

Talk a Lot

Clear Alphabet Dictionary

Classroom Activities for Learning the Clear Alphabet

Here are some classroom activities for learning the Clear Alphabet. Simply choose a handful to build your pronunciation lesson. Of course, you could also use your own ideas and activities with the Clear Alphabet. The activities fall into the following categories:

1. Translation
2. Vowel Sounds
3. Schwa Sound
4. Consonant Sounds
5. Connected Speech
6. Syllable Focus
7. Sound Focus
8. Word Focus

1. Translation

- Translate words and phrases (items) into English, e.g. one page, one column, or a fixed number. For lower-level learners: use the reduced list of 400 Elementary Words (from p.140), or the even shorter list of 100 Basic Words with the Clear Alphabet (p.185).
- Say a word or phrase – your partner writes it with the Clear Alphabet; they say one – you write it with the Clear Alphabet.
- Translate words into your first language, e.g. one column or one page.

2. Vowel Sounds

- Choose an item and sound out loud each phoneme (sound) in each syllable; then sound out loud each syllable separately; then say the item. Pay particular attention to stressing the stressed vowel sound.
- Circle the stressed vowel sound in an item written in the Clear Alphabet.
- Identify the stressed vowel sounds in one set of items (e.g. one page) and put them into groups. Which sounds occur most/least frequently? How many are long or short? Focus on learning the most common vowel sounds.
- Which vowel letters are most often reduced when we speak? Tip: look at the weak stressed syllables in a group of words and identify where sounds have been reduced, e.g. “to” is often pronounced t in a sentence, meaning that the oo sound has been reduced, and “for” is often pronounced f in a sentence, meaning that the or sound has been reduced.
- Find *x* (5, 10, 20, or whatever) examples of assonance – words and phrases that have the same vowel sounds (stressed or not). This could be with a pair or group of words, e.g. “hair” and “wear” both share the same vowel sound: eir . Or it could be within the same word or phrase, e.g. the word “expensive” has two e sounds: e Kspen siv , while the phrase “fruit juice” has two oo sounds: Froo_ Joos .
- Find *x* items which have sounds from a particular vowel sound group: short, long, or diphthong.
- Find *x* items that have a stressed vowel sound which also appears in another syllable in the same item, e.g.

roundabout
steering wheel

Raun d baut
Stiy ring wiy!

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Wi-Fi **Wai fai**
work experience wer k Kspiy riyns

- Using a given set of items, make groups of words which have the same vowel clusters in the normal spelling, then match them with their Clear Alphabet counterparts. Emphasise the point that while vowel clusters in the Roman alphabet vary wildly – with sometimes many different spellings for the same sounds – each sound always looks the same in the Clear Alphabet:

Clear Alphabet spelling: er

Some of the vowel clusters used to represent this sound in the Roman alphabet:

her, stir, fur, learn, world, earl, purr, whirr, were, burgh, etc.

The section *Rhyming Words – Vowel Sounds and Diphthongs* on pp.30-40 will be useful for this. See also from p.203 for more about vowel clusters.

- Challenge SS to find words which are comprised completely of one vowel sound, e.g. I, are, hour, etc. There are 9 of this kind of word in the dictionary:

a	uh
air	Eir
are	ar
ear	Iy
eye	Ai
hour	Auw
I	ai
or	or
owe	Eu

3. Schwa Sound

- Find *x* items that have a schwa sound (either the visible uh , or an invisible embedded schwa sound) and practise pronouncing them – paying particular attention to the schwa sound.
- Look for *x* examples of an embedded schwa sound, which is a schwa sound that occurs naturally after saying a consonant sound, e.g. in the word “cinema” there are two embedded schwa sounds: Si n m . One occurs naturally when we pronounce the sound n and the other occurs naturally when we say m .
- List *x* words which have visible schwa sounds, e.g.

uh Gree	agree
uh Plai	apply

Tip: these will generally be words that begin with “a-” which means that there isn’t a consonant sound for the schwa to be embedded in. See pp.229-230 for a list of *Two-Syllable Words where the First Syllable is a Schwa*.

