

1

Accents (1): Varieties of English

A

Although we commonly talk about ‘English pronunciation’ (including in the title of this book), obviously not all speakers of English pronounce it in the same way. Even between countries where English is the first language of the majority of the population there are considerable differences, and we can distinguish between the pronunciation of ‘British English’, ‘American English’, ‘Australian English’, ‘South African English’, and so on.

B

A2

Important for listening

Across these varieties of English, there may be differences in how vowels and consonants are pronounced, how words are stressed, and in intonation. For example, listen and notice differences between standard British English (Br) and American English (US) pronunciation in these sentences (you will hear British English first):

That's better.	In US /t/ is ‘flapped’ so that it sounds like /d/ (and often transcribed in dictionaries as /t̬/) when it comes between two vowels.
I'm picking up the car next Tuesday.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> car = /kɑː/ in Br and /kɑːr/ in US. In Br, /r/ is pronounced only when it is followed by a vowel, while in US it is also pronounced before consonants and at the end of a word. Tuesday = /tjuː-/ in Br and /tuː-/ in US. The sounds /tj/, /nj/, /dj/, etc. are not used in US.
What's your address?	Some words are stressed differently in Br and US, including a'ddress (Br) and 'address (US).
I went out because I was hot and wanted some fresh air.	Some speakers of US (and also Australian and New Zealand English) use a ‘high rising’ tone for statements where most speakers of Br would use a falling tone.

C

A3

Important for listening

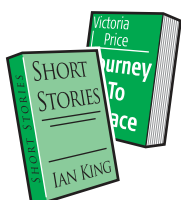
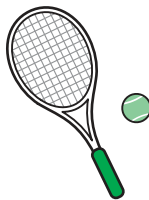
Within Britain and the US there are also many regional accents. For example, listen and notice differences in pronunciation in these sentences, said first by a speaker of ‘BBC English’ (see Unit 2) and then by a speaker from the city of Birmingham in England (you will hear BBC English first):

See you tonight.	The second vowel in ‘tonight’ is pronounced /aɪ/ in BBC English but /ɔɪ/ (as in ‘boy’) in a Birmingham accent.
Are those your brother's?	The vowel in ‘those’ is pronounced /əʊ/ in BBC English but more like /aʊ/ (as in ‘now’) in a Birmingham accent. The first vowel in ‘brother's’ is pronounced /ʌ/ (as in ‘but’) in BBC English but /ʊ/ (as in ‘would’) in a Birmingham accent.
She was smoking.	The last sound in <i>-ing</i> words is /ŋ/ in BBC English, but /ŋg/ in a Birmingham accent, i.e. the <i>-g</i> is pronounced.

Section E5 *Further reading* gives suggestions on where you can find more information about pronunciation in national and regional varieties of English.

Exercises

1.1 Listen. You will hear speakers from Britain, the USA, Canada, Australia and South Africa talking about what they enjoy doing in their spare time.



Which of these accents are you most familiar with? Is there one you find easier to understand than the others?

1.2 Here is a text read aloud first by a British English speaker and then an American English speaker. Listen as many times as you need and note differences in pronunciation that you observe, focusing on the underlined words. A few are done for you. (It is not necessary to use phonemic symbols in this exercise, but a list can be found on page 192 if you want to refer to it.)



I was reading in a magazine the other day about how common obesity is now. Some new research has found that over forty percent of the population is overweight. Most people in the survey said they'd rather drive than walk, and that it's better to spend leisure time at home than outside. That's understandable in the winter, I guess, but surely everyone can build some exercise into their daily schedule?

the first vowel is more 'open' in US

the first vowel is different – /ɑː/ (like 'car') in Br and /æ/ (like 'hat') in US

said 'nyoo' (/njʊː/) in Br and 'noo' (/nuː/) in US

the first vowel is different – /ɔː/ (like 'or') in Br and /ʊ/ (like 'put') in US; also the 'r' is pronounced in US

1.3 You will hear four more people talking about what they enjoy doing in their spare time. They are from northern England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Listen as many times as you need and write brief notes about what they say.



northern England:

Scotland:

Wales:

Northern Ireland:

Now read the transcripts in the Key. Are there particular features of their pronunciation that you had problems understanding? In what ways is their pronunciation different from BBC English – that is, British English spoken *without* a regional accent (see Unit 2)?

