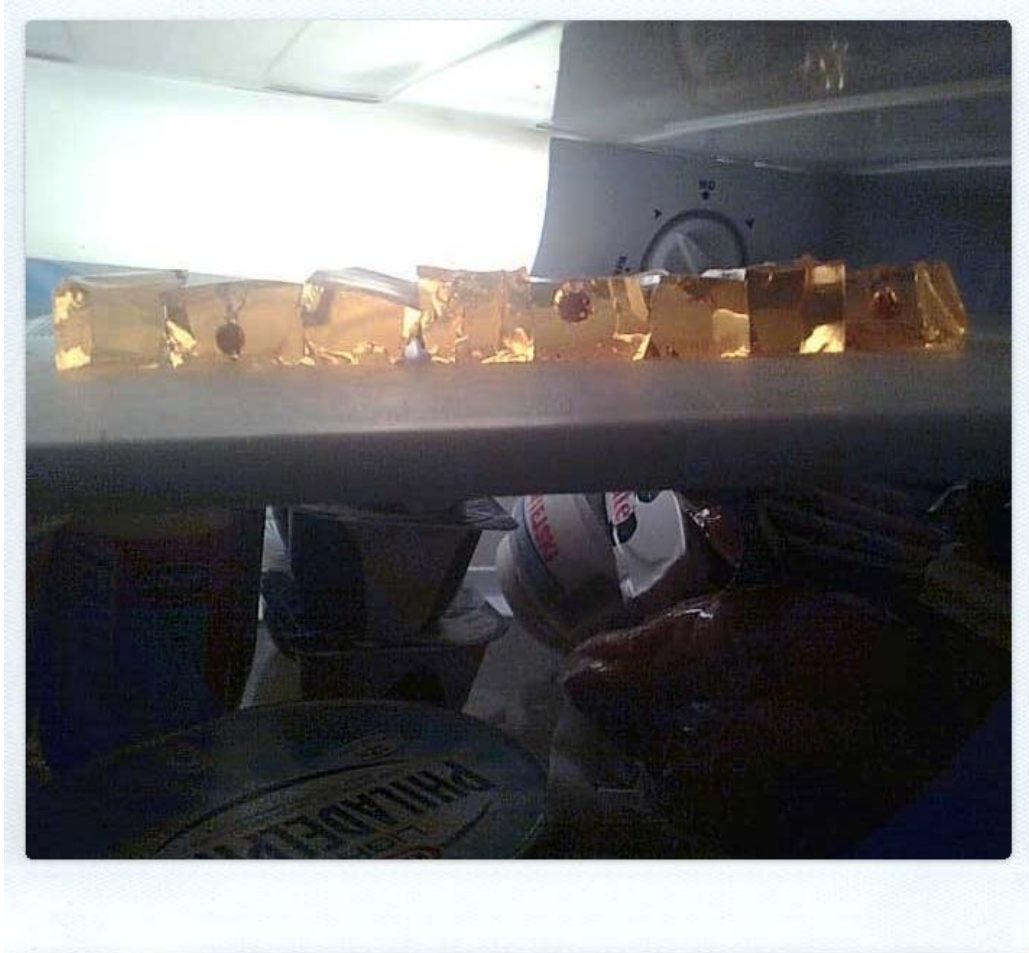


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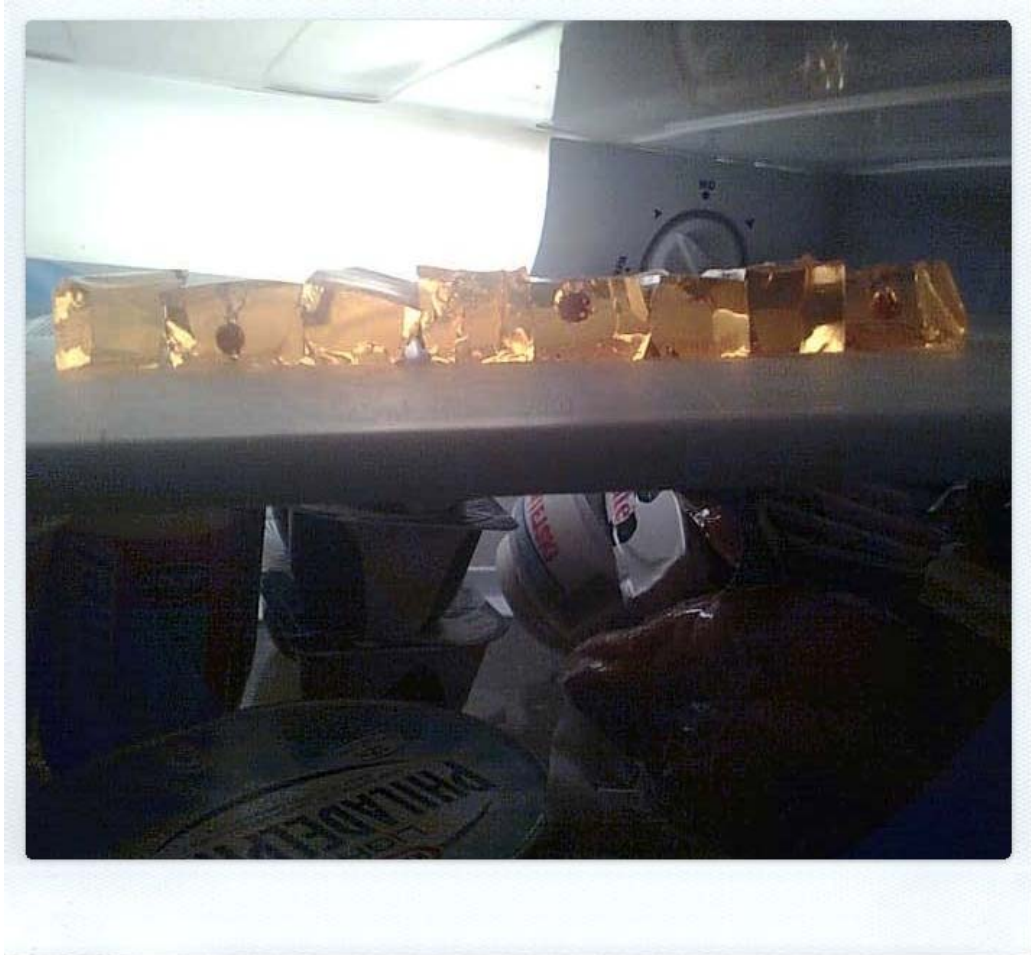


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by Matt Purland

How to STRESS content words + REDUCE function words

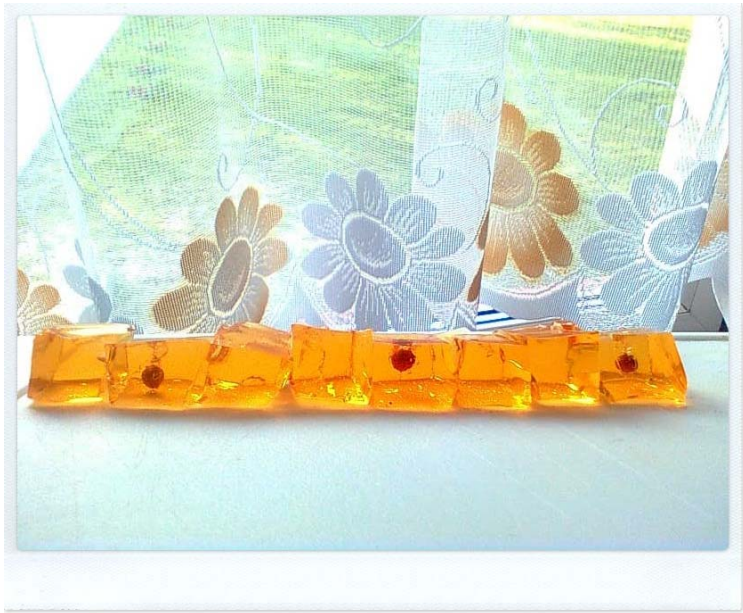


Talk a Lot Foundation Course

by Matt Purland



About the Cover Picture – Jelly Cubes in the Fridge (May 2011)



In Lesson 4 we learn that a sentence is like a row of jelly cubes, with each cube representing one syllable. Some of the jelly cubes have a hard centre, which is unaffected when the jelly cubes are squeezed together. The hard centres represent the stressed syllables. I made the jelly in the pictures and stored it in the fridge. This particular row of jelly cubes represents a sentence with the following stress pattern: o O o o O o o O which fits all of the following sentences:

The painter is painting a fence. | A man was avoiding his boss. | I wasn't surprised to be fired. | They ran to the shop for some milk.

o	O	o	o	O	o	o	O
The	pain	ter	is	pain	ting	a	fence.
A	man	was	a	voi	ding	his	boss.
I	wa	sn't	sur	prised	to	be	fired.
They	ran	to	the	shop	for	some	milk.

Can you think of any more sentences with this stress pattern? Go to Lesson 4 for more on the Jelly Cube Comparison!

Talk a Lot

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Foreword

Hi there!

Talk a Lot Foundation Course is for anybody who needs to better understand how to speak English like a Native Speaker. It will be especially useful for anybody who is studying with – or about to study with – Talk a Lot materials (i.e. Elementary Books 1-3 or Intermediate Book 1). The theory studied on this course will enable learners to get a lot more out of any Talk a Lot materials. The course is suitable for learners from Pre-Intermediate level (CEF B1) to Advanced (CEF C1) – and beyond. It can also be adapted for lower-level learners. It goes without saying that zero beginner learners will benefit from learning about word stress and weak forms as they take their first steps with vocabulary and sentence-building in English.

The focus of this course is pronunciation – how we speak. The message of the entire course can be summed up in two words: **stress** and **reduce** – learners can improve their pronunciation by stressing the content words in a sentence and reducing the function words – then connecting the syllables together. The aim of the course is to teach learners how to do this. Learners will also develop their listening skills as they discover the techniques that English native speakers routinely use when speaking quickly.

This is not a book to be picked up and read from beginning to end, but rather a collection of practical materials that need to be studied within the context of a course – guided by a teacher. This is not really a self-study book, although I'm sure learners could learn a lot from reading it on their own, and listening to the audio files (see below). The course is made up of four lessons of theory – Introduction and Basic Principles; Spelling and Sounds; Stress; and Connected Speech. There is also a fifth lesson with practical exercises, which can be repeated as often as you like – or have time for. This book contains the course material for each lesson, which may be given to learners on the course, and which the teacher can use to plan and facilitate the lessons.

The materials in this course are fairly flexible. Each lesson has an outline of the main points, which are described in more detail in boxes, and then followed by examples and practical activities. You don't have to follow this course as it is written word by word, doing every activity – although you could. You may decide to use the text as an outline, adding extra activities and examples that are more relevant for your learners, and taking away things that they don't need. The timing of each lesson can vary – it will depend on the level of your learners, and how much time there is available. I would recommend a classroom session of at least 90 minutes for covering one of the theory lessons.

There are no formal lesson or end of course tests available at the moment, but you may prepare your own to suit your teaching situation by using a number of activities (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) from the course material. (Including a written test where

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Foreword

learners translate a text either from or into the NEA – or both.) Whether you set tests or not, learners should do the homework between the lessons, revising what they have learned.

This book also includes various pages of extra reference material at the end of each lesson, and two vital documents which learners will need to refer to throughout the course – the Glossary of Pronunciation Terms and the New English Alphabet (NEA) handout. They follow this Foreword. There are further related materials in the Talk a Lot Handbook, which is a free download from: <https://purlandtraining.com/> There are cross-references to the Talk a Lot Handbook on the title page of some of the theory lessons.

I have tried the best I can to keep this course as jargon-free as possible. I'm not an academic or researcher – I'm a classroom teacher, and I want to write materials that can be easily absorbed by my learners. There is, of course, some jargon to be learned along the way. The comprehensive Glossary of Pronunciation Terms will be an invaluable point of reference. There are also some free .mp3 audio files to support this course, which are intended to bring the text to life, making the sounds and techniques discussed audible – and repeatable! You will find them at: <https://purlandtraining.com/>

I would like to say a big thank you to all of the learners who have helped me to try out this material over the past six months – both online and face to face in the classroom. It has been really invaluable for me as I have tried to figure out how to explain in an approachable way how to do something which is, in essence, a fairly simple thing: **stress** the content words and **reduce** the function words. If *you* have any feedback about this course – including questions, comments, or suggestions – I would be happy to hear from you. You can contact me here: info@purlandtraining.com

Thanks for reading this and for choosing Talk a Lot Foundation Course. Enjoy the course!
Guu Dluk!

