

PRACTICE MATERIAL  
FOR THE  
ENGLISH SOUNDS

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BY

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## Preface

There are still far too few books of a purely practical kind on the pronunciation of English. This book will be of great value to all, both teachers and learners, who are concerned with obtaining a proper basis for spoken English.

In recent years, interest in English as a second or foreign language has been growing rapidly, but with the increase of numbers the standards of proficiency have been declining. There is more than ever a need for a work of this kind.

Mr. Tibbitts has been for many years professionally concerned with the teaching of English to foreign students and with language work for native English speakers. We should be very grateful that he has decided to publish this book based as it is upon his great experience.

F. R. PALMER

Department of Linguistics,  
University College of North Wales,  
Bangor.

## Introduction

The purposes of the present book are firstly to provide material for practice of the sounds in the "Received Pronunciation" of English, as described in Professor Daniel Jones' works quoted below.

Many of the exercises have been used in remedial work with British students who have had difficulty with a sound or a combination of sounds and also with foreign teachers and students.

Secondly, with notes and Index, the book is intended to help readers who have little knowledge of Phonetics to extend it by study of the various features of the sounds exemplified.

Thirdly, it is hoped that the work may be an aid to teachers of pronunciation in providing material for compiling further exercises on phonetic features from the words and phrases given here.

Various phonetic contexts are illustrated for each of the sounds. Exercises on the *principal* and *subsidiary* members of phonemes are included, e.g., the exercises on the t-phoneme have one (t 24) for the *dental* as well as those (t 1-4, etc.) for the *alveolar* varieties of the sound. The number of examples for the various members of the phonemes will help the ear more easily to recognise their acoustic differences.

Finally, the repeated occurrence of one phoneme in the sentences may help the teacher with little experience of Phonetics to discover more rapidly the particular difficulties of individual students. Apart from the simplest exercises, the work caters on the whole for those who have a knowledge of English and much should prove useful in remedial practice especially.

The notes accompanying the practice material are intended for consultation when difficulties are encountered in pronouncing the lists and sentences. They cover a selection of the more common causes of mispronunciation by foreign learners of English.

There are possible alternative pronunciations of many words. These are marked † in the text. The alternatives may be studied in Daniel Jones' *English Pronouncing Dictionary*, Dent, 1963. The same author's *Outline of English Phonetics*, Heffer, 1956, provides the basis of the index of the present book and frequent reference is made to it. The student is recommended to consult these two standard titles and the author acknowledges his very great indebtedness to them. It is hoped that the index, reinforced by the many practical examples, will help in the preliminary study of phonetic features.

A slow pronunciation is recommended for the earlier practice of the lists and sentences. In the later stages of practising, normal conversational speed should be aimed at. It is for this later practice that assimilations, elisions and the weakest forms of some words are indicated in the phonetic text. Sounds shown in italics should be omitted in rapid practice.

Special attention has been paid to the marking of the relative length of the long vowels as an item of very considerable importance for intelligibility.

The intonation suggested is, in general, of a fairly simple kind. It is shown by means of a selection of symbols from the system devised by Mr. R. Kingdon and described and used in full in his *Groundwork of English Intonation*, Longmans, 1958, and his *English Intonation Practice*, Longmans, 1958. In the

present work, the more subtle melodies of speech have been avoided in order to guard against unduly distracting the attention of learners from the sounds. The selection is therefore of those symbols which are appropriate to the less complex unemphatic and emphatic tunes.

The author wishes to express his indebtedness to Professor Daniel Jones, M.A., Dr.phil., LL.D., and to Mr. J. L. M. Trim, M.A., Lecturer in Phonetics in the University of Cambridge, for many valuable suggestions; to Mr. R. Kingdon, M.A., for his evaluation of the use of the Stress-Intonation symbols and to Professor F. R. Palmer, M.A., for his comment and his preface to this book.

E.L.T.

