

The English Pronunciation Workbook

Eight printable practice packs · 300+ words with IPA and plain-English respelling · minimal pairs, sentence ladders, tongue twisters and progress trackers.

1. The R sound /r/	Speakers of Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic and French, plus children working on rhotacism.
2. The TH sounds /θ/ /ð/	Almost every English learner, plus children with a frontal lisp or TH-fronting.
3. The L sound (light and dark L) /l/	Speakers of Japanese, Korean, Mandarin and Portuguese, and children who substitute /w/ or /j/ for /l/.
4. The S, Z, SH and ZH sounds /s/ /z/ /ʃ/ /ʒ/	Anyone with a lisp, speakers who merge /s/ and /ʃ/, and learners tackling English plural and -s endings.
5. The V and W sounds /v/ /w/	Speakers of German, Dutch, Hindi, Tagalog, Russian, Korean and Chinese languages.
6. The CH and J sounds /tʃ/ /dʒ/	Speakers of French, Portuguese, Arabic and Slavic languages, plus children still fronting these sounds.
7. Tricky English vowel pairs iː · ɪ · æ · ε · ʊ · uː	ESL learners at every level, especially speakers of Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Arabic and Slavic languages.
8. Commonly mispronounced words	Public speakers, presenters, interviewees, actors, and advanced learners polishing their diction.

Free from onlinetonguetwister.com — print it, share it, use it with students.

The R sound /r/

Printable practice pack · free from onlinetonguetwister.com

English /r/ is the sound learners struggle with most. It is not tapped, not rolled, and not made with the lips alone — the tongue bunches or curls without ever touching the roof of the mouth.

Who this helps: Speakers of Spanish, Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Hindi, Arabic and French, plus children working on rhotacism.

How to make the sound

- 1 Pull the tongue back so the tip points up but touches nothing.
- 2 Bunch the middle of the tongue up toward the hard palate, or curl the tip back — both work.
- 3 Press the sides of the tongue against the upper back teeth. That side contact is what makes it sound American.
- 4 Round the lips slightly, as if starting a small 'w'.
- 5 Turn the voice on and hold: rrrrr. There should be no tap and no vibration at the tip.

Common mistakes

- Tapping the tongue on the ridge behind the teeth — that gives a Spanish 'r' (pero, not 'perro').
- Trilling the tongue, which turns 'red' into a rolled 'rrred'.
- Substituting /l/ or /w/ — 'rice' becomes 'lice' or 'wice'.
- Dropping /r/ after a vowel: 'car' becoming 'cah'. In American English the /r/ colours the vowel and must be heard.

A ten-minute daily routine

- 1 **Warm up (1 min).** Hum, then stretch the jaw and lips. Cold mouths slur.
- 2 **Isolate (2 min).** Make the target sound on its own, held long, ten times.
- 3 **Words (3 min).** Work one block of the word list on page 2, slowly, from the respelling.
- 4 **Contrast (2 min).** Run the minimal pairs on page 3 and listen for the difference.
- 5 **Speed (2 min).** Finish with a twister from page 4 — slow first, then fast.

Tip: record yourself on a phone before and after a week of practice. People rarely hear their own errors live, but almost always hear them in a recording. The microphone practice mode at onlinetonguetwister.com transcribes what you actually said and scores it against the target.

Word list

Word · IPA · say it (CAPITALS = stressed syllable)

R at the start of a word

red	/rɛd/	RED
right	/raɪt/	RITE
rural	/ˈrʊr.əl/	ROOR-uhl
really	/ˈri:.ə.li/	REE-uh-lee
rhythm	/ˈrɪð.əm/	RITH-uhm
robbery	/ˈrɑ:.bə.ri/	RAH-buh-ree
reservoir	/ˈrez.ə.vwɑ:r/	REZ-ur-vwar
ridiculous	/rɪˈdɪk.jə.ləs/	rih-DIK-yuh-luhs
recipe	/ˈres.ə.pi/	RESS-uh-pee
refrigerator	/rɪˈfrɪdʒ.ə.reɪ.tə/	rih-FRIJ-uh-ray-tur

R in the middle

February	/ˈfeb.ju.ɛr.i/	FEB-yoo-air-ee
library	/ˈlaɪ.brɛr.i/	LY-brair-ee
mirror	/ˈmɪr.ə/	MEER-ur
horrible	/ˈhɔ:r.ə.bəl/	HOR-uh-buhl
temporary	/ˈtɛm.pə.rɛr.i/	TEM-puh-rair-ee
particularly	/pəˈtɪk.jə.lə.li/	pur-TIK-yuh-lur-lee
deteriorate	/dɪˈtɪr.i.ə.reɪt/	dih-TEER-ee-uh-rat e
hierarchy	/ˈhaɪ.ə.rɑ:r.ki/	HY-uh-rar-kee
brewery	/ˈbru:.ə.ri/	BROO-uh-ree
secretary	/ˈsek.rə.tɛr.i/	SEK-ruh-tair-ee

R after a vowel (r-coloured)

world	/wɜ:rlɔ:/	WURLD
were	/wɜ:r/	WUR
girl	/gɜ:rl/	GURL
first	/fɜ:rst/	FURST
water	/ˈwɑ:.tə/	WAH-tur
computer	/kəmˈpjʊ:.tə/	kuhm-PYOO-tur
northern	/ˈnɔ:r.ðən/	NOR-thurn
murmur	/ˈmɜ:r.mə/	MUR-mur
further	/ˈfɜ:r.ðə/	FUR-thur
surprise	/səˈpraɪz/	sur-PRIZE

R in a cluster

street	/stri:t/	STREET
through	/θru:/	THROO
thrown	/θroʊn/	THRONE
scream	/skri:m/	SKREEM
strength	/streŋkθ/	STRENGKTH
groceries	/ˈgroʊ.sə.rɪz/	GROH-suh-reez
prescription	/prɪˈskrɪp.ʃən/	prih-SKRIP-shuhn
crisps	/krɪspz/	KRISPS
drawer	/drɔ:r/	DROR
squirrel	/ˈskwɜ:r.əl/	SKWUR-uhl

Minimal pairs

Say each pair aloud. If they sound identical, slow down and exaggerate.

