

A Practical Course in  
British English Pronunciation

e-book



audio

# The Sound



# of English

by Joseph Hudson

*"All the tricks you need to sound like a native speaker."*

**Javier Fernandez Pena**

self-study or classroom use  
9 chapters with answer key


Pronunciation  
**'S T U D I O**

# How to Use this E-Book

'The Sound of English' is a fully interactive pdf with the following features:

- **Audio:** click on the icons next to each activity to hear the audio.
- **Index:** click on the page you require to go straight there.
- **Answer Key:** click on the question mark to go straight to the answers.



**Audio** appears with this symbol  click it to hear the file.

**Explanations** appear in grey boxes.


**Exercises** should be completed then checked in the answer key.

**Answer Key** is linked to by clicking the red question mark.


**Drills** should be repeated with the audio until produced accurately.

## Sentence Stress | Intonation

- Listen to the following exchange.

2.16 

A "What would you like?"  
B "A cup of tea."




?

- In spoken English we **stress content words**.
- **One word in every sentence** is more stressed than the others.
- Normally the **last content word** is the most stressed word.

### EXERCISE

- Match the content words on the left with the content words on the right.




a	pair pint leg bunch bag glass book joint loaf	of	beef bread poems wine shoes milk flowers lamb crisps
---	---	----	--

?

---

### DRILL

- Repeat the rhythm followed by each sentence from the exercise:

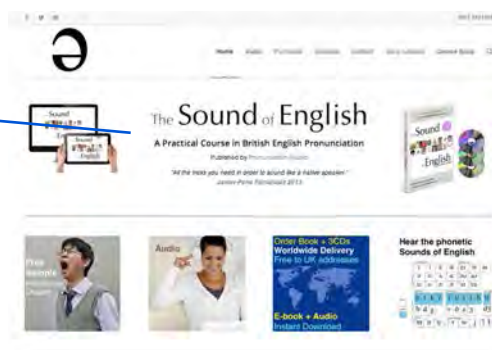
2.17 

. x . X

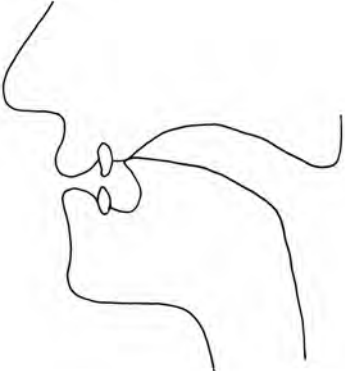



. x . X | a pair of shoes

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# Introduction

<b>Sounds</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Consonants</li><li>- Vowels</li></ul>	
<b>Spelling &amp; Sound</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>'ghoti'</li><li>Schwa</li></ul>	
<b>Structure</b>	Function & Content	
<b>Intonation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Patterns</li><li>Usage</li></ul>	
<b>Postscript</b>	IPA	<b>/ˈpɜːsənli/</b>
<b>Answer Key Pages 113-114</b>		

# Consonant Types | Sound

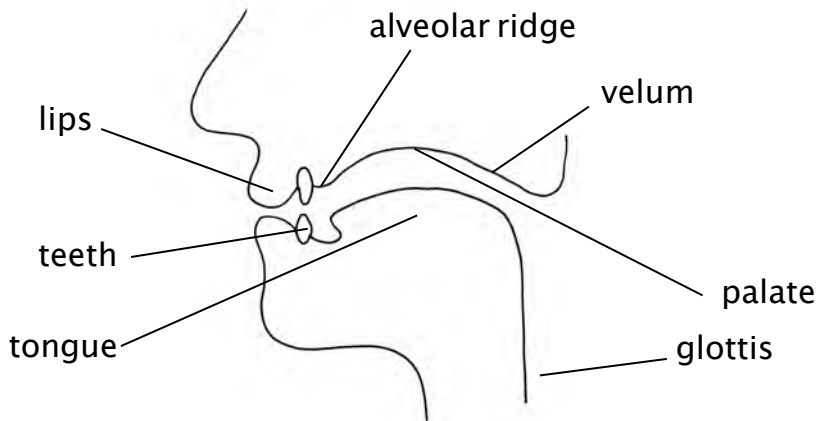
- ✦ Consonant sounds are produced by **blocking air** as it leaves the mouth.
- ✦ This course shows you how to pronounce all **25 consonant sounds** of English.
- ✦ Below is an example of each consonant sound - listen and read them.

