



Perfect Pronunciation

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**PERFECT YOUR
PRONUNCIATION IN 8 EASY
STEPS**

*Tips on how to speak clearly,
so that you never have to repeat yourself!*

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INTRODUCTION

Hello, and welcome to PPA (Perfect Pronunciation Academy e-book). My name is Thila Raja, and I will be your trainer and personal Speech Pathologist in this journey.

A brief introduction about me. I am originally from Singapore, but am now living in Perth, Australia. I wrote this e-book as a guide for you to improve your pronunciation and accent. Back when I was working on my own accent, I used my own listening powers (and my Speech Pathology course) to help me with my transition. Since then, I have embarked on a course on how to teach accent reduction, and have been using that method to teach all of my face to face clients. So, this e-book is filled with scientific information, not just any random information gleaned from the internet. I sincerely hope you find this helpful and an enjoyable read 😊

CONTENT

There will be eight lessons in this book. Each lesson would cover a specific topic.

Lesson 1: How to identify your common mistakes (without going crazy)

Lesson 2: Sounds that make you clearer- instantly.

Lesson 3: Vowels: Long vs Short

Lesson 4: The /th/ sound

Lesson 5: Was it the /r/ or the /l/ sound?

Lesson 6: What was the word? (confusion between /v/ & /w/)

Lesson 7: Word & syllable stress

Lesson 8: Intonation /Melody of Speech

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LESSON 1: How to identify common speech errors

Welcome to learning all about your pronunciation and speaking clearly. Before I go on, take a moment to reflect as to what you find particularly difficult when you are speaking.

It could be one of the following:

- i) Error in using the incorrect consonant sound
- ii) Error in using the incorrect vowel sound
- iii) Error in the way you speak (rate of speech, intonation, melody of speech)

If you, for some reason have decided that it is time for your speech to change, you are in the right place! In today's world, English is increasingly used as the international means of communication.

****In this e-book, we will not be focussing on a specific accent, such as an Australian, American or English accent. ****

Instead, we will be focusing on:

Standard Neutral English (SNE)

SNE is generally associated with the South Eastern region of England and is very close to Received Pronunciation. When spoken, SNE will be perceived as a **neutral accent**, and listeners will be typically **unable to place where the speaker comes from**. It will sound close to the English accent. A great place to check out common errors is this [website](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-native_pronunciations_of_English). (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-native_pronunciations_of_English)

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Lesson 2: Sounds that make you clearer- instantly!

Consonants play a greater role in speech intelligibility compared to vowels. Speakers often omit the final sounds of words, which are often consonants. Consonants which represent past tense (ed), plurals (s/z), are often overlooked hence giving the impression that a speaker has poor grammar, when in fact, its poor pronunciation.

PLOSIVES/STOP sounds.

These sounds help to separate the syllables away from the other. They add considerable clarity to your speech flow, when pronounced correctly. ***This is the main reason why a BBC radio announcer has such clear diction.***

Examples of stop sounds:

Voiced: p, t, k

Voiceless : b,d, g

Do not worry too much about voiced and voiceless sounds for now. Just know that they sound different due to difference in air released!

Here are some words with stop consonants. Say them out aloud and listen to the difference to the end of the sounds.

Crap crab

tight tide

back bag

Increase your practice further, and try these few phrases, remembering to say the final stop sounds. Aim to say the final stop sounds with as much puff and firmness as you can.

i) We hope to buy a crab.

ii) There was a lot of crap to sort through.

iii) She held him very tight.

iv) The tide was very low.

v) I have a very sore back.

vi) My bag is very heavy and is giving me a sore back.

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Lesson 3: Vowels: Long vs Short

Vowel positions are difficult to describe. No part of your mouth touches another and your tongue is suspended.

The position of your tongue, whether low or high, front or back makes the difference in sounds.

Most important feature of vowels is the length of their sound. They can be either short or long sounds. One of the most common errors in English is shortening the vowel sounds. E.g.: ship, sheep. Listen to your speech and pinpoint which vowels you shorten and lengthen.

Practice vowels. Ensure that the long vowels have 2 claps and short vowels have 1 clap

Long	Short
Bead	Bid
Food	foot
Bad	Bed
Bard	Bud
Bored	Bought

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Lesson 4: The /th/ sound

I have never met anyone who has liked the /th/ sound. Surprising enough, this sound is only known in English and Greek. No other language has this sound in their phonetic system! Its no wonder that non native speakers of English detest this sound.

Some points to note. Different people have different errors for /th/. If you are from:

- South Asia (India, Bangladesh etc) & South East Asia (Singapore/Malaysia)
You are most likely saying /d/ for voiced /th/ & /t/ for unvoiced /th/.
- Hongkong, you most likely replace /th/ for /s/ or /f/.
- Europeans (Speakers of Scandinavian languages), you replace /th/ for /z/ & /s/.