A	B	What to listen for
right	light	/r/ tongue floats free · /l/ tip touches the ridge
rice	lice	the classic /r/-/l/ swap
red	led	listen for the tap that should not be there
correct	collect	mid-word contrast
rake	wake	/r/ has tongue bunching, /w/ is lips only
grass	glass	cluster contrast

Sentence ladders

Build up: single word, then phrase, then full sentence. Three times each.

1	rural
2	the rural road
3	The rural road runs right by the river.

1	library
2	a library card
3	Rebecca borrowed a rare library book on February the third.

1	world
2	around the world
3	World-weary travellers wandered around the whole wide world.

1	squirrel
2	a grey squirrel
3	A grey squirrel scurried across the surprisingly narrow street.

Twisters for this sound

Slow and clear first. Speed is the last step, never the first.

Roughly rub raw red rhubarb rather rapidly.

HARD · sound focus: r

A rarely real rural rule ruled the royal realm.

HARD · sound focus: r/l

Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry.

HARD · sound focus: l/r

Rolling red wagons run rapidly round rugged rocks.

MEDIUM · sound focus: r

The wry walrus wore a white wig while wading west.

MEDIUM · sound focus: w/r/l

Warped walnut wood works worse when wet and weary.

MEDIUM · sound focus: w/r/l

Five-day tracker

Practice task	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Read the word list aloud					
Minimal pairs, 3× each					
Sentence ladders					
Twisters, slow					
Twisters, fast					
Record yourself and listen back					

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The TH sounds /θ/ /ð/

TH is two sounds sharing one spelling. Unvoiced /θ/ (think, bath) is pure air; voiced /ð/ (this, mother) buzzes. Both need the tongue tip between or just behind the front teeth.

Who this helps: Almost every English learner, plus children with a frontal lisp or TH-fronting.

How to make the sound

- 1 Let the tongue tip peek out lightly between the top and bottom front teeth.
- 2 Keep the tongue soft and flat — do not press. Air must escape over it.
- 3 For /θ/ (think), blow air with no voice. Your throat stays quiet.
- 4 For /ð/ (this), keep the same position and switch the voice on. Your throat buzzes.
- 5 Pull the tongue straight back into the next sound; do not add a 'd' on the way out.

Common mistakes

- Swapping in /s/ or /z/: 'think' becomes 'sink', 'those' becomes 'zose'.
- Swapping in /t/ or /d/: 'three' becomes 'tree', 'they' becomes 'day'.
- Swapping in /f/ or /v/: 'birthday' becomes 'birfday', 'brother' becomes 'bruvver'.
- Voicing the wrong one: 'bath' (unvoiced) versus 'bathe' (voiced) are different words.

A ten-minute daily routine

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Word list

Word · IPA · say it (CAPITALS = stressed syllable)

Unvoiced TH /θ/ — start

think	/θɪŋk/	THINK
three	/θri:/	THREE
thirty	/'θɜ:r.ti/	THUR-tee
thorough	/'θɜ:r.ʊ/	THUR-oh
theatre	/'θi:.ə.tə/	THEE-uh-tur
thousand	/'θaʊ.zənd/	THOW-zuhnd
thumb	/θʌm/	THUM
thermometer	/θə'mɑ:.mə.tə/	thur-MAH-muh-tur

Unvoiced TH /θ/ — middle & end

month	/mʌnθ/	MUNTH
months	/mʌnθs/	MUNTHS
sixth	/sɪksθ/	SIKSTH
twelfth	/twelfθ/	TWELFTH
strength	/streŋkθ/	STRENGKTH
birthday	/'bɜ:rθ.deɪ/	BURTH-day
something	/'sʌm.θɪŋ/	SUM-thing
healthy	/'heɪ.θi/	HEL-thee
mathematics	/,mæθ.ə'mæt.ɪks/	math-uh-MAT-iks
truth	/tru:θ/	TROOTH

Voiced TH /ð/ — function words

this	/ðɪs/	THISS (buzzing)
that	/ðæt/	THAT (buzzing)
these	/ði:z/	THEEZ
those	/ðoʊz/	THOHZ
they	/ðeɪ/	THAY
them	/ðɛm/	THEM
there	/ðɛr/	THAIR
though	/ðoʊ/	THOH
than	/ðæn/	THAN
without	/wɪ'ðaʊt/	with-OWT

Voiced TH /ð/ — content words

mother	/'mʌð.ə/	MUTH-ur
brother	/'brʌð.ə/	BRUTH-ur
weather	/'weð.ə/	WETH-ur
together	/tə'gɛð.ə/	tuh-GETH-ur
clothes	/kloʊz/	KLOHZ
breathe	/bri:ð/	BREETH (buzzing)
smooth	/smu:ð/	SMOOTH
northern	/'nɔ:r.ðən/	NOR-thurn
rhythm	/'rɪð.əm/	RITH-uhm
either	/'i:.ðə/	EE-thur

Minimal pairs

Say each pair aloud. If they sound identical, slow down and exaggerate.

