

*Colloquial
English
Pronunciation*



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BY

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Foreword

by

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Although there are already a number of books in existence designed to help foreign learners in the task of acquiring a good pronunciation of English, there is still room for a manual of the present type, in which an attempt is made to supply, as far as possible, a teacher's practical assistance to those who have to work on their own. Special attention is given to exercises suitable for overcoming common difficulties of pronunciation, with clear descriptions of the right way to practise them. Emphasis is laid on uttering not only isolated words, but especially whole phrases and sentences with fluency and correct rhythm.

Mr. Pring, who is a skilled phonetician, is well qualified to write such a book, as he has been teaching English on phonetic lines for nearly twenty years. I can strongly recommend his present work.

London, 30th April, 1958

DANIEL JONES

Introduction

This book has been written to help foreign students of English pronunciation. Its purpose is to show how to put sounds together in words, and words together in sentences. It explains the *variations* of sound which occur in continuous speech, and which give special difficulty to foreign learners. The emphasis is mainly on *groups of words*, because fluency in a new language is gained by working in whole phrases rather than single words.

It is a well-known difficulty of English that the spelling is not always a clear guide to the pronunciation. This is not because English spelling is bad. On the contrary, it is a presentation of the language which no other scheme of description can hope to approach in subtlety and comprehensiveness. If English is widely known throughout the world, that is made possible by the rationalising power of its spelling, which transcends the disintegrating effect of so many dialects and accents, and stands as a constant beacon of unity amid diversity.

But in order to represent all forms of pronunciation, spelling must be sufficiently detached from each particular one. This may cause perplexities for the learner. He is, therefore, likely to benefit by the use of phonetic transcriptions, which not only remind him of the right pronunciation, but also mark variations which are not shown by the spelling.

In this book, all the exercises are given in ordinary spelling and phonetic spelling, side by side. It is not meant for beginners, and you are expected to have some

idea of the sounds of English. But you need not have any previous knowledge of phonetics. The basic values of the phonetic symbols can quickly be learnt from the table at the beginning; and the gramophone records give you a model of the sounds whenever you wish to hear them. The phonetic transcription is the same as that which is used in two standard works: *An Outline of English Phonetics* and *An English Pronouncing Dictionary* by Daniel Jones. The pronunciation recommended is a type of 'standard southern English', which means the speech of an educated person having no marked regional characteristics. It should, of course, be remembered that other forms of pronunciation may exist, beside the ones mentioned in the book.

Although phonetic spelling tells us some things which the ordinary spelling does not, yet even so it does not tell us all we need to know about pronunciation. It shows the order in which sounds occur, but it does not mark all the variations that arise when we put them together in words. You must realise that a 'sound' may vary in quality according to its position in a word (for example, *title* has two different t-sounds, and *level* has two different l-sounds). So, in addition to knowing the basic sounds of English, you must also learn how they are modified by their situation.

Many students are too much influenced by writing when they try to speak a foreign language. They transfer the written words, one by one, into speech in a laborious and unnatural manner. That is not good enough. When you have understood the word-for-word structure of a sentence, you must then perform a creative act, moulding the words into phrases that follow the natural flow of living speech. Then you will not only speak as you ought, but you will feel an artist's satisfaction in

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something well done. Do not imagine this to be impossibly difficult. Three things are necessary: (i) you must listen to native speakers of English, or some equally good model; (ii) you must understand the phonetic structure of the language, and its relation to writing; (iii) you must practise intelligently.

It is easy to waste time in wrong practice. There is always a danger of this when the student works alone; and so this book tries to give specially clear instructions about what to do when you practise. Do not attempt to work if you are feeling tired or tense. You should only undertake these exercises in a calm, relaxed frame of mind. Use a mirror to watch your tongue and lips, and learn to make various movements without tightening your jaws and throat. Think analytically about the articulation of each single sound; and when you find a difficult passage, tackle the obstacles one at a time. Do not keep on saying a whole phrase or sentence with the same mistakes every time; but isolate each crucial junction or sequence of sounds in turn, and work on it until it is mastered. Repeat the passage as slowly as you like, but firmly and evenly. First, say the parts separately, then put them together. In doing this you will work much as you would in practising music. Ignore conventional divisions into words and bars—that is, do not stop at the end of a word just because it *is* the end. If the noises run on, you must run on with them. Never be in a hurry, but let your utterance be controlled and deliberate. Increasing speed to normal should be the last stage of the exercise.

Finally, remember that no one else can change your pronunciation for you. Others may advise you what to do: you alone can carry it out.