Follow up: Record yourself reading one of the extracts in exercise 1.1. (These are written down in the Key.) Compare your reading and the version on the recording. What are the main differences in pronunciation that you notice?

2

Accents (2): English as an international language

A

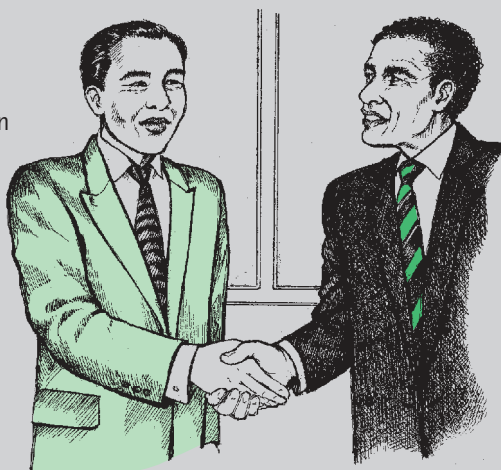
In this book...	
... you will use British English as a model for pronunciation.	In particular, you will use the variety that has come to be known as 'BBC English'. BBC English is the pronunciation used by speakers such as newsreaders and announcers on television and radio, including the World Service. Some of these speakers have regional accents from the United Kingdom, such as Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish accents, but the accent you will hear in this book is typical of those with an English accent. This accent is taken as the 'model' because it is a widely broadcast and respected variety, and for most people is easily understood.
... you will hear a wide variety of English accents.	Recorded material used mainly for listening includes speakers with different English accents. Some have English as their first language (e.g. from Australia and the United States), while others have English as a second or foreign language (e.g. from Japan and Poland). This will help prepare you to understand different pronunciations of English. Information about where speakers come from is given in the Key.

B

Important
for listening

The use of English has spread far beyond those countries where it is used as a first language. In some countries, such as India, Malawi, the Philippines and Singapore, English is an important second language for many speakers, and has often become the language used in official contexts such as courts, parliament and higher education. More recently, many other countries, such as Brazil, China, Thailand and Russia, have recognised the importance of English as an international language of communication, and encouraged its teaching in schools and colleges. In each country, the English spoken is influenced by other languages widely used there, and each variety is different in features of its grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation.

The widespread use of English as an international language means that much of the interaction in English that now goes on around the world is between speakers who don't have English as a first language. For example, when German and Spanish politicians meet to discuss policies of the European Union, their chosen language of communication might well be English. The same might apply when Saudi Arabian and Japanese people meet to do business.



C

Important
for listening

The consequence of this is that there is an enormous variety of accents of English in addition to those of 'British English', 'American English', 'Australian English' and so on, and you may be more likely to speak to people with 'Indian English', 'Singaporean English' or 'Russian English' pronunciation.

It would be impossible, however, to learn to 'switch' your pronunciation each time you were talking to a speaker with a variety of English different from your own – to use an Australian English pronunciation with an Australian, or Chinese English pronunciation with a Chinese person. Consequently, it is useful to 'model' your pronunciation on one variety – but also recognise that this is just one of many equally acceptable varieties.

Exercises

2.1 You will hear speakers with international accents of English from five countries talking about their families. Where do you think they are from? Listen and write the name of the country in the space.



Speaker 1 is from
 Speaker 2 is from
 Speaker 3 is from
 Speaker 4 is from
 Speaker 5 is from

Poland
 India
 China
 Japan
 Spain

Now check your answers in the Key. Which of these accents do you find easiest to understand and which most difficult? Can you say why? Which of these English accents is closest to your own?

2.2 Listen. You will hear the same text read three times: first by a speaker of BBC English, second by a speaker of Jamaican English, and third by a Polish speaker of English. They are talking about moving into a new house and some of the things they have had to buy.



Here are some notes on how the pronunciation in part of the reading by the speaker of Jamaican English is different from that in the reading by the speaker of BBC English.

Now do the same for this part of the text read by the Polish speaker of English.

... I had to do quite a lot of decorating. I've wallpapered the bedroom and painted the bathroom so far, but there's still quite a lot to do. But I'm in no hurry and I'm really enjoying it. It's great having my own place at last.

