

Common Pronunciation

"S"

In English we pronounce the 'S' at the end of words so pay attention to verbs in the **3rd person** and **plural** endings.

For example:

3rd person - looks, moves, goes, makes, loves

plurals – pens, books, films, trips, bags

Pronunciation of the past participle:

'ed' endings

You may have noticed that the "-ed" ending in the past tense adds another syllable to the word with some verbs. (For example: It ends at twelve -> it endeded at twelve).

However we don't add another syllable to the past tense of *every* verb. For example, "worked" is only pronounced with one syllable = '**workt**'

A second syllable with the "-ed" ending is *only* necessary when the last sound (not the last letter) is a /t/ or /d/.

For example, "wanted," "decided," "needed," or "invited."

These two sounds require that the added -ed ending be pronounced with an additional syllable.

Note – There are some exceptions: When we use the past participle as an adjective, we pronounce the additional syllable: aged, blessed, crooked, dogged, learned, ragged, and wretched.

So how do you know when to pronounce the second syllable?

Voiced and Unvoiced Sounds:

- The "-ed" ending of **unvoiced** sounds takes on a /t/.
- **Voiced** sounds take on a /d/.

Put two or three fingers gently against your throat and then make a sound. If you feel a vibration, the sound is **voiced**. If not it is **unvoiced**.

Examples of /t/ Endings for Past Tense Verbs

"**laugh**" becomes "laughed" and is pronounced "laugh/t/" (one syllable)

"**walk**" becomes "walked" and is pronounced "walk/t/" (one syllable)

"**kiss**" becomes "kissed" and is pronounced "kiss/t/" (one syllable)

"**finish**" becomes "finished" and is pronounced "finish/t/" (two syllables)

Examples of /d/ Endings for Past Tense Verbs

"**clean**" becomes "cleaned" and is pronounced "clean/d/" (one syllable)

"**dream**" becomes "dreamed" and is pronounced "dream/d/" (one syllable; note that "dreamt" is the British English version of the past tense of "dream")

"**save**" becomes "saved" and is pronounced "save/d/" (one syllable)

"**enjoy**" becomes "enjoyed" and is pronounced "enjoy/d/" (two syllables)

"**marry**" becomes "married" and is pronounced "marry/d/" (two syllables)

Formulating the correct 'th' sound

- There are actually **two** different "th" sounds in English, but they are very similar. Both "th" sounds are made putting your tongue between your teeth so that the tip of your tongue is touching the tips of your top teeth. Now you can make a "th" sound by blowing air through your teeth. You can check to see if you are doing it correctly by using a mirror.
- You should be able to see your tongue when you say words such as "**this**", "**the**", and "**that**".



Pronouncing ch/sh in the same way

Practice saying cheap and sheep

You can see they are pronounced in a different way. The French 'ch' (chez) is like the English 'sh' (she).

The sounds in "chip" and "jet"

Both of these sounds are actually a combination of two different sounds.

The "**ch**" sound like in "chip" = /t/ as in "tip" + "**sh**" like in "ship".
Use your voice.

The "**j**" sound in "jet" = /td/ as in "dip" + sound in the middle of "leisure" and "measure".
Don't use your voice.

To make these sounds, put your **tongue** on the roof of your mouth, right behind your teeth, then move your tongue back **behind your teeth** until you are making the "sh" or "measure" sound.

Helping Hint: If you are having trouble making these sounds, try these tricks. To say "chip", practice saying "**meet ship**". Say it **faster** and **faster**, and then you will notice that it sounds like you are saying "me chip".

Helping Hint: If you are having problems with "jet", first, say the word "measure" several times. Now try to add a "d" in the middle of the word, so you are saying "**meadsure**". Try saying this fast. It will sound as if you are saying "medjure". Now you've got it!

'H' problems

1) adding an 'h' in front of vowels sounds

In French you link words that end and begin with a vowel. This tempts you to add an 'h' sound in English where there is none.

2) Removing the 'h' sound from the beginning of words starting with 'h'

Similarly French students of English tend to have difficulty pronouncing the unfamiliar 'h' sound in words such as 'house', 'hat', 'however' etc.

The letter H is only silent in the following situations:

At the end of word preceded by a vowel, e.g. cheetah, Sarah, messiah

Between two vowels, e.g. annihilate, vehement, vehicle

After the letter 'r', e.g. rhyme, rhubarb, rhythm

After the letters 'ex', e.g. exhausting, exhibition, exhort.

Silent letter problems e.g. would, knee

A lot of letters in English words are not pronounced at all, they are called 'silent' letters. In fact *60 percent* of English words have silent letters in them.

Helpful Hint: Once again **practising** is the best way to learn how to pronounce them. Studying a list of them will also help you remember them and **watching** DVD's regularly with the subtitles in English is very helpful also.

Here are some examples.

- Mb at the end of a word (silent b), e.g. comb, lamb, climb.
- Sc at the beginning of a word followed by 'e' or 'i', (silent c), e.g. scene, scent, science, scissors (except for the word 'sceptic' and its derivations!).
- Kn (silent k), e.g. knife, knock, know.
- Mn at the end of a word (silent n), e.g. damn, autumn, column
- Ps at the beginning of a word (silent p), e.g. psalm, psychiatry, psychology
- Ght (silent gh), e.g. night, ought, taught
- Gn at the beginning of a word (silent g), e.g. gnome, gnaw,
- Bt (silent b), e.g. debt, doubtful, subtle (but not in some words, e.g. 'obtain', 'unobtrusive'!)

Confusing the French 'i' with the sound made by 'ee' and 'ea'

The sounds in "heed" and "hid"

We make the sound in "heed" (/i/) with our tongue very close to the top of our mouth. We also spread our lips so it looks like we are **smiling**.



When we make the sound in "hid" (/I/), we don't look as much like we are smiling, and our tongues are lower in our mouths.