

# how to *Teach Pronunciation*

Gerald Kelly

series editor:  
Jeremy Harmer



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For Frank and Moira Kelly, who would've been chuffed.

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# Introduction

**Who is this book for?**

*How to Teach Pronunciation* has been written for all teachers of English who wish to improve their knowledge and develop their practical skills in this important area.

**What is this book about?**

This book aims to help teachers gain theoretical knowledge and to confirm and extend what they already know. It also suggests a variety of practical ideas, skills and activities for the classroom. The book shows teachers how to integrate pronunciation work with the treatment of grammar and lexis in order to help students appreciate its relevance and importance for successful communication.

- Chapter 1 explores the features and physiology of pronunciation, and introduces phonemic transcription.
- Chapter 2 deals with various approaches to teaching pronunciation, and introduces three types of lesson: Integrated lessons, where pronunciation is fully integrated with the other aspects of the language being taught; Remedial lessons and activities, which deal with pronunciation difficulties and issues which arise in class; and Practice lessons and activities, where particular aspects of pronunciation are addressed in their own right.
- Chapters 3 to 8 separate out various areas of pronunciation, and cover theory, factual knowledge and ideas for the classroom.

All the chapters except the first one contain a range of sample lessons which demonstrate Integrated, Remedial and Practice lesson types.

The Task File at the back of the book comprises a number of tasks relevant to each chapter. They can be used for individual study and reflection, or for discussion and revision in a training context. An answer key is provided where appropriate.

The appendices offer a newly designed learners' reference chart of English sounds, a summary of common pronunciation difficulties, a set of sound and spelling tables, and suggestions for further reading.

The Compact Disc accompanying the book contains examples of sounds and sentences from the text. The relevant CD track numbers are indicated within the book by the symbol on the left.

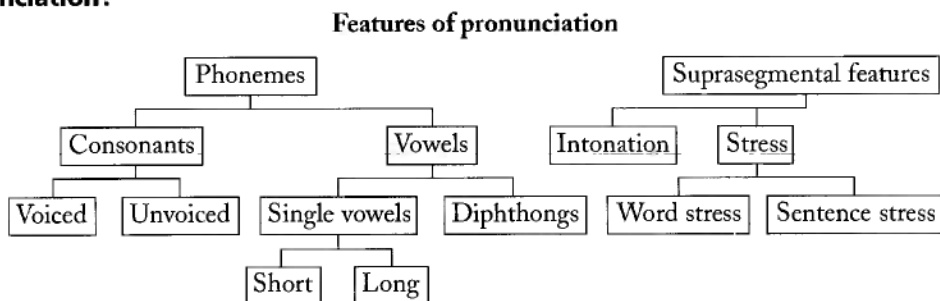


# 1 The description of speech

- What are the main features of pronunciation?
- The physiology of pronunciation
- The articulation of phonemes
- Phonemic transcription
- Phonetics and phonology

**What are the main features of pronunciation?**

In order to study how something works it is often useful to break it down into its constituent parts. The following diagram shows a breakdown of the main features of pronunciation.



## Phonemes

**Phonemes** are the different sounds within a language. Although there are slight differences in how individuals articulate sounds, we can still describe reasonably accurately how each sound is produced. When considering meaning, we see how using one sound rather than another can change the meaning of the word. It is this principle which gives us the total number of phonemes in a particular language. For example, the word *rat* has the phonemes /ræt/. (Refer to the **sounds chart** on the next page if you are not familiar with the symbols used here.) If we change the middle phoneme, we get /rɒt/ *rot*, a different word. If you or I pronounce /r/ in a slightly different way, the word doesn't change, and we still understand that we mean the same thing. To make an analogy, our individual perceptions of colours may theoretically vary (i.e. your notion of 'green' may not be the same as mine), but intuitively we know that we are likely to be thinking about more or less

the same thing. We can both look at a green traffic light and understand its significance, and how it differs from a red one.

Sounds may be **voiced** or **unvoiced** (sometimes referred to as 'voiceless'). Voiced sounds occur when the vocal cords in the larynx are vibrated. It is easy to tell whether a sound is voiced or not by placing one or two fingers on your Adam's apple. If you are producing a voiced sound, you will feel vibration; if you are producing an unvoiced sound, you will not. The difference between /f/ and /v/, for example, can be heard by putting your top teeth on your bottom lip, breathing out in a continuous stream to produce /f/, then adding your voice to make /v/. Hold your Adam's apple while doing this, and you will feel the vibration.

The set of phonemes consists of two categories: **vowel** sounds and **consonant** sounds. However, these do not necessarily correspond to the vowels and consonants we are familiar with in the alphabet. Vowel sounds are all voiced, and may be single (like /e/, as in *let*), or a combination, involving a movement from one vowel sound to another (like /eɪ/, as in *late*); such combinations are known as **diphthongs**. An additional term used is **triphthongs** which describes the combination of three vowel sounds (like /aʊə/ in *our* or *power*). Single vowel sounds may be short (like /ɪ/, as in *hit*) or long (like /i:/, as in *heat*). The symbol /:/ denotes a long sound.

Consonant sounds may be voiced or unvoiced. It is possible to identify many pairs of consonants which are essentially the same except for the element of voicing (for example /f/, as in *fan*, and /v/, as in *van*). The following table lists English phonemes, giving an example of a word in which each appears.

Vowels		Diphthongs		Consonants			
i:	be <u>ad</u>	eɪ	ca <u>ke</u>	p	pin	s	sue
ɪ	h <u>i</u> t	ɔɪ	to <u>y</u>	b	b <u>i</u> n	z	zo <u>o</u>
ʊ	bo <u>o</u> k	aɪ	h <u>i</u> gh	t	t <u>o</u>	ʃ	sh <u>e</u>
u:	fo <u>o</u> d	ɪə	be <u>e</u> r	d	d <u>o</u>	ʒ	mea <u>s</u> ure
e	l <u>e</u> ft	ʊə	few <u>e</u> r	k	c <u>o</u> t	h	h <u>e</u> llo
ə	ab <u>o</u> ut	eə	wh <u>e</u> re	g	g <u>o</u> t	m	m <u>o</u> re
ɜ:	sh <u>i</u> rt	əʊ	g <u>o</u>	tʃ	ch <u>u</u> rch	n	n <u>o</u>
ɔ:	ca <u>l</u> l	aʊ	hou <u>s</u> e	dʒ	j <u>u</u> dge	ŋ	s <u>i</u> ng
æ	h <u>a</u> t			f	f <u>a</u> n	l	l <u>i</u> ve
ʌ	r <u>u</u> n			v	v <u>a</u> n	r	r <u>e</u> d
ɑ:	f <u>a</u> r			θ	th <u>i</u> nk	j	y <u>e</u> s
ɒ	do <u>g</u>			ð	th <u>e</u>	w	w <u>o</u> od

(Pairs of consonants (voiced and unvoiced) are thickly outlined. The boxes containing unvoiced phonemes are shaded.)