- Look for *x* items with more than one syllable that do not have any schwa or short i sounds (known as the “2nd schwa sound”) – but a full vowel sound in every syllable, e.g.

borrow	Bo reu
download	daun Leud

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freesheet Free sheet
product Pro dukt

Note how most words and phrases contain at least one schwa or short i sound, and often more than one.

- Find *x* items that have one or more short i sounds in the weak stressed syllables, e.g.

m Ka nik mechanic
Rai ting writing

4. Consonant Sounds

- Choose an item and sound out loud each phoneme (sound) in each syllable; then sound out loud each syllable separately; then say the item. Pay particular attention to stressing the stressed vowel sound.
- Find *x* items which have voiced/unvoiced consonant sounds.
- Find *x* examples of consonance – words and phrases that have the same consonant sounds. This could be with a pair or group of words, e.g. “you” and “yet” both start with the same consonant sound: *y* . Or it could be within the same word or phrase, e.g. the word “mushroom” begins and ends with a *m* sound: Mu shroom , while the word “surface” begins and ends with a *s* sound: Ser fs .
- Find *x* items which have a syllable which consists only of consonant sounds (with or without an embedded schwa sound), e.g.

sequel See **kwl**
husband Hu **zbn**d

Practise pronouncing all the sounds in these syllables. (Remember that they are not stressed!)

- Identify *x* different consonant clusters and compare them with the Roman alphabet. Notice that they are often the same, e.g.

bread **Bred**
change **Cheinj**

...but not always, e.g.

thick **Ttik**
cough **Kof**

See from p.217 for more about consonant clusters.

5. Connected Speech

- Discuss how phonetic spelling changes when a word is added to a sentence, e.g. when a word ending with a consonant sound meets a word beginning with a vowel sound, the consonant sound usually moves forward: “small apple” = Smor La pl . See *Talk a Lot Foundation Course* for more on connected speech.
- Look for *x* examples of assimilation where a sound changes making it easier to pronounce with the next sound, e.g. *b* can become *p* :

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job security jo ps Kyuuw r tii
website We psait

See *Problem Sound Connections* from p.170 for more examples.

- Look for *x* examples of elision, where the first sound in a cc sound connection is deleted, making the connection easier to pronounce, e.g.

friendship Fren ship
sit down Si_ Daun

See *Words and Phrases with Glottal Stops* on p.166 for more examples.

- Look for *x* examples of FCL (forward consonant linking), e.g.

Pacific Ocean p si fi Keu shn
whatever wo Te v

...and many phrasal verbs, e.g. “come in” = Ku Min

- Look for *x* examples of vv (vowel sound to vowel sound) linking, e.g.

emergency exit i mer jn sii Ye_ ksit
humiliate hyoo Mi lii yeit
interviewer In t vyoo w

- Look for *x* examples of problem sound connections, where the Clear Alphabet looks awkward, e.g.

vegetable Ve cht bl
popcorn Po pkorn

See *Problem Sound Connections* from p.170 for more examples.

- List *x* items which have one or more syllables ending with a friendly consonant sound: m , n , ng , or l .
- Find *x* items that have a glottal stop and practise making glottal stops. See *Words and Phrases with Glottal Stops* on p.166 for more examples.

6. Syllable Focus

- Mix up the order of syllables in a word or phrase and SS have to identify it. See p.200 for a sample activity using this idea.
- Remove one or more syllables from a word or phrase and SS have to identify the word, e.g. write the following on the board and SS have to guess the missing syllable and write it in both normal spelling and the Clear Alphabet, e.g.

pre zn_ Tei _____

The word is “presentation” and the missing syllable is: tion / shn

- Find *x* items that have one (or more) matching syllables, e.g.

km Pleet complete
km Pyoo t computer

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- Find x words that have one (or more) syllables which are phonetic, i.e. written the same in the Clear Alphabet and in normal spelling, e.g.

