

1

# From zero to hero

## Playing with the sounds of English

A

It is common for speakers to play with the sounds of the language. Read these sentences from newspapers and magazines. Notice that the blue phrases contain words which sound similar. They contain rhymes: the final vowel or vowel + consonant sounds are the same or similar-sounding, e.g. *sign* and *time*.



B

**A1** Listen to this poem. Notice the pronunciation of the blue words.

It's very strange, but did you know  
**Shoe** will never rhyme with **toe**?  
And **foot** will never sound like **boot**;  
**Boot**'s like **suit** and **flute** and **fruit**.  
**Foot**'s like **put** and **feet**'s like **seat**;  
**Great**'s like **eight** but not like **eat**.

**Work** is not pronounced like **fork**.  
**Fork**'s like **walk** and also **talk**.  
Why is **beard** not like **heard**?  
Why does **bird** rhyme with **word**?  
This is what I've sometimes found:  
Spelling's often not like sound.

Spelling is not always a good guide to pronunciation. Listen to these groups of words from the poem. Notice that A does *not* rhyme with B even though the spelling of the end of the word is the same. B rhymes with C even though the spelling of the end of the word is different. The phonemic symbols make this clear.

A	B	C
shoe / <b>ʃuː</b> /	toe / <b>təʊ</b> /	know / <b>nəʊ</b> /
foot / <b>fʊt</b> /	boot / <b>buːt</b> /	suit / <b>suːt</b> /
great / <b>ɡreɪt</b> /	seat / <b>siːt</b> /	feet / <b>fiːt</b> /
work / <b>wɜːk</b> /	fork / <b>fɔːk</b> /	walk / <b>wɔːk</b> /
beard / <b>bɪəd</b> /	heard / <b>hɜːd</b> /	bird / <b>bɜːd</b> /



**Note:** The rhyming words above may not rhyme in all accents. For more on accent variation, see Units 56–60.

Exercises

1.1 Underline the phrases containing rhymes in these sentences from newspapers and magazines.

EXAMPLE We bring you the latest news and views from the sporting world.

- 1 Fancy flying to the Mediterranean for a weekend of fun in the sun?

2 An extremely low tide has left many boats high and dry on the beach.

3 'You don't get to the top by doing nothing,' says manager Bob Clarke, 'Hard work is the name of the game.'
- 4 'I'm a man with a plan,' Mitchell tells Democratic Party conference.

5 Back in the 1970s, school classrooms were all chalk and talk. Nowadays, kids expect their lessons to be entertaining.

6 Motorists have been advised to steer clear of Junction 15 during the roadworks.

1.2 A2 Read the poem below and write the words from the box in the gaps. Listen, check and repeat.

~~do~~ doll go goal hour magazine rude sounds slower wood

It's very strange, but did you know  
.....~~Do~~..... will never sound like <sup>1</sup>..... ?  
Ocean doesn't rhyme with *clean*;  
*Clean's* like *green* and <sup>2</sup>.....  
<sup>3</sup>..... will never rhyme with *roll*;  
*Roll's* like *hole* and also <sup>4</sup>.....  
<sup>5</sup>..... doesn't rhyme with *flower*  
And *four* will never sound like <sup>6</sup>.....  
*Good's* like <sup>7</sup>..... but not like *food*,  
*Would's* like *could* but not like <sup>8</sup>.....  
You know that *wounds* are not like *pounds*  
'Cause letters aren't the same as <sup>9</sup>.....

1.3 A3 Which word does not rhyme with the others? Underline it. The phonemic symbols will help you. Listen and check your answers.

EXAMPLE	hair	<u>here</u>	there	where	/heə	hɪə	ðeə	weə/
1	car	star	far	war	/ca:	sta:	fa:	wɔ:/
2	slow	cow	go	know	/sləʊ	caʊ	gəʊ	nəʊ/
3	nose	grows	does	goes	/nəʊz	grəʊz	dʌz	gəʊz/
4	clear	near	bear	hear	/klɪə	nɪə	beə	hɪə/
5	really	early	nearly	clearly	/rɪəli	ɜ:li	nɪəli	clɪəli/
6	close	choose	lose	shoes	/cləʊz	tʃu:z	lu:z	ʃu:z/
7	above	glove	love	move	/ə'bʌv	glʌv	lʌv	mu:v/

1.4 Find groups of rhyming words or letter names in these pictures. There are three words or letter names in each group.

EXAMPLE boot – suit – fruit

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....