0.1 

Type of Sound	Sound	Example 1	Example 2
<b>plosive</b> (complete block of air followed by explosion)	p b t d k g ?	pin bag time door cash girl -	cap robe late feed sock flag football
<b>fricative</b> (constant flow of air "squeezed" through a block, sounds like friction)	f v θ ð s z ʃ ʒ h	full vest think those sight zoo shirt - high	knife cave earth bathe kiss nose crash pleasure -
<b>affricate</b> (plosive followed by fricative)	tʃ dʒ	chose joy	catch stage
<b>nasal</b> (air is released through the nose)	m n ŋ	mood now -	calm turn bang
<b>approximant</b> (vowel-like consonant, no full block of air occurs)	w j r l / ɫ	wall yellow room law	- - - pill

# Consonant Articulation | Sound

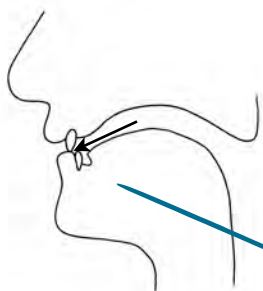
- We use the articulators: **tongue**, **lips** & **teeth**, to block air.
- The **places** where we block air in English are shown below.



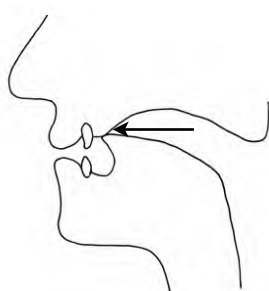
## EXERCISE

0.2 🎧 - Listen to the recording and match the sounds in the boxes with their articulation diagrams (number 1 has been done). The arrows point to the place of articulation.

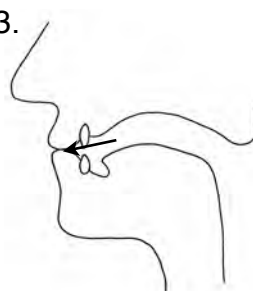
1.



2.



3.



θ / ð

t / d / l / n

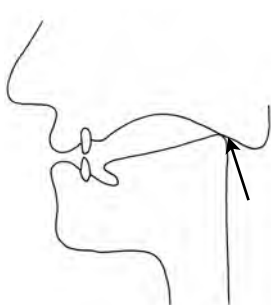
f / v

k / g / ŋ

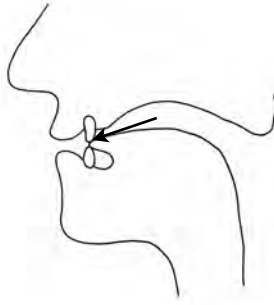
m / p / b

h / ?

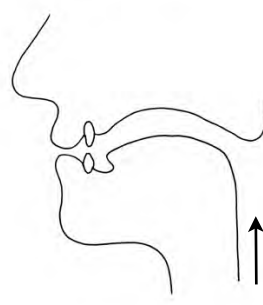
4.



5.



6.



- Check your answers in the answer key on page 112.

?

# Vowels | Sounds


- ✦ A neutral English accent has **19 vowel sounds**.
- ✦ There are 3 types of English vowel sound - **short**, **long** and **diphthong**.
- ✦ **English spelling** does not always show us which sound to pronounce.
- ✦ We will learn how to pronounce each individual vowel sound on this course.





