

English  
for  
academic  
study:

Sample unit

# Pronunciation

Study Book

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# Book map

Topic	Objectives
<p><b>1</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vowel sounds: /æ/, /e/, /ɪ/, /ɑː/, /ɜː/, /iː/</li> <li>Syllables and word stress</li> <li>Weak forms in function words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn which phonemic symbols represent certain vowel sounds</li> <li>Practise recognizing and producing these vowel sounds</li> <li>Learn about the concepts of the syllable and word stress</li> <li>Practise producing words with the correct word stress</li> <li>Practise recognizing weak forms of function words when listening</li> </ul>
<p><b>2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vowel sounds: /ʊ/, /ʌ/, /ə/, /ʊ/, /ɔː/, /uː/</li> <li>Unstressed syllables and word stress patterns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn which phonemic symbols represent the other vowel sounds</li> <li>Practise recognizing and producing these vowel sounds</li> <li>Learn more about which syllable is stressed in some types of word</li> </ul>
<p><b>3</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Voiced and unvoiced consonants</li> <li>Consonant sounds: /θ/, /ð/, /t/, /s/</li> <li>Sentence stress</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn about the pronunciation of voiced and unvoiced consonants</li> <li>Practise recognizing and producing these sounds</li> <li>Learn to identify stressed words in sentences</li> <li>Practise using sentence stress to highlight important information</li> </ul>
<p><b>4</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consonant sounds: /ʒ/, /v/, /j/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /dʒ/</li> <li>Word stress on two-syllable words</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn more phonemic symbols representing consonant sounds</li> <li>Practise recognizing and producing these consonant sounds</li> <li>Learn where to place the stress in words with two syllables</li> </ul>
<p><b>5</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diphthongs: /aɪ/, /əʊ/, /eɪ/</li> <li>Sounds in connected speech: linking, insertion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn which phonemic symbols represent certain diphthongs</li> <li>Practise recognizing and producing diphthongs</li> <li>Learn how the pronunciation of words is affected by their context in connected speech</li> </ul>
<p><b>6</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consonant clusters: at the beginning and in the middle of words</li> <li>Sounds in connected speech: disappearing sounds, contractions</li> <li>Tone units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn how to pronounce groups of consonants (consonant clusters) at the beginning and in the middle of words</li> <li>Learn how to divide up connected speech into tone units</li> </ul>
<p><b>7</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diphthongs: /aʊ/, /eə/, /ɪə/, /ɔɪ/</li> <li>Sentence stress and tone units</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn which phonemic symbols represent other diphthongs</li> <li>Practise recognizing and producing these diphthongs</li> <li>Have more practice identifying sentence stress and tone units</li> </ul>
<p><b>8</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consonant clusters: at the end of words and across two words</li> <li>Intonation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Learn how to pronounce consonant clusters at the end of words and across two words</li> <li>Learn how intonation is used to organize and emphasize information</li> </ul>



# Introduction

*EAS: Pronunciation* has been designed with the aims of helping you to:

- improve the accuracy of your pronunciation;
- develop your listening micro-skills;
- learn the phonemic alphabet;
- build your understanding of sound/spelling relationships;
- recognize and remember words and phrases that commonly occur in academic contexts.

## Accuracy of pronunciation

Accurate pronunciation is important if you want people to understand you clearly. Frequent pronunciation errors may put a strain on the listener, and may also lead to breakdowns in communication. While you do not have to speak with a perfect English accent, your aim must be at least for your pronunciation to be good enough for the listener to understand you with ease. The main technique you can use to achieve this is to listen and repeat patterns of pronunciation, but learning the phonemic alphabet and developing a sensitive ear will also help you. If you are using this book with a teacher, his or her feedback will help you to identify which aspects of pronunciation you need to focus on, and what progress you are making in improving your pronunciation.

## Learning the phonemic alphabet

The phonemic alphabet is a system for showing the pronunciation of words in English, and is shown on page 7 of this book. At first glance, the phonemic alphabet looks like another language that you have to learn. However, about half of the 44 phonemic symbols that you are expected to know are pronounced in the same way as they are written. In *EAS: Pronunciation* we have focused on:

- those symbols which may be unfamiliar, and so may be difficult to learn;
- those sounds which may be difficult to pronounce for certain learners.

