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A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English

BY JOHN S. KENYON AND THOMAS A. KNOTT

A guide to pronunciation using
the International Phonetic Alphabet
for everyone interested in acceptable speech.

A unique, standard reference book.

A
PRONOUNCING
DICTIONARY
OF
AMERICAN ENGLISH

BY

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To
Myra Pow Kenyon
and
Myra Powers Knott

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PREFACE

More than ten years ago several scholars especially interested in American English suggested to one of the present editors the making of a phonetic pronouncing dictionary of the speech of the United States that might serve, both in the United States and elsewhere, the purposes served for Southern British English by Professor Daniel Jones's *English Pronouncing Dictionary*. About six years ago the editors became associated in this work.

Although as a pioneer in the field great credit must go to Professor Jones, who has placed all later lexicographers under inescapable obligation to him, our task is much different from his. He records the pronunciation of a limited and nearly homogeneous class of people in England in a type of speech identical with that of the editor himself. Our problem has been to record without prejudice or preference several different types of speech used by large bodies of educated and cultivated Americans in widely separated areas and with markedly different backgrounds of tradition and culture. Here let it be emphasized once for all that we have no prejudice whatever either for or against any of these varieties of American speech.

As the book is completed, we are keenly aware that only a beginning has been made, subject to later supplementation by other students of the field. On the whole, Southern speech has in the past received least attention. If we have failed to do it the full justice that was our intention, our failure must be laid in part to conflicting testimony, but mainly to the fact that this field has still largely to be investigated.

It was originally intended to include Canadian speech as one of the main regional divisions. A number of questionnaires were sent to Canada, and some correspondents took pains to send us excellent material (see acknowledgments below). The material was not, however, extensive enough to warrant full record of Canadian pronunciation, so that we have had to content ourselves with occasional references thereto. See mention of some Canadian variants (§118).

The scope of this work is limited. It is not intended as a source book for the study of American dialects. That work is being done by the *Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada*. It is our aim to record only what is rather vaguely called standard speech (see further, Introduction, §§1-2, 57-58, 76, 90). It is not our purpose even to try to exhaust that field. Almost certainly we have omitted many "good" pronunciations. Many of these are provided for in the Introduction by the lists of variants not fully recorded in the vocabulary (§§90 ff.). Recent studies and records of American speech have made it clear that there exists far greater variety than was formerly supposed in the speech of Americans of unquestioned cultivation

and importance. Considering the actual facts of contemporary American pronunciation, the editors feel that on the whole they have been conservative in the variety recorded.

The vocabulary is intended to include the great body of common words in use in America. Besides, it includes a great many somewhat unusual words, inserted for a variety of reasons. Especial attention has been given to American proper names, though an exhaustive treatment of these is far beyond the scope of this work. The editors have had in mind the needs of college and university students, and have therefore included many names of history and literature likely to be encountered by them, as well as a large number of notes on various aspects of the English language. While foreign names are, strictly, outside the scope of a dictionary of American English, it is impossible to avoid including many often heard and used by Americans. The field of British place and personal names, tempting to one interested in pronunciation, has been little entered. A few of general interest must be included, and a considerable number of names of places in England whose pronunciation was verified locally by one of the editors have been inserted. Many of these names are of historical and traditional interest to Americans, and a great number have been transferred to America.

As in all trustworthy dictionaries, the editors have endeavored to base the pronunciations on actual cultivated usage. No other standard has, in point of fact, ever finally settled pronunciation. This book can be taken as a safe guide to pronunciation only insofar as we have succeeded in doing this. According to this standard, no words are, as often said, "almost universally mispronounced," for that is self-contradictory. For an editor the temptation is often strong to prefer what he thinks "ought to be" the right pronunciation; but it has to be resisted. For example, on etymological grounds the word *dahlia* "ought to be" 'dæljə; by traditional Anglicizing habits of English it should be 'deljə (as it is in England and often in Canada); as a fact, in America it is prevailingly 'dæljə. In this case the variants are current enough to allow free choice; but in many cases the theoretically "right" pronunciation of a word is not even current.