Win deu **w**indow
Kam **ping** cam**ping**

7. Sound Focus

- Choose a set of items from the dictionary (e.g. one page or half a page) and examine which sounds occur more or less frequently. For example, **zz** is not a very common sound in English, apart from in words with “vision”.
- Choose a group of x words and phrases and compare how many letters each has versus how many phonemes (individual sounds) it has, e.g.

<i>Normal Spelling:</i>	<i>CA Spelling:</i>	<i>No. Letters:</i>	<i>No. Phonemes:</i>
arrive	uh Raiv	6	4: uh r ai v
what	Wot	4	3: w o t

- Focus on learning IDs in Clear Alphabet which are not immediately obvious or intuitive (ee , oo , etc.) and need to be specifically learned, e.g. tt , zz , iy , _ , and so on.

8. Word Focus

- Focus on minimal pairs. A minimal pair is a pair of words which have exactly the same sounds, apart from one sound, e.g.

large	Larj	rice	Rais
laugh	Larf	right	Rait

There are plenty more examples on p.161, but also try to find your own examples.

Activity: **consonant sound sandwich!** Choose two consonant sounds and see how many different vowel sounds you can put between them to make new words... e.g. b – g: bag, bog, big, then two sounds in between, e.g. brag, blag, etc.; then three, and so on.

- Look for x examples of silent letters, which are letters which appear in the spelling of a word, but are not pronounced, e.g. the letter “w” in “wrist” or the letter “u” in “guess”. See *Silent Letters* on p.162 for more examples.
- Look for x examples of hidden sounds – sounds that are pronounced in a word, but do not appear in the spelling, e.g. the ng sound in “pink” = Pink .

See *Hidden Sounds* from p.164 for more examples.

- Look for x sets of homophones, which are words that have all the same sounds, but different spellings and different meanings, e.g.

aunt, aren't	Arnt
eight, ate	Eit

See *100 Sets of Common Homophones* on p.160, but also try to find your own examples. You can find free printables about homophones to download at <https://purlandtraining.com/>.

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- Look for x examples of common suffixes – notice how they are not stressed, e.g.

ing	dining table	Dai ning tei bl
tion	discrimination	di skri m Nei shn
ment	disillusionment	di s Loo zzn mnt
er	teacher	Tee ch
or	doctor	Do kt
y	happy	Ha pii

and so on. See pp.225-227 for more on the topic of suffixes.

- Find x words which look totally different from their normal spelling, e.g.

s Li s t	solicitor
Fyuuwl	fuel

- Find x items in the dictionary (or think of your own examples) which have different stress depending on the type of word they are, e.g. when “record” is a noun, we stress the first syllable, but when it’s a verb (“record”) we stress the second syllable. For more examples, see *List of Noun/Verb Homographs* on p.228.
- Put a group of x items written in the Clear Alphabet into alphabetical or reverse alphabetical order, e.g.

Alphabetical Order:

Eu pn
Ke mist
Sen s ship
Yoo

Reverse Alphabetical Order:

Yoo
Sen s ship
Ke mist
Eu pn

SS could then translate each item back into normal spelling.

- Make a list of features of the Clear Alphabet that are always or generally true, e.g. plural nouns tend to end with a z sound rather than s , and phrasal verbs are normally stressed on both syllables, and so on.
- Look at a group of x words and phrases written in the Clear Alphabet and discuss: which are easy to recognise and which are difficult? What are the possible reasons for this, e.g. some words are already phonetic in normal spelling and as such are spelled the same in the Clear Alphabet (“bus” = Bus) while other words contain phonetic spelling that may be unfamiliar for students, e.g. tt represents “th” in words like “thick”. (See p.159 for more Phonetic Words.) Or the use of connected speech in the Clear Alphabet – spelling syllable by syllable – might be confusing for students at first, e.g. the use of FCL in the phrase “make sense”: mei Ksens .
- Discuss words that come from the same root in both English and your first language, e.g. for Polish speakers: “million” (English) and “milion” (Polish); “mineral” (English) and “mineralny” (Polish). What difference is there in pronunciation? This can help to reveal interference from students’ first languages, e.g. in Polish the language is fairly phonetic and all written letters are usually pronounced, while in English unstressed vowel sounds are generally not pronounced.

