

A Practical Course in
British English Pronunciation

The Sound

FREE
SAMPLE
Chapter 1
pdf + mp3



of English

by Joseph Hudson

Written & Produced at the **Pronunciation Studio**

Self Study or Classroom Use

9 Chapters with Full Answer Key

The Sound of English

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www.thesoundofenglish.org

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Introduction

English is a confusing language to pronounce. With its 19 vowels, 25 consonants, weak forms, linking and intonation it poses plenty of problems to the non-native speaker. Not to forget the way its written form is so dramatically different from its pronunciation.

‘The Sound of English’ takes you step by step through these tricky areas, covering the sounds, structures and melodies of English in a logical way. Through studying the course you will learn:

- ♦ How to pronounce every vowel and consonant sound of English.
- ♦ Correct use of stress and intonation.
- ♦ The rules of joining and sound selection.
- ♦ To listen with accuracy to English speech.
- ♦ Phonetic symbols for all the sounds of English.

The course will show you how to experience English as a native does: instinctively through listening and sound production.

The course and book were designed, written and recorded through years of teaching experience at the Pronunciation Studio speech school in London. The method is modern and user-friendly, based on introducing, drilling and exercising all the key areas to gradually build students’ confidence and knowledge.

As you go through the course you can download extra materials and read tips on the course website: www.thesoundofenglish.org. You will also find useful information about teachers and contact information if you have any questions.

We hope you enjoy the course, let us know how you get on with improving your English pronunciation!


Joseph Hudson

Author & Teacher
The Sound of English

How to Use the Book

Every chapter is split into the following sections:

- **Sounds:** how to pronounce vowels and consonants.
- **Sound Comparison:** focus on difficult sounds that are often confusing.
- **Spelling & Sound:** how to turn written English into speech.
- **Structure:** how English joins together and the weak/strong structure.
- **Intonation:** the use of pitch and stress in speech.

Most activities come with audio files to practise with. These are indicated with the following symbol in the left margin: 9.3 

Every page of the course contains up to three parts: **NOTES**, **EXERCISES** and **DRILLS** as follows:

NOTES

- ✦ All notes appear in **grey boxes** like this one.
- ✦ Here you will find the **rules and production notes** for each section.

EXERCISES

- Complete the exercises and check your answers with the audio or answer key.
- The answer key is found in the back of the book on pages 113-130.

DRILLS

- Repeat drills regularly with the recording until they become easy to produce.
- There is space on the recordings to repeat after each sentence or sound.

EXTRA MATERIALS & CLASSES

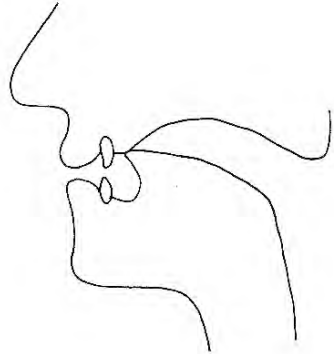
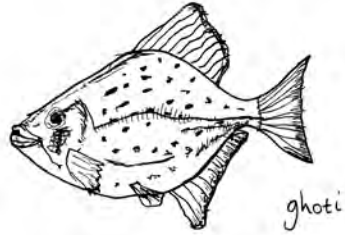

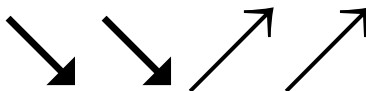
- Many of the exercises in 'The Sound of English' have extra practice activities available to download from our website, visit: www.thesoundofenglish.org
- You can also find information about where to study the course with qualified teachers on the website.

IPA Chart

- ♦ IPA is **phonetic script**, it shows us the sounds to pronounce rather than spelling.
- ♦ The script is very useful for improving accuracy in pronunciation.
- ♦ You will learn each sound and its possible spellings on the course.