In a work of this sort it is unavoidable to adopt certain devices to save space. These are explained in the Introduction (§§59 ff.). If the reader is now and then annoyed by these, he is asked to reflect that this makes possible the inclusion of far more material than would otherwise be possible, and on the whole makes this material easier for the reader to find.

A question naturally arises as to the relation of this work to the other dictionaries published by G. & C. Merriam Company. This book is published on a different basis from their other publications. For this book they act only as publishers and distributors, without editorial supervision. The Merriam Company is in no way responsible for any statements made in this book. That responsibility rests solely on the two authors.

The purpose of this dictionary is quite new in America. First, it deals solely with pronunciation. Even the entries are determined to a considerable extent by that purpose; for example, certain proper names of persons or places are selected, not for their intrinsic importance, but for some interest or problem in their pronunciation.

But the chief difference between this and the other Merriam dictionaries is that this is a dictionary of colloquial English, of the everyday unconscious speech of cultivated people—of those in every community who carry on the affairs and set the social and educational standards of those communities. *Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition* (Introduction, p. xii) thus defines its purpose in regard to pronunciation:

"In this edition, the style adopted for representation is that of formal platform speech—and this must be clearly remembered by consultants of the pronunciations here given. The omission of less precise pronunciations of familiar words does not, of course, indicate either that those pronunciations do not exist or that the editors of the dictionary refuse to recognize them. They do exist, and very naturally so when the occasion suits. . . . The recording of all such colloquial pronunciations of every separate word is not, however, possible in such a Dictionary as the *New International*. . . . The pronunciations contained in this Dictionary are not theoretical. They represent actual speech—the speech of cultivated users of English, speaking formally with a view to being completely understood by their hearers."

On the other hand, the pronunciation which the present editors intend to represent in this book is what has been called "easy English," "the speech of well-bred ease"—not slovenly or careless speech, nor, on the other hand, formal platform speech. Of course the great majority of English words are pronounced alike in colloquial and in formal speech, and much the largest part of the vocabulary will be found to have the same pronunciations in both books, and a large part of the differences will be the differences between colloquial and formal pronunciation. (For fuller discussion of the term *colloquial*, see Introduction, §§1–2.)

The *New International* does not attempt to represent the pronunciation of words as they occur in connected speech. The editors state, "It would be impossible, even were it desirable, to attempt to record the pronunciation of 'running speech,' that is, of words as elements in connected spoken discourse. . . ." The present book does not attempt to do this completely, could not, in fact, but in many instances does show modified pronunciations brought about by the phonetic effect of words on one another. Still more often the pronunciation of words as here indicated has been influenced, not so much by preceding or following sounds, as by rhythm, tempo, intonation, sense stress, etc. This will account for a goodly number of differences between the two books.

Another difference of aim lies in the scope of the two works. The *New*

International avowedly includes the pronunciation "of all parts of the English-speaking world" (p. xii), and puts little emphasis on regional differences within America. This book only occasionally and incidentally represents British or other non-American pronunciation of English, and represents as fully as practicable the main regional differences in America.

In some cases there are differences of accentuation that do not represent real inconsistencies. In the *Guide to Pronunciation in the New International* (p. xxxvi, col. 1) it is pointed out that a great many English words have no fixed accentuation, and that the accent shown in the vocabulary is merely one possible accentuation among others that may be equally correct. In this book, in some instances, the accentuation may depend on the colloquial character of the pronunciation. In some cases, too, differences of accentuation are due merely to a difference of practical policy. For instance, the *New International*, like many dictionaries, usually places no accent mark on a final third syllable though it may have secondary stress; thus the word *calabash* has only the first syllable marked, whereas in this book the mark of secondary accent is regularly placed on such words ('kæləbæʃ). This represents no difference of accentuation in the two books but merely a difference of practice, both methods being quite defensible.