Matt Purland, Ostróda, Poland (3rd June 2011)

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Certificate Template
Blank Pages for Notes

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Course Outline

Lesson 1 – Introduction and Basic Principles

- 1.1 Talk a Lot Foundation Course is an opportunity to study the theory of pronunciation before beginning a Talk a Lot course
- 1.2 English spelling is broken
- 1.3 We need a new phonetic alphabet to represent sounds in written form
- 1.4 The vowel sounds on the stressed syllables of content words are the most important sounds in a sentence
- 1.5 English Native speakers use sounds, stress, and connected speech without thinking about it, but you have to *learn* to do it!
- 1.6 The *Glossary of Pronunciation Terms* will be a useful reference tool during the course
- 1.7 Standard EFL course books are good at teaching reading and listening skills, but less able to teach speaking and writing

Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

- 2.1 English is not a phonetic language, which means that often spelling and sounds do not match
- 2.2 The spelling of a word and its sounds are usually two different things in English. You need to learn two parts of each word: the spelling and the sounds
- 2.3 Part of the problem is the high frequency of silent letters in English spelling
- 2.4 Students usually pronounce far too many vowel sounds when they speak English
- 2.5 The Schwa sound is the most common vowel sound in English – and the least discussed
- 2.6 The glottal stop is not a sound but rather an action – the cutting off of a sound at the moment of making it
- 2.7 We need to combine the written alphabet and the phonetic alphabet into one New English Alphabet (NEA)

Lesson 3 – Stress

- 3.1 English is a stress-timed language, not a syllable-timed language
- 3.2 Content words each have one strong stress, while function words are not stressed
- 3.3 Word stress is irregular in English
- 3.4 Communication is reduced when we don't use sentence stress
- 3.5 The sound spine is the sequence of vowel sounds on the stressed syllables in a sentence
- 3.6 It is not necessary to pronounce every letter in every word in every sentence
- 3.7 We reduce function words by using contractions and mega contractions
- 3.8 We also reduce function words by using weak forms
- 3.9 Most of the top 100 most common words in English are function words, which have weak forms that students do not generally use
- 3.10 We are not going to focus on intonation during this course

Lesson 4 – Connected Speech

- 4.1 Even with the stress and vowel sounds correct in a sentence, we still sound wrong when we don't use connected speech, because we are speaking word by word
- 4.2 We speak English syllable by syllable, not word by word
- 4.3 However, English words don't fit together very well. They are like badly-fitting puzzle pieces
- 4.4 We use the Features of Connected Speech to solve this problem. It can be learned using the mnemonic GLACIER
- 4.5 There are four possible sound connections between syllables
- 4.6 cc sound connections are the hardest to pronounce
- 4.7 The aim is to speak with only vc (vowel sound to consonant sound) sound connections between syllables, and we use connected speech techniques to achieve this
- 4.8 Friendly consonant sounds are helpful because they are happy to sit beside other consonant sounds

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New English Alphabet – 48 Phonemes (Individual Sounds)

23 vowel sounds: **8 short** **5 long** **10 diphthongs** | 25 consonant sounds: **15 voiced** **10 unvoiced**

Each phoneme always has the same written identifier (ID). Letters not used from the old alphabet: c, q, x
When pronounced on their own, all consonant sounds (including unvoiced) are followed by a Schwa sound,
e.g. 7. buh, 16. fuh, and 37. tuh . This is called an **embedded Schwa sound**

No.	Phonemic ID	Old IPA Symbol	Old Spelling	New Spelling	Type
1.	a	/æ/	bat	Bat	v / s
2.	ai	/aɪ/	time	Taim	d
3.	aiy	/aɪə/	hire	Haiy	d
4.	ar	/ɑː/	star	Star	v / l
5.	au	/aʊ/	cow	Kau	d
6.	auw	/aʊə/	power	Pauw	d
7.	b	/b/	bag	Bag	c / v
8.	ch	/tʃ/	cheese	Cheez	c / u
9.	d	/d/	dice	Dais	c / v
10.	e	/e/	leg	Leg	v / s
11.	ee	/iː/	three	Ttree	v / l
12.	ei	/eɪ/	plane	Plein	d
13.	eir	/eə/	pear	Peir	d
14.	er	/ɜː/	shirt	Shert	v / l
15.	eu	/əʊ/	home	Heum	d
16.	f	/f/	frog	Frog	c / u
17.	g	/g/	glass	Glars	c / v
18.	h	/h/	head	Hed	c / u
19.	hh	/x/	loch	Lohh	c / u
20.	i	/ɪ/	dish	Dish	v / s
21.	ii	/i/	happy	Ha pii	v / s
22.	iy	/ɪə/	here	Hiy	d
23.	j	/dʒ/	jam	Jam	c / v
24.	k	/k/	kit	Kit	c / u
25.	l	/l/	lake	Leik	c / v
26.	m	/m/	music	Myoo zik	c / v
27.	n	/n/	nurse	Ners	c / v
28.	ng	/ŋ/	ring	Ring	c / v
29.	o	/ɒ/	sock	Sok	v / s
30.	oo	/uː/	shoot	Shoot	v / l
31.	or	/ɔː/	ball	Borl	v / l
32.	oy	/ɔɪ/	toy	Toy	d
33.	p	/p/	pig	Pig	c / u
34.	r	/r/	road	Reud	c / v
35.	s	/s/	snow	Sneu	c / u
36.	sh	/ʃ/	shop	Shop	c / u
37.	t	/t/	taxi	Ta ksii	c / u
38.	th	/ð/	brother	Bru th	c / v
39.	tt	/θ/	thousand	Ttau znd	c / u
40.	u	/ʌ/	cup	Kup	v / s
41.	uh	/ə/	arrive	uh Raiv	v / s
42.	uu	/ʊ/	pull	Puul	v / s
43.	uuw	/ʊə/	pure	Pyuuw	d
44.	v	/v/	van	Van	c / v
45.	w	/w/	week	Week	c / v
46.	y	/j/	yoghurt	Yo gt	c / v
47.	z	/z/	zip	Zip	c / v
48.	zz	/ʒ/	revision	r Vi zzn	c / v
	—	/ʔ/	went out	Wen_ Au_	

Key – **v** = vowel sound: **s** = short **l** = long **d** = diphthong | **c** = consonant sound: **v** = voiced **u** = unvoiced

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Glossary of Pronunciation Terms

Glo s rii y vpr nun sii Yei shn Termz

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Glossary of Pronunciation Terms

This is a glossary of the main terms that learners should become familiar with before beginning a Talk a Lot course:

alphabet

An alphabet is a collection of words which are used to represent on a page the sounds that we make when speaking a language. There are 26 letters in the English alphabet, which are arranged in the following order:

a b c d e f g h i j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

There are 21 consonant letters and 5 vowel letters (see below).

assimilation

A technique of connected speech. Assimilation occurs when the sound at the end of a syllable changes so that it is easier to pronounce with the sound at the beginning of the next syllable.

e.g. "clean bike" is easier to pronounce when the *n* at the end of clean changes to *m* : "cleam bike"

connected speech

The practice of joining together words in a sentence, rather than pronouncing each one separately.

consonant cluster

A combination of two or more consonant letters together in the spelling of a word.

e.g. "br" and "ng" in "bring", or "th" and "nk" in "think"

consonant letter

There are 21 consonant letters in the English alphabet. They are: b c d f g h j k l m n p q r s t v w x y z

consonant sound

There are twenty-five consonant sounds in spoken English. Consonant sounds are made when we move our tongue, lips, and mouth into different positions before releasing breath from our lungs.

There are fifteen voiced consonant sounds (we can feel our vocal cords moving when we make them):

b	bag	n	nurse	w	week
d	dice	ng	ring	y	yoghurt
j	jam	r	road	z	zip
l	lake	th	brother	zz	revision
m	music	v	van		

and there are ten unvoiced consonant sounds (we can't feel our vocal cords moving when we make them):

ch	cheese	hh	loch	s	snow
f	frog	k	kit	sh	shop
h	head	p	pig	tt	thousand

Most consonants sound as you would expect them to from looking at them (they are phonetic), so it is more important to spend time learning how the vowel sounds and diphthongs look and sound.

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Glossary of Pronunciation Terms

content word

A content word is any word that has an individual meaning on its own, outside of a sentence. The following word groups are all content words: nouns, main verbs (but not verb “to be”, which is usually unstressed), phrasal verbs, adjectives, adverbs, numbers, proper names, and negative auxiliary verbs. Content words contrast with function words (see below), which are not usually stressed.

e.g. nouns – car, biscuit, tree, etc.
 main verbs – eat, go, take, etc.
 adjectives – interesting, good, expensive, etc.

contraction

A technique of connected speech. A contraction occurs when two words are merged together to make a single word, e.g. “it is” becomes “it’s”, and “I had” becomes “I’d”. The aim is to reduce unstressed syllables in the sentence: two function words, which are both unstressed, become one function word. The reduction of the function words makes the strong stresses on either side stand out more.

Note: a **mega contraction** is when a contraction is reduced even further to the barest minimum possible, without actually deleting the word, e.g. the contraction “you’re” is contracted further to *y* , “he’s” becomes *uhz* , and “they’re” becomes *th* .

diphthong

A diphthong is a vowel sound in English, in which two or more vowel sounds combine to make a new vowel sound. Therefore a diphthong is a double sound. There are 10 diphthongs in spoken English:

ai	time	auw	power	eu	home
aiy	hire	ei	plane	oy	toy
au	cow	eir	pear	uuw	pure

elision

A technique of connected speech. Elision occurs when a sound is removed from the end of a syllable, making it easier to pronounce next to the following syllable. The removal of a sound – usually *t* or *d* – often combines with a glottal stop (see below). The aim is to make a vc sound connection, which ensures a smooth transition to the next syllable.

e.g. in the phrase “hot coffee” there are two consonant sounds that meet – *t* and *c* – so to make them easier to pronounce together we get rid of the *t* (elision) and add a glottal stop: *Ho_ Ko fii*

embedded Schwa sound

An embedded Schwa sound occurs when we pronounce a consonant sound on its own. All consonant sounds are voiced in the NEA, and a Schwa sound naturally follows each consonant sound, e.g. *b*, *f*, or *t* . There is no need to write this Schwa sound (as *uh*) in the NEA, because it always follows a single consonant sound, e.g.

“today” = *t Dei* *t* is a consonant sound pronounced on its own which is followed by an embedded Schwa sound. It is pronounced like this: *tuh* , but we don’t need to write *uh* because the Schwa sound is assumed

Final Consonant Linking (FCL)

See *linking*, below.

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Glossary of Pronunciation Terms

Friendly consonant sounds

Friendly consonant sounds are consonant sounds which are quite happy to meet other consonant sounds. They are:

n, m, and ng

(note that l can also sometimes be a friendly consonant sound...)

