



Tutor Training Workshop Pronunciation

2025

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Pronunciation Overview

- Identify three principles for teaching pronunciation.
- Practice correctly making and describing English sounds.
- Learn the explicit instruction process for teaching sounds.
- Learn activities to help students improve pronunciation.



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Principle 1: Native language influences pronunciation

Problems

- The English sound is new to the student.
- The sound is used in a different place.
- The sound doesn't exist in student's language but is similar to one that does.

Research

- Compare English alphabet to native language alphabet.
- Compare English sounds to native language sounds.

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Principle 2: Students don't "pick up" good pronunciation

Students need

- Direct instruction
- Accurate modeling
- Descriptions
- Lots of practice



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Types of sounds

Name of letter = a
Sound of letter = /a/ (short vowel)
Sound of letter = /ā/ (long vowel)

- Voiced sounds such as /b/ /d/ /z/
- Unvoiced sounds such as /p/ /t/ /s/
- Nasal sounds /m/ /n/ /ng/
- Continuants such as /f/ /s/ /v/
 - Sounds you can make as long as you have breath
 - Blend easily with other sounds to make words
- Stop sounds such as /b/ /t/ /p/
 - Sounds which are gone as soon as you make them
 - Difficult to blend with other sounds to make words



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Four stages for making sounds correctly

- Get the lips and mouth in position.
- Produce the sound.
- Stop the sound.
- Relax the position of the mouth.

If you reverse the last two steps, you will get an unwanted vowel sound (uh) on your consonants.



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Steps for teaching sounds: Explicit instruction

- **Explain and model**
 - Model the sound and have them repeat it.
 - Explain the position of the mouth and have them watch.
- **Practice listening**
- **Practice speaking**
 - Have the student watch in a mirror as you both make the sound and compare mouth positions.
 - Describe what is happening in the mouth; draw a picture if needed
- **If the student makes the sound correctly, no explanation is necessary.**

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Distinguishing types of sounds. . .

Unvoiced	Voiced	Unvoiced	Voiced
p	b	s	z
t	d	wh	w
c	g	th	th
ch	j	sh	zh
f	v		

Nasal
m n ng



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. . .Distinguishing types of sounds - summary

Voiced vs Unvoiced

- Hold a slip of paper in front of the mouth and make the sound for *b* and then *p*. The paper stays still with *b* (the voiced sound), but moves with *p* (the unvoiced sound).
- Hold your fingers on your voice box and say the sounds for *s* and *z*. Feel the vibration for *z*, the voiced sound.
- Put your fingers in your ears and say *s* and *z*. With *z*, the voiced sound, you will hear buzzing.

Nasal sounds

- Make the sound for *m* while feeling the top of your head or your temples. You will feel vibration.



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Principle 3: Encourage, reassure, practice

- Give encouragement and praise.
- Assure the student that you will work together.
- Practice new sounds often.
- The goal is communication, not perfection.



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Vowels sounds

Long vowels

ā, ē, ī, ō, ū

The sounds are the same as the letter names.
Long vowels have multiple spellings.

Short vowels - Use the key words to hear the sounds.

apple - ā
Ed - ē
inch - ī
olive - ō
up - ū



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Minimal pairs

Minimal pairs

- pill/bill
- pail/bail

A minimal pair consists of two words that differ only in one sound.

- pair/bear
- pie/buy

△△
Same

△○
Different

- bit/beat
- bill/bell



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Practicing vowel sounds: Tense and lax pairs (long and short vowels)

Pairs of vowels that are
easily confused

beat	bit
meet	mit
bait	bet
cheap	chip
feet	fit
lace	less



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Non-standard English

- Gonna (going to)
- Coulda (could have)
- Didja (did you)
- Dontcha (don't you)
- Dewit (do it)



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Online Resources

Learning Chocolate

learningchocolate.com

Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary

learnersdictionary.com

Color Vowel Chart

americanenglish.state.gov/resources/color-vowel-chart



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