From zero to hero
Playing with the sounds of English

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.

Appearance is very important in the fashion business. According to company director Martha Friedl, ‘You have to dress for success.’

Fernando goes from zero to hero after scoring a last-minute goal in the European championship.

‘On this island, nothing happens in a hurry,’ says Jamie, ‘You just have to relax and go with the flow.’

In the age of the text message, it is perhaps a sign of the times that many teenagers can no longer write with a pen.

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.

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  
shoe /ʃuː/  
foot /fʊt/  
great /greɪt/  
work /wɜːk/  
beard /bɪəd/  

B  
toe /təʊ/  
boot /buːt/  
seat /siːt/  
fork /fɔːk/  
heard /hɜːd/  

C  
know /nəʊ/  
suit /sɑːt/  
feet /fiːt/  
walk /wɔːk/  
bird /bɜːd/  

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>dol</th>
<th>doll</th>
<th>go</th>
<th>goal</th>
<th>hour</th>
<th>magazine</th>
<th>rude</th>
<th>slower</th>
<th>wood</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

It’s very strange, but did you know

…………… doesn’t rhyme with flower

And four will never sound like ………………

Good’s like ……………… but not like food,

Would’s like could but not like ………………

You know that wounds are not like pounds

‘Cause letters aren’t the same as ………………

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

**EXAMPLE** hair here there where /heə hɪə ðeə weə/

| car | star | far | war | /caː staː faː wɔː/
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>slow</td>
<td>cow</td>
<td>go</td>
<td>know</td>
<td>/sləʊ caʊ ɡəʊ ɡəʊ/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nose</td>
<td>grows</td>
<td>does</td>
<td>goes</td>
<td>/nəʊz ɡrəʊz ʌz ɡəʊz/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clear</td>
<td>near</td>
<td>bear</td>
<td>hear</td>
<td>/kliə ɲeə ˈbɛə hɪə/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>early</td>
<td>really</td>
<td>nearly</td>
<td>clearly</td>
<td>/ˈrɛli ˈrɛlɪ ɲeəlɪ kləli/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>close</td>
<td>choose</td>
<td>lose</td>
<td>shoes</td>
<td>/kləʊz tʃuːz luːzʃuːz/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>above</td>
<td>glove</td>
<td>love</td>
<td>move</td>
<td>/əˈbʌv ɡlʌv lʌv muːv/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

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

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Mark Hancock
Excerpt
More Information
The vowel sounds /eɪ/ and /æ/

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.

meat, mate
come, came
white, wait
buy, bay

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

play played plate
grey grade great
aim age eight

longer — shorter

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.

mud, mad
sing, sang
pen, pan
hot, hat

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

bank bag back
hand cash catch
ham has hat

longer — shorter

Accent variation
SE /eɪ/ or /æ/ ⇒ Unit 57.
NE /æ/ or /æ/ ⇒ Unit 57.

Spelling

Frequently
/eɪ/ A-E (mate), AY (say), EY (grey), EI (eight), AI (wait), EA (great)

/æ/ A (hat)
Exercises

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>words with /eɪ/</th>
<th>words with /æ/</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>cake</td>
<td>apple</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 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 for the holiday, 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 Listen and underline the word you hear. If you find any of these difficult, go to Section 4 Sound pairs for further practice.

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

The consonant sounds /b/ and /p/

A

When you say the alphabet, the letters B and P have the sounds /biː/ and /piː/.

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

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.

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

bought bike broke
rubber about able
job web tube

C

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.

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

post park price
open happen spring
shop help jump

D

Spelling

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stef says:</th>
<th>Mel hears:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 pouring</td>
<td>boring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>it</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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 bananas.

'Sorry,' says the shopkeeper, 'This is a pet shop – we only sell food for pets.'

'OK,' says the baboon, 'I’d like to buy food for my pet rabbit.' What does your pet rabbit eat?' asks the shopkeeper.

'Peanuts and bananas,' replies the baboon.

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

EXAMPLE:

double  doubt  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

1 There’s a bear in that tree.
2 He had the beach to himself.
3 They burned it.
4 Say ‘boil’.
5 This is a nice pear.
6 Would you like a copy?

B

1 There’s a pear in that tree.
2 He had the peach to himself.
3 They’ve earned it.
4 Save oil.
5 This is a nice affair.
6 Would you like a coffee?

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?
### Rice, rise

#### The consonant sounds /s/ and /z/

**A14** When you say the alphabet, the letters C and S are pronounced /siː/ and /es/. Notice they both have the same 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.

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Zoo</th>
<th>Rise</th>
<th>Sue</th>
<th>Rice</th>
<th>Shave</th>
<th>Save</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sad</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>rising</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>rice</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glasses</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>city</td>
<td>science</td>
<td>scream</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>place</td>
<td>last</td>
<td>class</td>
<td>six</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Examples</th>
<th>Zoo</th>
<th>Zero</th>
<th>Sue</th>
<th>Place</th>
<th>Breathe</th>
<th>Plays</th>
<th>Breeze</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A dozen pretty roses, a thousand busy bees</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**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.)

### Spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/s/</td>
<td>S (sad), SS (class), C (place)</td>
<td>/ks/ can be written X (six). S is not always pronounced /s/ (sugar, rise, plays).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/z/</td>
<td>Z (zero), S (nose)</td>
<td>/gз/ can be written X (exact). -SE at the end of a word is usually pronounced /z/ (rise).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Pronunciation may be connected to grammar:**

- use /juːs/ = noun
- use /juːz/ = verb
- close /klouz/ = adjective
- close /klouz/ = verb
- house /haus/ = noun
- house /haus/ = 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 taking a zebra 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

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

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.
2 He sat or he’s at? I don’t know where he sat / he’s at.
3 Suit or shoot? They didn’t suit / shoot him.
4 Saved or shaved? I’ve saved / shaved a lot in the past few days.
5 Sink or think? We didn’t sink / think.
6 Closed or clothed? They were closed / clothed for the cold weather.

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/

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.

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.

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

dance daughter dream
sudden advice address
dad food mind

down town
down town
road wrote
road wrote
day they
day they
page paid
page paid

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.

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.

Listen and repeat these examples of the target sound.

taste Thomas train twelve
butter until hated
fruit worked toast

die hard three each
die hard three each

tie heart tree eat

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

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

Spelling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>frequently</th>
<th>sometimes</th>
<th>rarely</th>
<th>notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>/d/</td>
<td>D (dog), DD (address)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>/t/</td>
<td>T (tie), TT (butter)</td>
<td>(E)D past tense ending</td>
<td>TH (Thomas)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

Note: In fast speech, many speakers drop the /d/ or /t/ when they come between two other consonant sounds. So facts /fækts/ sounds like fax /fæks/.
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 built
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 wider / whiter smile! (⇒ Sound pair 34)
2 Dry or try? You have to dry / try it out. (⇒ Sound pair 34)
3 Breeding or breathing? These animals aren’t breeding / breathing! (⇒ Sound pairs 35)
4 Thought or taught? She thought / taught for a long time. (⇒ Sound pairs 35)
5 Aid or age? For us, aid / age is not important. (⇒ Sound pairs 36)
6 What or watch? What / Watch 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?