2.3 Are there any accents of English that are of particular interest or importance to you? Practise listening to people with these accents as much as possible. If you have access to the internet, you could regularly listen to English language broadcasts where you will hear these accents. For example, for New Zealand accents, try <http://www.radionz.co.nz/>; for Swedish accents of English, Radio Stockholm has a weekly English news broadcast (at http://www.sr.se/rs/red/ind_eng.html) where many of the speakers are Swedish. (For more information, see Unit 4.)

Follow up: Record yourself reading the text in exercise 2.2. Practise a few times before recording. Then write out the text again, and make notes on it, highlighting differences between your pronunciation and that of the speaker of BBC English. (Alternatively, you could get a friend or teacher to make notes for you.)

3

Finding out about pronunciation (1): dictionaries

A

Dictionaries

Many dictionaries represent pronunciation using the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA), or a similar system. From this you can find out about the sounds that make up a word and how it is stressed. For example, *Cambridge Dictionary* online (CDO) gives the pronunciations of 'lemon', 'lemonade' and 'lemon sole' (a type of fish) as shown here.

It is useful to spend some time learning the IPA symbols so that you can make use of pronunciations shown in dictionaries. A full list of phonemic symbols used in this book, and in many dictionaries, is given on page 192. Section E1 also includes some exercises to help you learn the symbols.

/ˈlem.ən/

The word has 2 syllables with stress on the first syllable.

/ˌlem.əˈneɪd/

The word has 3 syllables with primary (main) stress on the third syllable and secondary stress on the first.

/ˌlem.ən ˈsəʊl/

In this compound, primary stress is on the second part and secondary stress is on the first syllable of the first part.

B

Dictionary apps and online dictionaries

If you don't have time to learn phonemic symbols, most dictionary apps and online dictionaries give you the option to hear the words spoken. For example, to find out a word's pronunciation on CDO you can click on speaker icons to play a recording of the word spoken by an American and British speaker.

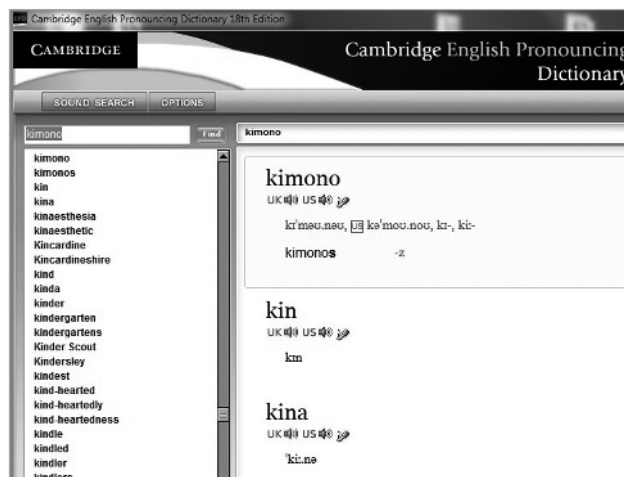
Clicking on 'UK 🇬🇧' gives the British English pronunciation, and on 'US 🇺🇸' gives the American English pronunciation.



Pronunciation dictionaries

Pronunciation dictionaries usually include more words than general dictionaries and so can be particularly useful for finding out how to pronounce place names, family names, brand names and technical terms. They also give more information about variation in pronunciation. For example, compare the information about the pronunciation of 'kimono' from CDO given in B with this entry from the *Cambridge English Pronouncing Dictionary, 18th edition (CEPD)* CD-ROM.

Both CDO and CEPD give British and American English pronunciations. CEPD shows also that in American English the first syllable is usually pronounced /kə/ but can also be pronounced /kɪ/ or /ki:/. It also shows that the plural '-s' is pronounced /z/.