A	B	What to listen for
think	sink	tongue out /θ/ vs tongue behind teeth /s/
thin	fin	/θ/ uses the tongue, /f/ uses the lip
three	tree	air flow vs stop
they	day	voiced /ð/ vs stop /d/
breath	breathe	unvoiced noun vs voiced verb
bath	bathe	same contrast, same trap

Sentence ladders

Build up: single word, then phrase, then full sentence. Three times each.

1	thirty
2	thirty-three
3	Thirty-three thirsty thinkers thought thoroughly.

1	months
2	six months
3	The sixth and twelfth months both have thirty-one days.

1	mother
2	my mother's brother
3	My mother's brother and their father gathered together.

1	clothes
2	smooth clothes
3	Those clothes need smoothing in this weather.

Twisters for this sound

Slow and clear first. Speed is the last step, never the first.

Vinnie felt the thaw through fifteen thin velvet vests.

MEDIUM · sound focus: v/f/th

Florence threw the vase through the third velvet valve.

MEDIUM · sound focus: f/th/v

The thrifty Viking flips thirty-four flat, velvet fish.

MEDIUM · sound focus: th/v/f

Thirteen vases fall flat from the fifth floor's vanity.

EASY · sound focus: th/v/f

Fifty vivid feathers thud through the third thick vault.

MEDIUM · sound focus: f/v/th

Thor values fat fish that flip through the fifth fountain.

EASY · sound focus: th/v/f

Five-day tracker

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Sentence ladders					
Twisters, slow					
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The L sound (light and dark L) /l/

English has two L sounds. Light L before a vowel (like, yellow) is bright and forward. Dark L after a vowel (milk, world, feel) pulls the back of the tongue up and sounds almost like 'oo'.

Who this helps: Speakers of Japanese, Korean, Mandarin and Portuguese, and children who substitute /w/ or /j/ for /l/.

How to make the sound

- 1 Press the tongue tip firmly on the ridge just behind the top front teeth.
- 2 Leave the sides of the tongue open — the air escapes around the sides, not over the tip.
- 3 Keep the voice on the whole time: llllll.
- 4 For dark L, keep the tip in place but lift the back of the tongue as if saying 'oo'.
- 5 Practise holding the L for two seconds before releasing into the next sound.

Common mistakes

- Substituting /r/: 'light' becomes 'right'.
- Substituting /w/: 'love' becomes 'wove' — very common in young children.
- Dropping dark L entirely: 'milk' becomes 'miwk', 'people' becomes 'peopo'.
- Adding a vowel after final L: 'call' becoming 'call-uh'.

A ten-minute daily routine

- 1 **Warm up (1 min).** Hum, then stretch the jaw and lips. Cold mouths slur.
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Word list

Word · IPA · say it (CAPITALS = stressed syllable)

Light L — start of word

light	/laɪt/	LITE
little	/'lɪt̬.əl/	LIT-uhl
love	/lʌv/	LUV
language	/'læŋ.gwɪdʒ/	LANG-gwij
literally	/'lɪt̬.ə.ə.li/	LIT-ur-uh-lee
lawyer	/'lɔɪ.jə/	LOY-yur
leisure	/'liː.ʒə/	LEE-zhur
lieutenant	/luː'ten.ənt/	loo-TEN-uhnt

Light L — middle

yellow	/'jɛl.oʊ/	YEL-oh
believe	/'br'iː.v/	bih-LEEV
salary	/'sæl.ə.i/	SAL-ur-ee
jewelry	/'dʒuː.əl.ri/	JOO-uhl-ree
million	/'mɪl.jən/	MIL-yuhn
colleague	/'kɑː.liːg/	KAH-leeg
delicious	/'dɪ'lɪʃ.əs/	dih-LISH-uhs
reliable	/'rɪ'laɪ.ə.bəl/	rih-LY-uh-buhl

Dark L — after a vowel

milk	/mɪlk/	MILK
world	/wɜːrld/	WURLD
help	/hɛlp/	HELP
field	/fiːld/	FEELD
bulb	/bʌlb/	BULB
twelfth	/twɛlfθ/	TWELFTH
film	/fɪlm/	FILM
health	/hɛlθ/	HEALTH
gold	/ɡoʊld/	GOHLD
wolf	/wʊlf/	WULF

Final L and -le endings

people	/'piː.pəl/	PEE-puhl
available	/ə'veɪ.lə.bəl/	uh-VAY-luh-buhl
vulnerable	/'vʌl.nə.ə.bəl/	VUL-nur-uh-buhl
comfortable	/'kʌmf.tə.bəl/	KUMF-tur-buhl
terrible	/'tɛr.ə.bəl/	TAIR-uh-buhl
normally	/'nɔːr.mə.li/	NOR-muh-lee
actually	/'æk.tʃu.ə.li/	AK-choo-uh-lee
usually	/'juː.ʒu.ə.li/	YOO-zhoo-uh-lee
careful	/'kɛr.fəl/	KAIR-fuhl
beautiful	/'bjuː.t̬ə.fəl/	BYOO-tuh-fuhl

Minimal pairs

Say each pair aloud. If they sound identical, slow down and exaggerate.

