

Speaking Clearly

Pronunciation and
Listening comprehension
for learners of English

Student's Book

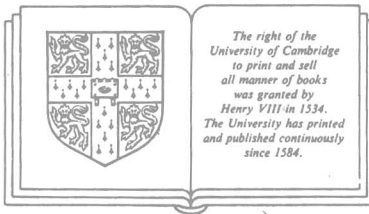
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Introduction

When you are speaking a foreign language there are times when the other person does not understand you, or you do not understand the other person – we can call this a ‘communication breakdown’.

Sometimes ‘communication breakdown’ is due to a grammar or vocabulary mistake and sometimes it is due to a pronunciation mistake. Just as you need to be able to analyse and correct your grammar and vocabulary mistakes you need to be able to analyse and correct your pronunciation mistakes.

It is not necessary to pronounce every sound perfectly to be understood – only a few parts of each sentence are really important, but these parts are essential. The native speaker depends on hearing these parts clearly, therefore you need to know which parts of a sentence must be clear and how to make them clear.

This book concentrates on elements of pronunciation which increase ‘intelligibility’, i.e. help you to understand and be understood in English.



marks the sections that are recorded on the cassettes.

PART 1: PRONUNCIATION

Name: Date:

Nationality:

Pronunciation test

The purpose of this test is to find which parts of English pronunciation may interfere with the way you understand and use spoken English. How you hear English is closely connected with how you speak English.

This test is recorded on the cassette.

A

How many syllables (beats) are there in these words?

Example:

beauty = 2 (beau-ty)

beautiful = 3 (beau-ti-ful)

Now listen and write down the number of syllables you hear in each word. You will hear each word twice.

- | | | | |
|-------------|-------|-------------|-------|
| 1 open | ..... | 4 closed | ..... |
| 2 difficult | ..... | 5 variation | ..... |
| 3 taxes | ..... |  |  |

B

Which syllable is prominent or stressed in these words?

Example:

Monday

tomorrow

education

Now listen and draw a line under the most strongly stressed syllable. You will hear each word twice.

- | | |
|---------------|---------------------|
| 1 participant | 4 photography |
| 2 photograph | 5 reliab <u>l</u> é |
| 3 November | |

C

Which syllables are not stressed (have weak sounds)?

Example:

- about
- atóm
- atómic

Now listen and draw a line through the weak sounds in each word.
You will hear each word twice.

- 1 banana 4 women
- 2 woman 5 Japan
- 3 Canada

D

Which word do you hear in these sentences?

Example:

- So, your name is
- i) Lampert, is it?
 - ii) Lambert X.....

Now listen and put a cross next to the word you hear:

- 1 That's i) Miss, isn't it?
- ii) Ms (mizz)
- 2 And you live at 22 i) Rishley Road.
- ii) Richley
- 3 And your name, sir, is i) Vinney, is that right?
- ii) Finney
- 4 And the address is 15 i) Boot Street.
- ii) Booth
- 5 That's in i) Axbridge, isn't it?
- ii) Haxbridge



Part 1: Pronunciation

E

Is the rhythm of these phrases the same or different? Listen to this example:

Trafalgar Square a cup of tea 'Same'

Now listen and decide if the the rhythm of the phrases on the left is the same (write S) as or different (write D) from the phrases on the right. You will hear each phrase once.

- | | | |
|--------------------|------------------|-------|
| 1 Oxford Circus | please be quiet | ..... |
| 2 Richmond Road | hurry up | ..... |
| 3 Victoria Station | a cup of tea | ..... |
| 4 Leicester Square | answer the phone | ..... |
| 5 Pall Mall | sit down | ..... |

F

Dictation. What are the missing words in these phrases?

Example:

She go. can't

He going. isn't

Now listen and write in the missing words. You will hear each sentence once.

- 1 She doesn't to do it now.
- 2 Please message.
- 3 think she'll come?
- 4 Where go?
- 5 How you been here?
- 6 busy?
- 7 call her at six?
- 8 What done?
- 9 I'm afraid at the moment.
- 10 told me if he'd known.

G

Which word has the most stress (prominence) in each sentence?