March, 1963

# List of Phonetic Symbols

## Vowels

1. i:	seed	ˈsi:d
2. i	sit	ˈsit
3. e	set	ˈset
4. æ	sat	ˈsæt
5. ɑ:	hard	ˈhɑ:d
6. ɒ	hot	ˈhɒt
7. ɔ:	sword	ˈsɔ:d
8. ū	soot	ˈsut
9. u:	food	ˈfu:d
10. ʌ	hut	ˈhʌt
11. ə:	heard	ˈhɑ:d
12. ə	banana	bəˈnɑ:nə
13. ei	hate	ˈheit
14. ou	boat	ˈbout
15. ai	height	ˈhait
16. au	out	ˈaut
17. ɔi	choice	ˈtʃɔis
18. iə	fierce	ˈfiəs
19. eə	scarce	ˈskeəs
20. ɔə	coarse	ˈkɔəs
(Often replaced by ɔ:)		
21. uə	fluent	ˈfluənt
22. iə	curious	ˈkjuəriəs†
(Always unstressed)		
23. ũə	arduous	ˈɑːdjuəs
(Always unstressed)		

## Consonants

p	pea	ˈpi:
t	tea	ˈti:
k	key	ˈki:
b	bee	ˈbi:
d	deed	ˈdi:d
g	gay	ˈgei
tʃ	cheese	ˈtʃi:z
dʒ	judge	ˈdʒʌdʒ
f	five	ˈfaiv
θ	thigh	ˈθai
s	sigh	ˈsai
ʃ	shy	ˈjai
h	huge	ˈcu:dʒ)
h	high	ˈhai
v	vine	ˈvain
ð	these	ˈði:z
z	zeal	ˈzi:l
ʒ	measure	ˈmeʒə
r	read	ˈri:d
m	meal	ˈmi:l
n	kneel	ˈni:l
ŋ	king	ˈkiŋ
l	lean	ˈli:n
j	year	ˈjiə†
ʍ	wheel	ˈmi:l)
w	west	ˈwest

Syllabic symbol, e.g., *n* button [ˈbʌtn¹].

Sounds shown in italics should be omitted in rapid practice.

: denotes the full length of a pure vowel, e.g., ˈsi:

˙ (immediately following the vowel symbol) denotes half-length of a pure vowel, e.g., ˈsɪt.

◌ denotes a devoiced sound.

~ denotes a nasal vowel, e.g., *gendarme* [ʒɑ̃ˈnːdɑ:m†].

~ denotes linking of words in lists where a reader is likely to separate consonants.

¹ The word ˈbʌtn shows a normal use of syllabic *n*. In the phonetic texts its use is restricted to unusual cases or where its absence would lead to ambiguity, e.g., *any* [ˈni].



# List of Stress-Intonation Symbols

High Rising Normal	ˈm	Low Rising Normal	m
High Falling Normal	ˈm	Low Falling Normal	m
High Falling Emphatic	ˈm	Low Falling Emphatic	m
High Falling-Rising Normal	ˈm		
Low Falling-Rising Normal	ˈm		
High Falling-Rising Emphatic	ˈm		
High Level Tone Normal	ˈm		
Low Level Tone Normal	ˈm		
High Level Tone Emphatic	ˈm		

ˈ between Emphatic marks denotes a lower pitch as does ˈ between the Normal symbols.

The symbol ˈ following a rising pitch denotes partial stress and continuation of the rising tune to the end of the phrase or sentence.

