

DICTIONARY  
OF MODERN  
PRONUNCIATION

*BY NORMAN LEWIS*

*Dictionary of*  
*MODERN*  
*PRONUNCIATION*

NORMAN LEWIS

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# MAJOR PRONUNCIATION CATEGORIES

- |                |                      |                |
|----------------|----------------------|----------------|
| 1. A-          | 34. -ANGE            | 66. BU-        |
| 2. AA-         | 35. -ANT             | 67. C-, SILENT |
| 3. AB-         | 36. -ANTE            | 68. CA-        |
| 4. -ABLE       | 37. ANTI-            | 69. CC-        |
| 5. -AC         | 38. AO-              | 70. CE-        |
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| 8. -ACY        | 41. ARCH-            | 73. CO-        |
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| 10. -ADA       | 43. -ARILY           | 75. COR-       |
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| 12. -ADO       | 45. -AS              | 77. CY-        |
| 13. AE-        | 46. -ASH             | 78. CZ-        |
| 14. AER-       | 47. -ASS             | 79. D-         |
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| 16. -AGA       | 49. -AST             | 81. DE-        |
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| 19. -AH        | 52. -ATA             | 84. DU-        |
| 20. -AI        | 53. -ATE             | 85. E-         |
| 21. AL-        | 54. -ATIVE           | 86. EA-        |
| 22. Á LA, Á L' | 55. -ATO             | 87. -EAL       |
| 23. -ALE       | 56. -ATR             | 88. -EAN       |
| 24. -ALK       | 57. -AU              | 89. -EAU       |
| 25. -ALM       | 58. -AV              | 90. -ED        |
| 26. -ALOGY     | 59. -AW              | 91. -EE        |
| 27. -ALV       | 60. -AY              | 92. -EI        |
| 28. -AM        | 61. B-               | 93. -EITY      |
| 29. -AMA       | 62. BE-              | 94. -EL        |
| 30. -AN        | 63. -BERRY           | 95. -EM        |
| 31. -ANA       | 64. BI-              | 96. EN-        |
| 32. -ANCE      | 65. BRITISH<br>NAMES | 97. -ENCE      |
| 33. -AND       |                      | 98. -END       |

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| 102. | -EO       | 141. | -IAL      | 181. | -ISE       |
| 103. | -EOUS     | 142. | -IALITY   | 182. | -ISEMENT,  |
| 104. | -ER       | 143. | -IAN      |      | -IZEMENT   |
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| 120. | -FICENCE, | 159. | -IFUL     | 200. | -LUNGED    |
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| 122. | G-        | 162. | -IL       | 203. | -METER     |
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| 124. | GE-       | 164. | -ILITY    | 205. | MI-        |
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| 133. | -GUE      | 173. | -INGE     |      | -OCK       |
| 134. | -GY       | 174. | -INITY    | 214. | -OCRACY    |
| 135. | H-        | 175. | -IO       | 215. | -OD        |
| 136. | HEL-      | 176. | -ION      | 216. | -OE        |
| 137. | I-        | 177. | -IOUS     | 217. | -OFF       |