A	B	What to listen for
light	right	tip touches vs tip free
lock	rock	the standard /l-/r/ test
collect	correct	mid-word contrast
led	wed	/l/ vs /w/ substitution
fill	fear	dark L vs r-coloured vowel
goal	go	final dark L must be heard

Sentence ladders

Build up: single word, then phrase, then full sentence. Three times each.

1	little
2	a little lamb
3	Little Lily lets her little lamb loose.

1	milk
2	cold milk
3	Well-chilled milk filled twelve small bottles.

1	world
2	the whole world
3	The world's most reliable lawyer felt well.

1	people
2	lovely people
3	Eleven lovely people were available and willing.

Twisters for this sound

Slow and clear first. Speed is the last step, never the first.

Larry's lemony lentil loaf left Leah low.

MEDIUM · sound focus: l

A rarely real rural rule ruled the royal realm.

HARD · sound focus: r/l

Yelling yellow yoyos yield yellow yarns yearly.

MEDIUM · sound focus: y/l/r

Lulu loves licked lemon lime lamb loins lately.

MEDIUM · sound focus: l

Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry.

HARD · sound focus: l/r

Really leery rilly reeds reel in the rolling rills.

MEDIUM · sound focus: r/l

Five-day tracker

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The S, Z, SH and ZH sounds /s/ /z/ /ʃ/ /ʒ/

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The sibilants are the hissing family. /s/ and /z/ are a narrow, focused hiss; /ʃ/ (sh) and /ʒ/ (measure) are broader and further back with rounded lips. They are also where most lisps live.

Who this helps: Anyone with a lisp, speakers who merge /s/ and /ʃ/, and learners tackling English plural and -s endings.

How to make the sound

- 1 For /s/, put the tongue tip just behind the top teeth without touching them, and aim a thin stream of air down the centre groove of the tongue.
- 2 Keep the teeth close together. If the tongue pokes through, you get a lisp (a 'th' sound).
- 3 /z/ is exactly the same shape with the voice switched on.
- 4 For /ʃ/ (sh), pull the tongue slightly back, flatten the groove, and round the lips.
- 5 /ʒ/ (measure, vision) is /ʃ/ with the voice on — it never starts an English word.

Common mistakes

- Frontal lisp: the tongue pushes between the teeth so 'sun' becomes 'thun'.
- Lateral lisp: air escapes sideways, producing a wet, slushy /s/.
- Merging /s/ and /ʃ/, so 'see' and 'she' sound identical.
- Missing the /ʒ/ in words like measure, usual and decision by saying a hard 'z' or 'sh'.

A ten-minute daily routine

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Word list

Word · IPA · say it (CAPITALS = stressed syllable)

S sound

sun	/sʌn/	SUN
specific	/spə'sɪf.ɪk/	spuh-SIF-ik
statistics	/stə'tɪs.tɪks/	stuh-TIS-tiks
scissors	/'sɪz.əz/	SIZ-urz
necessary	/'nes.ə.sər.i/	NESS-uh-sair-ee
sixth	/sɪksθ/	SIKSTH
asterisk	/'æs.tər.ɪsk/	ASS-tur-isk
suspicious	/sə'spɪʃ.əs/	suh-SPISH-uhs
consists	/kən'sɪsts/	kuhn-SISTS
costs	/kɒ:sts/	KOSTS

Z sound

zoo	/zu:/	ZOO
busy	/'bɪz.i/	BIZ-ee
easy	/'i:.zi/	EE-zee
please	/pli:z/	PLEEZ
cousins	/'kʌz.ənz/	KUZ-uhnz
clothes	/kloʊz/	KLOHZ
resume	/rɪ'zu:m/	rih-ZOOM
exhausted	/ɪg'zɔ:s.tɪd/	ig-ZAWS-tid
boxes	/'bɑ:k.sɪz/	BOK-siz
choose	/tʃu:z/	CHOOZ

SH sound

she	/ʃi:/	SHEE
sure	/ʃʊr/	SHOOR
machine	/mə'ʃi:n/	muh-SHEEN
ocean	/'oʊ.ʃən/	OH-shuhn
special	/'speʃ.əl/	SPESH-uhl
official	/ə'fɪʃ.əl/	uh-FISH-uhl
conscious	/'kɑ:n.ʃəs/	KAHN-shuhs
negotiation	/nɪˌɡoʊ.ʃi'eɪ.ʃən/	nih-goh-shee-AY-sh uhn
anxious	/'æŋk.ʃəs/	ANGK-shuhs

ZH sound /ʒ/

measure	/'meɜ:.ʒ/	MEZH-ur
vision	/'vɪʒ.ən/	VIZH-uhn
usual	/'ju:.ʒu.əl/	YOO-zhoo-uhl
decision	/dɪ'sɪʒ.ən/	dih-SIZH-uhn
garage	/gə'ra:ʒ/	guh-RAHZH
treasure	/'treɜ:.ʒ/	TREZH-ur
casual	/'kæʒ.u.əl/	KAZH-oo-uhl
leisure	/'li:.ʒə/	LEE-zhur
beige	/beɪʒ/	BAYZH

Minimal pairs

Say each pair aloud. If they sound identical, slow down and exaggerate.

A	B	What to listen for
sip	ship	narrow /s/ vs broad /ʃ/
sea	she	the core sibilant contrast
sue	shoe	watch the lip rounding on /ʃ/
sink	think	catches a frontal lisp
peace	peas	unvoiced /s/ vs voiced /z/
Caesar	seizure	/z/ vs /ʒ/

Sentence ladders

Build up: single word, then phrase, then full sentence. Three times each.

