Pronunciation Connected Speech

The 8 Voiced and Unvoiced Consonant Pairs in English

*Of the **48 individual phonemes** (sounds) in English, there are **25 consonant sounds** – 15 voiced and 10 unvoiced. A consonant sound is voiced when the vocal cords vibrate while making it; a consonant sound is unvoiced when the vocal cords are still while making it. There is no sound, apart from the sound of air moving through the mouth, tongue, lips, and teeth.*

15 voiced consonant sounds:

b	d	g	j	l	m	n	ng	r	th
big	do	get	join	love	make	nose	sing	rose	this
v	w	y	z	zz					
van	week	yet	zip	vision					

10 unvoiced consonant sounds:

ch	f	h	hh	k	p	s	sh	t	tt
chip	fan	hot	loch	keep	pick	soap	shoe	ten	thank

(The sounds of English are shown with Clear Alphabet. For more details, see https://purlandtraining.com/tag/clear-alphabet/)

*From the 25 consonant sounds we can identify **8 pairs of similar consonant sounds**, where one is voiced and the other is unvoiced. We could even go so far as to say that these consonant sounds are in fact **the same sound**, just with a voiced and an unvoiced version.*

*We need to know this because in connected speech we have to change a voiced consonant sound into an unvoiced consonant sound during the **Forward Consonant Linking (FCL)** process, when transforming a CC sound connection into a VC one or F (Friendly). For example:*

a large plate — ***CC*** — *j > p* — *changes to:* — *ch > p* — *uh Lar Chpleit* — ***VC***

*The j sound is replaced by ch. This is called **assimilation**. The connection is easier to pronounce, while a voiced consonant sound would draw attention to the linking process, reducing **fluid speech**.*

The 8 Voiced and Unvoiced Consonant Pairs in English:

Voiced con.	*Unvoiced con.*	*Example of assimilation (CC > VC)*	*As a minimal pair*
b	*p*	*lab coat > La Pkeut*	*bowl / pole*
d	*t*	*had fun > Ha Tfun*	*dip / tip*
g	*k*	*big book > Bi Kpuuk**	*good / could*
j	*ch*	*fridge man > Fri Chman*	*jeep / cheap*
th	*tt*	*breathe fast > Bree Ttfarst*	*breathe / breath*
v	*f*	*have time > Ha Ftaim*	*van / fan*
z	*s*	*lose time > Loo Staim*	*lose / loose*
zz	*sh*	*N/A (zz never ends a syllable)*	*vision / fission*

**The following consonant sound can also change to unvoiced, as here: b > p*

The rest of the consonant sounds are not involved in pairs for various good reasons:

l, m, n, ng	*voiced*	*as **Friendly consonant sounds** they do not move forward*
r, w, y	*voiced*	*they are never pronounced at the end of a syllable; instead they are used for linking in vv connections*
h	*unvoiced*	*never pronounced at the end of a syllable*
hh	*unvoiced*	*not in general use in Standard English*