Gramophone Records

A set of two double-sided seven-inch gramophone records has been made of certain passages from this book. They are spoken by the author as a model of the pronunciation described.



The signs ➤ and ➤ are placed in the text to mark the beginning and end, respectively, of each recorded extract. The passages are as follows.

SIDE 1

The Sounds of English (*pages 1-2*)
Vowel Practice (*pages 4, 8-9, 10*)

SIDE 2

Exercises in Weak Forms (*pages 40, 41-43, 45, 46, 49*)

SIDE 3

Grouping of Words (*pages 58-59, 61, 62, 63-64*)

SIDE 4

Analysis of a Passage, Sentence by Sentence (*pages 64-67*)

The set of records, speed $33\frac{1}{3}$ r.p.m., is published by Longmans and obtainable through any bookseller.

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I

The Sounds of English

> Vowels			Diphthongs		
symbol	keyword		symbol	keyword	
1. i:	deed	di:d	13. ei	aid	eid
2. i	give	gɪv	14. ou	goes	gouz
3. e	bed	bed	15. ai	five	faɪv
4. æ	black	blæk	16. au	loud	laud
5. ɑ:	laugh	lɑ:f	17. ɔɪ	voice	vɔɪs
6. ɔ	odd	ɔd	18. iə	dear	dɪə
7. ɔ:	bought	bɔ:t	19. ɛə	dare	dɛə
8. u	good	gud	20. ɔə	door	dɔə
9. u:	lose	lu:z	21. uə	tour	tʊə
10. ʌ	love	lʌv			
11. ə:	bird	bɜ:d			
12. ə	china	'tʃaɪnə			

Semivowels

j	yes	jes
w	wet	wet

COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

Consonants

p	pass	pa:s	f	face	feis
b	bus	bʌs	v	vote	vout
t	tie	tai	θ	thick	θik
d	do	du:	ð	this	ðis
k	car	kɑ:	s	see	si:
g	go	gou	z	zoo	zu:
m	miss	mis	ʃ	shoe	ʃu:
n	now	nau	ʒ	pleasure	'pleʒə
ŋ	sing	siŋ	tʃ	chin	tʃin
l	let	let	dʒ	just	dʒʌst
	tell	tel	h	heart	ha:t
r	rest	rest			◀

The consonants are grouped as follows:

Plosive

p b t d k g

Nasal

m n ŋ

Liquid { *lateral*
r-sounds

l

r

Fricative

f v θ ð s z ʃ ʒ h

Affricative

tʃ dʒ

Voiced consonants:

b d g m n ŋ l r v ð z ʒ dʒ

Voiceless consonants:

p t k f θ s ʃ h tʃ

The sign : is an indication of length. Placed after a vowel symbol, it shows that that vowel is longer than one which is not so marked.

Stress-accent is shown by the sign ' placed immediately before the stressed syllable.

2

Vowels and Diphthongs

(i) i e æ ʊ ʌ ə (the 'short' vowels) are relatively shorter than i: ɑ: ɔ: u: ə: (the 'long' vowels). Diphthongs are equal in length to the 'long' vowels. No word ends in e, æ, ʊ or ʌ. ə is almost always unstressed.

(ii) The actual length of a vowel depends on its situation in a word or phrase. Unstressed i and ə are usually very short when they occur immediately before a stressed syllable, ex: *begin* bi'gin, *eleven* i'levn, *today* tə'dei, *about* ə'baut, *a man* ə'mæn, *the boy* ðə'boi. Apart from this, the 'short' vowels are not extremely short. It is a common mistake to make the vowel too short and the final consonant too long in words like: *big* big, *get* get, *that* ðæt, *not* nɒt, *top* tɒp, *back* bæk, *yes* jes, *good* gud, *off* ɔf. Other variations of length are noticed in the long vowels and diphthongs, as follows.

(a) They are shorter when unstressed than when stressed:

i: is shorter in *concrete* 'kɒŋkri:t than in *discreet* dis'kri:t

ɔ: is shorter in *record* 'rekɔ:d than in *record* ri'kɔ:d

ou is shorter in *yellow* 'jelou than in *below* bi'lou.

(b) They are shorter in stressed syllables immediately followed by unstressed syllables than in those which are not so followed:

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a: is shorter in *father* 'fɑ:ðə than in *far* fɑ:

u: is shorter in *do it* 'du:it than in *do* du:

ei is shorter in *navy* 'neivi than in *nave* neiv

(c) They are shorter before voiceless consonants than before voiced ones:

ə: is shorter in *hurt* hə:t than in *heard* hə:d

ai is shorter in *wife* waif than in *wine* wain

iə is shorter in *pierce* piəs than in *piers* piəz

Avoid making the vowel too long in words like: *both* bouθ, *teeth* ti:θ, *youth* ju:θ, *most* moust, *feast* fi:st, *taught* tɔ:t.