These are really helpful sounds, because when one of them happens to be at the end of a syllable and a consonant sound follows, they make the sound connection easy – just like a vc sound connection. n, m, and ng are all easy to pronounce with a following consonant sound. This is because the tongue and mouth are in a neutral position after pronouncing these sounds, and as such ready to pronounce any following sound. The tongue can rest on n, m, or ng without having to link it to the start of the next syllable.

function word

A function word is a short, unstressed grammar word that doesn't have an individual meaning on its own, outside of a sentence. Function words are usually: pronouns, auxiliary verbs, prepositions, articles, and conjunctions. Verb "to be" is also a function word – even when used as a main verb. Note: negative forms of auxiliary verbs do have stress, e.g. didn't is stressed on the first syllable (see **content words**, above).

e.g. pronouns – she, their, him, etc.
auxiliary verbs – have, do, will, can, etc.
prepositions – to, for, in, on, etc.
articles and determiners – a, an, the, some, etc.

glottal stop

A technique of connected speech. A glottal stop is not a sound but rather an action – the sudden cutting-off of a vowel sound just after making it, instead of letting it run on. We hear a glottal stop as a tiny gap in the flow of speech. It happens when we close our glottis (the opening of the vocal cords). The aim is to turn cc sound connections into vc sound connections (see below). By replacing a consonant sound with a glottal stop, we stop the friction that would have occurred by the meeting of the two consonant sounds. Glottal stops usually occur at the same time as elision (see above). A sound disappears, and a glottal stop is used automatically by the speaker in its place. Some native speakers tend to make a glottal stop even when the next sound is a vowel sound, but this deviates from standard pronunciation. In the NEA, a glottal stop is represented by the underscore symbol: _

e.g. "My mate Pat." = mai Mei_ Pa_. (the t's are deleted and replaced by glottal stops)

homophone

A homophone is a word that has exactly the same **sounds** as another word, but a different **spelling** and a different **meaning**. Homophones are good examples of how sounds and spelling have become disconnected in English.

e.g.	your / yore	wait / weight	please / pleas	mind / mined	too / two
	sail / sale	weak / week	tail / tale	son / sun	bean / been

intonation

Intonation is how we strongly stress one or more particular words in a sentence to emphasise a particular part of it. We use intonation as a variation from standard pronunciation, where all the information is presented with a similar level of importance.

e.g. standard pronunciation: "Julie's just won the swimming gala." = clear and informative, with no particular intonation or emphasis

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Glossary of Pronunciation Terms

with intonation on **Julie**: a) “*Julie's* just won the swimming gala.” = it is relevant *who* won the gala. Maybe the result is a shock because Julie is known to be a poor swimmer, or maybe the listener didn't hear the winner's name

with intonation on **swimming**: b) “Julie's just won the *swimming* gala.” = it is relevant which gala Julie has won. Maybe the conversation has included several different galas.

intrusion

A technique of connected speech. When the sound connection (see below) between two syllables is **vv** (vowel sound to vowel sound) we insert a new consonant sound between them – *y*, *w*, or *r* – replacing the second vowel sound in the sound connection, making the sound connection much easier to pronounce.

e.g. intrusion with *y* : “grey eyes” = Grei Yaiz *not* Grei Aiz

the *y* in grey is not usually pronounced because it is part of a vowel cluster (“ey”) which makes the diphthong *ei*. However, when the next sound is another vowel sound, we must pronounce it, to create a **vc** sound connection (see below) instead of a **vv** connection.
more examples:

intrusion with *w* : “how old” = Hau Weuld *not* Hau Euld

intrusion with *r* : “four elephants” = For Re lfn_s *not* For E lfn_s

IPA

The IPA is an acronym for the International Phonetic Alphabet, a standard form of writing the sounds of a language. The current IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) was invented in the nineteenth century by French and British linguists. The IPA can be helpful in some situations, for example if a student takes the time to learn it they will be able to accurately pronounce any word in the dictionary. When teaching language – and especially pronunciation – we do need a way of representing sounds on a page, but the current IPA is no longer fit for purpose in the Digital Age, because it cannot be easily reproduced on a keyboard or mobile phone keypad. Just try sharing a document that uses IPA symbols and you will see what I mean. Everybody needs to buy a new font – which does not happen. So we need a new phonetic way of writing. Another problem with the IPA is that students have to learn a whole new alphabet of around fifty new characters. Students are often put off by the unfamiliar and exotic-looking symbols that they have to learn, which only adds an extra burden for students – especially those whose first language does not always use the Roman alphabet, e.g. those whose first language is Arabic, Russian, Chinese, etc. They already have to learn one new alphabet to learn English; then we try to add a second. It's no wonder the IPA is put on the back burner.

The **New English Alphabet (NEA)** is a modern phonetic English alphabet (see below).

linking

A technique of connected speech. Also known as Final Consonant Linking (FCL), linking occurs when the sound connection between two syllables is **cv** (consonant to vowel). Linking allows us to join together the two syllables with a **vc** (vowel to consonant) sound connection instead, which is the preferred sound connection for English native speakers, because it is the easiest to pronounce (see below).

e.g. in “like it” the two sounds meeting are *k* (consonant sound) and *i* (vowel sound)

before linking (original **cv** sound connection): Laik it

after linking (new **vc** sound connection): Lai kit

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Glossary of Pronunciation Terms

mega contraction

See *contraction*, above.

New English Alphabet (NEA)

A new alphabet for the English language, which is similar to the IPA in that it enables the reader to see all the phonemes (sounds) contained in each word. However, unlike the IPA, the NEA uses the more familiar Roman alphabet – a, b, c, etc. – and allows the reader to see the stressed syllable in a word as well as the connections between syllables and words. Each of the 48 sounds of English has its own written ID (identifier).

e.g. the “a” sound in “cake” is always written as **ei** – Keik

In normal spelling this sound can be written in different ways, but with the NEA it always looks the same: **ei**

e.g. make = **meik**, day = **dei**, change = **cheinj**, etc.

(See the separate NEA handout for the full list of sounds and IDs.)

phoneme

A phoneme is an individual sound, which is part of a syllable.

e.g. in the word “cat” there are three separate letters – c-a-t – and three separate phonemes – **k a t** – while in the word “tooth” there are five separate letters – t-o-o-t-h – but only three separate phonemes – **t oo tt** .

phonetics

Phonetics is the study of sound in human speech. “Phone” comes from the Greek word for “sound” and “voice”: *phōnē*, e.g. telephone = tele (distant) + phone (sound) = distant sound.

phonics

Phonics is how the study of phonetics is applied to language, e.g. understanding how spelling and sounds are connected. For example, Phonics may be used to teach reading to language learners. Phonics is sometimes used as a direct synonym for phonetics, though this is incorrect.

R-linking

A technique of connected speech. R-linking is part of intrusion and occurs when the **r** consonant sound is inserted between two vowel sounds, effectively replacing the second vowel sound in the sound connection. The aim is to transform a vv (vowel to vowel) sound connection into a vc (vowel to consonant) sound connection, which is easier to pronounce.

e.g. in “there is” the two sounds meeting are **eir** (consonant sound) and **i** (vowel sound)

original cv sound connection: **their iz**

new vc sound connection: **their riz**

Schwa sound

The Schwa sound **uh** is the most common vowel sound in English, and the least known. It is also the weakest vowel sound. It is the only sound in English to have an individual name, with “Schwa” coming from the Hebrew letter called *Shva*, which has the same function. It often occurs in weak stressed syllables, being a short expulsion of air, which

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Glossary of Pronunciation Terms

sounds like the noise made when somebody hits you in the stomach – “Uh!” Or the kind of grunt that a teenager might make first thing in the morning as a form of greeting – “Uh!”

The Schwa sound helps to make the stress pattern in a sentence, because it makes the unstressed syllables weaker by replacing vowel sounds, especially diphthongs and long vowel sounds. This makes the unstressed syllables shorter, which in turn makes the stressed syllables stronger, by increasing the contrast between weak and strong. When you don't use the Schwa sound your spoken English will lack stress and you will be likely to pronounce letters that should be silent, e.g. the “o” and “r” at the end of “doctor”:

Pronunciation written using the NEA: Do kt

The word “doctor” has two syllables. The first syllable is stressed, and the second is not. The first has a strong-stressed vowel sound, while the second has a Schwa sound – the weakest and dullest vowel sound there is. The contrast adds to the stress pattern in the sentence. The intention of the spelling “or” is to represent the Schwa sound. Unfortunately, many learners are unaware of this sound and, trying to pronounce every letter in the word, will learn the pronunciation as: do ktor. Some will even roll the r at the end of the word, which is never done in English.

The Schwa sound is not unique to English and occurs in a variety of languages, from Russian to Dutch, and Indonesian to Hindi. Do you have it in *your* language? Does it provide a similar function to the English Schwa sound?

In the NEA the Schwa sound can be written as **uh**, but it is often not written at all, and simply pronounced as part of a consonant sound, e.g. t has a built in Schwa sound when we say it: t . We call this an embedded Schwa sound (see NEA chart). It is enough to do this to pronounce the Schwa sound.

As we have seen above, in the NEA “doctor” is spelled: Do kt . The first syllable is the stressed one (hence capital “D”) and has a strong vowel sound o . The second syllable does not have a vowel sound, apart from an embedded Schwa sound which is not written, but occurs naturally when we pronounce the sound t . The “r” disappears from the spelling because it is a silent letter (see below) and not pronounced.

sentence stress

The sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables in a spoken sentence.

silent letters

Extra letters which appear in the spelling of the word when we write it, but which are not pronounced when we say the word.

e.g. “o”, “r”, “a”, and “e” in the word “comfortable”, which is pronounced Kum ft bl

sound connection

The place between two syllables where two sounds meet. There are four possible kinds of sound connection:

vc (vowel sound to consonant sound)	e.g. “my car”	mai Kar = easy to pronounce
vv (vowel sound to vowel sound)	e.g. “we are”	wee ar = difficult to pronounce
cv (consonant sound to vowel sound)	e.g. “it is”	it iz = difficult to pronounce
cc (consonant sound to consonant sound)	e.g. “that book”	that Buuk = difficult to pronounce

Speakers of English will do anything to their words and letters to create easy vc sound connections between syllables when they speak. They will quite ruthlessly get rid of sounds, add sounds, and change sounds to make these all-important vc sound connections. However, English spelling doesn't help, because not every syllable starts with a consonant sound and ends with a vowel sound. If only it did! Then we could all speak like this: ba ba ba ba ba ba etc. and we wouldn't need to use – or study – connected speech! Instead words clash and scrape together, like badly fitting puzzle pieces, and we must use the techniques of connected speech to “bash out” those troublesome sound connections. This is what usually happens:

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If the sound connection is:

we use:

vc
vv

OK – easy to pronounce (no connected speech required!)
intrusion with an extra consonant sound, which makes the
connection vc: y, w, or r

cv
cc

Final Consonant Linking (FCL)
Elision, Glottal Stop, Assimilation, or FCL

examples:

vc (vowel sound to consonant sound)

mai Kar – no need to do anything!

vv (vowel sound to vowel sound)

wee yar – add y to make a vc sound connection

cv (consonant sound to vowel sound)

i tiz – move the final consonant t forward to start the next
syllable, making a vc sound connection

cc (consonant sound to consonant sound)

tha_ Buuk – use elision: delete t and use a glottal stop instead.
A vc sound connection results

sound spine

The sound spine is the sequence of vowel sounds on the stressed syllables in a sentence. These sounds are the most important sounds in the sentence – the sounds that the listener needs to hear in order to correctly process the words. They form the “backbone” of the sentence – hence “sound spine”. We should always try to find and emphasise the sound spine in a sentence. Whatever other sounds are wrongly pronounced, the vowel sounds on the stressed syllables should be heard clearly and correctly. If one or more of these vowel sounds are wrongly pronounced, miscommunication can occur and the listener may have to say: “Sorry, I didn’t catch that. Could you repeat that, please?”

e.g. compare these two sound spines:

1. correct vowel sounds on stressed syllables:

ei i u ar a ar
Jason has finished cutting the grass in the back garden.

2. incorrect vowel sounds on stressed syllables:

ee er e i uu iy
Jason has finished cutting the grass in the back garden.

In the second example it is very difficult to work out what is meant, because the incorrect vowel sounds transform the content words into something different (sometimes into completely different words), making them unidentifiable, e.g. “finished” now sounds like “furnished”, “back” now sounds like “book”, and “grass” now sounds like “griss”, which isn’t a word in English, etc.

spelling

The system we use to put language into written form. Unfortunately for people trying to learn English, spelling in English is not phonetic, i.e. the sound of a word (in most cases) does not match the spelling. This means that we have to learn how each word is pronounced by listening to a native speaker – who is hopefully a good model. We have to learn by experience, or by using the IPA phonetic spellings in a dictionary. So there are two parallel components for each word – its sound and its spelling. Furthermore, once we have learned how each word sounds on its own, we then have to take into account how they sound when they are joined together, since we don’t speak word by word, but rather syllable by syllable, merging words together using the techniques of connected speech.