Exercises

3.1 Use a dictionary with IPA to help you match the words with their pronunciations.

EXAMPLE a flier i /flaʊə/
 b flower ii /flaɪə/

1 a stock	i /stɔ:k/	7 a sand	i /sænd/	13 a bear	i /beə/
b stalk	ii /stɒk/	b send	ii /send/	b buyer	ii /baɪə/
2 a here	i /hɪə/	8 a far	i /fɑ:z/	14 a should	i /ʃʊd/
b hair	ii /heə/	b fear	ii /fɪə/	b showed	ii /ʃəʊd/
3 a stand	i /stʌnd/	9 a leak	i /leɪk/	15 a chin	i /tʃɪn/
b stunned	ii /stænd/	b lake	ii /li:k/	b chain	ii /tʃeɪn/
4 a tour	i /taʊə/	10 a voice	i /vɔɪs/	16 a full	i /fu:l/
b tower	ii /tuə/	b vice	ii /vaɪs/	b fool	ii /fu:l/
5 a turn	i /tɜ:n/	11 a geese	i /ges/	17 a order	i /əʊdə/
b ton	ii /tʌn/	b guess	ii /gɪ:s/	b odour	ii /ɔ:də/
6 a learn	i /lɜ:n/	12 a oil	i /ɔɪl/	18 a pond	i /paʊnd/
b line	ii /lɪ:n/	b owl	ii /aʊl/	b pound	ii /paʊnd/

3.2 Underline the syllable in these words and compounds which you think has main stress. Check your answers in a dictionary. (For more practice, see exercise 10.1.)

EXAMPLE repudiate

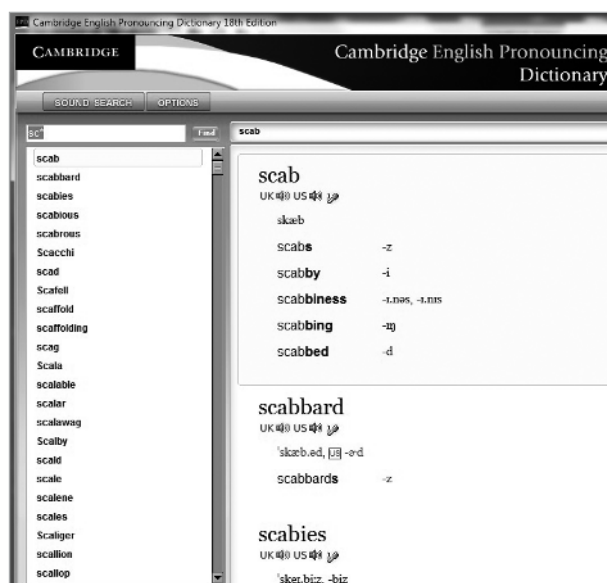
1 tortuous	5 subterranean	9 debutante
2 methylated spirits	6 decompression chamber	10 repetitive strain injury
3 flabbergasted	7 pistachio	11 rotisserie
4 symbiosis	8 glitterati	12 idiolect



Which of these are you not sure how to pronounce? Use the pronunciation given in your dictionary to try to work out how to say them. You can hear the words pronounced on the recording.

3.3 For this exercise you need to use a dictionary CD-ROM, such as the one that comes with *CEPD*. Write down a list of sounds you find difficult to pronounce, and then use the dictionary CD-ROM to find words with this sound and practise them. Here is an example of what you might do.

If you have problems pronouncing the consonant cluster /sk/, first think about how it might be spelt. The most common way is 'sc'. In the 'Search' box type 'sc*'. This will give you all the words beginning with this letter combination, as you can see here. Then listen and repeat. Then do the same with '*sc*', which will give you all the words with this letter combination *within* the word. (Note that 'sc*' and '*sc*' are not always pronounced /sk/.)



Follow up: What do you think are the most common pronunciations in British English of the following family names (Beauchamp, McFadzean), British place names (Mousehole, Towcester), and technical terms (isogloss, ozokerite)? If you are not sure, use a pronunciation dictionary, such as *CEPD*, to find out. Some of the pronunciations may surprise you! You can hear the words pronounced on the recording.

4

Finding out about pronunciation (2): online resources

There are many sites on the internet where you can listen to accents of English from around the world, find examples of particular styles of speech, or find out how words are pronounced. This unit gives just a few examples which you could explore.

A

Some countries broadcast radio online. If you listen to news reports, for example, you are likely to hear the ‘standard’ pronunciation from that country. Try, for instance:
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/> from the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation)
<http://www.abc.net.au/streaming/> from the ABC (Australian Broadcasting Corporation)
<http://www.rte.ie/> from RTÉ (Radio Telefís Éireann) in Ireland
<http://www.rsi.sg/english> from Radio Singapore

The website <http://www.penguinradio.com/> gives links to many radio stations from around the world that broadcast online.