1	scissors
2	sharp scissors
3	Six sharp scissors sit on Sasha's shelf.

1	measure
2	measure twice
3	The usual measure was a casual decision.

1	specific
2	a specific statistic
3	She cited a specific statistic on the sixth slide.

1	shoes
2	shiny shoes
3	Sure, Sue's shiny shoes seem seriously special.

Twisters for this sound

Slow and clear first. Speed is the last step, never the first.

Zany zodiac zones zap Zephyr's zero zests.

MEDIUM · sound focus: z

A zigzag zipper zipped Zora's zesty zinger.

EASY · sound focus: z

Noisy noozles nuzzle near nasal nozzle nez.

HARD · sound focus: z

Silly Sally swiftly shooed seven silly sheep.

MEDIUM · sound focus: s

Hazy daisies daze mazy gazers in lazy valleys.

EASY · sound focus: z

Should Shane share shaved sheep steak so shyly?

HARD · sound focus: sh

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Record yourself and listen back					

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The V and W sounds /v/ /w/

V is made with the lip and teeth; W is made with the lips alone. Confusing them turns 'vest' into 'west' and 'wine' into 'vine' — one of the most noticeable accent markers in English.

Who this helps: Speakers of German, Dutch, Hindi, Tagalog, Russian, Korean and Chinese languages.

How to make the sound

- 1 For /v/: rest the top teeth lightly on the inside of the bottom lip, then push voiced air through. You should feel a buzz in the lip.
- 2 Hold /v/ for two seconds. It is a continuous sound, not a quick tap.
- 3 For /w/: round both lips into a tight circle, as if starting 'oo', then glide immediately into the vowel.
- 4 The teeth never touch the lip for /w/. Put a finger on your lip to check.
- 5 For /f/, keep the /v/ position but turn the voice off.

Common mistakes

- Using a /w/ where a /v/ belongs: 'very' becoming 'wery'.
- Using a /v/ where a /w/ belongs: 'water' becoming 'vater'.
- Hardening /v/ into /b/: 'vote' becoming 'boat' (common for Spanish speakers).
- Devoicing final /v/: 'love' becoming 'loff'.

A ten-minute daily routine

- 1 **Warm up (1 min).** Hum, then stretch the jaw and lips. Cold mouths slur.
- 2 **Isolate (2 min).** Make the target sound on its own, held long, ten times.
- 3 **Words (3 min).** Work one block of the word list on page 2, slowly, from the respelling.
- 4 **Contrast (2 min).** Run the minimal pairs on page 3 and listen for the difference.
- 5 **Speed (2 min).** Finish with a twister from page 4 — slow first, then fast.

Tip: record yourself on a phone before and after a week of practice. People rarely hear their own errors live, but almost always hear them in a recording. The microphone practice mode at onlinetonguetwister.com transcribes what you actually said and scores it against the target.

Word list

Word · IPA · say it (CAPITALS = stressed syllable)

V sound

very	/ˈvɛr.i/	VAIR-ee
vowel	/ˈvaʊ.əl/	VOW-uhl
village	/ˈvɪl.ɪdʒ/	VIL-ij
vehicle	/ˈviː.ə.kəl/	VEE-uh-kuhl
visible	/ˈvɪz.ə.bəl/	VIZ-uh-buhl
available	/əˈveɪ.lə.bəl/	uh-VAY-luh-buhl
survive	/səˈvaɪv/	sur-VIVE
develop	/dɪˈvɛl.əp/	dih-VEL-uhp
of	/ʌv/	UV
love	/lʌv/	LUV

W sound

water	/ˈwɑː.tər/	WAH-tur
world	/wɜːrld/	WORLD
wonderful	/ˈwʌn.də.fəl/	WUN-dur-fuhl
women	/ˈwɪm.ɪn/	WIM-in
would	/wʊd/	WOOD
wolf	/wʊlf/	WULF
awkward	/ˈɔːk.wəd/	AWK-wurd
language	/ˈlæŋ.gwɪdʒ/	LANG-gwij
quality	/ˈkwɑː.lə.ti/	KWAH-luh-tee
squirrel	/ˈskwɜːr.əl/	SKWUR-uhl

F sound (same lip position, no voice)

fifth	/fɪfθ/	FIFTH
photograph	/ˈfoʊ.tə.græf/	FOH-tuh-graf
comfortable	/ˈkʌmf.tə.bəl/	KUMF-tur-buhl
enough	/ɪˈnʌf/	ih-NUF
difficult	/ˈdɪf.ə.kəlt/	DIF-uh-kult
laugh	/læf/	LAF
often	/ˈɔː.fən/	AW-fuhn
half	/hæf/	HAF

Silent W and tricky spellings

answer	/ˈæn.sər/	AN-sur (no W)
sword	/sɔːrd/	SORD (no W)
two	/tuː/	TOO (no W)
wrist	/rɪst/	RIST (no W)
write	/raɪt/	RITE (no W)
whether	/ˈwɛð.ər/	WETH-ur
whole	/hoʊl/	HOLE (no W)
Wednesday	/ˈwenz.deɪ/	WENZ-day

Minimal pairs

Say each pair aloud. If they sound identical, slow down and exaggerate.

A	B	What to listen for
vest	west	the definitive V/W test
vine	wine	teeth on lip vs lips only
veal	wheel	hold the /v/ buzz
very	wary	in running speech
ferry	very	unvoiced /f/ vs voiced /v/
leaf	leave	final voicing

Sentence ladders

Build up: single word, then phrase, then full sentence. Three times each.