|      |                |      |                |      |                |
|------|----------------|------|----------------|------|----------------|
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| 219. | <b>-OG</b>     | 249. | <b>PRE-</b>    | 279. | <b>TH-</b>     |
| 220. | <b>-OI</b>     | 250. | <b>PRIM-</b>   | 280. | <b>TI-</b>     |
| 221. | <b>-OIR</b>    | 251. | <b>PRO-</b>    | 281. | <b>TRANS-</b>  |
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| 223. | <b>-OM</b>     | 253. | <b>PY-</b>     | 283. | <b>TU-</b>     |
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| 230. | <b>-ORY</b>    | 260. | <b>RAD-</b>    | 290. | <b>U-</b>      |
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| 232. | <b>-OSCOPE</b> | 262. | <b>-RE</b>     | 292. | <b>-UND</b>    |
| 233. | <b>-OSH</b>    | 263. | <b>RI-</b>     | 293. | <b>-UOUS,</b>  |
| 234. | <b>-OSITY</b>  | 264. | <b>RU-</b>     |      | <b>-UITY</b>   |
| 235. | <b>-OSS</b>    | 265. | <b>S-</b>      | 294. | <b>-UR</b>     |
| 236. | <b>-OST</b>    | 266. | <b>SC-</b>     | 295. | <b>-URGY</b>   |
| 237. | <b>-OT</b>     | 267. | <b>SCH-</b>    | 296. | <b>-US</b>     |
| 238. | <b>-OTH</b>    | 268. | <b>SE-</b>     | 297. | <b>V-F</b>     |
| 239. | <b>OU-</b>     | 269. | <b>SEMI-</b>   | 298. | <b>-VALENT</b> |
| 240. | <b>-OUR</b>    | 270. | <b>SI-</b>     | 299. | <b>VI-</b>     |
| 241. | <b>OV-</b>     | 271. | <b>-SIA</b>    | 300. | <b>W-V</b>     |
| 242. | <b>-OW</b>     | 272. | <b>-SIER</b>   | 301. | <b>WA-</b>     |
| 243. | <b>P-</b>      | 273. | <b>-SION</b>   | 302. | <b>WH-</b>     |
| 244. | <b>-PATHY</b>  | 274. | <b>-SIS</b>    | 303. | <b>X-</b>      |
| 245. | <b>PH-</b>     | 275. | <b>-SPHERE</b> | 304. | <b>Y-</b>      |
| 246. | <b>-PHOBIA</b> | 276. | <b>SU-</b>     | 305. | <b>Z-</b>      |
| 247. | <b>-PHONY</b>  | 277. | <b>T-</b>      | 306. | <b>ZOO-</b>    |





# INTRODUCTION

## HOW TO USE THE DICTIONARY OF MODERN PRONUNCIATION

*This book examines the 9,000 English words most likely to cause pronunciation problems—and in 306 major categories, surveys the main trends in American pronunciation today.*

A glance at these categories, listed in full on the preceding pages, will indicate the type of problem discussed in the book. Here is a random sampling:

### **-ABLE**

Of words with this suffix (*admirable, formidable, hospitable, disputable, explicable, consolable, etc.*), some are accented on the first syllable, some on the second, and in some usage is divided. Which is which?

### **-ADA**

In words ending in *-ada*, when is the first *a*- “broad” (*ah*), when “long” (*ā*), when “short” (as in *at*)?

### **-AGE**

When is this ending pronounced *-əj\**, when *-ahzh*, when *-āj*?

### **CH-**

Does *ch-* have different pronunciations in *machicolation, chiropodist, chassis*, and *Bach*?

### **DU-**

Is the *-u* following *d-* commonly pronounced *-yōō, -yā, -ōō, or -ōō?*

### **-ILE**

In which words does this ending rhyme with *mile*? In which is it pronounced *-əl?* And in which is it *-eel?*

\* For the key to phonetic respellings used in the book, see pages 11-16.

**J-**

Does *j-* have different sounds in *junta*, *objet d'art*, *San Juan*, *Jung*, and *Navajo*?

**-NG**

When is *-ng* nasalized? When, on the other hand, is the *-g* of this pattern clearly pronounced?

**NU-**

Is *nu-* always pronounced *nyōō-* on educated levels, or has the pendulum of popularity swung to something closer to *nōō-*?

**-OR**

This combination is heard as *-awr*, *-ōr*, and *-ər*, depending on the word and on regional custom. Which words follow which pattern?

**S-**

*S-* may be silent (*apropos*), "hissed" (*gas*), or "buzzed" (*was*), or it may be pronounced as *sh-* (*transient*) or *zh-* (*casual*). Or usage may be divided. In which word does *s-* have which sound?

**TU-**

Is the *-u* following *t-* (as in *costume*, *student*, *tune*, etc.) pronounced *-yōō* in informal speech, or is it something closer to the vowel sound of *moon* and *soon*? On the other hand, is *tu-*, in words like *statue*, *virtuous*, *voluptuous*, commonly *chōō-*, *chōō-*, or *tyōō-*?

**Z-**

Is *z-* pronounced differently in *marzipan*, *Liszt*, *Mozart*, *azure*, and *rendezvous*?

Almost every entry in these pages refers you to one or more of these major categories. When you look up a word, whether out of idle curiosity, genuine puzzlement, or immediate need, you will not only discover its popular pronunciation or pronunciations on the educated level, but will also be directed to that category in which words of similar pattern are classified and explained.

Are you interested, for whatever reason, in the current educated pronunciation of *status*? The entry reads:

*status.* STĀ'-təs; also STAT'-əs.