2

Plane, plan  
The vowel sounds /eɪ/ and /æ/

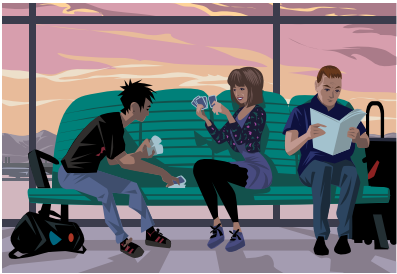
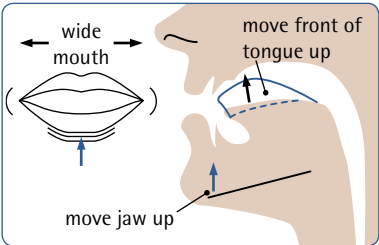
**A** When you say the letters of the alphabet, A has the long vowel sound /eɪ/. You hear this sound in the word *plane*. But the letter A is also pronounced as the short vowel sound /æ/, as in the word *plan*.

**A4** Listen to the sound /eɪ/ on its own. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make this long vowel sound.

Listen to the target sound /eɪ/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

target /eɪ/

meat	<b>mate</b>	met
come	<b>came</b>	calm
white	<b>wait</b>	wet
buy	<b>bay</b>	boy



The plane was delayed so we waited and played.

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

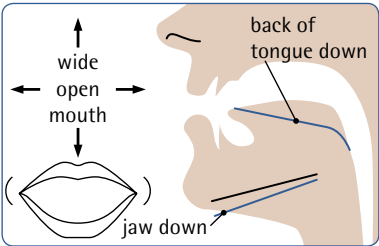
play    played    plate  
grey    grade    great  
aim    age    eight  
longer    shorter

**B** **A5** Listen to the sound /æ/. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make this short vowel sound.

Listen to the target sound /æ/ in the words and compare it with the words on each side.

target /æ/

mud	<b>mad</b>	made
sing	<b>sang</b>	sung
pen	<b>pan</b>	pain
hot	<b>hat</b>	heart



Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

bank    bag    back  
hand    cash    catch  
ham    has    hat  
longer    shorter

Accent variation **SE** / **NE** : /ɑː/ or /æ/ ⇒ Unit 57.  
Accent variation **SE** / **NZ** : /æ/ or /e/ ⇒ Unit 57.



A man in a black hat with a bag of cash in his hand

C

Spelling

	frequently
/eɪ/	A-E ( <i>mate</i> ), AY ( <i>say</i> ), EY ( <i>grey</i> ), EI ( <i>eight</i> ), AI ( <i>wait</i> ), EA ( <i>great</i> )
/æ/	A ( <i>hat</i> )

Exercises

2.1 Write the words for these things in the correct part of the table.

words with /eɪ/	words with /æ/
cake	apple



2.2 **A6** Look at the blue words or syllables in the dialogue. Do they contain 1 /eɪ/ or 2 /æ/ ? Write 1 or 2 in the gap after each word. Then listen and check your answers.

Kate: What are your **plans** ..... 2 for the holiday, ..... 1 **Jack**? .....

Jack: I'm off to **Spain** ..... with **Jane** .....

Kate: Sounds **great**! ..... How are you getting there?

Jack: **Train** ..... to **Manchester** ..... and the **plane** ..... to Malaga.  
And you? What are you doing?

Kate: No **plans** ..... I'm a bit short of **cash** ..... **actually** ....., so I'm **staying** ..... here.

Jack: Oh. In **that** ..... **case** ....., **Kate** ....., can you do me a **favour**? .....

Kate: What?

Jack: Can you go to my **flat** ..... and feed the **cat** ..... ?  
It's just for a few **days** .....

Kate: When do you get **back** ..... ?

Jack: I'm **back** ..... on **Saturday** .....