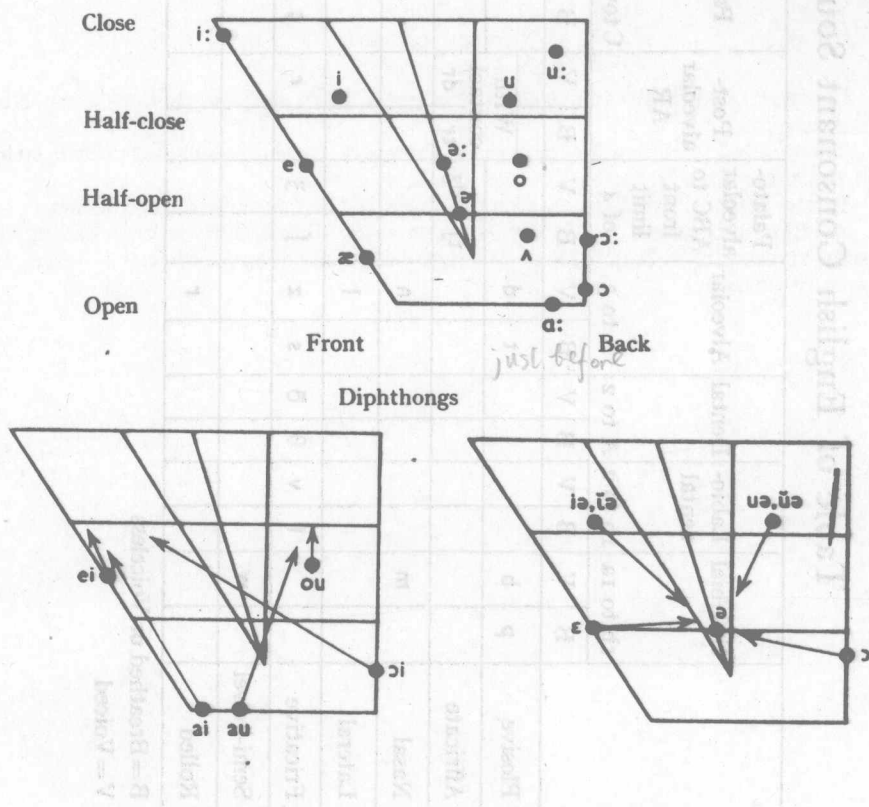
In the phonetic texts, syllables preceded by ˈ have only partial stress.

A falling intonation ˈ has been suggested for almost all the words having the main stress in the lists. In very many cases, however, alternative tunes are equally possible.

# The English Vowel Sounds

Approximate positions (or movements) of the highest point of the tongue in producing the English vowels.

Jaw-opening and Lip-positions—See *Index*.