(iii) In three pairs of vowels there is a double distinction of quality and length. They are i:—i, ɔ:—ɔ, and u:—u. Practise the following:

➤ week	wi:k	wick	wik
leave	li:v	live	liv
sheep	ʃi:p	ship	ʃip
green	gri:n	grin	grin
feel	fi:l	fill	fil
caught	kɔ:t	cot	kɒt
dawn	dɔ:n	don	dɒn
short	ʃɔ:t	shot	ʃɒt
forks	fɔ:ks	fox	fɒks
wars	wɔ:z	was	wɒz
food	fu:d	good	gud
boot	bu:t	foot	fut
Luke	lu:k	look	luk
wooded	wu:d	wood	wud
fool	fu:l	full	ful

(iv) In a diphthong, two vowel sounds are joined together to make a single syllable. The jaw, tongue and lips perform a gliding movement from the first element of

VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS

the diphthong to the second. But when we say a simple vowel sound, the jaw, tongue and lips do not move while we are uttering it. It is important to observe this difference. Be especially careful to see that *ei* and *ou* are really diphthongal. Say the diphthong several times, smoothly, without a break in the chain of sound:

ei—ei—ei—ei—ei
ou—ou—ou—ou—ou

Watch your mouth in a mirror as you do this. You ought to see a clear movement of the jaw and lips with each repetition of the sound. If you cannot see any such movement, you are not making the diphthong properly. Now repeat a simple vowel in the same way:

ɔ:—ɔ:—ɔ:—ɔ:—ɔ:
ə:—ə:—ə:—ə:—ə:
e—e—e—e—e

This time you ought not to see any movement of the jaw and lips. If you can see such a movement, you are not making the simple vowel properly.

(v) In the diphthongs of English the first element is more prominent than the second, and we have a feeling that the pressure falls towards the end of the glide. In *ei ai ɔi* do not let the *i* be too conspicuous. Remember that this second element is not a very close vowel. It ought to suggest the *i* of *bit* rather than the *i:* of *beat*. When you practise *ai* and *ɔi* it may be helpful to aim at something resembling *ae* and *ɔe*.

In practising *ou*, remember that the first element is very similar to the *ə:* of *bird*. Thus the first part of *boat* sounds rather like the first part of *bird*. Aim at saying *əu*, and do not let it sound too much like *ɔu*, *au* or *eu*. You may practise the diphthong in two parts, and gradually run them together:

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boat	bə:—ut	bəut
go	gə:—u	gəu
home	hə:—um	həum

(vi) In making iə ə ɔə uə be sure that the second element is sufficiently open. It is, in fact, rather like the ʌ of *love*, and in practice you might aim at iʌ əʌ ɔʌ uʌ. Be sure also that the first element ɛ of ɛə is more open than the e of *get*. It is, in fact, rather like the æ of *bad*.

(vii) Some people do not use the diphthong ɔə, but replace it with the simple vowel ɔ:. These people do not distinguish between *saw* and *sore*, or between *paw* and *pour*, or between *sawed* and *sword*. Some other people, however, do distinguish between these words, as follows:

saw	sɔ:	sore, soar	sɔə
paw	pɔ:	pore, pour	pɔə
sawed	sɔ:d	sword, soared	sɔəd
laud	lɔ:d	lord	lɔəd

When ɔə is used, it is most noticeable at the end of words terminating in *-r* and *-re*, or in stressed syllables when a voiced consonant follows. If a voiceless consonant follows, the simple vowel ɔ: is often used:

fought, fort	fɔ:t
sauce, source	sɔ:s
stalk, stork	stɔ:k

(viii) Avoid using the following sound sequences:

ai	} + r + vowel
au	
u:	
i:	

In each case it is usual to insert ə before the r, so that the sequence becomes:

VOWELS AND DIPHTHONGS

$$\left. \begin{array}{l} a\text{ɪ} \\ a\text{u} \\ u \\ i \end{array} \right\} + r + \text{vowel}$$

