

The TH sounds /θ/ /ð/

Printable practice pack · free from onlinetonguetwister.com

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

- 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)

Unvoiced TH /θ/ — start

think	/θɪŋk/	THINK
three	/θri:/	THREE
thirty	/ˈθɜːr.ti/	THUR-tee
thorough	/ˈθɜːr.ʊ/	THUR-oh
theatre	/ˈθiː.ə.tə/	THEE-uh-tur
thousand	/ˈθaʊ.zənd/	THOW-zuhnd
thumb	/θʌm/	THUM
thermometer	/θəˈmɑː.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	/ˈbɜːrθ.deɪ/	BURTH-day
something	/ˈsʌm.θɪŋ/	SUM-thing
healthy	/ˈheɪl.θi/	HEL-thee
mathematics	/ˌmæθ.əˈmæt.ɪks/	math-uh-MAT-iks
truth	/truːθ/	TROOTH

Voiced TH /ð/ — function words

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

Voiced TH /ð/ — content words

mother	/ˈmʌð.ə/	MUTH-ur
brother	/ˈbrʌð.ə/	BRUTH-ur
weather	/ˈweð.ə/	WETH-ur
together	/təˈɡeð.ə/	tuh-GETH-ur
clothes	/kloʊz/	KLOHZ
breathe	/briːð/	BREETH (buzzing)
smooth	/smuːð/	SMOOTH
northern	/ˈnɔːr.ðən/	NOR-thurn
rhythm	/ˈrɪð.əm/	RITH-uhm
either	/ˈiː.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

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					

Free to print, copy and share for classroom, therapy and personal use. Practise with a microphone and instant accuracy scoring at onlinetonguetwister.com/pronunciation/th-sound