(See -AT, 4.)

Category -AT, paragraph 4, explains that in a few words, notably *apparatus*, *datum*, *gratis*, *status*, *stratum*, "long" *-a* (*ā*) is somewhat

more popular in educated speech; but that the “short” -a of *hat* is very widely heard.

Perhaps your interest in words containing -AT is now engaged. If so, you can discover from paragraph 1 of that category that the -a preceding -t is “long” (ā) in *blatant, fatal, imprimatur, mater, natal, petrolatum, Satan, verbatim, ultimum*; from paragraph 2, that it is “short” (as in *hat*) in *cravat, philatelist, platen, regatta, stratify*; and from paragraph 3, that usage is divided between “short” and “long” -a in *paternoster, satyr, stratosphere*.

You may have occasion to wonder about the first syllable of *productivity*. Is it *prō-* or *prod-*? The entry reads as follows:

**productivity.**    *prō'-duk-TIV'-ə-tee.*  
(See *PRO-*, 4.)

If your curiosity about *pro-* words is aroused, you turn back to the category indicated. Here you find 36 more words in which the -o of *pro-* is regularly “long”—more important, you learn that the sound of the -o is influenced by the position of the accent.

What about still other *pro-* words? In paragraph 1 are listed 82 examples in which the -o is “obscure” (ə) because the syllable is unaccented; in paragraph 2, 50 instances in which the -o is “long” even though the syllable receives no accent; in paragraph 3, the 16 words on which educated usage is divided. The principle that governs the use of “short” -o (as in *probable, prodigal*) is explained in paragraph 5, and 34 typical examples are listed; the difference between the British and American pronunciation of ten *pro-* words is explained in paragraph 6; and, finally, 16 atypical words starting with *pro-*, each with its two equally popular patterns, are listed and respelled phonetically in paragraph 7.

The *Dictionary of Modern Pronunciation* may be profitably used then, in one or more of three ways:

1. To discover the current educated pronunciation of a problem word.

Simply find it in its alphabetical position in the entries.

2. To learn what principles govern the pronunciation of words that have similar spellings.

Turn to the category or categories indicated in parentheses following the word you have looked up.

3. To gain an understanding of current trends in American pronunciation.

Browse through the entries and categories at your leisure. Such random sampling will turn up a surprising store of information: how the double vowel *aa-* is pronounced; how and why accent shifts according to the way in which a word is used; when final *-e* is silent, when pronounced *-ee*, when *-ā*; when *g-* is "hard" as in *girl*, when "soft" as in *gem*, when *-zh* as in *beige*; when *v-* is pronounced *f-*, when *w-* is pronounced *v-*; how to determine which of the 6 possible sounds of *x-* to use in any given word; and so on, almost without end.

#### THE LINGUISTIC PHILOSOPHY BEHIND THE RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this dictionary is to record those pronunciations used *today* by most educated speakers—pronunciations, which are, in short, current, reputable, and popular.

For it is a principle of linguistic science that the criterion of "correctness" in pronunciation is *educated usage*—not rules, not tradition, not spelling, not derivation, not clarity, not preciseness, not indeed anything but actual usage.

Which is not to say, by any means, that educated people invariably or unanimously agree on the pronunciations of all, or almost all, English words.

Geographical variations must be taken into account—natives of Maine, Mississippi, and California, for example, pronounce certain vowels in very different ways.

But even ignoring regional characteristics, there are still hundreds of English words on which educated usage is divided—two or more pronunciations for the same word are widely heard, and are apparently equally popular—no one pattern more favored throughout the country than any other.

For *abject* you will hear AB'-jekt just as often as ab-JEKT'; for *economics*, ee'-kə-NOM'-əks as often as ek'-ə-NOM'-əks; for *juvenile*, JOO'-və-nəl as often as JOO'-və-nīl; for *Monday*, MUN'-dee as often as MUN'-dā; for *diamond*, DĪ'-mænd as often as DĪ'-ə-mænd; for *paprika*, pap-REE'-kə as often as PAP'-rə-kə.

*Advertisement* appeals to educated speakers in all three of the following patterns: ad'-vər-TĪZ'-mənt, əd-VUR'-tiz-mənt, and ad-VUR'-tis-mənt. For *eighth*, some people say ĀTH; just as many others say AT and then add the *-th* sound.