We believe that learning the phonemic alphabet will help you to develop more accurate pronunciation and improve your listening skills. In addition, if you know the phonemic alphabet you can:

- understand the correct pronunciation when looking up a word in a dictionary;
- note down the correct pronunciation in your vocabulary notebook.

So, knowing the phonemic alphabet is another important aspect of recording and learning vocabulary.

## Listening micro-skills

In listening classes, you will have had practice understanding meaning that is built up over a sentence or several sentences, but you may have had difficulty with comprehension at a lower level. Listening micro-skills are the skills you need to understand meaning at the level of a word or small group of words.

Students frequently remark that there are many words that they know in their written form, but fail to recognize when listening. There may be several reasons for this; for example, words may not be pronounced in the way you expect them to be, or it may be difficult to hear where one word ends and another begins. Many activities in this book will help you to deal with such problems.

## Sound/spelling relationships

Another difficulty faced by students is that there does not seem to be a relationship between the way words are spelt in English and the way they are pronounced. This creates problems, not just for accurate pronunciation, but also for correct spelling. In fact, while there are exceptions (and many of these exceptions seem to relate to the most common words in English), there are a lot of useful sound/spelling patterns. If you can ensure that you are familiar with these patterns, you can then focus on learning the exceptions, which are the words that create the most problems.

## Academic vocabulary

The examples and exercises in these materials are focused on words from:

- the General Service List (GSL): the 2,000 most frequently used words in English;
- the Academic Word List (AWL): a list of 570 word families that are most commonly used in academic contexts.

All the words in the AWL will be useful to you, but some of the words in the GSL are either words you may know already (e.g., *you*, *from*, *hand*) or words that are not commonly or widely used in academic contexts (e.g., *handkerchief*, *niece*, *jealous*). In general, words like these have not been used in the examples and exercises.

In addition, a number of extracts from academic lectures have been used to provide practice in listening for features of pronunciation.

A lot of care has been taken, therefore, to ensure that the vocabulary focused on in this book is relevant to both academic study and your needs. Many words will be those you 'half know', so the materials should reinforce your understanding. Other words may be quite new to you.

## Using the materials

There is a range of different exercises which require you to work in different ways. For example, you may need to:

- listen and repeat words or sentences;
- stop the recording and read an explanation;
- stop the recording, write words in spaces in sentences, then listen to check your answers;
- stop the recording, fill in a table or choose the correct answer, then listen to check your answers.

If you just play the recording non-stop, listening and reading at the same time, you will not improve your pronunciation or listening skills. You will have to stop the recording to read, think, write and check answers, and you will have to replay short sections you have difficulty with.

## Recording your own voice

When you are asked to listen and repeat words, phrases or sentences, it can also be very useful to record your own voice and then play it back. This will enable you to compare your own pronunciation with the recording, and hear any differences or problems clearly. You will not need to record your voice for every exercise, but try to do this when you know you have a problem with certain aspects of pronunciation.

If you are unsure whether your pronunciation on an exercise is accurate enough, and you are working with a teacher, ask him or her to listen to your recording. He or she will be able to assess your pronunciation more objectively.

# 3

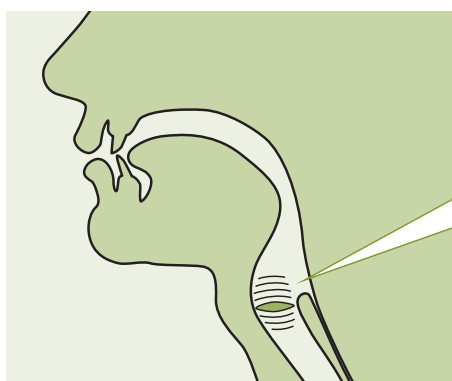
## Consonant sounds 1, sentence stress

In this unit you will:

- learn about the pronunciation of voiced and unvoiced consonants;
- practise recognizing and producing these sounds;
- learn to identify stressed words in sentences;
- practise using sentence stress to highlight important information.

### Task 1: Voiced and unvoiced consonants

There are a number of pairs of consonants that are pronounced in the same way, except that one consonant is *unvoiced* and the other is *voiced*.



For **voiced** consonants /b/, /d/, /g/, etc., the vocal chords in your throat vibrate.

For **unvoiced** consonants /p/, /t/, /k/, etc., there is *no* vibration.