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standard pronunciation

Standard pronunciation is a neutral form of pronunciation, which is not influenced by any specific accented version of English, e.g. Scouse (the Liverpool accent), Geordie (the Newcastle accent), or Welsh (a Welsh accent). Formerly known as Received Pronunciation (RP), standard English can be heard when you watch the news on a British TV channel, or listen to many of the programmes on BBC Radio 4. Standard pronunciation is used in all of the Talk a Lot books, so that learners can study pronunciation with a neutral accent, rather than a particular regional one.

stressed syllable

The syllable in a content word that has greater stress than all of the other syllables. We pronounce this syllable a little louder – more strongly – than the others. In the NEA the stressed syllable always begins with a capital letter. This helps learners to identify them in a sentence and then work out the sound spine.

e.g. in the word “television”, there are four syllables and the third syllable is stressed: te l Vi zzn

stress mark

The stress mark shows us which syllable is stressed in an IPA phonetic spelling of a word. The stress mark always comes before the stressed syllable and looks like this: /ˈ/. The stress mark takes the guesswork out of finding the stress in a word when using the IPA. In the NEA there is no need for a stress mark, because the stressed syllable always starts with a capital letter.

stress pattern

A stress pattern is the sequence of strong (stressed) and weak (unstressed) syllables in a sentence.

e.g. in the following sentence the syllables in bold are strong while the others are weak:

Jason has finished **cutting** the **grass** in the **back** garden.

stress-timed languages

English is a stress-timed language, which means that it should be spoken with its familiar rhythm, e.g. du DUH du DUH du DUH du DUH... etc. The stress pattern is like a mountain range, with the strong stresses the peaks, and the weak stresses the valleys. The contrast between weak and strong makes the distinctive rhythm of English. Other stress-timed languages include German, Dutch, and Swedish. Some languages are not stress-timed, but syllable-timed, with each syllable having roughly equal stress. Syllable-timed languages include French and Spanish. Learners of English who have these languages as their first language often try to force English to follow the same stress pattern. The result is confusion for the listener, because in English much of the meaning of the words is picked up subconsciously by the listener from the vowel sounds on the stressed syllables in a sentence.

strong form

Function words can have strong forms and weak forms, depending on where they are in a sentence. When a function word is in between words in a sentence, we should pronounce the weak form, e.g. the preposition “to” in the following sentences:

I went to the bank. ai Wen_ t th Bangk.

But when a function word comes at the end of a sentence, we should pronounce the strong form, e.g.

Which bank did you go to? Wi Chbang kdi ch Geu too?

Often learners use strong forms of words like prepositions (to, for, etc.) instead of the weak forms, leading to errors in the sentence stress, e.g.

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normal spelling:	NEA spelling (strong form):	NEA spelling (weak form):
to	too	t
for	for	f
the	thee	th
	or thu	th

strong stress

The strong stress is the stressed syllable in a word. This syllable must be pronounced more strongly – and clearly – than the others in the word. The vowel sound in this syllable must be correct and clear, because it is the most important sound in the syllable – and one of the most important sounds in the sentence as a whole. Pronouncing the correct vowel sound on the correct stressed syllable will help to ensure that the listener understands you.

suffix

A suffix is a word ending which is the same in many different words. Suffixes are not usually stressed. This is helpful to note because it means that we can discount the suffix when we are looking for the stressed syllable in a content word.

e.g. “-ing” in: “**cooking**”, “**going**”, “**putting**”, “**taking**”, etc.
or “-er” in: “**baker**”, “**letter**”, “**builder**”, “**player**”, better, etc.

syllable

A syllable is part of a word that can be said in one beat.

e.g. in the word “potato” there are three syllables = three beats: po-ta-to. The middle syllable is stressed: p Tei teu

vc sound connection

A vc sound connection occurs when a syllable that ends with a vowel sound meets a syllable that begins with a consonant sound, e.g. “be nice” or “daytime”. vc sound connections are the easiest of the four kinds of sound connection for native speakers of English to pronounce, because after making the vowel sound our tongue, lips, and mouth are in a neutral position – ready to form any consonant sound.

vowel cluster

A combination of two or more letters (vowel or consonant letters) together in the normal spelling of a word, which makes one sound.

e.g. the vowel cluster “ea” makes the sound e in the word “bread”, ei in the word “break”, and ee in the word “read” (among others).

(See also *Talk a Lot Handbook* p.18.55: List of Vowel Clusters – In Alphabetical Order.)

vowel letter

There are 5 vowel letters in the English alphabet. They are: **a**, **e**, **i**, **o**, **u**. The lack of vowel letters in the English language leads to the problematic differences between spelling and sounds, because just five vowel letters have to represent twenty-three different vowel sounds. For example, vowel letters can combine to form vowel clusters (see above) which then represent different sounds, creating a lot of confusion for learners of English. In the NEA one written ID (identifier) always represents the same single sound, so the sounds always look the same on the page.

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Because of this, spelling with the NEA is much easier: when you think of the sound, you know how it should look, and you know which letters to write. You don't have to memorise two different elements per word: spelling and sounds.

vowel sound

There are twenty-three vowel sounds in spoken English. Vowel sounds are made when we allow breath to move freely from our lungs out of our mouths, without blocking it with our tongue, lips, or mouth (as we do with consonant sounds).

There are eight short vowel sounds:

a	bat	ii	happy	uh	arrive (Schwa sound)
e	leg	o	sock	uu	pull
i	dish	u	cup		

...five long vowel sounds:

ar	star	er	shirt	or	ball
ee	three	oo	shoot		

...and ten diphthongs:

ai	time	ei	plane	oy	toy
aiy	hire	eir	pear	uuy	pure
au	cow	eu	home		
auw	power	iy	here		

Learners whose first language doesn't contain any long vowel sounds or diphthongs will often try to use only short vowel sounds to make all of the vowel sounds in English – which leads to errors and misunderstandings, because the vowel sounds on the stressed syllables in a sentence (the sound spine) must be correct and clear. In comparison, consonant sounds are mostly phonetic, i.e. they sound how you would expect them to from how they look, e.g. t, d, m, n, etc.

weak form

One-syllable function words often have weak forms, which should be used in spoken English instead of their strong forms (see *strong form* above). For example, the weak form of the preposition “for” is pronounced simply f, without a vowel sound, apart from the embedded Schwa sound (see above) which is the natural result of saying f. If learners use strong forms instead of weak forms, their pronunciation will sound stilted and “foreign”, because the sentence stress and the sound spine will be incorrect.

word stress

Word stress is the system of stress within an individual word. Every content word in English has one strong stress.

e.g. in the word “government”, the strong stress is on the first syllable: Gu v mnt

The second syllable contains an embedded Schwa sound, which is pronounced naturally when you say v, and the final syllable also contains an embedded Schwa sound after m. The strong stress in a content word should be emphasised by saying it more loudly and strongly than the other unstressed syllables. In any given content word, one syllable will be stressed strongly (with the vowel sound being the most important sound) and the other syllables will be unstressed, with one or more of them likely to contain a Schwa sound.

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Lesson 1:

Introduction and Basic Principles

Lesson 1:

in tr Du ksh nuhn Bei si Kprin s plz

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Lesson 1 – Introduction and Basic Principles

- 1.1 Talk a Lot Foundation Course is an opportunity to study the theory of pronunciation before beginning a Talk a Lot course

- 1.2 English spelling is broken

- 1.3 We need a new phonetic alphabet to represent sounds in written form

- 1.4 The vowel sounds on the stressed syllables of content words are the most important sounds in a sentence

- 1.5 English Native speakers use sounds, stress, and connected speech without thinking about it, but you have to *learn* to do it!

- 1.6 The *Glossary of Pronunciation Terms* will be a useful reference tool during the course

- 1.7 Standard EFL course books are good at teaching reading and listening skills, but less able to teach speaking and writing

What I found most surprising / interesting today:

What I need to revise again after this lesson:

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Lesson 1 – Introduction and Basic Principles

A note on the kind of English used during this course:

Throughout this course we are using Standard British English pronunciation as the basis for the materials. Formerly known as RP (Received Pronunciation), Standard British English is English with a neutral accent, rather than an international (e.g. American English) or regional (e.g. Scouse or Geordie) accent.

1.1 Talk a Lot Foundation Course is an opportunity to study the theory of pronunciation before beginning a Talk a Lot course.

We are going to learn how to get from written words on a page to spoken English – using sounds, stress, and connected speech.

This course is made up of information that students and teachers need to know at the beginning of a Talk a Lot course. It comprises a brief introduction to the theory of pronunciation, as used throughout each Talk a Lot course. It is intended to be a practical and interactive guide to be used with Talk a Lot materials, rather than a dry theoretical course.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you want to learn about spoken English? What do you want to get out of it?
2. Are you confident in speaking English? If not, why not?
3. What do you know already about stress, sounds, and connected speech in English?
4. What are some of the differences between written English and spoken English?

1.2 English spelling is broken.

The current English spelling system is defunct. The spelling of a word on a page is supposed to represent the words spoken. There is a big difference between written English and spoken English. The current spelling system is unable to do this job, because the current spellings often do not represent the sounds made when speaking them, and because it doesn't take into account connected speech in spoken English. We can blame the history of the English language, the number of influences it has absorbed from other languages over the years, and the lack of control that has been exerted.

Examples:

Here are some examples of words whose spellings are very different to how we say them:

daughter
comfortable
though
pineapple

Activity:

- Practise saying the words. Did you know the correct pronunciation of each one?

Discussion Questions:

1. Is your first language a phonetic language, where most or all written letters are pronounced?
2. What are some difficult words or phrases for a non-native speaker of your language to pronounce?
3. Should spelling represent sounds? What difference does it make to learning a language if it doesn't?

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4. Think of four more “un-phonetic” words in English which have a big difference between their spelling and pronunciation.

1.3 We need a new phonetic alphabet to represent sounds in written form.

The current IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) was invented in the nineteenth century by French and British linguists. The IPA can be helpful in some situations, for example if a student takes the time to learn it they will be able to accurately pronounce any word in the dictionary. When teaching language – and especially pronunciation – we do need a way of representing sounds on a page, but the current IPA is no longer fit for purpose in the Digital Age, because it cannot be easily reproduced on a keyboard or mobile phone keypad. Just try sharing a document that uses IPA symbols and you will see what I mean. Everybody needs to buy a new font – which does not happen. So we need a new phonetic way of writing. Another problem with the IPA is that students have to learn a whole new alphabet of around fifty new characters. Students are often put off by the unfamiliar and exotic-looking symbols that they have to learn, which only adds an extra burden for students – especially those whose first language does not always use the Roman alphabet, e.g. those whose first language is Arabic, Russian, Chinese, etc. They already have to learn one new alphabet to learn English; then we try to add a second. It's no wonder the IPA is put on the back burner.

For these reasons, the New English Alphabet has been created [see NEA page] – a truly phonetic way of writing English – using the normal Roman alphabet instead of exotic symbols.

Examples:

- Try typing the IPA on a keyboard.
- Try typing it on a phone keypad.
- Try sharing a document written in the IPA.
- Try using it on a blog, on Twitter or Facebook, or on a web page.

Activities:

1. Can you read the following words written using the IPA?
 - a) /'kɑ:sl/
 - b) /ɪn.tə'næ.ʃnl/
 - c) /'i:tlŋ/
 - d) /'sæ.tə.deɪ/
2. Can you read the following sentences written using the IPA?
 - a) /θə'best'kaɪnd.əv'bred.ɪz'wai?'slɑ:sd'bred/
 - b) /aɪ'wd'laɪk.tə'spi:k'ŋ.gɪf'be.tə.thən.aɪ'du:'naʊ/

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever... a) heard of the IPA? b) used the IPA in class? c) used the IPA out of class?
2. Can you already read and write English words using the IPA? How did you first learn it – and why? How easy is it for you to use?
3. Do you find the IPA... a) easy to learn, b) hard to learn, c) interesting, d) boring, e) just plain odd?

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Lesson 1 – Introduction and Basic Principles

1.4 The vowel sounds on the stressed syllables of content words are the most important sounds in a sentence.

This sequence of vowel sounds forms the “sound spine” – the sound backbone of the sentence. To speak correctly the student needs to pronounce the correct vowel sounds on the correct stressed syllables in a sentence, and join those syllables together as tightly as possible using connected speech techniques. This is the main proposition regarding English pronunciation in a Talk a Lot course.

The Talk a Lot proposal is quite simple:

Find the stressed syllables in a sentence, and reduce the other syllables where possible.

From Sentence Blocks – Sentence Stress and Vowel Sounds (an activity included in each unit of Talk a Lot Elementary Book 3 and Intermediate Book 1):

“Each content word [in a sentence] contains one syllable with a strong stress... Each stressed syllable has one vowel sound. The vowel sounds on the stressed syllables are the most important sounds in the sentence. They make the “sound spine” of the sentence. To improve communication, try to get the sound spine right.”