1	very
2	very valuable
3	Vivian's very valuable violin vanished.

1	water
2	warm water
3	We watched warm water wash over the wall.

1	vowel
2	every vowel
3	Every vowel in the village was voiced well.

1	whether
2	whether or not
3	Whether the weather is wet, we will wait.

Twisters for this sound

Slow and clear first. Speed is the last step, never the first.

A very vain vulture voiced a vivid verse.

MEDIUM · sound focus: v

Wobble the waffles while the water warms.

MEDIUM · sound focus: w

Four furious friends fought for the phone.

MEDIUM · sound focus: f

The fickle finger of fate flicks fiercely.

HARD · sound focus: f

A wacky woodchuck whittled a wooden whistle.

HARD · sound focus: w

Four fresh fried fish fingers for Fatty Finn.

EASY · sound focus: f

Five-day tracker

Practice task	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Read the word list aloud					
Minimal pairs, 3× each					
Sentence ladders					
Twisters, slow					
Twisters, fast					
Record yourself and listen back					

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The CH and J sounds /tʃ/ /dʒ/

CH and J are affricates — a stop plus a hiss, glued together. CH is /t/ + /ʃ/, J is /d/ + /ʒ/. Learners often stretch them into a plain 'sh' or soften them into 'y'.

Who this helps: Speakers of French, Portuguese, Arabic and Slavic languages, plus children still fronting these sounds.

How to make the sound

- 1 Start with the tongue pressed against the ridge behind the top teeth, as if for /t/.
- 2 Release the pressure suddenly into an 'sh' — that burst-then-hiss is CH.
- 3 Round the lips a little as the air escapes.
- 4 For J, the identical movement with the voice turned on from the start.
- 5 Keep both sounds short. Stretching them turns 'chair' into 'share'.

Common mistakes

- Dropping the stop: 'chair' becomes 'share', 'jeep' becomes 'zheep'.
- Hardening into /ʃ/ + vowel: 'question' becoming 'kwesh-tion' instead of 'KWES-chun'.
- Missing the hidden CH/J in -ture and -dure words (nature, schedule, gradual).
- Confusing spelling with sound: choir is /kw/, machine is /ʃ/, both spelled with 'ch'.

A ten-minute daily routine

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- 3 **Words (3 min).** Work one block of the word list on page 2, slowly, from the respelling.
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Word list

Word · IPA · say it (CAPITALS = stressed syllable)

CH at the start

chair	/tʃɛr/	CHAIR
church	/tʃɜ:rtʃ/	CHURCH
cheese	/tʃi:z/	CHEEZ
challenge	/ˈtʃæl.ɪndʒ/	CHAL-inj
choose	/tʃu:z/	CHOOZ
chocolate	/ˈtʃɑ:k.lət/	CHOK-luht
children	/ˈtʃɪl.drən/	CHIL-druhn

CH in the middle and end

kitchen	/ˈkɪtʃ.ɪn/	KITCH-in
future	/ˈfju:.tʃə/	FYOO-chur
nature	/ˈneɪ.tʃə/	NAY-chur
picture	/ˈpɪk.tʃə/	PIK-chur
question	/ˈkwɛs.tʃən/	KWES-chuhn
actually	/ˈæk.tʃu.ə.li/	AK-choo-uh-lee
adventure	/ədˈvɛn.tʃə/	ad-VEN-chur
watch	/wɑ:tʃ/	WOTCH
stretch	/strɛtʃ/	STRETCH

J sound

jewelry	/ˈdʒu:.əl.ri/	JOO-uhl-ree
judge	/dʒʌdʒ/	JUJ
general	/ˈdʒɛn.ə.əl/	JEN-ur-uhl
giraffe	/dʒəˈræf/	juh-RAF
region	/ˈri:.dʒən/	REE-juhn
suggestion	/səˈdʒɛs.tʃən/	suh-JES-chuhn
gradual	/ˈgrædʒ.u.əl/	GRAJ-oo-uhl
schedule	/ˈskɛdʒ.u:l/	SKEJ-ool
soldier	/ˈsoʊl.dʒə/	SOHL-jur
individual	/ˌɪn.dəˈvɪdʒ.u.əl/	in-duh-VIJ-oo-uhl

CH spellings that are not /tʃ/

choir	/ˈkwaɪ.ə/	KWY-ur
chaos	/ˈkeɪ.ɑ:s/	KAY-oss
character	/ˈkɛr.ək.tə/	KAIR-uhk-tur
stomach	/ˈstʌm.ək/	STUM-uhk
machine	/məˈʃi:n/	muh-SHEEN
chef	/ʃɛf/	SHEF
architect	/ˈɑ:r.kɛ.tɛkt/	AR-kuh-tekt
technique	/tɛkˈni:k/	tek-NEEK

Minimal pairs

Say each pair aloud. If they sound identical, slow down and exaggerate.

A	B	What to listen for
chair	share	affricate vs plain hiss
cheap	jeep	unvoiced vs voiced
chin	gin	same contrast, short vowel
watch	wash	final position
batch	badge	final voicing
cheese	she's	listen for the burst

Sentence ladders

Build up: single word, then phrase, then full sentence. Three times each.