The editors believe that this book is a natural complement to *Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition*. The *New International* fully recognizes the validity and importance of colloquial English speech. In its *Guide to Pronunciation*, §8, it states: "The most important of these different styles [of spoken English] is what may be called the cultivated colloquial, which has aptly been termed the style of well-bred ease. This is the most used of the standard styles, it is acceptable to every class of society, whether used by them or not. . . ." The *New International* provides for colloquial pronunciation by means of certain flexible symbols. Thus the Webster symbol *ă* ('italic short *a*') "is used to suggest a variable sound. . . tending. . . , especially in familiar speech, to the neutral vowel [ə]" (Guide, §91). The symbol *ĕ* ('italic short *e*') serves a similar purpose: "In the great majority of everyday words, unaccented *e* before *n* or *l*, and in many words in other unaccented position, as in *quiĕt*, *proprĕty*, is obscured to the neutral vowel [ə] in colloquial speech" (Guide, §127). Thus our book gives chief emphasis to colloquial speech, while the *New International*, though fully recognizing it, treats it only as one among many features of the English language.

The *New International* has also given a table of the International Phonetic Alphabet for English with full illustration of its use: see especially Guide, pp. xxii-xxv, and thereafter throughout the Guide. The G. & C. Merriam Co. would therefore seem to be in a logical position to publish a dictionary of colloquial American speech in the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet. In the upshot, we believe that the actual dif-

ferences in pronunciation between the Merriam-Webster dictionaries and this one are comparatively few.

The eager and extensive co-operation which the editors have received in the prosecution of this work has gone far beyond our expectation, and has placed us under great obligation to all who have shown interest and given help. First of all we wish to express our thanks to the Carnegie Corporation for a grant-in-aid through the University of Wisconsin to one of the editors, and to that University for inviting him to spend the year 1940-41 in residence to prosecute the work; to the Carnegie Corporation, on recommendation of the American Council of Learned Societies, for extending the grant-in-aid to supply this editor with an instructor at Hiram College in 1941-42 to enable him to give more time to the dictionary; to Dr. Margaret Waterman for competently fulfilling this appointment; and to Hiram College for granting him leave of absence in 1940-41.

We are under very particular obligations to Professor Miles L. Hanley, of the University of Wisconsin, for his hearty encouragement of the dictionary from its beginning, for placing at our disposal his great collection of rimes and spellings at the University of Wisconsin, and for many valuable suggestions; and to Mrs. Louise Hanley for much help in the utilization of the above-mentioned collections, and for many items of expert editorial advice.

We have profited greatly from the material thus far published by the *Linguistic Atlas of the United States and Canada*, and in addition we wish to thank the Directors for placing at our disposal a considerable amount of unpublished material from the collections covering parts of the Central West and of the South.

We thankfully acknowledge our great indebtedness, in common with all students of the English language, to the great *Oxford English Dictionary*.

Intimately associated as the editors have been with *Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition*, it is inevitable that we should be influenced by its standards and indebted to its materials in many ways. We gladly acknowledge the deepest obligations to it.

We are indebted to many individuals who have supplied us with details of information in their respective fields; among them, Professors Myles Dillon (Celtic), William Ellery Leonard (English), J. Homer Herriott (Spanish), Joseph L. Russo (Italian), Alexander A. Vasiliev (Russian), R-M. S. Heffner (German and Phonetics), Einar Haugen (Scandinavian), Casimir Zdanowicz (French), Dr. Karl G. Bottke (French and Italian), Mr. Charles E. Condray (Southern speech),—all at the University of Wisconsin; to Mr. Edward Artin, G. & C. Merriam Co., Springfield, Mass. (Eastern speech), Professor J. D. M. Ford, Harvard University (Italian), Professor Bernard Bloch, Brown University (Eastern speech), Dr. George L. Trager, Yale University (Linguistics), Dr. Ruth E. Mulhauser, Hiram

College (Romance Languages), Professor R. H. Stetson, Oberlin College (Syllabics).

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We also wish to thank a number of scholars and teachers who responded to our request for advice on the editing (published in *American Speech*, xi, Oct. 1936, pp. 227-31), replying either in the columns of that journal or by private correspondence. Their suggestions were all carefully considered, and many of them were adopted.