Example:

That's a great idea.

Now listen to the dialogue. Underline the most stressed word in each sentence. You will hear the dialogue once only.

A: What's the matter?

B: I've lost my hat.

A: What kind of hat?

B: It was a rain hat.

A: What colour rain hat?

B: It was white. White with stripes.

A: There was a white hat with stripes in the car.

B: Which car?

A: The one I sold!

H

Can you recognise groups of words? Two identical sentences may have a different interpretation.

Example:

John said, 'My father is here.'

'John,' said my father, 'is here.'

Now listen to one sentence from each of the following pairs. Put a cross next to the sentence you hear. You will hear it twice.

- 1 a) Alfred said, 'The boss is stupid.'
- b) 'Alfred,' said the boss, 'is stupid.'
- 2 a) He sold his houseboat and motorbike.
- b) He sold his house, boat and motorbike.
- 3 a) If you finish, quickly leave the room.
- b) If you finish quickly, leave the room.
- 4 a) Pressing the pedal slowly, push the lever forward.
- b) Pressing the pedal, slowly push the lever forward.
- 5 a) The passengers, who had blue boarding cards,
 were told to board the plane.
- b) The passengers who had blue boarding cards
 were told to board the plane.

Part 1: Pronunciation

The movement of our voice (pitch) can change the interpretation of sentences. Can you interpret the meaning of these sentences?

Example:


It was awful. (statement)

It was awful. (question)

Now listen to these sentences. Underline one of the two words or phrases in brackets that best interprets the meaning of each sentence. You will hear each sentence twice.

- 1 She left her glasses. (question / statement)
- 2 He's finished. (question / statement)
- 3 The number is 35547. (statement / contradiction)
- 4 It's 22 Hills Road. (statement / contradiction)
- 5 You're English, aren't you? (fairly sure / not very sure)
- 6 That's his sister, isn't it? (fairly sure / not very sure)
- 7 Really. (very interested / not very interested)
- 8 Thanks. (very interested / not very interested)
- 9 I like the garden. (enthusiastic / not very enthusiastic)
- 10 The kitchen is nice. (enthusiastic / not very enthusiastic)

1 Syllables

 The syllable is the basic unit of English pronunciation. Listen to the following words and notice how some of them have two or more parts or sounds.

<i>one syllable</i>	<i>two syllables</i>	<i>three syllables</i>
ease	easy	easily
will	willing	willingly

A

As you listen to the following words and phrases, count the number of syllables you hear.

<i>one syllable</i>	<i>two syllables</i>	<i>three syllables</i>	<i>four syllables</i>
I	seven	eleven	identity
my	eighteen	syllable	analysis
name	sentence	important	it's important
called	focus	emphasis	he wants a book
real	really	realise	reality

B

Say your name aloud and decide how many syllables there are in it. Do the same with the other members of the class.

C

Listen and practise saying these words, counting the syllables on your fingers. Be careful not to add or subtract syllables. Decide exactly how many syllables there are in the words in the third column.

<i>one syllable</i>	<i>two syllables</i>	<i>three or more syllables</i>
fun	funny	stupidly
sing	singer	sentences
write	writer	registration



Part 1: Pronunciation

<i>one syllable</i>	<i>two syllables</i>	<i>three or more syllables</i>
wind	windy	difficult
blow	below	economy
prayed	parade	economical
loud	aloud	classify
sticks	stickers	establishment
tasks	attack	astronomical

D 

Grammar mistakes are sometimes the result of not hearing the number of syllables. For example:

- a) They've rent(ed) a house.
- b) There are two dish(es).

1 Listen to the following words. Which have one syllable and which have two syllables?

painted	rented	added	caused
walked	worked	watched	started
landed	closed	folded	laughed

What is the rule? (See RULE CHECK on page 10.)

2 Listen to these sentences. Are they about the past or the present? Put a cross in the appropriate column.

	<i>Past</i>	<i>Present</i>
<i>Example:</i> The talk last(ed) for hours.	×	

- 1 They start(ed) at 10.00.
- 2 We often rent(ed) a house on holiday.
- 3 They regularly visit(ed) the cathedral at Christmas.
- 4 The teachers want(ed) a pay rise.
- 5 I intend(ed) to go shopping on Saturday.