From Talk a Lot Handbook cover:

*“Success in spoken English lies in **stress** and **vowel sounds**: specifically, getting the correct vowel sounds on the correct stressed syllables in a sentence, and joining them together...”*

Example:

The best kind of bread is white sliced bread.

Activity:

- Try to find the sound spine in the following sentence:

Michelle is having salad and pasta because she doesn't eat meat.

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you learned about the importance of vowel sounds and stress in English before? If yes, where – what can you remember?
2. Do you agree with the Talk a Lot Spoken English Proposition? Why? / Why not?

1.5 English Native speakers use sounds, stress, and connected speech without thinking about it, but you have to *learn* to do it!

They can do this because they have learned to do it in a natural way since before they were born. They are programmed to understand speech in terms of the stressed vowel sounds. In fact, they receive the meaning of the words and sentences from them, and automatically discount the weak stresses. Learners of ESL must approach it as an integral part of learning the language, which means studying consciously and intentionally what native speakers have absorbed without thinking about it from everybody around them for as long as they have been able to hear.

On this course we're going to learn how to do it in a stage by stage process:

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Lesson 1 – Introduction and Basic Principles

Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds
Lesson 3 – Stress (finding the important sounds)
Lesson 4 – Connected Speech (joining together the important sounds)

Discussion Questions:

1. How did you learn to speak *your* first language?
2. How did you learn to write it? Which process was easier for you? Why?
3. Where can we hear examples of English native speakers talking in a natural way?

1.6 The *Glossary of Pronunciation Terms* will be a useful reference tool during the course.

At this level we can assume some knowledge of English pronunciation before we begin. However, let's check understanding of some of the basic terms that we are going to use on this course, using the Glossary of Pronunciation Terms.

Examples:

Discuss with a partner:

- What is the difference between:

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------|-------|
| a) | an alphabet | _____ |
| | a phonetic alphabet | _____ |
| b) | a phoneme | _____ |
| | a letter | _____ |
| c) | a consonant letter | _____ |
| | a consonant sound | _____ |
| d) | a vowel letter | _____ |
| | a vowel sound | _____ |
| e) | a content word | _____ |
| | a function word | _____ |
| f) | word stress | _____ |
| | sentence stress | _____ |

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- g) a strong-stressed syllable _____
a weak-stressed syllable _____

1.7 Standard EFL course books are good at teaching reading and listening skills, but less able to teach speaking and writing.

This is because the medium (book and CD or cassette, or smart board) can give the answers for reading and listening comprehension activities. Students can see their results, and learning can happen.

However, standard EFL course books have difficulty teaching speaking and writing, because for learning to take place there needs to be a third party (i.e. a teacher) present to check students' work – to listen to the student speaking and correct errors, or to read and mark their written work. Individual feedback must be given by this third party – something the course book simply cannot do.

The Talk a Lot series acts as a springboard for the student, providing many hours of practical pronunciation activities, which, done in conjunction with a teacher – whose feedback is required and is invaluable – can enable them to really improve their spoken English skills. We are happy that you have chosen to take this journey with us!

Activities:

1. Have a look through some standard ESL course books. Do a survey of one unit:
 - a) How many activities practise reading skills?
 - b) How many activities practise speaking and pronunciation skills?
 - c) How much is the phonetic alphabet used – if at all?
 - d) How much mention is made of connected speech?
2. How could you use the many reading texts in the course book to practise speaking and pronunciation skills?
3. What kind of activities for practising speaking and pronunciation skills would you like to see in your course book?

Discussion Questions:

1. What is your favourite course book? Why do you prefer it? Does it help you practise your speaking and pronunciation skills? How?
2. Can you recommend any good books for practising speaking and pronunciation?

Homework:

- Study the *Glossary of Pronunciation Terms*. Look up new words and try to find information about unfamiliar terms, either online or in a library. Discuss them with a partner and be prepared to ask your teacher about them in the next lesson.
- Ask a few native speakers (not connected with teaching English) about stress, sound connections, vowel sounds, Schwas, and glottal stops – in fact any terms from the *Glossary* – and you are likely to be met with confusion. Yet they can speak English – like a native speaker!

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Lesson 2:

Spelling and Sounds

Lesson 2:

Spelling and Sounds

Reference:

Talk a Lot Handbook

- | | |
|-------|---|
| 18.1 | Learn the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) |
| 18.48 | Vowel Digraphs |
| 18.55 | List of Vowel Clusters – In Alphabetical Order |
| 18.62 | Spelling and Sounds – The Magic “e” Rule |
| 19.1 | IPA Practice Worksheets and Tests |

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Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

2.1 English is not a phonetic language, which means that often spelling and sounds do not match

2.2 The spelling of a word and its sounds are usually two different things in English. You need to learn two parts of each word: the spelling and the sounds

2.3 Part of the problem is the high frequency of silent letters in English spelling

2.4 Students usually pronounce far too many vowel sounds when they speak English

2.5 The Schwa sound is the most common vowel sound in English – and the least discussed

2.6 The glottal stop is not a sound but rather an action – the cutting off of a sound at the moment of making it

2.7 We need to combine the written alphabet and the phonetic alphabet into one New English Alphabet (NEA)

What I found most surprising / interesting today:

What I need to revise again after this lesson:

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Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

2.1 English is not a phonetic language, which means that often spelling and sounds do not match.

The English spelling system doesn't work. The words that we write are supposed to represent the sounds that we make when speaking. That is the whole point of the alphabetic system of spelling that we use – letters are meant to represent sounds. However, more often than not, this does not happen, which means that English spelling is of only limited help for working out pronunciation. Unfortunately, students of English often try to pronounce all the letters in words they don't know, especially all of the vowel letters, just to “make sure” that they are pronouncing them correctly. In fact, the opposite happens – the pronunciation is wrong – and miscommunication takes place because the stress is messed up and the stressed vowel sound is incorrect.

The problem is that sounds in English do not each have individual identifiers (IDs):

There are 26 letters in the English alphabet, but 48 different sounds (see Glossary and NEA Handout).

There are 5 vowel letters but 23 vowel sounds = spelling problems!

Examples:

1. Words with “hard” spellings:

- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| 1. daughter | Dor t |
| 2. natural | Na chrl |
| 3. pharmacy | Far m sii |

2. Common vowel digraphs (two vowel letters together) that represent different sounds:

1. the spelling “oo” can represent the following sounds:

oo in “fool”	u in “flood”
uu in “book”	eu in “brooch”

2. the spelling “ie” can represent the following sounds:

ai in “tie”	ee in “believe”
iy in “field”	aiy in “variety”

and so on...

Activity:

- Try to pronounce the words above, first without the phonetic spelling to help you, then with it. What is the difference?

Discussion Questions:

1. Is it a problem for you that spelling and sounds don't generally match in English words? If yes, how do you handle it?
2. How phonetic is your first language? How closely does the spelling match the sound of words?

2.2 The spelling of a word and its sounds are usually two different things in English. You need to learn two parts of each word: the spelling and the sounds.

When you are learning vocabulary, you should learn not only the spelling, but also the sounds of each word – and which syllable is stressed. Life is made more complicated because you then have to predict how each word will change when it comes up against other words. We will find out more about this in

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Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

Lesson 4 – Connected Speech. Of course, there are plenty of spelling rules in English – with their numerous exceptions. But these only seem to exasperate learners, who tend to conclude that “English spelling doesn’t make sense!”¹

Some English words are phonetic in that the pronunciation is easily guessable from the spelling (List 1), but more often than not, the pronunciation is not obvious or easily guessable (List 2).

Examples:

List 1: 10 phonetic English words whose pronunciation can be easily guessed – they sound how we expect them to:

big, fell, frog, crash, greeting, keep, land, milk, string, upset

List 2: 10 English words which are not phonetic – their pronunciation cannot be guessed, but has to be learned. They don’t sound how they look:

breakfast, attendance, comfortable, famous, cough, gymnasium, knowledge, straighten, vegetable, wouldn’t

Another good example of this problem is the phenomenon of **homophones**, which are pairs or groups of words that have the same pronunciation, but different spellings and different meanings:

e.g. piece / peace poor / pour I’ll / aisle its / it’s one / won pear / pair new / knew plane / plain, etc.

This can often lead to confusion, as well as many jokes and puns, which abound in English:

e.g. “What kind of chocolate do pilots like?” “Plain!” (plane)

Activities:

1. Find 5 more words which are phonetic – i.e. they are spelled how they sound.
2. Find 5 more words which are not phonetic – i.e. they are not spelled how they sound.
3. Find 5 more examples of homophone word pairs.
4. How many English spelling rules do you know? Discuss them with a partner.

2.3 Part of the problem is the high frequency of silent letters in English spelling.

These are extra letters which appear in the spelling of a word when we write it, but are not pronounced when we say the word. Many of these are vowel letters, which are not pronounced because the syllable in which they appear is not stressed, and the vowel sound is a Schwa sound rather than a strong vowel sound – or it does not exist.

Examples:

Which letters are silent?

1. famous
2. attendance
3. knowledge
4. straighten

¹ See also: 18.62 Spelling and Sounds – The Magic “e” Rule, *Talk a Lot Handbook* . Download: <https://purlandtraining.com/>

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Foundation Course

Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

Activity:

- Find 5 more words in English that contain one – or more – silent letter.

2.4 Students usually pronounce far too many vowel sounds when they speak English.

In general, in English spelling there is one vowel letter in each syllable which represents one vowel sound. Learners will often try to pronounce the vowel letter that they see as *they think it ought to sound* – i.e. with a full sound – when in fact many of these vowel sounds are pronounced as Schwa sounds (weak stress vowel sounds – see below). The result is that there are too many redundant vowel letters in written English, leading to mistakes by students who stress extra vowel sounds in a word as well as the correct stressed vowel sound. This messes up the stress pattern and makes the sound spine harder to hear.

This problem is historic and has grown up over hundreds of years of spoken English. Unlike the proud peoples of other countries, e.g. France and the USA, nobody in the UK has tried to control and tame the spelling of the English language, and as new words have flooded into the language, spelling has expanded to become a history of the development of English, rather than a useful tool for noting down the sounds that we make. (See pp.20-21 for a comparison of British English and American English spelling.)

Examples:

The Schwa Sound gets everywhere in English! In the following common food and drink words the Schwa sounds are in bold. Vowel sounds which are silent are crossed-out:

tomato	banana	potato	mineral water
lemonade	butter	chocolate	pasta
chicken	strawberry	water	vegetable

Activity:

Look for the hidden Schwa sounds in these words:

1. presenter (of 3 vowel sounds, 2 are Schwa sounds – which ones?)
2. responsibility (of 6 vowel sounds, 3 are Schwa sounds – which ones?)

...and in these common shopping vocabulary words:

customer	groceries	promotion	assistant
delicatessen	escalator	manager	frozen food

Discussion Questions:

1. Tell me about the alphabet in your language. Does it have vowels, diphthongs, and consonants? Compare it to the English alphabet.
2. Do words in your first language have silent letters?

2.5 The Schwa sound is the most common vowel sound in English – and the least discussed.

The Schwa sound is a short unstressed vowel sound, which is pronounced uh . It is simply an expulsion of air that comes straight from the gut. It sounds like the noise you would make if somebody hit you in the stomach: uh!

[The teacher models and students practise making the Schwa sound.]

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Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

The Schwa sound is a vowel sound, but one which has been reduced as far as possible. It can be found in the weak stressed syllables of many words, e.g. teacher, arrive, and twice in elephant (see also 2.4, above). As we have seen, one of the main problems in English pronunciation is that students pronounce full vowel sounds which should be Schwa sounds. They look like vowel sounds in the spelling, but are actually Schwa sounds.

It is typical of the chaos in English spelling that there is no dedicated vowel letter for the Schwa sound, which is the most common vowel sound of all! Instead we need to use all of the vowel letters, often in different combinations (see above).

The Schwa sound is not unique to English, but can be found in many other languages, e.g. Russian and French. Do you have it in your language? If you don't consciously use the Schwa sound in English at present, then you are definitely pronouncing a lot of unnecessary vowel sounds when you speak.

Two top tips:

1. Notice places where Schwas often appear, e.g. suffixes ("-tion", "-ment", "-ance", etc.) and function words (a, the, for, you, etc.)
2. Be suspicious of long words, e.g. four-syllable words. Only one syllable is stressed in each content word. How many of the rest of the syllables have Schwa sounds?