*Length* is pronounced with a nasalized -ng; with a nasalized -ng

followed by a -g sound; and with a nasalized -ng plus a slight -k sound. No one of these patterns is the most popular; all three are widely used.

Which, then, are the "correct" pronunciations of these words? All of them are, since they're all current, reputable, and popular. Such equally favored choices are separated by the word *or* in the entries and it is not to be construed that first position makes one form preferable to, or more acceptable than, the other or others.

Consider, now, a second class of words, such as *adult*, *abdomen*, *hospitable*, *acclimate*, *culinary*, *drama*, *status*, and many hundreds of others. On educated levels, ə-DULT', AB'-də-mən, HOS'-pə-tə-bəl, ə-KLĪ'-mət, KYŌŌ'-lə-ner'-ee, DRAH'-mə, and STĀ'-təs are more favored than AD'-ult, ab-DŌ'-mən, hos-PIT'-ə-bəl, AK'-lə-māt', KUL'-ə-ner'-ee, DRAM'-ə, and STAT'-əs. But the latter patterns are so frequently and widely encountered in educated speech that it is impossible and unrealistic to ignore them, and consequently dishonest to consider them, arbitrarily, as unacceptable. However, to indicate that these second choices have a somewhat lesser appeal to educated Americans, they are preceded by the word *also*. The popularity of some *also* pronunciations is diminishing, and in such instances a qualifying phrase (*infrequently*, *less commonly*, *far less commonly*, *fairly infrequently*, etc.) is appended.

There is a third class of words, again numbering in the many hundreds, in which usage is divided along different lines—words like *mishchievous*, *grievous*, *film*, *elm*, *athlete*, *get*, *orgy*, *chiroprapist*, *comparable*, *genuine*, *impotent*, and *accept*. These words are often pronounced mis-CHEE'-vee-əs, GREE'-vee-əs, FIL'-əm, EL'-əm, ATH'-ə-leet, GIT, AWR'-gee (-g as in *girl*), shə (or tchə)-ROP'-ə-dist, kəm-PĀR'-ə-bəl, JEN'-yōō-wīn, im-PŌ'-tənt, and a-SEPT' by Americans of little or no schooling. However, the patterns indicated are so rarely heard from educated speakers that they have no place in a book such as this—pronunciations common only on the less educated levels of American speech are not listed in the entries.

My aim, then, throughout these pages, is to record (and inferentially, by recording, to recommend) only those pronunciations that have the widest currency in educated speech. On the one hand, I have not listed every pattern heard anywhere and on any level; on the other hand, I have been careful to make clear that few prob-

lem words are limited to one correct and unanimously accepted pronunciation.

In compiling this dictionary I have drawn mainly on my own continuing research in the field over the past twenty years. In the last three years, especially, I have traveled extensively in many parts of the country, listening to the pronunciation of educated Americans and testing on them, at first hand, a large proportion of the 9,000 entries in the book; interviewing lexicographers, linguists, writers, speech and English teachers, and other people professionally involved with American pronunciation; and studying scores of tapes of individual speech.

All entries have been checked with the major American dictionaries. Since dictionaries, like people, do not always agree on how a word is pronounced, I have relied particularly on *Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language* and *The Thorndike-Barnhart Comprehensive Desk Dictionary*, these being the works in whose scientific approach to linguistics I have the greatest faith. This is not to suggest, however, that the patterns recommended in this book invariably agree in part or in whole with those recorded in the two dictionaries mentioned—the final decision on how many, and which, pronunciations to recommend has always been based on my own firsthand research.

# KEY TO PRONUNCIATIONS

## PARTS OF SPEECH

An entry is identified as an adjective (*adj.*), adverb (*adv.*), noun (*n.*), or verb (*v.*) only when different pronunciations are used for different parts of speech. For example, the noun *abstract* is pronounced AB'-strakt, the verb is ab-STRAKT'; the noun *abuse* is ə-BYŌŌS', the verb is ə-BYŌŌZ'.

## DEFINITIONS

Similarly, definitions are given only when a change of meaning causes a change in pronunciation. For instance:

genial. Cheerful: JEEN'-yəl. Of marriage or generation: JEE'-nee-əl. Having to do with the chin: jə-NĪ'-əl. (See A-, 13; -IAL, 2.)