VOWELS																		
Monophthongs										Diphthongs								
1 i:	2 ɪ	3 e	4 æ	13 eɪ	14 ɔɪ	15 aɪ	5 ə	6 ɜ:	7 ʌ	8 ɑ:	16 əʊ	17 aʊ	9 u:	10 ʊ	11 ɔ:	12 ɒ	18 ɪə	19 eə
CONSONANTS																		
Plosives					Fricatives					Affricates								
20 p	21 t	22 k	23 ʔ	24 f	25 θ	26 s	27 ʃ	28 h	29 tʃ	30 b	31 d	32 g	33 v	34 ð	35 z	36 ʒ	37 dʒ	
Approximants																		
Nasals					Approximants													
38 m	39 n	40 ŋ	41 r	42 w	43 j	44 l												
Legend																		
Voiced					Voiceless													
[White Box]					[Blue Box]													

Chapter 1

Sounds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Consonants – Vowels 	
Spelling & Sound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ‘ghoti’ Schwa 	
Structure	Function & Content	
Intonation	Patterns Usage	
Postscript	IPA	/ˈp3:sənli/
Answer Key Pages 113-114		

Before beginning, download the free mp3 audio pack from:
www.thesoundofenglish.org/free.html

Consonant Types | Sound

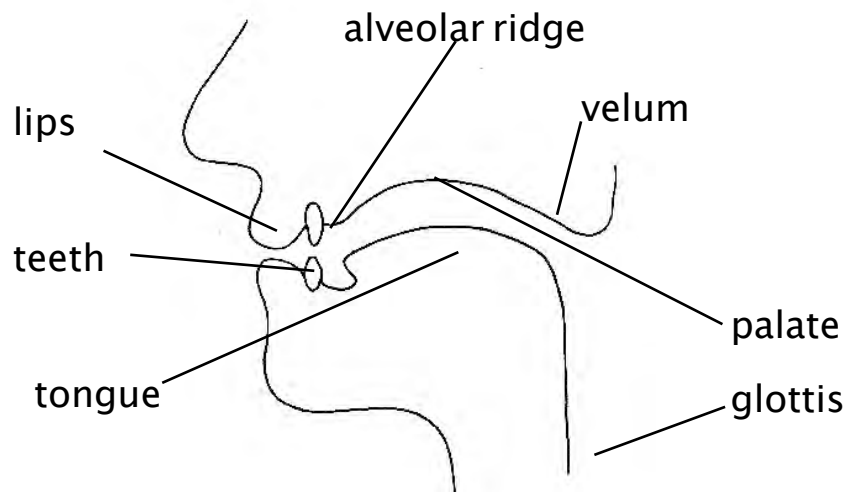
- ✦ Consonant sounds are produced by **blocking air** as it leaves the mouth.
- ✦ This course shows you how to pronounce all **25 consonant sounds** of English.
- ✦ Below is an example of each consonant sound - listen and read them.

1.1 

Type of Sound	Sound	Example 1	Example 2
plosive (complete block of air followed by explosion)	p b t d k g ʔ	pin bag time door cash girl -	cap robe late feed sock flag football
fricative (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 -
affricate (plosive followed by fricative)	tʃ dʒ	chose joy	catch stage
nasal (air is released through the nose)	m n ŋ	mood now -	calm turn bang
approximant (vowel-like consonant, no full block of air occurs)	w j r l / ɹ	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

1.2 

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

1.	2.	3.
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">θ / ð</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">t / d / l / n</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">f / v</div>
4.	5.	6.
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">k / g / ŋ</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">m / p / b</div>	<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 2px; display: inline-block;">h / ?</div>

- 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.

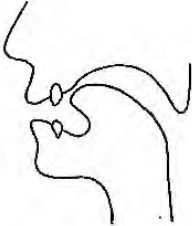


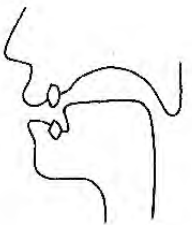


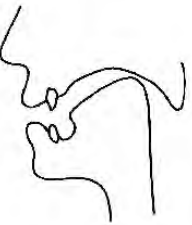
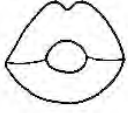

1.3 

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

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.