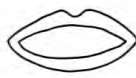




0.3 

Type of Sound	Sound	Spellings	Examples
<b>short</b>  (single mouth position)	ə	a, e, o, u	<b>alive, the, today, supply</b>
	ɪ	i	<b>thin, sit, rich</b>
	ʊ	u, oo, ou	<b>put, look, should</b>
	e	e, ea, ie	<b>went, bread, friend</b>
	ʌ	u, o	<b>fun, love, money</b>
	æ	a	<b>cat, hand, fan</b>
	ɒ	o, a	<b>rob, top, watch</b>
<b>long</b>  (single mouth position)	i:	ee, ea	<b>need, beat, team</b>
	u:	ew, oo, o_e	<b>few, boot, lose</b>
	ɜ:	ir, ur, wor	<b>third, turn, worse</b>
	ɔ:	al, aw, or, our, oor	<b>talk, law, port</b>
	ɑ:	a, al, ar	<b>glass, half, car</b>
<b>diphthong</b>  (double mouth position)	eɪ	ay, ea, ae, ai	<b>pay, great, maid</b>
	ɔɪ	oi, oy	<b>noise, toy, choice</b>
	aɪ	ie, i_e, i, y	<b>fine, like, might</b>
	əʊ	o, o_e, oa	<b>no, stone, road</b>
	aʊ	ou, ow	<b>round, how, brown</b>
	ɪə	eer, ear	<b>beer, hear, steer</b>
	eə	are, ere, ea, ai	<b>care, there, bear</b>

# Vowel Articulation | Sounds

- ✦ A vowel sound is made by **shaping the mouth** as air flows out.
- ✦ Articulators used to shape the mouth are: **tongue, lips** and **jaw**.
- ✦ The chart below shows examples of mouth positions in English.

0.4 

Example	Position		
	tongue	lips	jaw
<b>i: (keep)</b>	front 	spread 	close 
<b>ɜ: (bird)</b>	centre 	relaxed 	mid 
<b>ɒ (watch)</b>	back 	rounded 	open 

## DRILL

- Repeat the following sentences. Notice your jaw opening each time.

0.5 




1. Keep this red bag.
2. Who took Paul's watch?
3. The bird runs fast.

- Which sentence contains only rounded vowels?



# Introduction | Spelling & Sound

- 0.6  - English spelling does not always indicate pronunciation.  
- It was famously claimed that the word 'fish' could be spelt 'ghoti' because:

'gh' in 'enough' is pronounced /f/

'o' in 'women' is pronounced /I/

'ti' in 'motion' is pronounced /ʃ/

so 'ghoti' could be pronounced /fiʃ/!




- ♦ The pronunciation of many English sounds **can be predicted** by their spelling.
- ♦ The '**Spelling & Sound**' section shows you how to select sounds accurately by interpreting spelling.

## EXERCISE

- Each group of words contains an identical spelling.
- Circle the word that you think is **pronounced** differently from the others.



1. goose loose choose
2. nose rose lose
3. played stopped liked
4. father author Northern
5. paid maid said
6. put but hut
7. none done gone
8. foot book food
9. slow now cow
10. word work worn
11. watch wall was

- 0.7  - Listen and check your answers.





# Schwa | Spelling & Sound

- Match the words below with the IPA transcription on the right:


0.8 

Word	IPA Transcription
around	'mænə
manner	'seɪlə
sailor	'kæktəs
cactus	ə'raʊnd



?

- Which sound appears in every IPA transcription?

0.9 

- ♦ The schwa sound /ə/ can be spelt as < a >, < e >, < o > and < u >.
- ♦ The schwa is the **most common vowel sound** in English.
- ♦ The schwa is **weak** - it can never be stressed.
- ♦ The production of the schwa is **neutral**: lips, jaw and tongue are **relaxed**.

## EXERCISE

- Every word in the box below contains one schwa sound.
- Listen to the recording and underline the schwa in each word.

0.10 

servant persist bacon picture commit alive  
 jumper sublime Lonondon salad Peru structure  
 suggest soldier persuade combine balloon  
 terror cushion scripture tighten sofa Russia

?