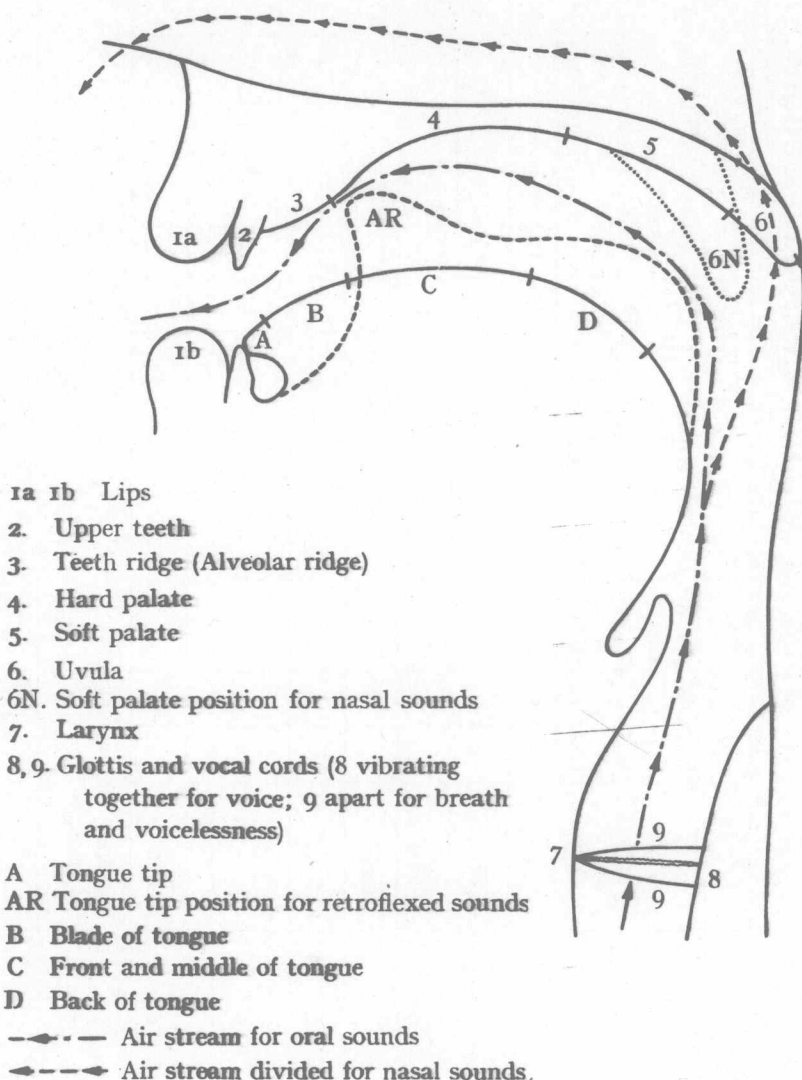
# Table of English Consonant Sounds

	Bi-labial		Labio-dental		Dental		Alveolar		Palato-alveolar ABC to front limit of 4		Post-alveolar AR		Palatal		Velar		Glottal	
	Ib to Ia		Ib to 2		A to 2		A to 3						C towards 4		D to 5		7	
	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V	B	V		
Plosive	p	b					t	d			With contact					k	g	ʔ
Affricate									tʃ	dʒ	tr	dr						
Nasal		m						n									ŋ	
Lateral								l										
Fricative			f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ		r	ʃ					h
Semi-vowel		w												j		ɹ	w	
Rolled								r										

B = Breathed or Voiceless

V = Voiced

## Approximate Positions of the Speech Organs for the English Consonants



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## THE VOWEL SOUNDS

Vowel I (long pure vowel)

1. bee	2. lead	3. bean	4. lean
key	lead	bean	lean
three	lead	bean	lean
pear	lead	bean	lean
sea	lead	bean	lean
tea	lead	bean	lean
5. deal	6. clean	7. beat	8. creep
lead	clean	beat	creep
heel	clean	beat	creep
peel	clean	beat	creep
meal	clean	beat	creep
seal	clean	beat	creep

9. (i) The sheet of steel was heated by the steam.  
(ii) Three degrees to the east.  
(iii) Eat the peaches and cream.  
(iv) Geese were feeding beneath the trees.  
(v) He seems to be even keener.  
(vi) Three feet by three feet.  
(vii) The sheep ate in the wheatfield.  
(viii) The teacher repeated the speech.  
(ix) We need to clean the heater.  
(x) It feeds on green leaves.

## THE VOWEL SOUNDS

*Vowel 1 (long pure vowel)*

1. bee	2. feed	3. bean	4. leaned
key	lead	clean	cleaned
knee	need	green	steamed
pea	read	mean	screened
sea	seed	seem	seemed
tea	speed	team	streamed
5. deal	6. cleaner	7. beat	8. creeper
feel	feeder	leaf	deeper
heel	meaner	meat	sleeper
peel	leader	niece	steeper
meal	eager	piece	heater
seal	greener	seat	neater

9. (i) The sheet of steel was heated by the steam.  
 (ii) Three degrees to the east  
 (iii) Eat the peaches and cream.  
 (iv) Geese were feeding beneath the trees.  
 (v) He seems to be even keener.  
 (vi) Three feet by three feet  
 (vii) The sheep are in the wheatfield.  
 (viii) The teacher repeated the speech.  
 (ix) We need to clean the heater.  
 (x) It feeds on green leaves.

'vaʊəl' 'wan ('lɒŋ 'pjuːt, 'vaʊəl')

- |          |            |          |            |
|----------|------------|----------|------------|
| 1. 'bi:  | 2. 'fi:d   | 3. 'bi:n | 4. 'li:nd  |
| 'ki:     | 'li:d      | 'kli:n   | 'kli:nd    |
| 'ni:     | 'ni:d      | 'gri:n   | 'sti:md    |
| 'pi:     | 'ri:d      | 'mi:n    | 'skri:nd   |
| 'si:     | 'si:d      | 'si:m    | 'si:md     |
| 'ti:     | 'spi:d     | 'ti:m    | 'stri:md   |
| 5. 'di:l | 6. 'kli:nə | 7. 'bi:t | 8. 'kri:pə |
| 'fi:l    | 'fi:də     | 'li:f    | 'di:pə     |
| 'hi:l    | 'mi:nə     | 'mi:t    | 'sli:pə    |
| 'pi:l    | 'li:də     | 'ni:s    | 'sti:pə    |
| 'mi:l    | 'i:gə      | 'pi:s    | 'hi:tə     |
| 'si:l    | 'gri:nə    | 'si:t    | 'ni:tə     |