Examples:

These words all contain at least one Schwa sound. Find them and repeat each word:

slipper	buttons	trousers	underwear
necklace	glasses	pyjamas	trainers

In a quick test, I examined a text of 201 words. 57 of them contained a Schwa sound – around one quarter. If you read this text without using the vowel sound you would have made at least 57 errors. Your listener would have heard far too many unnecessary vowel sounds, which would have messed up the sound spine, leading to miscommunication and the question: "Sorry, can you say it again, please? I didn't catch it..."

Activities:

1. Find 5 more English words that contain a Schwa sound.
2. Say the word below:

permission

Which syllable is stressed? Find the Schwa Sound(s).

Answer: this word is pronounced: p Mi shn . The middle syllable is stressed, while there is a Schwa sound on each of the other syllables. Note: in the NEA we rarely have to write the Schwa sound because the sound is made naturally when single consonant sounds are pronounced, e.g. p , t , b , etc. In the word "permission" students might try to pronounce "er" and "io", both of which should be Schwa sounds (see 2.4 above). For example, in the word p Mi shn when we say p we hear the Schwa sound too. It naturally follows the p sound. This is called an **embedded Schwa sound** (see *Glossary* for more details).

Discussion Questions:

1. Were you aware of the Schwa sound? Have you learned about it before? If yes, where and when?
2. Do you use the Schwa sound in your language? What are the similarities and differences in how you use it, compared with English?
3. Do you have a problem with pronouncing the Schwa sound? How can you improve your skill in physically making this sound? How can you increase your understanding of when to use it?

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Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

2.6 The glottal stop is not a sound but rather an action – the cutting off of a sound at the moment of making it.

This action puts a tiny pause into the flow of sounds as you speak. We make a glottal stop by closing the glottis for a moment. The glottis is the small space at the top of our throat, in between the vocal cords. When you close it the air flow is stopped for a brief moment, and the previous sound is cut short – clipped. It is possible to learn to control the glottis – to open and close it – since this is only a physical action. It's like learning to click your fingers, or whistle. It might take some practise, but it can be learned.

[The teacher models the glottal stop and students practise: late night Lei_ Nai_]

The glottal stop is common in Standard Pronunciation, as well as in English spoken with an accent, e.g. a London accent. The glottal stop is not unique to English, but can be found in many other languages, e.g. Chinese, German, and Arabic.

If you are not using glottal stops, your spoken English won't sound as natural and smooth as it could, because you are pronouncing too many consonant sounds, especially t, d, and k. This will slow down your speech and mess up the stress pattern and the sound spine.

Remember that the glottal stop is not a sound – a vowel, diphthong, or consonant sound – but rather an action; it's something that we do when we want to get rid of cc sound connections from our speech (see *Glossary* for more details). It is written as _ in the NEA – the underscore implying that there is something missing (i.e. an unnecessary consonant sound).

I'm afraid neither the Schwa Sound nor the glottal stop can be avoided if you want to speak like a native speaker. Both have to be – and can be – learned and mastered.

Examples:

1. “We ate out late last night.” can mean making four glottal stops: wi Yei_ Au_ Lei_ Lar Snai_

vv cv cc cc cc

vc vv vc vc vc

Four of the five sound connections are now vc, where none was before. It doesn't matter if we lose the t sound because the vowel sounds are the most important sounds in these four stressed syllables.

2. “a lot, lot worse” in normal Standard Pronunciation (e.g. a politician) = uh Lo_ Lo_ Wers

vc cc cc

vc vc vc

Activities:

1. Practise the phrases above – both without **and with** glottal stops.
2. Practise the following phrases – both without **and with** glottal stops:

fight night blood brother rude dog book club week day heart to heart

3. Find more English words or phrases where we need to use a glottal stop, e.g. “completely” = km Plee_ lii

Discussion Questions:

1. Were you aware of the glottal stop in English before this lesson?
2. Do you use the glottal stop in your language? What are the similarities and differences in how you use it, compared with English?
3. Do you have a problem with the glottal stop? How can you improve your glottal stop technique? Are you prepared to practise the technique over and over again until you have completely mastered it? If not, why not?

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Foundation Course

Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

2.7 We need to combine the written alphabet and the phonetic alphabet into one New English Alphabet (NEA).

We need a new written English alphabet. The old one (a, b, c, etc.) is not fit for purpose because it doesn't contain enough letters (especially vowel letters) to adequately represent all of the 48 sounds of English. We cannot write phonetically – as we speak – with this alphabet. It allows us to write words, but we speak syllable by syllable, not word by word. It doesn't show stressed syllables, but it is vital for us to know which syllables are stressed. It doesn't show the "hidden" features of spoken English – Schwas and glottal stops – but if we don't use these features our pronunciation will be much worse, and communication will be reduced.

We also need a new phonetic alphabet. The widely-used IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) was invented in the 19th Century and is no longer fit for purpose because it cannot be easily typed on a keyboard or keypad, or shared electronically. Also the strange and unfamiliar symbols add an extra burden for busy students and can put them off learning about pronunciation altogether.

We looked at the problem in 2.1, above:

The old written alphabet has 26 letters – but there are 48 sounds in English.

The old written alphabet has 5 vowel letters – but there are 23 different vowel sounds in English.

The NEA provides the remedy to both problems, because it allows us to write phonetically, representing the sounds we make when we speak. It is a true alphabet. It also clearly shows individual syllables, stressed syllables, Schwas, and glottal stops.

Examples:

1. In the NEA there is one written identifier (ID) for each of the 48 different sounds. Each sound always has the same ID. The letters "ei" are always pronounced ei, like "train"; the letter "a" is always pronounced a like "cat", etc.

[Look at the NEA handout.]

Features of the NEA:

- Each ID matches a sound
 - Each sound always has the same ID
 - A capital letter always indicates a stressed syllable – not a new sentence or proper noun, etc.
 - Apart from that, punctuation remains the same – we still use full stops, commas, question marks, etc.
 - Schwas and glottal stops can be seen
 - It can be typed on a keyboard or keypad because it uses the Roman alphabet (a, b, c, etc.)
 - This alphabet is already familiar to learners of English – there are no new symbols to decode
 - You can write the way you speak – so when I read your writing I "hear" your voice in my head
2. [The teacher models each of the 48 different sounds and the students repeat them, making notes to help them remember each sound.]
 3. Compare the **IPA** and **NEA** spellings of these transport words. Which spelling is easier to read? Why? Which helps you more to understand the sounds in each word? Why? What is the difference?

Normal Spelling (Roman Alphabet):	NEA Spelling:	IPA Spelling:
journey	Jer nii	/ˈdʒɜː.ni/
engine	En jin	/ˈɛn.dʒɪn/
garage	Ga rij	/ˈgæ.rɪdʒ/

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Lesson 2 – Spelling and Sounds

aeroplane	Eir r plein	/ˈeə.re.pleɪn/
motorway	Meu t wei	/ˈməʊ.tə.weɪ/
tyre	Taiy	/taɪə/

Activities:

1. Write your first name using the NEA: _____
2. Write some more transport words using the NEA:
 - a) car _____
 - b) bike _____
 - c) station _____
 - d) airport _____
3. Look at the following *Tips for Working with the NEA*. Match the first half of a sentence with the second half. Which tips are going to be the most helpful for you?

Tips for Working with the NEA:

1. Don't expect the sounds of English...
 2. Focus on learning the *vowel sounds*...
 3. There will be an initial outlay of time and effort in learning the NEA, but learning is intuitive –
 4. We can afford to get some consonant sounds wrong, or leave a few out...
 5. When a syllable comes before a punctuation mark, e.g. a comma or full stop...
 6. If a written text in the NEA looks strange and hard to read...
- a) ...but we must get the correct vowel sound on the correct stressed syllable.
 - b) ...to be the same as in your first language.
 - c) ...try reading each syllable slowly, pronouncing all of the sounds fully – then getting faster and faster, and using the stress.
 - d) ...because consonant sounds may be similar to those in your language.
 - e) ...the NEA gets easier the more you use it, because the sounds always look the same.
 - f) ...the final consonant sound of that syllable can be pronounced in full, because there is nothing for it to connect to.

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you know all of the sounds of English in the IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet)? If yes, where, when, and how did you learn it? If no, why haven't you learned it? Do you recognise any of the symbols?
2. Do you think that you will be able to learn to write using the NEA... a) individual words, b) sentences including the features of connected speech? If not, what will stop you from learning this?
3. What are the potential difficulties for you in learning the NEA? How will you overcome them? What is easy for you and feels natural?
4. Is it important to you to be able to spell well in English? Why? / Why not? Does bad spelling obstruct communication? How?

Homework:

- Study the *NEA Handout*. Learn the IDs and sounds that they represent. Practise making the sounds.
- Translate words into the NEA... a) 10 household things, e.g. "guitar", b) 10 everyday actions, e.g. "eat".

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Role Play with the New English Alphabet (NEA) 1

Mei king Planz

A lis: Hai, Tom! Hau zi_ Geu win?

Tom: Fain! uhn joo?

A lis: Eu, wai Vgo_ Leu ts Vheum wer kt Doo.

Tom: Ye, mee Too. uh y g n Fi ni shi_ Or lon Taim?

A lis: Ai Deun_ Neu. ai Heu pseu!

Tom: s m v s Geu wing t th Si n mar Lei_ uh. j Won_ uh Joy ns? y Wel k mi fy Wo n.

A lis: Ar, So rii To, mai karn_ t Nai_. ai Pro mi smai Fren dai Tstu dii wi th. May bii y_ th wee Kend? Wo_ ch Think?

Tom: Shor! E nii Tai, Mei_! I Te ksch. See y!

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Foundation Course

Role Play with the New English Alphabet (NEA) 1

Mei king Planz – tran Zlei shn

Making Plans – Translation

A lis: Hai, Tom! Hau zi_ Geu win?

Alice: Hi, Tom! How's it going?

Tom: Fain! uhn joo?

Tom: Fine! And you?

A lis: Eu, wai Vgo_ Leu ts Vheum wer kt Doo.

Alice: Oh, I've got loads of homework to do.

Tom: Ye, mee Too. uh y g n Fi ni shi_ Or lon Taim?

Tom: Yeah, me too. Are you going to finish it all on time?

A lis: Ai Deun_ Neu. ai Heu pseu!

Alice: I don't know. I hope so!

Tom: s m v s Geu wing t th Si n mar Lei_ uh. j Won_ uh Joy ns? y Wel k mi fy Wo n.

Tom: Some of us are going to the cinema later. Do you want to join us? You're welcome, if you want to.

A lis: Ar, So rii To, mai karn_ t Nai_. ai Pro mi smai Fren dai Tstu dii wi th. May bii y_ th wee Kend? Wo_ ch Think?

Alice: Ah, sorry Tom, I can't tonight. I promised my friend I'd study with her. Maybe at the weekend? What do you think?

Tom: Shor! E nii Tai, Mei_! I Te ksch. See y!

Tom: Sure! Any time, mate! I'll text you. See you!

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Practice Text with the New English Alphabet (NEA) 1

Hau t Mei k Nai Sku p Vtee

Fain d Mu gth_ y Lai Kdring king from.

Puu t Tee Ba gi ni_.

Boyl sm Wor t ri n Ke tl.

Por th Boyl Dwor t rin t th Mu gn Ster ri_ f r bi_.

Skwee zth Tee Bag, then Tei ki_ Au tn Da d Bi t Vmilk.

Ster ri tor l Gen n Dge_ Re dii t wn Joy yor Dringk!

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Practice Text with the New English Alphabet (NEA) 1

Hau t Mei k Nai Sku p Vtee – tran Zlei shn

How to Make a Nice Cup of Tea – Translation

Fain d Mu gth_ y Lai Kdring king from.

Find a mug that you like drinking from.

Puu t Tee Ba gi ni_.

Put a teabag in it.

Boyl sm Wor t ri n Ke tl.

Boil some water in a kettle.

Por th Boyl Dwor t rin t th Mu gn Ster ri_ f r bi_.

Pour the boiled water into the mug and stir it for a bit.

Skwee zth Tee Bag, then Tei ki_ Au tn Da d Bi t Vmilk.

Squeeze the teabag, then take it out and add a bit of milk.

Ster ri tor l Gen n Dge_ Re dii t wn Joy yor Dringk!

Stir it all again, and get ready to enjoy your drink!