- 1 church
- 2 the church choir
- 3 **The church choir chose cheerful children.**

- 1 jewelry
- 2 gold jewelry
- 3 **The judge's jewelry jangled gently in January.**

- 1 picture
- 2 a natural picture
- 3 **Nature's picture captured the future perfectly.**

- 1 schedule
- 2 a gradual schedule
- 3 **A gradual schedule suggested a general adjustment.**

Twisters for this sound

Slow and clear first. Speed is the last step, never the first.

Chuckling cheerful chimps chomp cheddar chunks.

HARD · sound focus: ch

Should Shane share shaved sheep steak so shyly?

HARD · sound focus: sh

Sharp sheared shears shave short shaggy sheep shirts.

HARD · sound focus: sh

Chester Cheetah chews a chunk of cheap cheddar cheese.

MEDIUM · sound focus: ch

Shimmering shale shards sheared Shelly's shallow shoes.

MEDIUM · sound focus: sh

Charlie chose cheesy chicken chili chasing cheap chips.

MEDIUM · sound focus: ch

Five-day tracker

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Sentence ladders					
Twisters, slow					
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Record yourself and listen back					

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Tricky English vowel pairs **i:** · **ɪ** · **æ** · **ɛ** · **ʊ** · **u:**

Printable practice pack · free from onlinetonguetwister.com

English has more vowels than most languages, and the differences are small. Long and short, tense and lax — get these six pairs right and your speech becomes dramatically easier to follow.

Who this helps: ESL learners at every level, especially speakers of Spanish, Italian, Japanese, Arabic and Slavic languages.

How to make the sound

- 1 /i:/ (sheep) is long and tense — smile hard, tongue high and forward, hold it.
- 2 /ɪ/ (ship) is short and relaxed — jaw slightly lower, no smile, cut it short.
- 3 /æ/ (bad) drops the jaw wide; /ɛ/ (bed) keeps it half open.
- 4 /ʌ/ (cup) is central and relaxed; /ɑ:/ (car) is open and back.
- 5 /ʊ/ (full) is short with loose lips; /u:/ (fool) is long with tight rounding.

Common mistakes

- Using one vowel for both members of a pair, so 'ship' and 'sheep' sound the same.
- Making short vowels too long — length alone will not fix the quality difference.
- Adding a glide to /e/ and /o/ where English wants a pure or diphthongal sound.
- Over-pronouncing unstressed vowels instead of reducing them to schwa /ə/.

A ten-minute daily routine

- 1 **Warm up (1 min).** Hum, then stretch the jaw and lips. Cold mouths slur.
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Word list

Word · IPA · say it (CAPITALS = stressed syllable)

/i:/ long — sheep		
sheep	/ʃi:p/	SHEEP
beach	/bi:tʃ/	BEECH
seat	/si:t/	SEET
leave	/li:v/	LEEV
feel	/fi:l/	FEEL
piece	/pi:s/	PEES

/ɪ/ short — ship		
ship	/ʃɪp/	SHIP
bit	/bɪt/	BIT
sit	/sɪt/	SIT
live	/lɪv/	LIV
fill	/fɪl/	FIL
business	/'bɪz.nəs/	BIZ-nuhs

/æ/ vs /ɛ/ — bad and bed		
bad	/bæd/	BAD
bed	/bed/	BED
man	/mæn/	MAN
men	/men/	MEN
sand	/sænd/	SAND
send	/send/	SEND
axe	/æks/	AKS
expect	/ɪk'spekt/	ik-SPEKT

/ʊ/ vs /u:/ and /ʌ/ vs /ɑ:/		
full	/fʊl/	FUUL
fool	/fu:l/	FOOL
pull	/pʊl/	PUUL
pool	/pu:l/	POOL
could	/kʊd/	KUUD
cooed	/ku:d/	KOOD
cup	/kʌp/	KUP
carp	/kɑ:rp/	KARP
color	/'kʌl.ə/	KUL-ur
collar	/'kɑ:.lə/	KAH-lur

Minimal pairs

Say each pair aloud. If they sound identical, slow down and exaggerate.

A	B	What to listen for
ship	sheep	short and relaxed vs long and smiling
bit	beat	same contrast, final /t/
bed	bad	half-open vs wide-open jaw
full	fool	loose lips vs tight rounding
cot	caught	merged in many accents — pick one and be consistent
walk	work	back vowel vs r-coloured vowel

Sentence ladders

Build up: single word, then phrase, then full sentence. Three times each.

- 1 sheep
- 2 three sheep
- 3 **Three sheep slipped off the ship's steep steps.**

- 1 bad
- 2 a bad bed
- 3 **Ten men said the bed was bad and the sand was damp.**

- 1 fool
- 2 a full pool
- 3 **The pool was full, so a fool pulled the pull-cord.**

- 1 beat
- 2 a steady beat
- 3 **It is a bit of a beat, and I live to leave it.**

Twisters for this sound

Slow and clear first. Speed is the last step, never the first.

Only oily olive omelets offered Otto odd odors.

MEDIUM · sound focus: o

Hugh handled honey hassle ham high helping hands.

MEDIUM · sound focus: h

An octopus in an orchard eats oranges over oceans.

MEDIUM · sound focus: o

Hattie's hot honey ham hash hit high heat hastily.

MEDIUM · sound focus: h

Olive often over-oiled Oliver's only onion omelet.

MEDIUM · sound focus: o

Young Yolanda yielded yummy yellow yams yesterday.

EASY · sound focus: y

Five-day tracker

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Commonly mispronounced words

Some words are hard for everyone: silent letters, buried syllables, stress in an unexpected place, or a spelling that lies about the sound. This pack collects the forty that trip people up most.