1.4 🎧

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

DRILL

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

1.5 🎧



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

1.6 

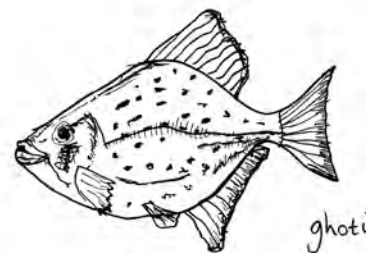
- English spelling does not always indicate pronunciation.
- It was famously claimed that the word 'fish' could be spelt 'ghoti' because:

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

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

'ti' in 'motion' is pronounced /ʃ/

so 'ghoti' could be pronounced /fɪʃ/!



- ✦ 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

1.7 

- Listen and check your answers.

Schwa | Spelling & Sound

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

1.8 🎧

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



- Which sound appears in every IPA transcription?

1.9 🎧

- ✦ 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.

1.10 🎧

servant persist bacon picture commit alive
 jumeper subelime 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.

Function & Content | Structure

- Listen to the sentence below:

1.11 

“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:

1.12 

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:

1.13 

I'd like tə go shopping fər ə pair əf shoes, bət thə shops ə closed becəse thəs ə weathər əlert. əparrəntly lots əf snow is coming in frəm thə Highlənds 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):

1.14 

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

Introduction | Intonation

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

1.15 



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:

1.16 

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:

1.17 

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-----|---|----|---|
| 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 speakers' **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:

1.18 

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

B "Excellent"

- How is the father's reaction different in each case?
- How does he show this with intonation?



2. IMPLICATION

- Listen to the following conversation twice:

1.19 

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

- What is the difference in meaning between the two versions?
- How is the intonation in the word 'good' different the second time?

3. REPETITION

Listen to the following conversation:

1.20 

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 /'pɜ:sənli/

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

- ♦ IPA (**International Phonetic Alphabet**) 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 following symbol / ' /

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	

1.21 

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

Answer Key

Chapter	Pages
1	113 - 114
2	115 - 116
3	117 - 118
4	119 - 120
5	121 - 122
6	123 - 124
7	125 - 126
8	127 - 128
9	129 - 130

Answer Key | Chapter 1

Consonant Articulation | Sounds

EXERCISE

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

EXERCISE

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

Introduction | 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 | 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 | 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 | Structure

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

Answer Key | Chapter 1

Introduction | Intonation

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

EXERCISE

1. ↘ 2. ↘↗ 3. ↗ 4. ↗ 5. ↘ 6. ↘↗

Usage | 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 | 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

What to do now?

Now you have completed the free sample, you have started on the road to improving your English pronunciation. Here are some options for continuing:

1. **Download the full course 9 Chapters (140 pages + full audio)** and study the course yourself. The full course pack costs £15.00 and can be downloaded instantly, visit:



www.thesoundofenglish.org/shop.html

2. **Join 'The Sound of English' Group Classes** in central London, daily 17:30-19:00 and Saturdays 10:00 - 13:00. The entire course book is covered, classes cost:

£25 / 1 Class | £90 / 5 Classes | £175 / 10 Classes | £300 / 20 Classes

Visit www.thesoundofenglish.org/classes.html for dates and booking.

Intensive 1 week and 1 weekend courses are also available.

3. **Study with expert IPA Certified teachers** at the Pronunciation Studio speech school in London both individually and in small groups.

The school offers accent reduction, elocution, voice and advanced courses. Visit www.pronunciationlondon.co.uk for full details.

THE AUTHOR

Joseph Hudson (BA/CELTA/IPA Cert) is a teacher and writer based in London. He founded the Pronunciation Studio Speech school in 2007. His early career was as a general English teacher, where he learnt the rudiments of language learning. He is the author of the courses 'An English Accent' and 'The Sound of English'.



THE RECORDINGS

The audio pack features the voice of Erica Buist (BA/CELTA/IPA Cert) alongside the author. Erica is an experienced and vibrant classroom teacher. She has taught general English and pronunciation in Central America and England and joined the Pronunciation Studio in 2009. Her voice skills are notably clear and warm.



THE SCHOOL

Pronunciation Studio London provides education in all aspects of speech from phonetics, pronunciation and accent reduction to voice coaching and acting classes. Over 10,000 students have passed through its doors since 2007. Creative teaching, exciting materials, a passion for language learning in general and phonetics in particular are central to its popularity.



Visit the Pronunciation Studio at www.pronunciationlondon.co.uk.

www.thesoundofenglish.org