To Mr. Donald A. Bird, Mr. Philip M. Davies, and Mrs. Wayne Caygill of the University of Wisconsin we are indebted for valuable assistance in preparing the manuscript.

In addition to those mentioned above, the editors also have to express lasting obligations to many more scholars, teachers, and others, who made transcriptions of their own and others' speech, and often supplied supplementary notes; in several instances also they sent phonograph records. To those whose names follow and a few that we had no means of identifying we extend our sincere thanks. Titles are omitted; and since it could not be significant without detailed explanation, address and locality are omitted. Suffice it to say that the informants were well distributed over the United States. Those from Canada are so marked.

Virgil A. Anderson, Phyllis B. Arlt, A. M. Barnes, L. L. Barrett, A. C. Baugh, J. F. Bender, C. L. Bennet (Can.), E. B. Birney (Can.), Morton W. Bloomfield (Can.), Hilda Brannon, Alexander Brede, Jr., Christine Broome, William F. Bryan, Donald C. Bryant, C. H. Carruthers (Can.), Philip H. Churchman, Roy B. Clark, T. F. Cummings, Edwin B. Davis, J. de Angulo, L. R. Dingus, Sarah Dodson, Julia Duncan, Norman E. Eliason, Bert Emsley, E. E. Ericson, Paul H. Flint, Frances A. Foster, Elizabeth F. Gardner, James Geddes, Jr., Erma M. Gill, W. Cabell Greet, Louis A. Guerriero, Harold F. Harding, Harry W. Hastings, Grace E. Ingledue, Annie S. Irvine, Cary F. Jacob, Joseph Jones, W. Powell Jones, Claude E. Kantner, Clifford Anne King, C. A. Knudson, C. A. Lloyd, C. M. Lot-speich, William F. Luebke, Klonda Lynn, T. O. Mabbott, John C. McCloskey, Cassa L. McDonald, James B. McMillan, Kemp Malone, Edward W. Mammen, Albert H. Marckwardt, E. K. Maxfield, R. J. Menner,

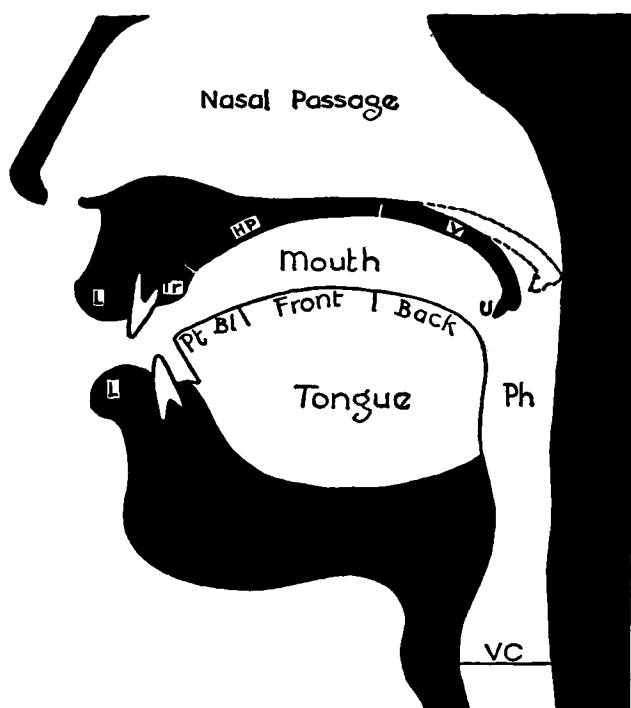
Alice W. Mills, George Neely, T. Earl Pardoe, Gordon E. Peterson, Holland Peterson (Can.), Louise Pound, E. G. Proudman, Robert L. Ramsay, W. Charles Redding, Loren D. Reid, Stuart Robertson, J. C. Ruppenthal, I. Willis Russell, C. Richard Sanders, Edwin F. Shewmake, Loretta Skelly, Gordon W. Smith, Paul L. Stayner, J. M. Steadman, Jr., W. J. Stevens (Can.), Everett F. Strong, Morris Swadesh, C. H. Thomas, Argus Tresidder, E. H. Tuttle, W. Freeman Twaddell, Charles H. Voelker, Chad Walsh, Lois P. Ware, Raymond Weeks, Walter H. Wilke, Rudolph Willard, A. M. Withers, Robert Withington.