Kate: Well, **okay** ..... then.



**Follow-up:** Play the recording again. Pause and repeat after each line.

2.3 **A6 (cont.)** Listen and underline the word you hear. If you find any of these difficult, go to Section E4 *Sound pairs* for further practice.

- |                  |  |                  |
|------------------|--|------------------|
| 1 Man or men?    | Did you see the <b>man / men</b> ?           | (⇒ Sound pair 1) |
| 2 Cap or cup?    | Have you seen my <b>cap / cup</b> ?          | (⇒ Sound pair 2) |
| 3 Hat or heart?  | She put her hand on her <b>hat / heart</b> . | (⇒ Sound pair 3) |
| 4 Pain or pen?   | I've got a <b>pain / pen</b> in my hand.     | (⇒ Sound pair 4) |
| 5 Stay or stare? | There's no reason to <b>stay / stare</b> .   | (⇒ Sound pair 5) |

**Follow-up:** Record yourself saying the sentences in 2.3, choosing one of the two words each time. Make a note of which words you say. Then listen to your recording in about two weeks. Is it clear which words you said?

3

Back, pack

The consonant sounds /b/ and /p/

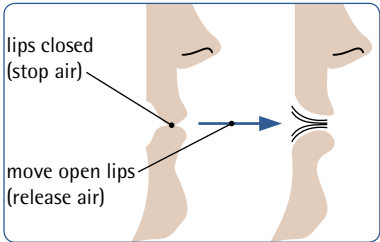
A

**A7** When you say the alphabet, the letters B and P have the sounds /bi:/ and /pi:/. In words, they have the consonant sounds /b/ and /p/.

Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make these sounds.  
Listen to the sounds /b/ and /p/.

The mouth is in the same position for both sounds, but:

- in /b/ there is voice from the throat, whereas in /p/ there is no voice from the throat
- when /p/ is at the start of a word, there is a small explosion of air when the lips open. With /b/ this does not happen.



B

**A8** Now listen to the sound /b/ on its own.

Listen to the target sound /b/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

target /b/

pack	<b>back</b>	pack
cap	<b>cab</b>	cap
very	<b>berry</b>	very
covered	<b>cupboard</b>	covered

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

- |        |       |       |
|--------|-------|-------|
| bought | bike  | broke |
| rubber | about | able  |
| job    | web   | tube  |



The boy bought a blue bike but his new blue bike broke.

C

**A9** Listen to the sound /p/ on its own.

Listen to the target sound /p/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

target /p/

bay	<b>pay</b>	bay
lab	<b>lap</b>	lab
full	<b>pull</b>	full
coffee	<b>copy</b>	coffee

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

- |      |        |        |
|------|--------|--------|
| post | park   | price  |
| open | happen | spring |
| shop | help   | jump   |



Penny went to post a parcel and paid a pound to park.

D

Spelling

	frequently	notes
/b/	B ( <i>job</i> ), BB ( <i>rubber</i> )	B is sometimes silent ( <i>comb</i> ).
/p/	P ( <i>open</i> ), PP ( <i>happen</i> )	PH is pronounced /f/ ( <i>phone</i> ). P is sometimes silent ( <i>psychology</i> ).



Exercises

3.1 **A10** Listen and read this dialogue. What are the three misunderstandings? Complete the table.

**Mel:** Oh, hello, Stef – back from the shops already? Is it still raining?  
**Stef:** Yeah, it's pouring!  
**Mel:** Boring? If you're bored, get yourself a hobby!  
**Stef:** No, I said pouring, with a P.  
**Mel:** Oh, I see, pouring, right. Was there anything in the post box today?  
**Stef:** Nothing interesting, just some bills.  
**Mel:** Oh? I wonder who put pills in the post box!  
Did you remember to buy a gift for Tom's birthday?  
**Stef:** Yes. Now I just need to wrap it.  
**Mel:** Rabbit? What do you need a rabbit for?



Stef says:	Mel hears:
1 pouring.....	boring.....
2 .....	.....
3 ..... it	.....

**Follow-up:** Play the recording again. Pause and repeat after each line.

3.2 **A11** Read the joke and write the letter *b* or *p* in each gap. Listen and check your answers. Then practise saying the joke.