#### 1.1 CD1 – 29 Listen and repeat these continuous sounds.

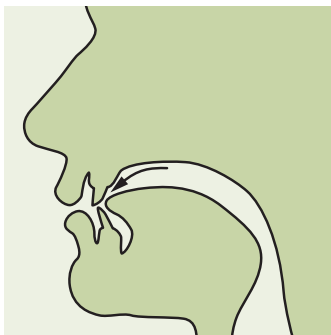
SSSSSSSSSSSSSSSS

ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ

The position of your tongue, lips and mouth is more or less the same for each sound, but for the /z/ sound there is also vibration of your vocal chords, so we say that /z/ is a *voiced* consonant. There is no vibration for the /s/ sound, so it is *unvoiced*.

/s/ is **unvoiced**, e.g., snow

/z/ is **voiced**, e.g., zero



For both these sounds, the tip of the tongue is held close to the part of the mouth just above the teeth. There is a narrow gap through which you force air.

In the table on page 24, each pair of consonants (/p/ and /b/, /t/ and /d/, etc.) is pronounced in the same way, except that one is voiced and the other is unvoiced.

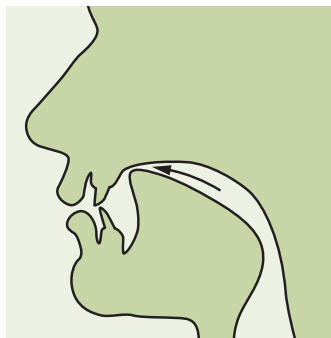
## 1.2

**CD1 – 30** Listen and repeat each pair of words. Can you hear the difference in pronunciation?

Unvoiced		Voiced	
/p/	pie	/b/	buy
/t/	town	/d/	down
/k/	coal	/g/	goal
/s/	sink	/z/	zinc
/ʃ/	mesh	/ʒ/	measure
/tʃ/	chunk	/dʒ/	junk
/f/	fast	/v/	vast
/θ/	breath	/ð/	breathe

/ʃ/ is **unvoiced**, e.g., mesh

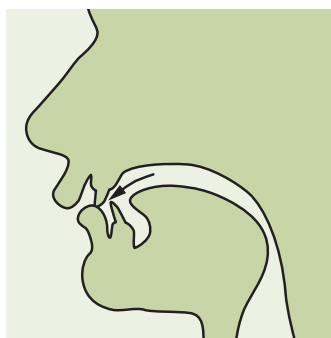
/ʒ/ is **voiced**, e.g., measure



For both these sounds, the tongue is held close to the roof of the mouth. There is a narrow gap through which you force air. Compare these sounds with /s/ and /z/ on page 23. You will see the tongue is higher and further back in the mouth.

/f/ is **unvoiced**, e.g., fast

/v/ is **voiced**, e.g., vast



For both these sounds, the inside part of the bottom lip is held against the top teeth. Pressure is released as you bring the bottom lip away from the top teeth.

## 1.3

**CD1 – 31** Look at the following pairs of words and circle the word you hear.

Each pair is pronounced in the same way, except that one consonant is unvoiced and the other is voiced.

**Example:**

pill

bill

	Unvoiced	Voiced
a)	paste	based
b)	simple	symbol
c)	tense	dense
d)	try	dry
e)	white	wide
f)	card	guard
g)	class	glass
h)	ankle	angle
i)	sown	zone
j)	price	prize
k)	use ( <i>n</i> )	use ( <i>v</i> )
l)	advice ( <i>n</i> )	advise ( <i>v</i> )
m)	rich	ridge
n)	batch	badge
o)	few	view
p)	proof ( <i>n</i> )	prove ( <i>v</i> )
q)	belief ( <i>n</i> )	believe ( <i>v</i> )

Check your answers on page 95. Then listen and repeat the words with the correct voiced or unvoiced consonant.

**1.4** 🎧 CD1 – 32 Listen and complete these sentences or phrases.

- a) 1 a \_\_\_\_\_ situation \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 a \_\_\_\_\_ material \_\_\_\_\_
- b) 1 a \_\_\_\_\_ area \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 as \_\_\_\_\_ as a sheet \_\_\_\_\_
- c) 1 at the \_\_\_\_\_ of the plant \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 the \_\_\_\_\_ of change \_\_\_\_\_
- d) 1 Public \_\_\_\_\_ have improved. \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 A cube has six \_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_
- e) 1 difficult to \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 It's had good \_\_\_\_\_ . \_\_\_\_\_
- f) 1 the \_\_\_\_\_ of the fire \_\_\_\_\_  
 2 It changed the \_\_\_\_\_ of his life. \_\_\_\_\_

**1.5** Write *U* or *V* beside each sentence or phrase to show if the missing word has an unvoiced or a voiced consonant.