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The editors feel that the making of the dictionary has been a co-operative enterprise, and if it has value, this is in large measure due to expert help from many voluntary contributors; for its defects the editors hold themselves solely responsible.

Vachel Lindsay Room, Hiram College
September, 1943

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CONVENTIONALIZED DIAGRAM OF THE SPEECH ORGANS

(Reprinted by permission from Kenyon's *American Pronunciation*, 8th ed.)

LL=Lips. Pt=Tongue Point. Bl=Tongue Blade. Tr=Teethridge. HP=Hard Palate.
 V=Velum (soft palate): black: lowered, or open; dotted: raised, or closed. U=Uvula.
 Ph=Pharynx. VC=Vocal Cords.

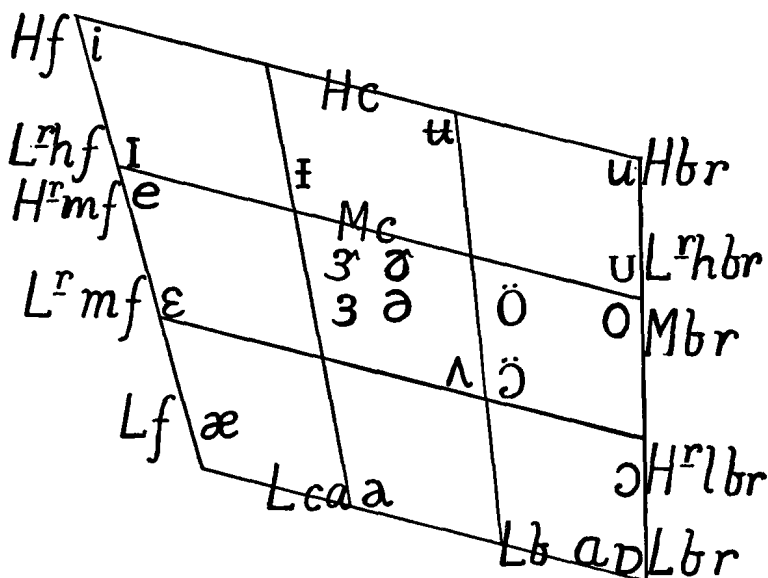


CHART OF THE TONGUE POSITIONS OF THE VOWELS

(Reproduced, with slight changes, from Kenyon's *American Pronunciation*, 8th edition, by permission.)

The left of the figure represents the front of the mouth

Hf = High-front

L^{rh}f = Lower high-front

H'mf = Higher mid-front

L_rmf = Lower mid-front

Lf = Low-front

Hc = High-central

Mc = Mid-central

Lca=Low-central advanced

Hbr = High-back round

L^{rhbr} = Lower high-back round

Mbr = Mid-back round

Hr1br = Higher low-back round

Lbr = Low-back round

Lb = Low-back

INTRODUCTION

THE STYLE OF SPEECH REPRESENTED

§1. It is the purpose of this dictionary to show the pronunciation of cultivated colloquial English in the United States. The meaning of the word *colloquial* is sometimes misunderstood. A common misunderstanding is that in dictionaries the label *Colloq.* attached to a word or pronunciation brands it as inferior, and therefore to be avoided.

Webster's New International Dictionary, Second Edition, thus defines *colloquial*: "Pertaining to, or used in, conversation, esp. common and familiar conversation; conversational; hence, unstudied; informal; as, *colloquial* phrases or pronunciations; specif., of a word or a sense or use of a word or expression, acceptable and appropriate in ordinary conversational context, as in intimate speech among cultivated people, in familiar letters, in informal speeches or writings, but not in formal written discourse (*flabbergast*; *go slow*; *harum-scarum*). Colloquial speech may be as correct as formal speech. 'Every educated person speaks his mother tongue in at least two ways, and the difference between the dignified and the *colloquial* style is considerable.' —G. L. Kittredge." It should be noted that the illustrative words do not refer to pronunciation but to diction, though the definition includes pronunciation.