A baboon goes into a pet shop to buy peanuts and ...b...ananas.  
'Sorry,' says the sho..p..keeper, 'This is a pet shop – we only sell food for .....ets.'  
'OK,' says the baboon, 'I'd like to .....uy food for my pet rabbit.'  
'What does your pet rabbit eat?' asks the shopkeeper.  
'.....eanuts and bananas,' re.....lies the .....aboon.



3.3 **A12** Listen. In one word in each group, the B or P is not pronounced. Underline the word.

EXAMPLE	double	<u>doubt</u>	Dublin
1	lamb	label	lab
2	crab	robbed	climb
3	cup	cupboard	copy
4	photo	potato	paper
5	recipe	repeat	receipt
6	possibly	psychology	special
7	Cambridge	combine	combing

3.4 **A13** Listen and tick (✓) the sentence you hear, A or B. If you find any of these difficult, go to Section E4 *Sound pairs* for further practice.

A	B	
1 There's a bear in that tree.	There's a pear in that tree.	(⇒ Sound pair 28)
2 He had the beach to himself.	He had the peach to himself.	(⇒ Sound pair 28)
3 They burned it.	They've earned it.	(⇒ Sound pair 29)
4 Say 'boil'.	Save oil.	(⇒ Sound pair 29)
5 This is a nicer pear.	This is a nice affair.	(⇒ Sound pair 30)
6 Would you like a copy?	Would you like a coffee?	(⇒ Sound pair 30)

**Follow-up:** Record yourself saying the sentences in 3.4, choosing sentence A or B. Make a note of which sentence you say. Then listen to your recording in about two weeks. Is it clear which sentences you said?

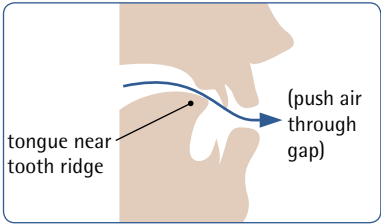
4

Rice, rise

The consonant sounds /s/ and /z/

**A** **A14** When you say the alphabet, the letters C and S are pronounced /si:/ and /es/. Notice they both have the consonant sound /s/. But S is also often pronounced as the consonant sound /z/.

Listen to the sounds /s/ and /z/. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make these consonant sounds. Notice that in the sound /s/, there is no voice from the throat. It sounds like the noise of a snake. In the sound /z/, there is voice from the throat. It sounds like the noise of a bee.



**B** **A15** Now listen to the sound /s/ on its own.

Listen to the target sound /s/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

Then listen and repeat the examples of the target sound.

target /s/

zoo	Sue	zoo
rise	rice	rise
shave	save	shave



**Examples**

sad	city	science	scream
glasses	concert	last	
bus	place	class	six

Lucy sang six or seven sad songs for her last concert.

**C** **A16** Listen to the sound /z/ on its own.

Listen to the target sound /z/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

Then listen and repeat the examples of the target sound.

target /z/

Sue	zoo	Sue
place	plays	place
breathe	breeze	breathe



**Examples**

zoo	zero		
dozen	busy	scissors	exact
size	wise	bees	roses

A dozen pretty roses, a thousand busy bees

**Note:** The vowel sound is shorter before /s/ than /z/, e.g. in *place* and *plays*. If you have difficulty making the difference, exaggerate the length of the vowel in *plays*. (For the pronunciation of -s endings such as plurals, see Unit 23.)

D

Spelling

	frequently	sometimes	notes
/s/	S ( <i>sad</i> ), SS ( <i>class</i> ), C ( <i>place</i> )	SC ( <i>science</i> )	/ks/ can be written X ( <i>six</i> ). S is not always pronounced /s/ ( <i>sugar</i> , <i>rise</i> , <i>plays</i> ).
/z/	Z ( <i>zero</i> ), S ( <i>nose</i> )	ZZ ( <i>buzz</i> ), SS ( <i>scissors</i> )	/gz/ can be written X ( <i>exact</i> ). -SE at the end of a word is usually pronounced /z/ ( <i>rise</i> ).