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Practice Text with the New English Alphabet (NEA) 2

b Gi ning t Tee Chnum bz

wen wi Tee Chnum bz, wi Yoo zz lii Star To fwi th Fer Sten, ai yee Wun, Too, Ttree, For, Fai,
Vsi, Kse v, Nei_, Nai, nn Ten.

Wun Schoo dn s Vgo_ th Ha ng vthm, wi Moo Von t th Ne Kse_, wi ch r Bi_ Ee ziy bi k Zmeu
st vth Ma vth "Teen" Su fiks.

th Meu Sdi fi kuhl_ Num b st Spe lin thi Sgroo p Yoo zz lii fi Fteen, wi Chschoo dn_ Zo fn Rai t
"Zfai fteen", an Dnain teen, wi Chschoo dn_ Seem t Thing ki Spel_ "Dnin teen". Deu Nar skmi
Wai!

Eu Se v Nei_ Too For, Si Ksdu bl Ttree, Yei_ For Fai For.

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Practice Text with the New English Alphabet (NEA) 2

b Gi ning t Tee Chnum bz – tran Zlei shn

Beginning to Teach Numbers – Translation

wen wi Tee Chnum bz, wi Yoo zz lii Star To fwi th Fer Sten, ai yee Wun, Too, Ttree, For, Fai, Vsi, Kse v, Nei_, Nai, nn Ten.

When we teach numbers, we usually start off with the first ten, i.e. one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, and ten.

Wun Schoo dn s Vgo_ th Ha ng vthm, wi Moo Von t th Ne Kse_, wi ch r Bi_ Ee ziy bi k Zmeu st vth Ma vth “Teen” Su fiks.

Once students have got the hang of them, we move on to the next set, which are a bit easier, because most of them have the “-teen” suffix.

th Meu Sdi fi kuhl_ Num b st Spe lin thi Sgroo p Yoo zz lii fi Fteen, wi Chschoo dn_ Zo fn Rai t “Zfai fteen”, an Dnain teen, wi Chschoo dn_ Seem t Thing ki Spel_ “Dnin teen”. Deu Nar skmi Wai!

The most difficult numbers to spell in this group are usually fifteen, which students often write as “fiveteen”, and nineteen, which students seem to think is spelled “nineteen”. Don’t ask me why!

Eu Se v Nei_ Too For, Si Ksdu bl Ttree, Yei_ For Fai For.

07824 633 8454

oh seven eight two four, six double three, eight four five four

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Practice Text with the New English Alphabet (NEA) 3

uh kon tr Ver sh l Pin yn

th r Sum Spor_ sth_ ai uhn Joy Wo ching – Lai k Thle ti ksn Tsai kling – uhn_ th r Ru th zth_
ai Ju Sfain_ tseu Te r bli Bor ring, f ri Gzarm pl Reu wing uhn_ Dfuu_ borl.

uh Neu th_ Meu Spee p – l Spe shlii Gai – z g n di s Gree wi thmee, bu_ ai Karn_ See thi y
Tra ksh nin Wei sting mai Val y bl Taim Gei zing uh_ uh Groo p Vmil y neir Ski king uh Ba g
Vwin d raun d Mu dii Fiyl tf Nain tii Mi ni_s!

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Practice Text with the New English Alphabet (NEA) 3

uh kon tr Ver sh l Pin yn – tran Zlei shn

A Controversial Opinion – Translation

th r Sum Spor_ sth_ ai uhn Joy Wo ching – Lai k Thle ti ksn Tsai kling – uhn_ th r Ru th zth_
ai Ju Sfain_ tseu Te r bli Bor ring, f ri Gzarm pl Reu wing uhn_ Dfuu_ borl.

There are *some* sports that I enjoy watching – like athletics and cycling – and there are others
I just find so terribly boring, for example rowing and football.

uh Neu th_ Meu Spee p – l Spe shlii Gai – z g n di s Gree wi thmee, bu_ ai Karn_ See thi y
Tra ksh nin Wei sting mai Val y bl Taim Gei zing uh_ uh Groo p Vmil y neir Ski king uh Ba g
Vwin d raun d Mu dii Fiyl tf Nain tii Mi ni_s!

I know that *most* people – especially guys – are going to disagree with me, but I can't see the
attraction in wasting my valuable time gazing at a group of millionaires kicking a bag of wind
around a muddy field for ninety minutes!

Talk a Lot

Transport

Discussion Words

fare	petrol pump	tyre	boat
ticket	bus	take-off	motorway
fine	cruise	passenger	canoe
station	driver	train	commuter
engine	aeroplane	ferry	tractor
car	taxi	cancellation	bike
emergency exit	driving licence	car park	road
ship	road sign	reservation	motorbike
flight	service station	airport	roundabout
garage	runway	van	journey

Talk a Lot

Transport

Discussion Words (with the NEA)

feir	Pe trl pump	Taiy	Beut
Ti kit	Bus	Tei Kof	Meu t wei
Fain	Krooz	Pa sn j	k Noo
Stei shn	Drai v	Trein	k Myoo t
En jin	Eir r plein	Fe nii	Trak t
Kar	Tak sii	kan s Lei shn	Baik
i mer jn sii Ye ksit	Drai ving lai sns	Kar park	Reud
Ship	Reu tsain	re z Vei shn	Meu t baik
Flait	Ser vi stei shn	Eir port	Raun d baut
Ga rij	Run wei	Van	Jer nii

Talk a Lot

Transport

Discussion Words (with the IPA)

/feə/	/'pe.trɪ.pʌmp/	/taɪə/	/bəʊt/
/'tɪ.kɪt/	/bʌs/	/'teɪ.kɒf/	/'məʊ.tə.weɪ/
/faɪn/	/kruːz/	/'pæ.sn.dʒə/	/k'nuː/
/'steɪ.ʃn/	/'draɪ.və/	/treɪn/	/kə'mjuː.tə/
/'en.dʒɪn/	/'eə.rə.pleɪn/	/'fe.ri/	/'træ.ktə/
/kɑː/	/'tæ.ksi/	/kæn.sə'leɪ.ʃn/	/baɪk/
/ɪ.mɜː.dʒən.si. 'je.ksɪt/	/'draɪ.vɪŋ.laɪ.sns/	/'kɑː.pɑːk/	/rəʊd/
/ʃɪp/	/'reʊ.tsaɪn/	/re.zə'veɪ.ʃn/	/'məʊ.tə.baɪk/
/flaɪt/	/'sɜː.vɪ.steɪ.ʃn/	/'eə.pɔːt/	/'raʊn.də.baʊt/
/'gæ.rɪdʒ/	/'rʌn.weɪ/	/væn/	/'dʒɜː.nɪ/

Talk a Lot

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Lesson 2 – 200 One-Syllable Words that End with “t”

Practise making **glottal stops** with this handy list of one-syllable words that end with *t* :

ant	dote	mart	sat	wrote
art	fat	mat	seat	wrought
at	fate	mate	set	yacht
bait	feat	Matt	short	yet
Bart	feet	meat	shot	zit
bat	fight	meet	sight	
beat	fit	met	sit	
beet	fleet	might	skate	<u>My words:</u>
belt	float	mitt	soot	
bet	foot	moat	sot	_____
bit	fought	mutt	sought	
bite	gate	Nate	splat	_____
bleat	get	neat	spout	
blot	git	net	sprout	_____
boat	gnat	newt	start	
bolt	goat	night	stat	_____
boot	got	nit	state	
bought	greet	not	stoat	_____
brat	grit	note	straight	
Brit	grot	nought	tart	_____
brought	gut	nut	tat	
built	hart	oat	Tate	_____
but	hat	ought	taught	
butt	hate	part	thought	_____
cart	heart	pat	throat	
cat	heat	peat	tight	_____
caught	height	pert	tit	
cert	hit	pet	toot	_____
chart	hot	Pete	tot	
chat	hurt	pit	tote	_____
cheat	hut	plate	treat	
chute	it	pleat	tut	_____
clot	jet	port	vat	
coat	jot	pot	vet	_____
coot	jut	put	vote	
cot	jute	quit	wait	_____
crate	Kate	quite	wart	
curt	kit	quote	weight	_____
cut	kite	rat	wet	
cute	late	rate	what	_____
dart	let	rent	wheat	
date	light	right	white	_____
debt	lit	root	wilt	
dirt	loot	rot	wit	_____
dot	lot	rut	writ	

Practise glottal stops by repeating these four fun phrases – then make up some of your own!

- Kate wrote a short note.
- The goat with the neat coat met a stoat whose feet got hot a lot.
- Bart bought some light wheat.
- Pete's pet cat knew a neat newt.

Talk a Lot

Foundation Course

These pages show 100 examples of words where spelling differs. Can you find any more words in each category?

Lesson 2 – Comparing British English and American English Spellings

Problem: there are too many unnecessary silent letters in British English spelling – especially vowel letters.
American English spelling gets rid of some of them (see below). NEA spelling gets rid of **all** of them!

British English Spelling	American English Spelling	How is the British English spelling simplified?
anaesthetic	anesthetic	silent vowel letter “a” is deleted
archaeology	archeology	
encyclopaedia	encyclopedia	
gynaecology	gynecology	
leukaemia	leukemia	
mediaeval	medieval	
orthopaedic	orthopedic	
paediatric	pediatric	
palaeontology	paleontology	
toxaemia	toxemia	
ageing	aging	silent vowel letter “e” is deleted
axe	ax	
blonde	blond	
judgement	judgment	
likeable	likable	
loveable	lovable	
sizeable	sizable	
storey	story	silent vowel letter “o” is deleted
diarrhoea	diarrhea	
foetus	fetus	
moustache	mustache	
oestrogen	estrogen	silent vowel letter “u” is deleted
mould	mold	
analogue	analog	silent vowel letters “u” and “e” are deleted
catalogue	catalog	
dialogue	dialog	silent letters “u”, “g”, and “h” are deleted (archaic spelling) in the AmE spelling “f” represents f instead of “ght”
doughnut	donut	
draught	draft	“er” represents the schwa sound uh better than “re”
centre	center	
fibre	fiber	silent vowel letter “o” is deleted too
kilometre	kilometer	
litre	liter	silent vowel letter “o” is deleted too
lustre	luster	
manoeuvre	maneuver	silent vowel letter “o” is deleted too
theatre	theater	
armour	armor	“or” represents the schwa sound uh better than “our”
behaviour	behavior	
colour	color	
favour	favor	
favourite	favorite	
flavour	flavor	
harbour	harbor	
honour	honor	
honourable	honorable	
humour	humor	
labour	labor	
neighbour	neighbor	
odour	odor	
rumour	rumor	
savoury	savory	

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Lesson 2 – Comparing British English and American English Spellings

Problem: there are too many unnecessary silent letters in British English spelling – especially vowel letters.
American English spelling gets rid of some of them (see below). NEA spelling gets rid of **all** of them!