The definition in the *Oxford Dictionary* is concise and also adequate. Though it does not mention pronunciation, "etc." may safely be taken to include it: "Of words, phrases, etc.: Belonging to common speech; characteristic of or proper to ordinary conversation, as distinguished from formal or elevated language. (The usual sense.)"

Definitions of *colloquial* that only concern choice of words and give as examples only oaths or slang are perhaps in part responsible for some of the popular misunderstanding of the term.

A less frequent, but still not uncommon error is the confusion of *colloquial* with *local*, the assumption that a *colloquialism* is a *localism*, and so to be avoided.

Another not uncommon confusion is to regard *colloquial* English as the opposite of *standard* English (*standard* being confused with *formal* or *literary*). There is standard colloquial English and standard formal or literary English, as there is nonstandard colloquial and nonstandard formal English. As regards pronunciation, one kind of nonstandard formal English is the artificial type in which vowels that are normally unaccented are pronounced with their accented sounds, in which articles (*a, an, the*), prepositions (*to, from, of*), and other normally unstressed particles are pronounced with their emphatic forms instead, in which the tempo and intonation are not those of traditional living speech, in which abnormal accentuation and loudness are practiced, together with similar distortions that detract from unostentatious sincerity.

The accepted meaning of *colloquial* is to be found in the work of such linguistic scholars as Professor Henry Cecil Wyld, of Oxford, whose *History of Modern Colloquial English* deals with the unstudied speech and familiar correspondence of the cultivated classes, and reminds us of the importance both to literature and to general culture of this central core of the English language. Says Professor Wyld, "The style of literary prose is alive and expressive, chiefly insofar as it is rooted in that of colloquial utterance.... The style of Literature is rooted in the life and conversation of the age."¹ Similarly, the American scholar and poet William Ellery

¹ *History of Modern Colloquial English*, London 1925, pp. 157, 188.

Leonard: "In general every good colloquialism is possible in good prose (or verse), for quite rightly good prose (or verse) is becoming more and more a skillful adaptation of the vigorous, compact, racy idiom of the best spoken speech."²

§2. Colloquial pronunciation is here treated as the conversational and familiar utterance of cultivated speakers when speaking in the normal contacts of life and concerned with what they are saying, not how they are saying it. There are, of course, different styles of colloquial, from that of the everyday contacts of family life to the somewhat less familiar contacts of social and business or professional life. The variant pronunciations of the same word frequently shown will often reflect the different styles of the colloquial. In all cases of words that are not formal per se, unstudied everyday speech is the basis. It is of course true that the majority of words in general use are the same for colloquial as for formal language, and are pronounced alike in both styles.

The editors are aware that the attempt to represent in fairly accurate symbols the everyday speech of the cultivated is likely now and then to cause surprise and to tempt criticism. The average observer has not been trained to observe speech on the wing, and is too apt to be influenced by unconscious habitual association with spelling forms. No experience is commoner with trained observers than to hear certain pronunciations in the very statements in which the critic is denying them.

It must also be remembered that not all words are of a colloquial nature. Words not in colloquial use have, properly speaking, no colloquial pronunciation. Thus the word *exorcise* does not often occur in conversation. Its pronunciation is therefore what it would be in formal context, with the *-or-* fully sounded. If it should become a popular word, it would sound just like *exercise*. So the word *adhibit*, not being colloquial, receives the full sound of the first vowel as in *add*, while in the more popular word *advise* the first vowel is normally obscured.

THE PHONETIC ALPHABET

§3. Pronunciation in this dictionary is indicated by the alphabet of the International Phonetic Association (IPA). These symbols and the pronunciations represented by them invariably appear in **boldface type**. More than half of these are the ordinary letters of the English alphabet or familiar variations of them.

