader for her local English language radio station. Look at the transcript of the news item that she read. Then listen to the news being read clearly and correct the words that Anna pronounced wrongly.



The police ^{think}~~thin~~ the rose on the south coat will be pack when the seven Felton Pop Festival beginners neck weekend. Lass year more than 10,000 pop fan pack into the feel where the festival was hell. There is simpler accommodation on a nearby farm, but most people will camper in small tense.



Now check your answers in the Key. Then read aloud the (correct) news item.

Follow up: What is the maximum number of final consonant sounds that can occur in your first language?