On some of these radio station websites, transcripts of certain recordings are available. These might help you to understand broadcasts. Type ‘transcript’ into the site search box and follow links.

B

You can listen to examples of British regional accents either at the BBC’s <http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/> or the British Library’s <http://www.bl.uk/collections/sound-archive/accents.html>

C

A number of sites allow you to listen to samples of particular styles of speech.

For example:

at <http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/> you can hear some famous political speeches;

at <http://www.lsa.umich.edu/eli/micase/audio/> you can hear speech in a variety of academic contexts (lectures, seminars, meetings, student presentations, etc.) from the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE).

D

Some online dictionaries show the pronunciation of words using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) or some other system. These include the *Cambridge Advanced Learner’s Dictionary* and the *Cambridge Dictionary of American English* at <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>. The Miriam-Webster Online Dictionary also allows you to hear words pronounced in North American English, at <http://www.m-w.com/>.

If you have a specialist area of interest or study, you may be able to find websites to help you pronounce terminology. For example:

<http://www.saltspring.com/capewest/pron.htm> gives rules on how to pronounce Biological Latin, including taxonomic names of plants and animals;

<http://www.dinosauria.com/dml/names/aeto.htm> has sound files with the pronunciation of the names of dinosaurs;

<http://www.genome.gov/page.cfm?pageID=10002096> is a ‘talking glossary’ of terms from the field of Genetics. Terms are explained and you will also hear how they are pronounced.

Finally, if you have read J. K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* books and are unsure how to pronounce names and the made-up words you find, you can hear how to pronounce them (in North American English) at <http://www.scholastic.com/harrypotter/reference/>.

Exercises

These exercises depend on you having internet access. It may be that you have to download free software to listen to some of the material.

- 4.1** Visit the websites of two English-language internet radio stations from different countries. You could take two of the four given in A or look for others. (The website <http://www.penguinradio.com/> can help you find them.) Find one recent news story that you are familiar with that is reported on both stations and listen carefully to the broadcast on the first radio station. Write down a few of the key words you hear. Now listen in detail to the story on the second radio station and notice whether these key words are pronounced in the same or a different way. What differences do you notice?
- 4.2** Go to <http://www.bbc.co.uk/voices/>. Follow links to 'Voices Recordings'. Here you can listen to voices from many parts of the UK. Choose one of the recordings by clicking on a dot on the map, and then do the following:
- 1 Click on the name of one of the speakers under 'More clips from this interview'.
 - 2 Read 'About the interviewee'.
 - 3 Read the transcript. Check in a dictionary any words you don't understand.
 - 4 Listen to the recording and follow the transcript.
 - 5 Some clips have a section on 'More about the speech in this clip'. Read this, focusing in particular on information about pronunciation. Some dialect words, which you may not find in the dictionary, are explained here.
 - 6 Do the same with any other 'More clips from this interview'.
 - 7 Go back and listen to the 'Voice clip(s)'. These don't have transcripts. How much of them do you understand? Do you notice features of pronunciation you observed and read about earlier?
 - 8 Do the same with accents from other parts of the UK by clicking on other dots on the map.

- 4.3** Go to <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/> and look up the following words in the *Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary*:

belligerent	charade	continuum	felafel	precinct	sepia
vitamin	wrath				

Is the usual British and American pronunciation the same or different for each? Try to work out from the phonemic symbols how each is pronounced. (See Section E1 for advice, if necessary.) If you want to hear how these words are pronounced in North American English, go to <http://www.m-w.com/>. Notice that where more than one pronunciation is given, the most common one comes first.

- 4.4** Go to <http://www.genome.gov/page.cfm?pageID=10002096> and look up the following words:

centromere	monosomy	nucleotide
------------	----------	------------

Listen to the explanations and find out how they are pronounced. Say the words after the recording.

Follow up: Use your search engine (such as *Google*) to try to find one other website that gives information about the pronunciation of terms in a specialist area. Use the search words 'pronunciation guide [specialist area]'.

5

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.



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.



- 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.



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.