Example: a tense situation U

**1.6** Listen again and repeat the sentences or phrases, focusing on accurate pronunciation.

## Task 2: /θ/, /t/ and /s/

2.1 🎧 CD1 – 33 Listen to the difference in pronunciation between these pairs of words.

/θ/	/s/
thing	sing
path	pass
worth	worse
mouth	mouse
youth	use

/θ/	/t/
thin	tin
thank	tank
thread	tread
both	boat
death	debt

Listen again and repeat the words.

### Pronunciation note

/θ/ is always written as *th* (*think, both*).

2.2 🎧 CD1 – 34 You will hear some of the words from Ex 2.1. Circle the phonemic transcription that matches the pronunciation of the word you hear.

Example: /θɪn/ /tɪn/

- a) /θænk/ /tænk/
- b) /deθ/ /det/
- c) /bəʊθ/ /bəʊt/
- d) /wɜːθ/ /wɜːs/
- e) /pɑːθ/ /pɑːs/
- f) /maʊθ/ /maʊs/
- g) /juːθ/ /juːs/

2.3 Complete these sentences with words from Ex 2.1.

- a) The painting is supposed to be \_\_\_\_\_ £5 million.
- b) The fuel is stored in a 30-litre \_\_\_\_\_.
- c) Cancer is the leading cause of \_\_\_\_\_ among women.
- d) A \_\_\_\_\_ layer of plastic is needed to provide waterproofing.
- e) I couldn't follow the \_\_\_\_\_ of his argument.
- f) The \_\_\_\_\_ is, no one likes to be criticized.
- g) Tax increases are necessary to finance the national \_\_\_\_\_.

2.4 🎧 CD1 – 35 Now listen to the correct answers and repeat the sentences.



### Task 3: /ð/

/ð/ occurs as the first sound in a number of common function words.

#### 3.1 🎧 CD1 – 36 Listen and repeat these words.

the this these that those they their\*  
there\* theirs than then though

\* These words have the same pronunciation.

#### Pronunciation note

/ð/ is always written as *th* (*this*, *other*).

This sound also occurs at the end of some common words as /ðə/, spelt *~ther*.

weather\*\* whether\*\* gather either neither together bother rather  
other another further mother father brother

\*\* These words have the same pronunciation.

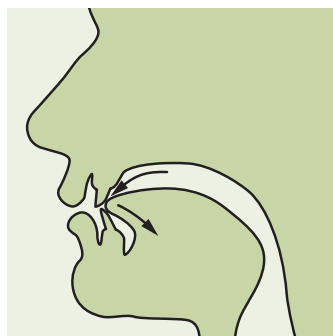
#### 3.2 🎧 CD1 – 37 Listen to these sentences and phrases and repeat them.

- What's the weather like there?
- Let's get together.
- I'd rather not.
- I wouldn't bother.
- I don't like them.
- I don't like them, either.
- ... further down the road ...
- ... the other day ...

### Task 4: /θ/ and /ð/

/θ/ is **unvoiced**, e.g., thin

/ð/ is **voiced**, e.g., the



For both these sounds, the tip of the tongue is held against the back of the teeth. Pressure is released as you bring the tip of the tongue away from the teeth.



## Task 5: Sentence stress

While word stress (or accent) is generally decided by language rules, sentence stress (or prominence) is decided by speaker choice. The speaker usually chooses to stress content words, which carry the information, and not structure or function words, such as auxiliary verbs, pronouns, prepositions and determiners, although this is not always the case.

### 5.1 🎧 CD1 – 40 Listen to this recording of the previous paragraph.

You will hear that the underlined words sound stronger than the other words. These are the words that the speaker has chosen to stress.

While word stress (or accent) is generally decided by language rules, sentence stress (or prominence) is decided by speaker choice. The speaker usually chooses to stress content words, which carry the information, and not structure or function words, such as auxiliary verbs, pronouns, prepositions and determiners, although this is not always the case.

### 5.2 🎧 CD1 – 41 Listen to these sentences, in which the sentence stress changes according to the meaning.

You **have** to hand in the essay on Monday ... there's a **strict deadline**.

You have to hand in the **essay** on Monday ... not the **report**.