**E** Pronunciation may be connected to grammar: use /ju:s/ = noun use /ju:z/ = verb  
close /kləʊs/ = adjective close /kləʊz/ = verb house /haʊs/ = noun house /haʊz/ = verb

Exercises

4.1 **A17** Look at the blue words in the story. Do they contain /s/ or /z/? Write s or z in the gap after each word. Listen and check your answers. Then practise saying the joke.

A woman **was** ...**z**...taking a **zebra** ...**z**...along the **street** ..... A **police** .....  
officer **stopped** ..... her and said: 'The street is no **place** ..... for zebras,  
Madam. You should take it to the **zoo** ..... !'  
  
'You're right, **officer** .....,' said the woman, 'I'll take it **straight** ..... there!'  
  
Later, the officer **saw** ..... the woman with the zebra again. 'I said you  
should take that zebra to the zoo!' he **said** .....  
  
'**Yes** ....., we went, and it was great,' said the woman, 'Now he wants to  
go to the **museum** .....'



4.2 **A18** Find a route from Start to Finish. You may *not* pass a square if the word contains the sound /z/. You can move horizontally (↔) or vertically (↑↓) only. Listen and check the words in the correct route.

START

spots	squares	prize	since	six	sports
streets	wise	sells	sits	exact	escapes
rice	rise	sense	science	lose	lost
loose	desert	smokes	songs	crisps	box
place	face	snacks	seas	voice	boxes
plays	phase	nose	smiles	focus	concert

FINISH

4.3 **A19** Listen to the sentences. Look at the words in blue. Underline the words which contain the sound /s/ and circle the words which contain the sound /z/. Then listen again and repeat.

- EXAMPLE You can have my tent. It's no use to me. I never use it.
- 1 I'm not going to **advise** you. You never take my **advice**.
  - 2 Your tooth is **loose**. You'll **lose** it if you're not careful.
  - 3 The shop's very **close** to home, and it doesn't **close** till late.
  - 4 I can't **excuse** people who drop litter. There's no **excuse** for it.

4.4 **A19 (cont.)** Listen and underline the word you hear. If you find any of these difficult, go to Section E *Sound pairs* for further practice.

- 1 Price or prize? I got a good **price** / **prize** for that painting. (⇒ Sound pair 31)
- 2 He sat or he's at? I don't know where **he sat** / **he's at**. (⇒ Sound pair 31)
- 3 Suit or shoot? They didn't **suit** / **shoot** him. (⇒ Sound pair 32)
- 4 Saved or shaved? I've **saved** / **shaved** a lot in the past few days. (⇒ Sound pair 32)
- 5 Sink or think? We didn't **sink** / **think**. (⇒ Sound pairs 33)
- 6 Closed or clothed? They were **closed** / **clothed** for the cold weather. (⇒ Sound pairs 33)

**Follow-up:** Record yourself saying the sentences in 4.4, choosing one of the two options each time. Make a note of which words you say. Then listen to your recording in about two weeks. Is it clear which words you said?



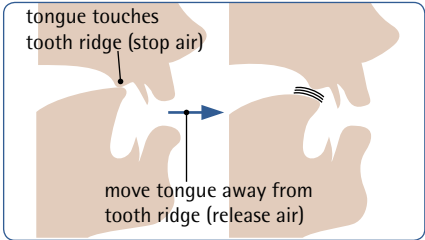
5

Down town  
The consonant sounds /d/ and /t/

A

**A20** Listen to the sounds /d/ and /t/. Look at the mouth diagram to see how to make these consonant sounds. The mouth is in the same position for both sounds, but:

- in /d/ there is voice from the throat, whereas in /t/ there is no voice from the throat
- when /t/ is at the start of a word, there is a small explosion of air when the tongue moves. With /d/, this does not happen.



B

**A21** Now listen to the sound /d/ on its own.

Listen to the target sound /d/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

target /d/

town	<b>down</b>	town
wrote	<b>road</b>	wrote
they	<b>day</b>	they
page	<b>paid</b>	page



David’s daughter didn’t dance, but David’s dad did.

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

dance	daughter	dream
sudden	advice	address
dad	food	mind

!