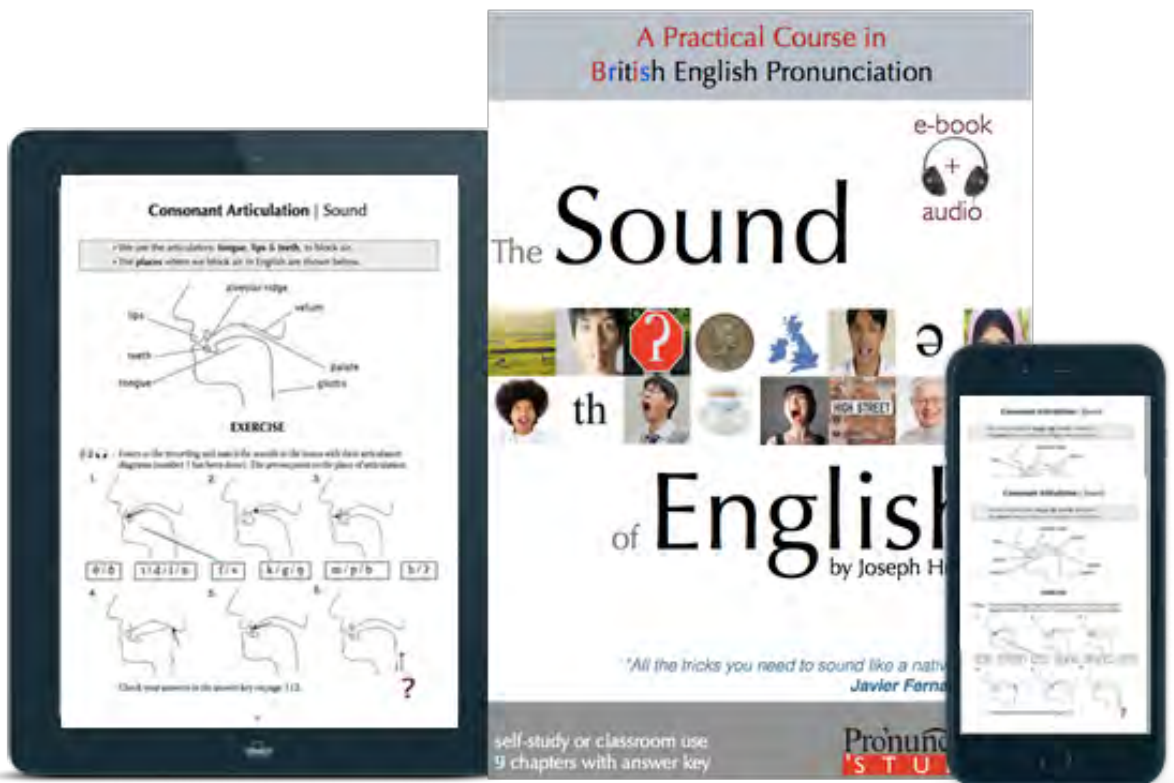
- Think of any word in English with 3 syllables or more.
- How many schwa sounds does it contain? Check in a dictionary.

**EXAMPLE:** 'conspiracy' = 2 schwa sounds.

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# Function & Content | Structure

- Listen to the sentence below:

0.11 

“Shall we go for a walk?”



- Which words are stressed? Why?

- ✦ Spoken English is divided into function and content words.
- ✦ **Function words** carry only grammatical meaning, such as:

Word Type	Examples
prepositions	to from for of with by
auxiliaries	are was do have could would shall can
articles	a an the
quantifiers	some any few all
pronouns	he she it you I this that

- ✦ **Content words** carry real meaning such as:

Word Type	Examples
nouns	car wedding James table joy
verbs	move drink turn enjoy think
adjectives	big interesting quiet slow bright
adverbs	quickly quietly fortunately often again

## EXERCISE

- In the sentences below, underline the function words:

0.12 

1. Can we go for a swim in the sea?
2. It's a beautiful day in the South of England.
3. How do you want to pay for this, sir?
4. Jessica Smith is required in 'Arrivals' immediately.
5. When you get to the station, give me a call.
6. Would you like some of my carrot cake?



# Schwa Function Words | Structure

- Read and listen to the passage below, the schwa sound is written in IPA:

0.13 

I'd like tə go shopping fər ə pair əf shoes, bət thə shops ə closed becəse thəs ə weathər əlert. əparrəntli lots əf snow is coming in frəm thə Highlānds so thə govərnmənt həv ədvised peopəl tə stay ət home. ❄️



- Which function words are pronounced with a schwa sound in the passage?

- ✦ Many function words are pronounced with schwa **when they are weak**.
- ✦ If a function word is **stressed**, it **can not be pronounced with schwa**.
- ✦ Function words are always **strong** when said **alone**.