This means, important filler words like /the, they, their, there/ may be pronounced as: /deh, dey, zeir, zere/ etc. In connected speech, it actually does not change the meaning of the word or sentence. So, it is not the worst sound in the world to mispronounce. However, should you wish to practice saying this sound, here is ONE main tip.

Place tongue tip very lightly against lower half of top teeth, and not INBETWEEN your teeth. Aim for friction and blow air through.

Try the above, and practice the following words: The, They, Their, There, Thank you, Thumb.

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Lesson 5: Was it the /r/ or the /l/ sound?

This sound is very difficult for speakers with an Asian language background. Eg: Korea, Japan, Hongkong etc. In those countries, the /r/ sound is mispronounced as /l/, simply because Asian languages do not have the /r/ sound in them.

A common mistake that has happened before, is the over exaggeration of /r/ sound. Eg: Rolling the /r/ too much.

The American way of saying /r/ is overemphasized as well, but we shall not get into that here.

Here is the instruction on how to produce /r/:

- Curl tongue tip back in the area behind upper teeth.
- **Do not touch roof of mouth. (MOST IMPORTANT)**
- Lips unrounded and jaw relaxed.
- Air passes through the curled tongue

Main difference between /r/ & /l/

/r/ - tongue does not contact any point in the mouth. It is curved near the upper tooth ridge.

/l/ - only the tongue tip makes contact, and the tongue is curved.

Practice these words:

Rice/lice, ran/land, brand/land, rye/lie

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Lesson 6: What was the word? (confusion between /v/ & /w/)

This sound confuses most Indian English speakers, as well as European and Eastern European speakers. This difficulty is due to the difference in spelling of the words in English and German/Russian. So, the main work here is in retraining the habit, rather than learning a new sound.

How to say /v/ correctly:

Place your upper teeth lightly against inner edge of lower lip. Allow for friction between teeth and lip. Push air through.

How to say /w/ correctly:

Round your lips, and bunch your tongue high at the back of your mouth. Do not create friction as you blow air through your mouth.

Try the following words:

Vine/wine, veil/wail, vet/wet, veal/weal

- Many violent offenders reform and vanish after leaving jail.
- Avoid the fruit of the vine if it gives you unwanted cravings.
- Our volleyball team tried several fancy moves but wailed woefully.

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Lesson 7: Word & syllable stress

Now we come to a different and interesting part of accent reduction. We move away from the sounds and move to how things SOUND when you say them. I am talking about the rhythm and intonation of things when you speak.

Rhythm, intonation and stress make the difference when you speak. English has a different rhythm to other languages. Often when we learn another language, we transfer the rhythm of the previous language, onto the new one. This is like squeezing the rhythm of a march into a waltz.

Words are made up of syllables, meaning parts. Eg: Sunrise (2 syllables), banana (3 syllables), caterpillar (4 syllables) and so on. You get the picture. For the purpose of this e-book, lets keep this simple and only focus on 2 syllable words & common noun/verb productions.

Majority of 2 syllable words, stress the first syllable. Eg: PUR-chase, COLL-eague

The words which are nouns, and can be verbs:

NOUNS :

PRO-gress

PRE-sent

PRO-duce

RE-cord

VERBS:

To pro-GRESS

to pre-SENT

to pro-DUCE

to ob-JECT

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Lesson 8: Intonation /Melody of Speech

Basically, whichever language you speak, you need to speak that language with its rhythm and pitch. The stress and intonation of speech make up:

Pitch (the rise and fall of your voice)

Loudness (how loud you are)

Length (how long you hold a sound for)

English is not a tone language, whereas majority of Asian, South American languages are tonal languages. So, when the tone on /no/ changes, the meaning is the same.

The easiest way to stress a word is to say it louder. The main question is which word do you stress in a sentence? The simple answer is to place stress on the word that has the most importance. E.g.: I **WANT** to go home now. Or I want to go home **NOW**.

Intonation is used to convey the meaning of a sentence. The most common mistake with intonation is finishing every sentence with an upwards inflection, as though it is a question, or unsure of their statement.

E.g.: Did you know this was incorrect? (ending on an upward inflection), as though you are questioning yourself.

The most **effective** way to learn intonation is by listening to native language speakers and being attentive to their speech patterns. You can even try singing songs or nursery rhymes to copy the intonation pattern of English.

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Thank you for reading till the end!

I hope you enjoyed reading this e-book.

This is meant to be a real brief, introduction to accent reduction.

For some of you, it might have been new information. For others, might have been a revision.

I am working away on a project that will help you with your accent reduction.

Stay tuned to your email for more details.

Till then, stay funky!

Loads of Love,

Thila