**Note:** The vowel sound is shorter before /t/ than /d/, for example in *wrote* and *road*. If you have difficulty making the difference, exaggerate the length of the vowel in *road*.

C

**A22** Listen to the sound /t/ on its own. Listen to the target sound /t/ in the words below and compare it with the words on each side.

target /t/

die	<b>tie</b>	die
hard	<b>heart</b>	hard
three	<b>tree</b>	three
each	<b>eat</b>	each



Grapefruit tastes so bitter; toast and butter’s better.

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

taste	Thomas	train	twelve
butter	until	hated	
fruit	worked	toast	

Accent variation [SE] / [Am] / [C] : /t/ or /d/; /t/ or /?/ ⇒ Unit 58.

!

**Note:** In fast speech, many speakers drop the /d/ or /t/ when they come between two other consonant sounds. So *facts* /fæktz/ sounds like *fax* /fæks/.

D

Spelling

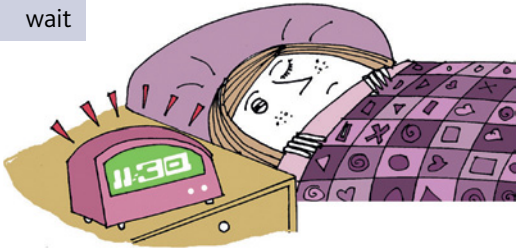
	frequently	sometimes	rarely	notes
/d/	D ( <i>dog</i> ), DD ( <i>address</i> )			
/t/	T ( <i>tie</i> ), TT ( <i>butter</i> )	(E)D past tense ending	TH ( <i>Thomas</i> )	T can be silent ( <i>listen</i> ).

Exercises

5.1 **A23** Complete the rhymes with words from the box. Then listen and check. The second time you listen, pause after each line and repeat it.

rude said late head fight polite food wait

There was a young lady called Kate,  
Who always got out of bed .....late.....  
The first thing she .....  
When she lifted her .....  
Was: 'I thought it was better to .....'



There was a young waiter called Dwight,  
Who didn't like being .....  
If you asked him for ..... ,  
He was terribly .....  
And invited you out for a .....

5.2 **A24** Listen and underline the word you hear in each pair.

- |           |              |
|-----------|--------------|
| 1 build   | <u>built</u> |
| 2 wide    | white        |
| 3 weighed | weight       |
| 4 heard   | hurt         |
| 5 down    | town         |
| 6 dry     | try          |
| 7 send    | sent         |

5.3 **A25** Put the words from 5.2 into the sentences below. Then listen and repeat the sentences.

EXAMPLE Last year, Tom weighed more than Sam, but now they both have the same weight.

- 1 It wasn't ..... in a day; it takes ages to ..... a cathedral like that.
- 2 When you're out in the mountains, you have to ..... to stay .....
- 3 He ..... it to the wrong address, so he had to ..... another copy.
- 4 It ..... my ears when I ..... that noise.
- 5 The ..... sofa is too ..... to go through that door.
- 6 We went ..... the hill and into the .....

5.4 **A26** Listen and underline the word you hear. If you find any of these difficult, go to Section E4 *Sound pairs* for further practice.

- |                          |  |                    |
|--------------------------|--|--------------------|
| 1 Wider or whiter?       | Choose Dentocream for a <u>wider / whiter</u> smile! | (⇒ Sound pair 34)  |
| 2 Dry or try?            | You have to <u>dry / try</u> it out.                 | (⇒ Sound pair 34)  |
| 3 Breeding or breathing? | These animals aren't <u>breeding / breathing</u> !   | (⇒ Sound pairs 35) |
| 4 Thought or taught?     | She <u>thought / taught</u> for a long time.         | (⇒ Sound pairs 35) |
| 5 Aid or age?            | For us, <u>aid / age</u> is not important.           | (⇒ Sound pairs 36) |
| 6 What or watch?         | <u>What / Watch</u> a game!                          | (⇒ Sound pairs 36) |

**Follow-up:** Record yourself saying the sentences in 5.4, choosing one of the two words each time. Make a note of which words you say. Then listen to your recording in about two weeks. Is it clear which words you said?