Who this helps: Public speakers, presenters, interviewees, actors, and advanced learners polishing their diction.

How to make the sound

- 1 Say the word slowly, one syllable at a time, from the respelling — not from the spelling.
- 2 Find the CAPITALISED syllable and make it longer and louder than the rest.
- 3 Reduce every unstressed syllable to a soft schwa 'uh'. English rhythm depends on it.
- 4 Say it three times slow, then three times at speaking speed.
- 5 Use it in a real sentence the same day, or it will not stick.

Common mistakes

- Pronouncing letters that are silent: the 'l' in salmon, the 'd' in Wednesday, the 'b' in subtle.
- Adding a syllable that is not there: 'ath-uh-lete' for athlete, 'ex-pres-so' for espresso.
- Putting the stress on the wrong syllable, which is more confusing to listeners than a wrong vowel.
- Guessing from spelling on loanwords — colonel, choir and epitome are all traps.

A ten-minute daily routine

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Word list

Word · IPA · say it (CAPITALS = stressed syllable)

Silent letters

Wednesday	/ˈwɛnz.deɪ/	WENZ-day
salmon	/ˈsæm.ən/	SAM-uhn
subtle	/ˈsʌt̬.əl/	SUT-uhl
receipt	/rɪˈsi:t/	rih-SEET
almond	/ˈɑː.mənd/	AH-muhnd
debt	/dɛt/	DET
island	/ˈaɪ.lənd/	EYE-luhnd
indict	/ɪnˈdaɪt/	in-DITE
mortgage	/ˈmɔːr.gɪdʒ/	MOR-gij
queue	/kjuː/	KYOO

Stress in a surprising place

entrepreneur	/ˌɑːn.trə.prəˈnɜːr/	ahn-truh-pruh-NUR
epitome	/ɪˈpɪt̬.ə.mi/	ih-PIT-uh-mee
hyperbole	/haɪˈpɜːr.bə.li/	hy-PUR-buh-lee
comparable	/ˈkɑːm.pə.ə.bəl/	KAHM-pur-uh-buhl
mischievous	/ˈmɪs.tʃə.vəs/	MIS-chuh-vuhs
applicable	/ˈæp.lɪ.kə.bəl/	AP-lih-kuh-buhl
preferable	/ˈprɛf.ə.ə.bəl/	PREF-ur-uh-buhl
infamous	/ˈɪn.fə.məs/	IN-fuh-muhs
developer	/dɪˈvɛl.ə.pə/	dih-VEL-uh-pur
photography	/fəˈtɑː.grə.fi/	fuh-TAH-gruh-fee

Spelling that lies

colonel	/ˈkɜːr.nəl/	KUR-nuhl
choir	/ˈkwaɪ.ə/	KWY-ur
quinoa	/ˈkiːn.wɑː/	KEEN-wah
Worcester-shire	/ˈwɜːs.tə.ʃə/	WUUS-tur-shur
gauge	/geɪdʒ/	GAYJ
suite	/swi:t/	SWEET
niche	/niːʃ/	NEESH
façade	/fəˈsɑːd/	fuh-SAHd
genre	/ˈʒɑːn.rə/	ZHAHN-ruh
cache	/kæʃ/	KASH

Words people add or drop syllables in

athlete	/ˈæθ.li:t/	ATH-leet, 2 syl.
espresso	/ɛˈspres.oo/	eh-SPRESS-oh (no X)
nuclear	/ˈnuː.kli.ə/	NOO-kee-ur
jewelry	/ˈdʒuː.əl.ri/	JOO-uhl-ree
library	/ˈlaɪ.brɛr.i/	LY-brair-ee
February	/ˈfɛb.ju.ɛr.i/	FEB-yoo-air-ee
probably	/ˈprɑː.bə.bli/	PRAH-buh-blee
particularly	/pəˈtɪk.jə.lə.li/	pur-TIK-yuh-lur-lee
comfortable	/ˈkʌmf.tə.bəl/	KUMF-tur-buhl
anyway	/ˈɛn.i.weɪ/	EN-ee-way (no S)

Minimal pairs

Say each pair aloud. If they sound identical, slow down and exaggerate.

A	B	What to listen for
athlete	ath-uh-lete	two syllables, never three
espresso	expresso	there is no X
nuclear	nucular	NOO-kee-ur
prescription	perscription	PRE, not PER
supposedly	supposably	not a word
et cetera	ex cetera	ET, not EX

Sentence ladders

Build up: single word, then phrase, then full sentence. Three times each.

1	entrepreneur
2	a young entrepreneur
3	The young entrepreneur was the epitome of comfortable confidence.

1	Wednesday
2	next Wednesday
3	Next Wednesday the colonel will visit the library.

1	particularly
2	particularly comparable
3	That figure is particularly comparable to February's.

1	mischievous
2	a mischievous athlete
3	A mischievous athlete ordered almond espresso.

Twisters for this sound

Slow and clear first. Speed is the last step, never the first.

The dog drags the doll down the driveway.

EASY · sound focus: d

Kooky kittens knock over knitted mittens.

MEDIUM · sound focus: k

Tasty tarts took time to top tiny tables.

MEDIUM · sound focus: t

Double drums draw dredge down damp docks.

MEDIUM · sound focus: d

Paper pockets pick per petty purple pits.

HARD · sound focus: p

Did Dot do duty during dark daily drives?

MEDIUM · sound focus: d

Five-day tracker

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