Examples

Irish	'aɪərɪʃ	<i>not</i>	'aɪrɪʃ
tiring	'taɪərɪŋ	<i>not</i>	'taɪrɪŋ
inquiry	ɪŋ'kwaɪəri	<i>not</i>	ɪŋ'kwairɪ
irony	'aɪərəni	<i>not</i>	'aɪrəni
Cairo	'kaɪərou	<i>not</i>	'kairou
Byron	'baɪərən	<i>not</i>	'bairən
floury	'flauəri	<i>not</i>	'flaurɪ
devouring	dɪ'vauərɪŋ	<i>not</i>	dɪ'vaurɪŋ
scourer	'skauərə	<i>not</i>	'skaurə
our own	auər'oun	<i>not</i>	aur'oun
during	'dʒuərɪŋ	<i>not</i>	'dʒu:rɪŋ
curious	'kjuəriəs	<i>not</i>	'kju:riəs
purity	'pjuərɪtɪ	<i>not</i>	'pju:ritɪ
jury	'dʒuəri	<i>not</i>	'dʒu:ri
Europe	'juərəp	<i>not</i>	'ju:rəp
tourist	'tuərɪst	<i>not</i>	'tu:rist
period	'piəriəd	<i>not</i>	'pi:riəd
hero	'hiərou	<i>not</i>	'hi:rou
mysterious	mɪs'tiəriəs	<i>not</i>	mɪs'tɪ:riəs
serious	'siəriəs	<i>not</i>	'sɪ:riəs
cheery	'tʃiəri	<i>not</i>	'tʃɪ:ri
engineering	endʒɪ'niəriŋ	<i>not</i>	endʒɪ'ni:rɪŋ

It is a very common mistake to use the pronunciation shown in the last column. You should be on the watch for this in words spelt with *ir-*, *yr-*, *our-*, *ur-*, *er-*, *eer-*.

(ix) Take special care to distinguish between the following groups of vowels:

COLLOQUIAL ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION

ɔ			æ	ʌ	ɑ:
cat	cut	cart	kæt	kʌt	kɑ:t
cap	cup	carp	kæp	kʌp	kɑ:p
bad	bud	bard	bæd	bʌd	bɑ:d
badge	budge	barge	bædʒ	bʌdʒ	bɑ:dʒ
match	much	march	mætʃ	mʌtʃ	mɑ:tʃ
ban	bun	barn	bæn	bʌn	bɑ:n
ham	hum	harm	hæm	hʌm	hɑ:m

		ʌ	ɔ
dug	dog	dʌg	dɔg
nut	not	nʌt	nɔt
shut	shot	ʃʌt	ʃɔt
luck	lock	lʌk	lɔk
cuff	cough	kʌf	kɔf
one, won	want	wʌn	wɔnt
done	don	dʌn	dɔn
gun	gone	gʌn	gɔn
colour	collar	'kʌlə	'kɔlə
worry	sorry	'wʌrɪ	'sɔrɪ
wonder	wander	'wʌndə	'wɔndə
monkey	donkey	'mʌŋki	'dɔŋki
dull	doll	dʌl	dɔl

		ə:	ɔ:
work	walk	wə:k	wɔ:k
world	worn, warn	wə:ld	wɔ:n
worth	sworn	wə:θ	swɔ:n
worm	warm	wə:m	wɔ:m
word	ward	wə:d	wɔ:d
burn	born, borne	bə:n	bɔ:n
turn	torn	tə:n	tɔ:n
Turk	talk	tə:k	tɔ:k
curt	court, caught	kə:t	kɔ:t

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saw	so, sew	ɔ:	qu
law	low	ɔ:	sou
Shaw	show	ɔ:	lou
paws	pose	ɔ:	jou
claws	close	ɔ:z	pouz
drawn	drone	klɔ:z	klouz
gnawing	knowing	drɔ:n	droun
cause	cosy	'nɔ:ɪŋ	'nouɪŋ
caught	coat	ɔ:z	'kouzi
bought	boat	k:t	kout
ought	oats	b:t	bout
broad	road	ɔ:t	outs
haul	hole, whole	brɔ:d	roud
tall	toll	hɔ:l	houl
ball	bowl	tɔ:l	toul
bald	bold	bɔ:l	boul
Paul	Pole, poll	bɔ:ld	bould
paltry	poultry	pɔ:l	poul
		'pɔ:ltri	'poultri

Notice the various pronunciation of these words:

bow (knot, weapon or musical instrument): bou
(other senses): bau

row (noise, dispute): rau
(other senses): rou

sow (to plant seed): sou
(female pig): sau

(x) Dark l may affect the quality of a preceding vowel, by causing it to be articulated further back or lower in the mouth. But you must not allow the quality of the vowel to be changed beyond recognition. Say these