You have to hand in the essay on **Monday** ... not **Wednesday**.

**Practise repeating them with the correct sentence stress.**

### 5.3 🎧 CD1 – 42 Listen to these beginnings of sentences and choose the more suitable ending, according to the sentence stress.

a) Well, we know how this happened, ...

... but do other people know?

... but do we know why it happened?

b) Having looked at the effect of deforestation on the environment, ...

... we will now discuss greenhouse gases and the roles they play.

... we will now consider its effect on the economy.

c) Most of our cotton is imported, ...

... but we produce about 500,000 tonnes a year.

... but we are self-sufficient in wool.

d) The crime rate fell by 15 per cent last year, ...

... but this year it's risen.

... but this year the figure is nearer to 8 per cent.

e) The oil pump needs replacing, ...

... not the filter.

... as it can't be repaired.

**5.4** 🎧 **CD1 – 43** Now listen to the complete sentences to check your answers.

Can you hear how words are contrasted through stress in different parts of each sentence?

**5.5** 🎧 **CD1 – 44** Read and listen to an extract from a lecture called *Introduction to British Agriculture*. Underline the words you hear stressed.

As a backdrop to all of these activities, particularly after the Second World War, a lot of effort was put into research and development of agriculture in terms of plant breeding, breeding crops that were higher yielding, that were perhaps disease-resistant, and so on and so forth. Also, crops that might have better quality, better bread-making quality, higher gluten content, to make them doughy, higher protein content, and so on and so forth. Research, too, and this is again at one of the university farms, research into livestock production. Understanding how to better manage our livestock, again to make them produce more, certainly, but also to produce and influence the quality of the livestock products, whether that happens to be milk or cheese, come back to that in a moment, or indeed meat.

**5.6** Why do you think the speaker chose to stress those words? Listen to the extract again and repeat it sentence by sentence.

**5.7** 🎧 **CD1 – 45** Read and listen to part of a lecture on globalization. Underline the words you hear stressed.

Now to get to the meat of the lecture, the basic purpose of this lecture is to give you some overview of the kind of contemporary academic and policy debate about globalization and particularly about a very specific, although rather general, debate itself, that is the debate on the effect of globalization on the role of the state. So, you see on the overhead, the lecture's going to be kind of in two parts: the first will be looking at globalization, causes and consequences, and more particularly a kind of definition of the discussion of some of the competing conceptions of globalization, that is, you know, what people say it is, so that we can then discuss in some detail, hopefully, this question of how globalization's affecting the state.

**5.8** Why do you think the speaker chose to stress those words? Listen to the extract again and repeat it sentence by sentence.

## Unit Summary

In this unit, you have learnt about voiced and unvoiced consonant sounds, practised distinguishing between commonly confused sounds and focused on pronouncing the sounds /θ/ and /ð/. You have also become more aware of sentence stress and how it is used to highlight information.

### 1 Study the words in the box and say them aloud.

lose proof surge three very seem free theme  
loose ferry prove search


- Which words have a similar pronunciation and could be confused?
- Can you think of any other English words that are easily confused with each other?

### 2 Practise saying the sentences by stressing the underlined words.

- You can take notes during the lecture or after it.  
You can take notes during the lecture, but you don't have to.  
You can take notes during the lecture, but I'm not going to!
- Exports rose by three per cent last year, but imports fell.  
Exports rose by three per cent last year, after years of decline.  
Exports rose by three per cent last year, not the eight per cent reported in the media.

### 3 In each sentence, underline two words that you would expect to be stressed to contrast information. Practise saying the sentences with these words stressed.

- Some species of shark attack people, but most are harmless.
- There used to be a Chemistry Department, but it closed in 2006.
- The aid provided to the victims was too little, too late.
- Many banks stopped lending, when the government wanted them to lend more.

 **CD1 – 46 Listen and compare your ideas with the recording.**

### 4 Think about what you have studied in this unit and answer the questions below.

- Which exercises did you find most challenging?
- Which consonant sounds do you confuse or find difficult to pronounce?
- How is it helpful to study the phonemic symbols for different sounds?
- Why is it helpful to be more aware of stressed words in a sentence?

For web resources, see:

[www.englishforacademicstudy.com/student/pronunciation/links](http://www.englishforacademicstudy.com/student/pronunciation/links)

These weblinks will provide you with further practice in areas of pronunciation such as the sounds, stress and intonation patterns of English.