## ACCENT

When only one syllable of a word is accented, that syllable is capitalized and is followed by an accent mark. Thus:

similar. SIM'-ə-lər

When two or more syllables are accented, the syllable receiving the stronger, or primary, accent is capitalized and followed by an accent mark; the syllable with the weaker, or secondary, stress is marked with an accent but is not capitalized. Thus:

evolution. ev'-ə-LŌŌ'-shən  
headstrong. HED'-strawng'  
recapitulate. rec'-kə-PICH'-ə-lāt'

## SYLLABICATION

Entries have been syllabicated to insure maximum clearness of pronunciation pattern, and are not necessarily always in rigid accordance with the rules of syllabication.

## OR; ALSO

*Or* indicates that two or more pronunciations are of approximately equal currency in educated speech; patterns following the word *also* are heard less frequently than those listed first.

## PHONETIC RESPELLINGS

- ə This symbol, taken from the international phonetic alphabet and called a *schwa* (pronounced SHWAH), indicates a neutral vowel sound heard in the unaccented syllables of most English words. It varies slightly in everyday speech according to its position in a word and the preceding or following consonant sounds. It is not as protracted as the *-i* of *tin*, the *-e* of *ten*, or the *-u* of *bun*, but instead is merely an unstressed sound either at the beginning or end of a word, or between consonants within a word. Characteristically, it is the first syllable of *ago* (ə-GŌ') or *aback* (ə-BAK'), or the last syllable of *Linda* (LIN'-də) or *vista* (VIS'-tə). In the final syllable of words like *mucilage*, *geographic*, *hostile*, *revocable*, *masculine*, *beneficence*, *fervent*, and *obstinate*, the vowel sound is so brief (not quite a full "short" *e* or *i*) that ə is again the symbol of choice.

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| mucilage    | MYŌŌ'-sə-ləj    |
| geographic  | jee'-ə-GRAF'-ək |
| hostile     | HOS'-təl        |
| revocable   | REV'-ə-kə-bəl   |
| masculine   | MAS'-kyə-lən    |
| beneficence | bə-NEF'-ə-sənce |
| fervent     | FUR'-vənt       |
| obstinate   | OB'-stə-nət     |

- a The so-called "short" *a* of *hat*, *sat*.

|        |          |
|--------|----------|
| canyon | KAN'-yən |
| radish | RAD'-ish |
| sample | SAM'-pəl |



|            |   |
|------------|---|
| <b>ā</b>   | The so-called "long" vowel sound of <i>hale, hate, wait</i> .<br>elongate           ə-LAWNG'-gāt<br>outrage           OUT'-rāj<br>inhale            in-HĀL' |
| <b>ah</b>  | The so-called "broad" <i>a</i> of <i>father</i> .<br>padre             PAH'-drā<br>palmy            PAHM'-ee<br>sardine           sahr-DEEN'                |
| <b>air</b> | As in <i>flair</i> .<br>heirloom          AIR'-lōom'<br>gregarious       grə- <b>GAIR'</b> -ee-əs<br>wary <b>WAIR'</b> -ee                                  |
| <b>är</b>  | As in <i>carriage</i> .<br>disparage         dis-PÄR'-əj<br>parachute        PÄR'-ə-shōōt<br>Paradise         PÄR'-ə-dis'                                   |
| <b>aw</b>  | The vowel sound of <i>law</i> .<br>fortune           FAWR'-chən<br>haunch           HAWNCH<br>mortify           MAWR'-tə-fi'                                |
| <b>b</b>   | As in <i>bit</i> .  |
| <b>ch</b>  | As in <i>chair</i> .<br>archbishop        AHRCH'-BISH'-əp<br>champion          CHAM'-pee-ən<br>Czech             CHEK                                       |
| <b>d</b>   | As in <i>dim</i> .  |
| <b>e</b>   | "Short," as in <i>bet</i> .<br>ascetic            ə-SET'-ək<br>evolution         ev'-ə-LŌŌ'-shən  |
| <b>ee</b>  | Represents the so-called "long" <i>e</i> , as in <i>see</i> .<br>demarcation       dee'-mahr-KĀ'-shən<br>leisure           LEE'-zhər                        |

Also represents the somewhat briefer vowel sound heard in the final syllable of *beauty, company, or aborigine*. This sound is usually represented in dictionaries as "short" *i*, but since it is so conspicuously different from the *i* of *hit* and so much closer to *ee*, though not identical with it, *ee* is a far more logical, and less confusing, symbol.