9. (i) ðə 'fɪt əv 'sti:l wəz 'hi:tɪd baɪ ðə 'sti:m.  
 (ii) 'θri: di'grɪz tə ði 'ɪst  
 (iii) 'ɪt ðə 'pɪtʃɪz ənd 'krɪm.  
 (iv) 'gi:s wə 'fi:diŋ bi:nɪθ ðə 'tri:z.  
 (v) hi: (hi) 'si:mz tə bi: (bi) 'i:vən 'ki:nə.  
 (vi) 'θri: 'fɪt baɪ 'θri: 'fɪt  
 (vii) ðə 'fi:p ər ɪn ðə 'wi:tʃfɪld.  
 (viii) ðə 'ti:tʃə ri'pɪtɪd ðə 'spɪtʃ.  
 (ix) wi: (wi) 'ni:d tə 'kli:n ðə 'hi:tə.  
 (x) ɪt 'fi:dz ɒn 'gri:n 'li:vz.

sem ɔ:l'tə'nətiʊt fɔ:ɪmz.

- |   |                                       |                        |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------|
| (i) (a) - - - - -                         | (b) - - - - -                         | (c) - - - - - ,sti:m   |
| (d) - - - - - ,sti:l 'wɔ:z                | - - - - - ,sti:m                      | - - - - -              |
| (ii) (a) - - - - - ,di'grɪz               | (b) ,θri: di'grɪz                     | (c) - - - - - ,di'grɪz |
| (iii) (a) - - - - -                       | (b) - - - - -                         | (c) - - - - -          |
| (iv) (a) - - - - -                        | (b) - - - - -                         | (c) - - - - -          |
| (v) (a) - - - - - ,si:mz                  | (b) - - - - - ,si:mz                  | (c) - - - - -          |
| (d) "hi: 'si:mz                           | - - - - -                             | - - - - -              |
| (vi) (a) - - - - -                        | (b) ,θri: - - - - - ,θri: -           | - - - - -              |
| (vii) (a) - - - - -                       | (b) - - - - - ,aɪr                    | - - - - -              |
| (viii) (a) - - - - -                      | (b) - - - - -                         | (c) - - - - -          |
| (ix) (a) - - - - - ,ni:d - - - - - ,kli:n | (b) - - - - - ,kli:n                  | - - - - -              |
| (x) (a) - - - - - ,fi:dz                  | (b) - - - - - ,fi:dz - - - - - ,li:vz | - - - - -              |

wɔ: dɔ: gɔ: t. s. pɔ:



## Vowel 2 (short pure vowel)

- |        |        |         |           |           |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. big | 2. him | 3. bill | 4. killer | 5. dimmer |
| did    | limb   | fill    | liver     | dinner    |
| fig    | pin    | kill    | miller    | finish    |
| give   | sin    | pill    | mirror    | limit     |
| lid    | tin    | still   | river     | sinner    |
| pig    | win    | till    | shiver    | winner    |
- 
- |         |         |           |            |
|---------|---------|-----------|------------|
| 6. lick | 7. city | 8. dishes | 9. the egg |
| list    | misty   | finished  | the ant    |
| miss    | pity    | lifted    | the aunt   |
| pick    | pretty  | wishes    | the earth  |
| sit     | sticky  | ticket    | the age    |
| tip     | witty   | thicket   | the eye    |
- 
10. (i) Is this printing-ink?  
 (ii) Fit six bricks in this tin.  
 (iii) This is an interesting system.  
 (iv) I think it'll fit.  
 (v) It's a pity they missed the outing.  
 (vi) Bill-sticking prohibited  
 (vii) A visit to the windmill  
 (viii) Finish pinning on the tickets.  
 (ix) It's a pity it's misty.  
 (x) The kitten's sitting near the river.

