

English Pronunciation in Use



Mark Hancock



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Bye, buy

Introducing letters and sounds

A

In writing, words are made of letters. In speech, words are made of sounds. Letters are not always the same as sounds. For example, the words *key* and *car* begin with the same sound, but the letters are different. We can see this clearly if we read the two words in phonemic symbols: /ki:/, /ka:/. In the examples below, word pairs have the same pronunciation but different spelling:

buy	bye	sun	son
weak	week	weigh	way
too	two	write	right



Note: There are some exercises to help you learn the phonemic symbols in Section D1.

B

There are two kinds of sounds: consonant sounds (C) and vowel sounds (V). For example, in *duck*, there are three sounds, consonant–vowel–consonant (CVC). The number of sounds in a word is not usually the same as the number of letters. We can see this if we write the word using phonemic symbols (see Section D1). For example, *duck* is /dʌk/.

C

Writers often play with the sounds in words. For example, if they are finding a name for a cartoon character, they might:

- repeat the first sound, for example **D**onald **D**uck.
- repeat the final sound or sounds (this is called rhyme), for example **R**onald **McD**onald.



Listen to these examples of names and expressions with sound-play. Notice that the writer is playing with the *sound*, not the spelling. For example, in **D**ennis **th**e **M**enace, the last three sounds of the words are the same, but the spelling is completely different.

Mickey Mouse

Rudolf the red-nosed reindeer

Dennis **th**e **M**enace

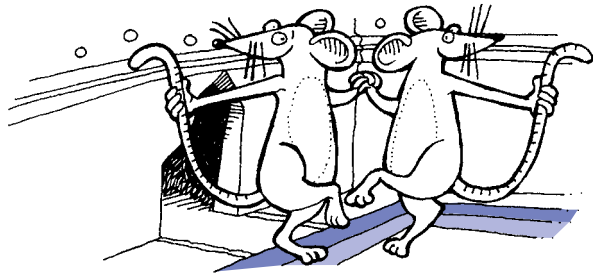
Bugs **B**unny

news and views

rock and roll

wine and dine

While the cat's away, the mice will play.



D

There are probably some sounds in English which do not exist in your language, and others which are similar but not exactly the same. This can make it difficult to hear and make the distinction between two similar words in English.



Listen to these pairs. Are any of them difficult for you?

boat – vote hit – heat so – show sung – sun wine – vine wet – wait



Note: To find out which sounds are usually easy or difficult for speakers of your language, see Section D3 *Guide for speakers of specific languages*.

Exercises

- 1.1** In this story, there are 12 incorrect words. The correct word is pronounced the same as the incorrect one, but the spelling is different. Correct them using words from the box.

son some meat way threw pears sent ~~week~~ buy piece road two

week
Last ~~week~~, I sent my son Jamie to the shops to buy some food. He got a piece of meat and two pairs. On the way home, the bag broke. The food fell onto the road and got dirty. In the end, Jamie threw the food in the bin.



- 1.2** How many sounds are there in each word? Write the order of consonant sounds (C) and vowel sounds (V).

EXAMPLE

nightCVC..... (three sounds: first a consonant, then a vowel and finally another consonant)

1 dog

4 gorilla

2 rabbit

5 snake

3 frog

6 bee

- 1.3** Listen to these possible names of cartoon animals. Do they have the same first sounds? (Write A.) Do they rhyme? (Write B.)



EXAMPLE Sam the lambB.....

1 Phil the fox

5 Polly the parrot

2 Mary the canary

6 Deborah the zebra

3 Ida the spider

7 Myrtle the turtle

4 Claire the bear

8 Kitty the cat

- 1.4** Listen to these sounds. Do you have a similar sound in your language? If you do, write a tick (✓).



1 /f/ (shoe)

5 /dʒ/ (June)

2 /ɜ:/ (girl)

6 /əʊ/ (soap)

3 /æ/ (hat)

7 /θ/ (thing)

4 /z/ (zoo)

8 /l/ (life)

Now go to Unit 21