

Pronunciation Guide

American English Pronunciation of Consonant Sounds with Symbols					
Phonemic Symbol	AHD ¹ Symbol	Examples	Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol	Example
/b/	/b/	<i>boy, cabin</i>	/p/	/p/	<i>pink, hip</i>
/tʃ/	/ch/	<i>cheer, watch, cello</i>	/r/	/r/	<i>rest, far</i>
/d/	/d/	<i>dog, bed</i>	/s/	/s/	<i>sink, bus</i>
/f/	/f/	<i>fill, phone, life</i>	/ʃ/	/sh/	<i>she, special,</i>
/g/	/g/	<i>go, log</i>	/t/	/t/	<i>tiny, little</i>
/h/	/h/	<i>his, cohort</i>	/ð/	/th/	<i>the, bathe</i>
/dʒ/	/j/	<i>joy, giant, budge</i>	/θ/	/th/	<i>thin, bath</i>
/k/	/k/	<i>cat, king, lack</i>	/v/	/v/	<i>view, weave</i>
/l/	/l/	<i>long, ill</i>	/w/	/w/	<i>win, when</i>
/m/	/m/	<i>my, team</i>	/j/ ²	/y/	<i>you, mayor</i>
/n/	/n/	<i>no, knife</i>	/z/	/z/	<i>zoo, rise</i>
/ŋ/	/ng/	<i>sing, think</i>	/ʒ/	/zh/	<i>leisure, beige</i>

American English Pronunciation of Vowel Sounds with Phonemic Symbols					
Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol	Examples	Phonemic Symbol	AHD Symbol	Example
æ	ă	<i>can, hat</i>	ɔ:	ô	<i>caught</i>
eɪ	ā	<i>cane, bait</i>	ɔr	ôr	<i>north</i>
ɛər	âr	<i>air, hare</i>	ɔɪ	oi	<i>joy, noise</i>
ɑ:	ä	<i>father</i>	ʊ	oo	<i>took</i>
ɑr	är	<i>arm</i>	ʊər	oor	<i>tour</i>
ɛ	ě	<i>bet, head</i>	u:	oo	<i>soon</i>
i:	ē	<i>meet, beat</i>	aʊ	ou	<i>out</i>
ɪər	îr	<i>here</i>	ʌ	ü	<i>cut</i>
ɪ	ĭ	<i>pit</i>	ɜr	ûr	<i>word</i>
aɪ	ī	<i>my, light</i>	ə	ə	<i>about, the</i>
ɒ	ö	<i>hot</i>	ər	ər	<i>butter</i>
oʊ	ō	<i>no, know</i>	ju:	yoo	<i>view,</i>

¹ American Heritage Dictionary

² While the IPA symbol for this sound is /j/, I will use the AHD symbol of /y/

Characteristic Difficulties with English for Speakers of South Asian Languages

(16 major languages: 4 Dravidian, 12 Indo-Aryan, Indo-European, deriving from Sanskrit) comments relate to Hindi and Urdu: official languages of India and Pakistan

1. In these languages, T and d have a set of 4 sounds with tongue behind teeth and 4 sounds with tongue curled back behind alveolar ridge. They'll need to learn to just use the 2 sounds common in English.
2. Tense articulation of all words
3. T,p,-tch and k pronounced without aspiration
4. Raise pitch for emphasis rather than intonation for emphasis—difficult for English ears to follow
5. Confusion between said and sad, law and laugh, med for made, tie for toy
6. May split diphthongs into syllables. Pronouncing coat as “ko at”
7. Confusion of dem for them and pit for fit
8. Distinguishing vet and wet
9. Interchange j, z, sh and dg as in bridge
10. Long l as in full replaced by short l as in light
11. R is pronounced as a tap of tongue
12. Self for shelf
13. Use phonetic scripts – over pronounced r, h and s
14. Teach past tense –ed pronunciation rules
15. Final l and n have vowel tacked on: buttone for button or a pronounced e at the end of little
16. Consonant clusters have preface vowel added: istreet for street and istation for station
17. Consonant clusters may be divided by vowels: sallow for slow and faree for free
18. Stress-timing must be taught since most timing is syllable-timed. 60% of 2-syllable verbs are stressed on the 2nd syllable. Often if the stress is moved to the first syllable, it produces a noun: **record** vs **record**, **compress** vs **compress**, **progress**, **progress**.
19. Rising intonation as in English questions is reserved for surprise in Hindi and Urdu
20. In English, stressed syllables tend to have a slightly higher pitch than unstressed ones. In many of the South Asian languages, stress is done by lowering the pitch, making it seem like the stress is on the wrong syllable.
21. The rise-fall intonation produced by English Language Learners (ELLs) when making polite requests in English may sound peremptory to English ears. English speakers tend to use a falling

