

Talk a Lot

Foundation Course

Practice Page 1 – Notes for Teachers

1. a) The student could choose any topic, e.g. Food, Transport, Shopping, Books, etc. They think of a person, thing, and place / person / time connected with the topic.

b) The student could use a dictionary to find out what the stressed syllables are – or they could use logic, e.g. we know that suffixes are usually unstressed. If a word has more than one syllable, the syllable break should occur after a vowel letter. This is to ensure a **vc** (vowel to consonant) sound connection – apart from if the final sound of a syllable is *n*, *m*, *ng*, or *l*, which are friendly consonant sounds that blend well with other consonant sounds.

2. a) We're starting off in a fairly easy way with the New English Alphabet (NEA), by asking the student to figure out individual words, before having to deal with how connected speech can change the original form of each word.

b) The aim is to get the student thinking about a word as a group of individual phonemes (sounds). They become aware that some phonemes are written with one letter (e.g. *e*), some with two letters (e.g. *sh*), and a few with three letters (e.g. *auw*).

c) Here the student should refer back to the NEA chart from Lesson 2. It will help them to focus on which sound each Phonemic ID represents.

d) The student should compare the original spelling – the written version – with the NEA spelling – the spoken version. The NEA spelling shows which sounds are used. The student should note the differences between the original spelling, which will probably *not* represent the sounds needed to say the word, and the phonetic spelling, which will. This inconsistency is one of the main causes of pronunciation errors, with students attempting to pronounce the sounds of the letters in the word as they understand them, rather than the actual sounds in the word, as seen in the phonetic spelling.

3. a) This exercise helps the student to understand that content words (e.g. person, main verb, thing, and place) are the main building blocks in the sentence, and as such have one strong stress each, while the function words act like glue holding them together. The student has to think about grammar, by choosing a tense (or using one that is given) to make the sentence. The sentence should have a maximum of twelve syllables – the longer the sentence, the more work to do! The teacher should check the sentence for grammatical errors before the student continues.

b) This is a repeat of 1. b), reinforcing the idea of stress in content words – with the addition of finding the stressed syllable in the main verb, which was added by the student.

c) Here the student has to write the sentence syllable by syllable using normal spelling. This reinforces one of the main concepts of this work – that we speak syllable by syllable, not word by word. As in 1. b), above, if a word has more than one syllable, the student should ensure that the syllable break occurs after a vowel letter or *n*, *m*, *ng*, or *l* . This will make it easier to write the NEA version in stage 5. a).

d) The sound connections between syllables are really vital to deciding which features of connected speech to use – so it is really important to get the syllable breaks right (see above).

Talk a Lot

Foundation Course

Practice Page 1 – Notes for Teachers

e) and f) Here we can see which sound connections are easy to pronounce, i.e. vc connections, and cc connections where the final sound of the first syllable is n, m, ng, or l . After this stage we are left with only problematic sound connections, which we need to change using connected speech techniques.

4. a) At this point the student tries to think of ways to change the problematic sound connections into vc sound connections, using what they know about each kind of sound connection and connected speech techniques. They could note down their ideas. For example, they have learned that cv usually results in Final Consonant Linking (FCL), and that vv results in Intrusion. cc sound connections are more difficult to work out, because there are four ways to deal with them. The student should sound out the syllables in question, listening to what happens at each sound connection. They could also remember that a cc sound connection with t or d at the end of the first syllable will probably result in Elision and a Glottal Stop. This is not always the case, but it's likely.

b) Here the students needs to check whether there are any contractions, i.e. whether there are two function words that could become one, e.g. "we are" could change to "we're", removing the problematic vv sound connection. If there are any contractions, the student should cross out the unnecessary letters, and update the written record of the sound connections.

c) This is to remind the student to look for weak forms of function words in the sentence, e.g. "to" is likely to be pronounced t (weak form), rather than too (full form) – except at the end of the sentence. The student should circle any words that have weak forms.

5. a) Finally the student needs to put together what they have learned about the sentence – the stress, sounds, and effects of connected speech – to produce the NEA version of the sentence, which will reveal each element in a very clear way. The student should note how the vowel sounds on the unstressed syllables are mostly Schwa sounds...

b) ...which is in marked contrast to the stressed syllables, which contain strong and clear vowel sounds. The student circles the stressed vowel sounds to reveal the sound spine – the most important sounds in the sentence.

At each stage the student should be sounding out the individual phonemes and words in the sentence. Now that they have the "finished product" – the NEA spelling of the sentence that they have created – they need to practise saying the sentence – slowly at first – sounding out each sound in each syllable, then getting faster, and putting stress on the stressed syllables, until they are speaking at regular speed.

6. The last stage is optional, integrating the work on pronunciation with a grammar activity from the Talk a Lot books – sentence block building. The student uses the sentence they have made to create a new sentence block, with any 'wh' question word – or one that they are given. For example, if the student has produced the sentence: "Peter went for a walk in the park last night." the teacher could give the question word "who" and the student would start building the sentence block:

Talk a Lot

Foundation Course

Practice Page 1 – Notes for Teachers

- Peter went for a walk in the park.
- Who went for a walk in the park?
- Peter did.
- Did Peter go for a walk in the park?
- Yes, he did. ... etc.

With this sentence you could also give the question words: “what” (x2), “where”, and “when”.
(See any Talk a Lot book for more information about sentence blocks.)

The student can reflect on the whole activity with great satisfaction. From their original topic and the three original words that they provided, they have been able to build their own sentence, and figure out how to pronounce it correctly using connected speech, then create their own sentence block activity. Out of nothing, the student has initiated and completed an in-depth and enjoyable language activity, practising speaking, listening, vocabulary, and grammar skills to achieve a highly satisfying outcome.