6 fun activities using “Translate from Normal Spelling” pages:

1. Translation
 - Translate items into the Clear Alphabet, e.g. one page or one column.

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- Translate items into your first language, e.g. one page or one column.
 - Print one page: how many words/phrases do you know? / not know? Translate them into your first language and learn them.
2. Word Focus
- Do any Discussion Word activities from *Talk a Lot Elementary Books 1-3* or *Intermediate Book 1* with a given group of words from the dictionary (or your own choice of words). Or you could base a complete *You Are The Course Book Mode 1* process on your word list.
 - Guess which Talk a Lot unit a word or phrase comes from, e.g. “learner driver” comes from “Unit 6: Cars” from *Talk a Lot Elementary Book 2*; or identify words that you think are not discussion words in any of the Talk a Lot books, e.g. “why” is not, because it’s a function word rather than a noun, and similarly “busy” is not a discussion word, because it’s an adjective.
 - Look for homographs – two words which have the same spelling but different meanings, e.g. park (verb or noun), live (verb or adjective), rose (verb or noun), and import (verb or noun). For more examples of homographs see p.228.

8 fun activities using “Normal Spelling & Clear Alphabet Spelling” pages:

1. Word Focus
- The whole list makes a useful vocabulary list for all students to learn, from beginner level upwards.
 - Record an audio (or video) version of a group of items, with a clear reading of each word and phrase.
 - Use the dictionary to make list(s) of high-frequency words (e.g. the ten most common words in English) or words that you use a lot; list words that you know but seldom or never use, and resolve to try to use them more often; list words that are new for you and learn them – both spelling and sounds.
 - Choose a group of x words, or half a page, or two pages and write beside each word or phrase what kind of word it is, e.g. noun, verb, adjective, etc.

brought	verb
brown	adjective
browse	verb
browser	noun

...and so on. Put the same kinds of words into groups (word classes), e.g. you could list x different colours, or past participles.

2. Sound Focus
- Compare the normal spelling with the phonetic spelling. Sound out each sound in the word.
 - Look for words that rhyme, e.g. power, hour, flower, etc. For more on *Rhyming Words* see pp.30-40.

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- Study spelling and sounds further with any of the special topics in this book. See from p.159.

3. Translation

- Make a sentence using words picked randomly from the dictionary, e.g.

boxing carrot popstar allergy

The popstar always had an allergy to carrots after boxing.

...then translate it into the Clear Alphabet:

th Po pstar Ror lwei Zha d Na l jii t Ka r_ sar ft Bo ksing.

...or use consecutive words in the dictionary which may or may not be related, e.g.

referee refund refuse refute

The refereee refuted the argument of the sales assistant who had refused him a refund.

...which translates into the Clear Alphabet as follows:

th re f Ree r Fyoo t_ thii Yar gy mn t vth Seil z si stn_ too w tr Fyoo sti m Ree fund.

8 more fun things that you can do with this dictionary:

- Study the longer phrases that had to be cut out of the main dictionary (p.167).
- Study the list of words and phrases that look confusing in the Clear Alphabet (p.168).
- Study problem sound connections in the Clear Alphabet (p.170).
- Learn high-frequency words in English with the Clear Alphabet (pp.140-157, and p.185).
- Practice translating and reading aloud different role plays and texts with the Clear Alphabet (pp.188-195).
- Compare the use of the Clear Alphabet and the IPA with a discussion words activity (pp.196-198).
- Use the Clear Alphabet to do practice activities from *Talk a Lot Foundation Course*, e.g. Cut-Up IPA Sentence (pp.200-201).
- Use the flashcards (from pp.18-29) and specially written practice material (pp.174-183) – or, even better, create your own!