intonation to show completion of a thought (or a distinct rise when asking a question). South Asian speakers often use a flat intonation throughout, confusing the listener into thinking more is to come. It may be necessary to explain that these intonation patterns are also used to show empathy and to create rapport, and the lack of them could make the speaker seem cold and disconnected to an American.

22. Some Indian speakers may break up sentences into smaller phrases with pauses at places that seem unusual or grammatically odd for an American listener.
23. Students may need explanation for necessity of learning colloquial expressions; they value formal writing and their speech in English reflects their attempt to be loyal to the written language
24. Female students may not participate unless the class is all female

Comments related to Dravidian languages (Tamil as example)

1. English diphthongs tend to be pronounced as two short vowels with a glide between
2. Cot, caught, coat indistinguishable at first
3. Pat, pot, part confused
4. Consonants pronounced with tongue tip curled back touching top of hard palate
5. p,t,k sound like b,d and g
6. Consonant sound doubling as in hutches pronounced as hutch cheese
7. Mace for maze
8. Occasion pronounced as occashon
9. Final nasal consonants strongly pronounced: himmmmmm for him, thinnnnn for thin
10. Tamil does not have final consonants—ELLs add short u as in up
11. Teach stress-timing to improve being understood by native speakers
12. Tamil sentences end with the verb; reluctance to specify agency when reporting action

Characteristic Difficulties with English for Speakers of Arabic

1. All Arabic words have a specific structure: three-root consonants with vowels changing to provide the meaning. A similar English structure would be:

Sing

Sang

Sung

Song

2. Consonants and long vowels give meaning in first language
3. Energetic, stressed syllables creates a staccato effect---teach stress-timing
4. Reluctance to omit consonants: ex. Climb bed for climbed
5. Confusions: bit for bet, cot for caught, red for raid, hop for hope,
6. Pronounce g as in goat and j as in jump according to their local dialect
7. Over pronounce h
8. P and b interchanged randomly
9. Both th sounds as in this and think are reduced to t and d
10. -ing pronounced as -ink
11. Initial and final consonant clusters broken up with vowels insert: perice for price, monthiz for months
12. All aspects of written English are difficult when compared to first language—allow extra time for reading and writing
13. Because Arabic goes from right to left, common errors of spelling and letter formation relate to this orientation
14. Writing is highly valued in Arabic-speaking cultures. Status speech is valued—Explain need for colloquial expressions
15. ELL's may have difficulty with informal teaching styles, mixed gender and social classes, casual and immodest dress of instructor/peers in non-Arabic countries

Characteristic Difficulties with English for Speakers of Farsi (Persian)

1. Confusion of /v/ and /w/ sounds. *vun* for *won*, *avare* for *aware*
2. Move and open your mouth. Farsi is a more “closed mouth” language than English. The students need to move their jaws, and open their mouths more to have better pronunciation in English. The “long o” in *loan* or *home* or the diphthong /ai/ as in *ride* or *wide* require more of an open mouth.
3. Farsi tends to be spoken with a more even tone (pitch) than English. Work on correct syllable stress and pitch variation to make pronunciation more understandable.
4. Students may try to put an “e” sound on the front of words that start with “s”. *estudent*, *eschool*.
5. Farsi does not have consonant clusters at the beginning of words. Students may struggle with those initial sounds.
6. Farsi does not have the “th” sounds. Watch for *sin* for “thin” and *zees* for “theses”
7. The “ng” sound is also missing from Farsi. Often it is replaced with an “n” followed by a hard “g”.
8. Often vowels are shortened. *Ship* for *sheep*.
9. Certain “u” sounds change to “oo” sounds like “full” becomes “fool”
10. “ear” sound becomes “air” for example: *beer* becomes *bear*. Pay special attention when teaching these because the spelling may be part of what is tripping them up.