Each symbol stands for only one speech sound, and each speech sound has only one symbol to represent it. In accord with the practice of many British and American users of this alphabet the accented sounds **ʌ**, **ɜ**, **ɜ̃** are considered to be separate speech sounds from the unaccented sounds **ə** and **ɐ**. Diphthongs are regarded as single sounds and their symbols (**aɪ**, **au**, **ɔɪ**, etc.) as single symbols. The same is true of **tʃ**, **dʒ**.

In using the phonetic alphabet the reader must be careful to give only the one designated sound to those letters which in ordinary spelling represent more than one sound. Thus the symbol **g** has only the sound in *get* **ɡet**, never that in *gem* **dʒem**; **s** has only the sound in *gas* **ɡæs**, never that in *wise* **waɪz** or that in *vision* **ˈvɪʒən**. The dotted **i** has only the sound in *machine* **məʃɪn**, never that in *skin* **ʃɪn**; ordinary **e** always has the sound in *gate* **ɡet**, never that in *met* **mɛt**. Below is the list of symbols with key words. The notes after the table give fuller information and additional symbols. The accent mark (ˈ) always precedes the syllable accented.

² *American Speech*, VIII, 3, Oct. 1933, p. 57.

VOWELS

Sym- bol	Spelling	Spoken Form	Sym- bol	Spelling	Spoken Form
i	bee	bi	ʊ	full	fʊl
ɪ	pity	'pɪtɪ	u	tooth	tuθ
e	rate	ret	ɜ	further	ˈfɜ:ðə <i>accented syllable</i> <i>only, r's sounded</i>
ɛ	yet	jet	ɜ	further	ˈfɜ:ðə <i>accented syllable</i> <i>only, r's silent</i>
æ	sang	sæŋ	ə	further	ˈfɜ:ðə <i>unaccented syllable</i> <i>only, r's sounded</i>
ɑ	bath	baθ <i>as heard in the East,</i> <i>between æ (sang)</i> <i>and ɑ (ah)</i>	ə	further	ˈfɜ:ðə <i>unaccented syllable</i> <i>only, r's silent</i>
ɑ	ah	ɑ	ə	further	ˈfɜ:ðə <i>unaccented syllable</i> <i>only, r's silent</i>
	far	far		custom	ˈkʌstəm <i>unaccented syl-</i>
ɒ	watch	wɒtʃ <i>between ɑ (ah) and</i> <i>ɔ (jaw)</i>		above	əˈbaʊ <i>lable</i>
ɔ	jaw	dʒɔ			
	gorge	ɡɔrdʒ	ʌ	custom	ˈkʌstəm <i>accented syl-</i>
o	go	go		above	əˈbaʊ <i>ble</i>

DIPHTHONGS

aɪ	while	hwaɪl	ju	using	'ju:zɪŋ
aʊ	how	haʊ		fuse	fju:z
ɔɪ	toy	tɔɪ	ɪu	fuse	fiu:z

CONSONANTS

Sym- bol	Spelling	Spoken Form	Sym- bol	Spelling	Spoken Form
p	pity	'pɪtɪ	dʒ	jaw	dʒɔ
b	bee	bi		edge	ɛdʒ
t	tooth	tuθ	m	custom	ˈkʌstəm
d	dish	dɪʃ	ŋ	keep 'em	'kɪpp
k	custom	ˈkʌstəm	n	vision	'vɪʒən
g	go	go	ɪ	Eden	'ɪdɪ
f	full	fʊl	θ	sang	sæŋ
v	vision	'vɪʒən		angry	'æŋ·ɡrɪ
θ	tooth	tuθ	l	full	fʊl
ð	further	ˈfɜ:ðə	l	cradle	'kredl
s	sang	sæŋ	w	watch	wɒtʃ
z	using	'ju:zɪŋ	hw	while	hwaɪl
ʃ	dish	dɪʃ	j	yet	jet
ʒ	vision	'vɪʒən	r	rate	ret
h	how	haʊ		very	'veri
tʃ	watch	wɒtʃ		far	far
	chest	tʃest		gorge	ɡɔrdʒ