## DRILL

- Say the word on the left alone (strong), then say it in the sentence on the right using the schwa sound (weak):

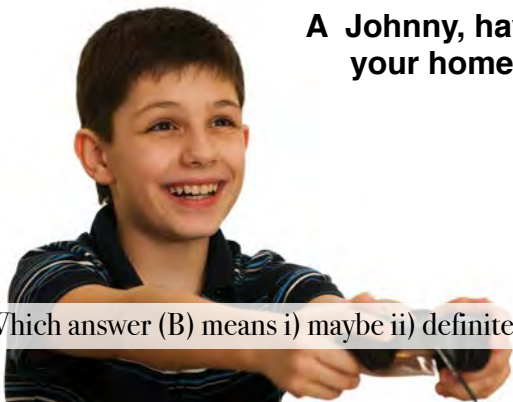
0.14 

	Word (STRONG)	Sentence (WEAK)
1	to /tu:/	I went <b>to</b> work early. /tə/
2	are /ɑ:/	What <b>are</b> you doing? /ə/
3	was /wɒz/	<b>Was</b> it warm in Greece? /wəz/
4	from /frɒm/	This card's <b>from</b> my family. /frəm/
5	there /ðeə/	<b>There</b> weren't enough drinks. /ðə/
6	can /kæn/	Where <b>can</b> we buy a map? /kən/
7	her /hɜ:/	<b>Her</b> car's broken down. /hə/
8	for /fɔ:/	I'll repeat <b>for</b> the last time! /fə/

# Introduction | Intonation

- Listen to the following question being answered in three different ways:

0.15 



**A Johnny, have you finished your homework?**

1. ↘Yes
- B** 2. ↘↗Yes
3. ↗Yes

- Which answer (B) means i) maybe ii) definitely iii) why are you asking me?



- ✦ Spoken English uses 3 intonation patterns - **fall**, **fall-rise** & **rise**.
- ✦ Intonation shows us the **speaker's attitude** to what they are saying.

## DRILL


- Repeat after the recording:

0.16 

1. a) ↘Yes b) ↘↗Yes c) ↗Yes
2. a) ↘No b) ↘↗No c) ↗No

## EXERCISE

- Listen to the conversations and circle the answer you hear:

0.17 

1. Are you married? Yes  ↘ ↗ ↗
2. Did you enjoy the film? Yes ↘ ↘ ↗ ↗
3. Can you afford this meal? Yes ↘ ↘ ↗ ↗
4. You're drunk, aren't you? No ↘ ↘ ↗ ↗
5. Is this your first class? No ↘ ↘ ↗ ↗
6. Did you eat all the chocolate? No ↘ ↘ ↗ ↗



# Usage | Intonation

- ♦ Intonation shows us a speaker's **attitude** to their words.
- ♦ This course will show you **how to produce English intonation** in your speech.
- ♦ Some important examples of intonation usage are displayed below.

## EXERCISE

### 1. ATTITUDE

- Listen to the following conversation twice:

0.18 

A "Dad, I've got some news, I'm getting married!"

B "Excellent"

i) How is the father's reaction different in each case?

ii) How does he show this with intonation?



### 2. IMPLICATION

- Listen to the following conversation twice:

0.19 

A "What did you think of the film?"      B "It was good."

i) What is the difference in meaning between the two versions?

ii) How is the intonation in the word 'good' different the second time?



### 3. REPETITION

Listen to the following conversation:

0.20 

A "Who are you meeting tonight?"      B "Nicole Kidman."

A "Who are you meeting tonight?"      B "Not the Nicole Kidman!"

- Person A says the same question twice, but the intonation is different the second time. How does it change and why?



# IPA | Postscript

- Look at the dictionary entry for the word “personally”:

personally /<sup>l</sup>pɜːsənli/

- What differences do you notice between the spelt and the IPA versions?



- ♦ IPA (**I**nternational **P**honetic **A**lphabet) shows the **way we pronounce words**.
- ♦ In English, the pronunciation of a word often differs from its spelling, making IPA a **very useful study tool** to improve your pronunciation.
- ♦ **Stress** is marked in IPA using the symbol /<sup>l</sup>/.