3 Listen to the following words: Which words have one syllable and which have two?

causes	dishes	watches	cakes
rules	files	misses	pieces
mixes	changes	loves	prices

What is the rule? (See RULE CHECK on page 10.)

4 Listen to the sentences on the recording and decide which of the two words you hear.

Example: match / matches
The matches fell on the floor.

- 1 excuse / excuses
- 2 beach / beaches
- 3 finish / finishes
- 4 box / boxes
- 5 tax / taxes increase / increases

E 

Practise saying the following words and put them into the correct column, according to the number of syllables.

starts	extra	sentences	mixed
completed	little	scream	interfaces
stopped	mixes	sport	taxes
manages	started	uses	communication
advantages	hopes	support	international
castle	pieces	managed	
<i>one syllable</i>	<i>two syllables</i>	<i>three syllables</i>	<i>four or more syllables</i>
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

F 

Disappearing syllables. Sometimes in natural spoken English vowel contractions cause syllables to 'disappear' completely.

Look at these words. How many syllables would you expect in each word? Write the number down. Listen to the words and write down the number of syllables you actually hear.

	<i>Expected number</i>	<i>Actual number</i>
Example: medicine	3	2
1 chocolate
2 vegetable
3 comfortable
4 interesting
5 secretary
6 library

Part 1: Pronunciation

G



Dictation. Listen to these sentences and write the words that are missing.

- 1 The lovely.
- 2 The plane at eight.
- 3 Petrol last month.
- 4 Did you the Mosque?
- 5 She put in the suitcase.
- 6 They car.
- 7 yesterday.

Check your progress



1 Record yourself saying the following sentences several times. Then listen to the recording. Check the number of syllables very carefully. It is difficult to hear your own mistakes, but it is important.

- 1 'Can I have six oranges and two pieces of cheese ... oh ... and three boxes of dates please, one large and two small.'

Did you have three syllables for 'oranges', two for 'pieces' and 'boxes', and one for 'dates'?

- 2 'This is the first city they visited when they travelled around the country, and they liked it very much.'

Did you have two syllables for 'this is', 'city' and 'travelled', three syllables for 'visited' and one for 'liked'?

- 2 Now listen to the recorded extract of natural speech and write down what you hear.

Rule check

Rule 1

Regular past tense verbs that end in a 't' or 'd' sound in the basic form will add an extra syllable in the past tense.

Rule 2

Nouns and verbs ending in a hissing sound (i.e. a sibilant) have an extra syllable when an 's' is added.

Example: pass buzz box church change dish

2 Stress

In English some syllables are much more prominent than others. This prominence, or stress, is important to make speech clear. There are three main signals of stress:

- 1 Pitch change
- 2 Length of syllable
- 3 Vowel quality

Together, these signals make syllables sound louder.

Pitch change

When we speak our voice moves up and down. That is, it changes pitch. Look at this word:

ba^{na}na

Which syllable has the highest pitch?

A 

Listen to these words. Underline the syllable with the highest pitch.

quarter	admission
career	applicant
division	application
residence	education
requirements	information
professional	

B 

There are many words in English which are similar in other languages, but different syllables are stressed in different languages.

Part 1: Pronunciation

Listen to these words. Which syllable has the highest pitch?

Example: chocolate

cafeteria	orange
service	algebra
telephone	biology
theory	minister
president	

Syllable length

In English, some syllables are long and some are short. Syllables are extra long when they are prominent.

C 

Listen to these names:

Barbara Peter

Which syllable is the longest in each word?

D 

Listen and practise saying the following words, concentrating on the different duration (length in time) of the syllables.

statement	estate	solution	beautiful
Peter	repeat	tomato	easily
sign it	design	it's ready	open it
longer	along	he's busy	give me some

E 

Listen to these sentences and write down the words that are missing.

- 1 I hope you like it. I it
- 2 not here yet. He'll be in a
- 3 The agent was
- 4 Can you as soon as