**Note:** Many learners of English fail to distinguish sufficiently between the vowels *i:* and *i*. Particular attention should be given to this point. Some teachers achieve good results by describing *i:* as a relatively *tense* vowel, i.e., a vowel pronounced with some degree of muscular effort, whereas *i* is considered a *lax* vowel which "may be acquired by trying to pronounce the sound in a slack sort of way, or by making it more like *e*".<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> D.J., *Outline*, § 258.

'vaʊəltʃ 'tu: ('fɔ:t 'pju:əltʃ 'vaʊəltʃ)

1. 'big  
'did  
'fig  
'giv  
'lid  
'pig

2. 'himt  
'lim  
'pin  
'sin  
'tin  
'win

3. 'bil  
'fil  
'kil  
'pil  
'stil  
'til

4. 'kilə  
'live  
'mile  
'mirə  
'rive  
'five

5. 'dimə  
'dina  
'finif  
'limit  
'sine  
'wine

6. 'lik  
'list  
'mis  
'pik  
'sit  
'tip

7. 'siti  
'misti  
'piti  
'piti  
'stiki  
'witi

8. 'difiz  
'finift  
'liftid  
'wifiz  
'tikit  
'θikit

9. 'ði 'eg  
'ði 'ænt  
'ði 'a:nt  
'ði 'ə-θ  
'ði 'eidz  
'ði 'ai

10. (i) iz 'dis 'printɪŋ-ɪŋk?  
(ii) 'fit 'siks 'briks in 'ðis 'tin.  
(iii) 'dis iz ən 'intrɪstɪŋt 'sɪstɪmt.  
(iv) ai 'θɪŋk it l 'fit.  
(v) it s ə 'piti 'dei 'mɪst 'ði 'aʊtɪŋ.  
(vi) 'bɪl'stɪkɪŋ prə'hɪbɪtɪd  
(vii) ə 'vɪzɪt tə ðə 'wɪndəmɪl  
(viii) 'fɪnɪf 'pɪnɪŋ ɒn ðə 'tɪkɪts.  
(ix) it s ə 'piti it s 'mɪsti.  
(x) ðə 'kɪtn z 'sɪtɪŋ 'niə ðə 'rɪvə.

sem ɔ:l'tə'nətvʃ 'fɔ:mz

- (i) (a) ---  
(ii) (a) ---  
(iii) (a) ---  
(iv) (a) ---  
(v) (a) ---  
(vii) (a) ---  
(viii) (a) ---  
(ix) (a) ---  
(x) (a) ---

- (b) ---  
(b) ---  
(b) ---  
(b) ---  
(b) ---  
(b) ---  
(b) ---  
(b) ---  
(b) ---

- (c) ---  
(c) ---  
(c) ---  
(c) ---  
(c) ---  
(c) ---  
(c) ---  
(c) ---  
(c) ---

*Vowel 3 (short pure vowel)*

- |        |        |         |            |
|--------|--------|---------|------------|
| 1. bed | 2. hen | 3. bell | 4. feather |
| head   | men    | fell    | leather    |
| led    | pen    | sell    | ever       |
| leg    | ten    | spell   | measure    |
| red    | when   | tell    | treasure   |
| said   | stem   | well    | weather    |
- 
- |           |          |        |           |
|-----------|----------|--------|-----------|
| 5. mender | 6. heavy | 7. get | 8. better |
| sender    | jelly    | let    | deaf      |
| splendour | many     | neck   | letter    |
| tender    | penny    | nest   | debtor    |
| November  | ready    | net    | wetter    |
| September | steady   | wet    | wrecker   |
- 
9. (i) Fetch the eggs from the nest.  
 (ii) There are ten pennies on the desk.  
 (iii) Send a messenger with the letter.  
 (iv) The beds in the tent are wet.  
 (v) Don't spend every penny you get.  
 (vi) Attempt twelve questions in the test.  
 (vii) Mend the fence when the weather's better.  
 (viii) The heavier, the better.  
 (ix) In the end, there were ten dresses left.  
 (x) You'll get well again if you have plenty of rest.