## EXERCISE

- Write the words from the box below into the chart next to their IPA transcription.
- Write the silent consonant from each word into the 3rd column.

cupboard island half often write know light lamb handbag autumn

	Word	IPA	Silent Consonant(s)
1	<i>autumn</i>	'ɔ:təm	<i>n</i>
2	<i>half</i>	hɑ:f	<i>/</i>
3		læm	
4		nəʊ	
5		'aɪlənd	
6		laɪt	
7		'kʌbəd	
8		rʌɪt	
9		'ɒfən	
10		'hænbæg	

0.21 - Listen to the recording to check your answers and practise saying the words.





# Pronunciation 'S T U D I O



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# Answer Key | Introduction

## ↑ Consonant Articulation I Sounds

EXERCISE

1. f/v
2. t/d/l/n
3. m/p/b
4. k/g/ŋ
5. θ/ð
6. h/?

## ↑ Vowel Articulation I Sounds

EXERCISE

- sentence 2 'Who took Paul's watch' uses only rounded vowels.

## ↑ Introduction I Spelling & Sound

EXERCISE

1. choose
2. lose
3. played
4. author
5. said
6. put
7. gone
8. food
9. slow
10. worn
11. wall

## ↑ Schwa I Spelling & Sound

- around /ə'raʊnd/, manner /'mænə/, sailor /'seɪlə/, cactus /'kæktəs/
- /ə/ appears in every IPA transcription (in bold above).

EXERCISE

servant persist bacon picture commit alive  
jumper sublime London salad Peru structure  
suggest soldier persuade combine balloon  
terror cushion scripture tighten sofa Russia

## ↑ Function & Content I Structure

- 'go' and 'walk' are stressed because they carry meaning.
- The other words 'shall', 'we', 'for', & 'a' are all grammatical words used to gel the sentence.

EXERCISE

1. Can we go for a swim in the sea?
2. It's a beautiful day in the South of England.
3. How do you want to pay for this sir?
4. Jessica Smith is required in 'Arrivals' immediately.
5. When you get to the station, give me a call.
6. Would you like some of my carrot cake?

## ↑ Schwa Function Words I Structure

- Function words pronounced with schwa in the passage: 'to', 'for', 'a', 'of', 'but', 'the', 'are', 'there', 'a', 'have', 'at'.

## ↑ Introduction I Intonation

- i) 'Maybe' = ↘↗yes    ii) 'Definitely' = ↘yes    iii) 'Why are you asking?' = ↗yes.

EXERCISE

1. ↘
2. ↘↗
3. ↗
4. ↗
5. ↘
6. ↘↗

# Answer Key | Introduction

## ↑ Usage I Intonation

### EXERCISE

#### 1. ATTITUDE

- i) In the first version, the father is excited and interested, in the second he is uninterested and a little rude.
- ii) The father's intonation is falling in both examples, the main difference is that he starts from a much higher pitch in the first example. This shows more emotion. In the second version, he starts his phrase quite low, showing disinterest.

#### 2. IMPLICATION

- i) In the first version, we understand that person B really felt the film was good. In the second version, he is not entirely sure, he is showing reservation, we are expecting him to say something less positive now.
- ii) In the first version, person B uses falling intonation on 'it was good', whereas in the second version he uses fall-rising intonation, known as an implicational fall-rise.

#### 3. REPETITION

- The first question is asking for new information, person A does not know the answer and uses falling intonation. The second time she asks, she already knows the answer, she is repeating the question and for this reason uses rising intonation.

## ↑ IPA I Postscript

- The IPA version shows us a silent < r >, a long vowel /:/ and a silent < a >. It also indicates the pronunciation of the vowels /ə/ and /i/.

### EXERCISE

1	autumn	ɔ:təm	n
2	half	hɑ:f	l
3	lamb	læm	b
4	know	nəʊ	k (and w)
5	island	aɪlənd	s
6	light	laɪt	gh
7	cupboard	'kʌbəd	p (and r)
8	write	raɪt	w
9	often	ɒfən	t
10	handbag	hænbæg	d