British English Spelling	American English Spelling	How is the British English spelling simplified?
analyse	analyze	“s” changes to “z”, which better represents the sound z
apologise	apologize	
appetiser	appetizer	
breathalyse	breathalyze	
catalyse	catalyze	
civilise	civilize	
colonise	colonize	
cosy	cozy	
criticise	criticize	
emphasise	emphasize	
harmonise	harmonize	
memorise	memorize	
organiser	organizer	
paralyse	paralyze	
popularisation	popularization	
prise	prize	
realise	realize	
recognise	recognize	
defence	defense	“se” is a more rational way to represent s than “ce”
licence	license	
offence	offense	
practice	practise	
pretence	pretense	
cancelled	canceled	an “l” is deleted where two letters represent one l sound the AmE spelling “enroll” is an exception to this rule! silent vowel letter “e” is deleted too
chilli	chili	
enrol	enroll	
equalling	equaling	
fulfill	fulfil	
jewellery	jewelry	
modelling	modeling	
traveller	traveler	
woollen	woolen	
cheque	check	“ck” or “k” are more rational ways of representing the hard k sound. “licorice” is an exception – if “c” is acceptable here, why is it not in “disc”?
disc	disk	
liquorice	licorice	both spellings are valid, representing different pronunciations of the same word
sceptical	skeptical	
dreamt	dreamed	“i” is a more rational way to represent a vowel sound
learnt	learned	
cypher	cipher	“f” is a more rational way to represent f
sulphur	sulfur	
omelette	omelet	silent letters “t” and “e” are deleted
programme	program	silent letters “m” and “e” are deleted
aluminium	aluminum	2nd “i” is deleted which cuts out y sound
aeroplane	airplane	2nd (weak) syllable is deleted; “aer” changes to “air”
speciality	specialty	2nd & 3rd syllables deleted; stress changes to 1st syllable
mum	mom	both spellings are valid, representing different accents
grey	gray	in my opinion “ey” represents ei better than “ay”
mementoes	mementos	in my opinion “oes” represents euz better than “os”
pyjamas	pajamas	I don't like either spelling; p Jar mɜz is more accurate!
tyre	tire	there is a y sound in “tyre”, so I prefer the British English

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100 Basic Words with the NEA

uh Baut	about	Gar dn	garden	Ri v	river
Eir r plein	aeroplane	Glar sz	glasses	Reud	road
ar ft Noon	afternoon	Guud	good	Sed	said
Orl weiz	always	Groo	grew	Skool	school
A n mlz	animals	Hai	hi	See said	seaside
uh Nu th	another	Hors	horse	Shau td	shouted
b Nar n	banana	Haus	house	Sum tting	something
bi Gan	began	in Said	inside	Song	song
Be t	better	Ki chn	kitchen	So rii	sorry
Blak	black	Leik	lake	Stu mk	stomach
Buuk	book	Larft	laughed	Su dn lii	suddenly
Beutt	both	Luuk	look	Soot	suit
Bre kfst	breakfast	Meik	make	Tee ch	teacher
Braun	brown	Ma n j	manager	te l Vi zzn	television
Bil ding	building	Mee	me	Thang kyoo	thank you
See ling	ceiling	mi Steik	mistake	th / thee	the
Chil drn	children	Mor ning	morning	their	there
Klar sroom	classroom	Mu th	mother	Ttort	thought
Klee ning	cleaning	Maun tn	mountain	Ttroo	through
Kleuthz	clothes	Maus	mouse	Too thbrush	toothbrush
Keuld	cold	Nyoo	new	Taun	town
km Pyoo t	computer	Nekst	next	Trein	train
Ker tn	curtain	Neuz	nose	Tree	tree
Di dnt	didn't	neu Vem b	November	Twen tii	twenty
Di frnt	different	Num b	number	Won td	wanted
Do kt	doctor	O fn	often	Wor t	water
Juuw ring	during	O rinj	orange	Wel km	welcome
Ee zii	easy	Par tii	party	Weil	whale
E l fnt	elephant	Pee pl	people	Wait	white
Ev ri bo dii	everybody	Feun	phone	Win deu	window
Forl	fall	Plei	play	with	with
Fam lii	family	Pleez	please	Rait	write
Fo leu	follow	Pro blm	problem		
for Teen	fourteen	Puut	put		

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100 Basic Words – Translate from the NEA

uh Baut		Gar dn		Ri v	
Eir r plein		Glar sz		Reud	
ar ft Noon		Guud		Sed	
Orl weiz		Groo		Skool	
A n mlz		Hai		See said	
uh Nu th		Hors		Shau td	
b Nar n		Haus		Sum tting	
bi Gan		in Said		Song	
Be t		Ki chn		So rii	
Blak		Leik		Stu mk	
Buuk		Larft		Su dn lii	
Beutt		Luuk		Soot	
Bre kfst		Meik		Tee ch	
Braun		Ma n j		te l Vi zzn	
Bil ding		Mee		Thang kyoo	
See ling		mi Steik		th / thee	
Chil drn		Mor ning		their	
Klar sroom		Mu th		Ttort	
Klee ning		Maun tn		Ttroo	
Kleuthz		Maus		Too thbrush	
Keuld		Nyoo		Taun	
km Pyoo t		Nekst		Trein	
Ker tn		Neuz		Tree	
Di dnt		neu Vem b		Twen tii	
Di frnt		Num b		Won td	
Do kt		O fn		Wor t	
Juuw ring		O rinj		Wel km	
Ee zii		Par tii		Weil	
E l fnt		Pee pl		Wait	
Ev ri bo dii		Feun		Win deu	
Forl		Plei		with	
Fam lii		Pleez		Rait	
Fo leu		Pro blm			
for Teen		Puut			

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Lesson 3:

Stress

Lesson 3:

Stress

Reference:

Talk a Lot Handbook

12.1	What is Sentence Stress?
12.28	List of Common Contractions in English
13.1	What is Word Stress?
15.1	Suffixes
16.1	Compound Nouns
17.1	Weak Forms

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Lesson 3 – Stress

3.1 English is a stress-timed language, not a syllable-timed language

3.2 Content words each have one strong stress, while function words are not stressed

3.3 Word stress is irregular in English

3.4 Communication is reduced when we don't use sentence stress

3.5 The sound spine is the sequence of vowel sounds on the stressed syllables in a sentence

3.6 It is not necessary to pronounce every letter in every word in every sentence

3.7 We reduce function words by using contractions and mega contractions

3.8 We also reduce function words by using weak forms

3.9 Most of the top 100 most common words in written English are function words, which have weak forms that students do not generally use

3.10 We are not going to focus on intonation during this course

What I found most surprising / interesting today:

What I need to revise again after this lesson:

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Foundation Course

Lesson 3 – Stress

3.1 English is a stress-timed language, not a syllable-timed language.

English is a stress-timed language. Each content word has one stressed syllable. The stress gives English its distinctive “up and down”, “rise and fall” rhythm. The contrast between the weak and strong stresses in a sequence of words creates the familiar rhythm of English. Other stress-timed languages include German, Dutch, and Swedish. Some languages are not stress-timed, but syllable-timed, giving each syllable an equal amount of stress, e.g. French and Spanish.

Example:

1. Carol is taking her puppy Goldie for a walk to the fountain after tea.

CArol is TAKing her PUPpy GOLdie for a WALK to the FOUNtain after TEA.

Activities:

1. be be be be be be be be be be be be be be be be... etc.
b BE b BE b BE b BE b BE b BE b BE b BE... etc.
2. Read the sentence again. This time be LOUD on the stressed syllables and *whisper* the unstressed syllables:

CArol is TAKing her PUPpy GOLdie for a WALK to the FOUNtain after TEA.

3.2 Content words each have one strong stress, while function words are not stressed.

Content words are words that have their own meaning outside of a sentence, e.g. nouns, main verbs, and adjectives. They each have one syllable that is strongly stressed. Function words are grammar words, which do not have meaning apart from in a sentence, e.g. prepositions, pronouns, and articles. They are not usually stressed.

Examples:

Content words: nouns (e.g. fountain), main verbs (e.g. take, but not “be”), adjectives (e.g. happy), adverbs (e.g. quickly, often), numbers, wh- question words (e.g. what, when), and negative auxiliary verbs (e.g. didn’t, isn’t).

Function words: pronouns (e.g. she, them, my), auxiliary verbs (e.g. “have” in “I have eaten...”), prepositions (e.g. in, at, on), articles and determiners (e.g. a, the, some), conjunctions (e.g. and, but, or), quantifiers (e.g. many), and the verb “be” when used as a main verb.

Activities:

1. Which words are content words and which words are function words:
 - My mum lives with her new partner in Brighton.
 - Sam’s brother is going to start university in Edinburgh next September.
2. Write two more of each kind of word, and say what kind of word they are (e.g. main verb, preposition, etc.)

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Lesson 3 – Stress

Discussion Questions:

1. Is your first language stress-timed? What is the stress like in your language? How does it compare to English?
2. Do you notice the stress in English? Do you like it? Why? / Why not?
3. Give an example of some song lyrics in English that demonstrate the rise and fall stress pattern.

3.3 Word stress is irregular in English.

It is not easy to predict which syllable will be stressed in any given word. Don't expect the stress patterns in English to be the same as in your first language.

For example, find the stress in each of these common words (all nouns):

aeroplane reservation table behaviour anaesthetic apology

Examples:

However, there are some important word stress rules that we can learn:

1. in general, there is a *tendency* in English to stress words on the first syllable
2. **suffixes** are not usually stressed. For example, this means that two-syllable words ending in "-ing" or "-er", etc. will always be stressed on the first syllable
3. **compound words** (e.g. "breakfast" = "break" + "fast") are usually stressed on the first syllable
4. **two-syllable nouns** are very often stressed on the first syllable, e.g. "dentist", "table", "kitchen", etc.
5. **two-syllable verbs** are very often stressed on the second syllable e.g. "improve", "approach", "contain", etc.

As a result, we can often use **logic** to work out word stress:

e.g. in the word "teacher", "-er" is a suffix, so the stress must be on the first syllable: Tee ch .

Activities:

1. Find the stress in each holiday word:
a) campsite, b) departure, c) foreigner, d) passport, e) relaxation, f) arrive, g) waiter
2. Match each word to a word stress rule above.
3. Find... a) 5 words with different suffixes, b) 5 compound words, c) 5 two-syllable nouns, d) 5 two-syllable verbs. Do you notice any exceptions to the rules?

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you have word stress in your first language? If yes, is it regular or irregular? Where does the strong stress usually fall?
2. How much do you already know about word stress in English? How confident are you in identifying the stressed syllable in any given content word? Do you habitually learn the strong stress of each word when you are learning new vocabulary words? What strategies can you use to reduce your risk of error?

3.4 Communication is reduced when we don't use sentence stress.

Sentence stress creates the distinctive "rise and fall" rhythm of English: du DUH du DUH du DUH, du DUH, etc. When we don't use sentence stress, or we get it wrong, communication is reduced because the

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Lesson 3 – Stress

listener cannot hear the all-important vowel sounds on the stressed syllables clearly. The listener is waiting to catch these sounds to be able to process your words quickly, and make sense of what you are saying.

Example:

- The bears at the zoo must be fed at least five times a day.

The bears at the zoo must be fed at least five times a day.

/eə/ /uː/ /e/ /aɪ/ /aɪ/ /eɪ/
The bears at the zoo must be fed at least five times a day.

“Each content word (shown in black) contains one syllable with a strong stress, which is underlined. Each stressed syllable has one vowel sound. The vowel sounds on stressed syllables are the most important sounds in the sentence. They make the “sound spine” of the sentence. To improve communication, try to get the sound spine right.” (from Talk a Lot course books)

Activities:

1. Practise the stress in the sentence above.
2. Now – read the sentence again, but this time with...
 - a) the wrong syllables stressed
 - b) all syllables stressed the same (syllable-timed)
 - c) the correct stresses but the wrong vowel sounds on the stressed syllables

Which is hardest to understand?

Discussion Questions:

1. How confident do you feel in separating content words from function words in a sentence? How can you improve your chances of identifying each kind of word correctly?
2. Do you speak English with stress or without? Ask a few of your fellow students, and your teacher, for their opinion. How can you improve? What areas do you need to work on in particular?

3.5 The sound spine is the sequence of vowel sounds on the stressed syllables in a sentence.

These stressed vowel sounds are the most important sounds in the sentence – the sounds that the listener needs to hear in order to make sense of the words. They form the “backbone” of the sentence – i.e. the “sound spine”. We should always try to find and emphasise the sound spine in a sentence. Whatever other sounds are wrongly pronounced, the vowel sounds on the stressed syllables should be loud and clear. If one or more of these vowel sounds is wrongly pronounced, miscommunication can occur and the listener may have to say: “Sorry, I didn’t catch that. Could you repeat it, please?”

Examples:

- See Activity 2 c), above. With the wrong vowel sounds on the correct stressed syllables, the sentence:

The bears at the zoo must be fed at least five times a day.

could become:

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The BEERS at the TSAR must be FIRED at least FAVE TOMBS a DIE.

English is such a rich language, with such a large number of words in its collection, that when you pronounce the wrong vowel sound on a stressed syllable, you are very likely to say a completely different word, rather than a nonsense word, as can be seen here: bears -> beers fed -> fired, etc.

Activities:

1. a) Find the sound spine in this sentence:
 - The whole family has decided to go on holiday to Florida next year.b) Read just the stressed vowel sounds in order.
2. Listen to me (or a partner) read a phrase or short sentence. Write down just the stressed vowel sounds to make the sound spine.

Discussion Questions:

1. How easy is it for you to find the sound spine?
2. How aware are you of the stressed vowel sounds when... a) you hear spoken English, b) you speak in English?

3.6 It is not necessary to pronounce every letter in every word in every sentence.

When learners do this their pronunciation sounds wrong and “foreign”. The most important sounds are the vowel sounds on the stressed syllables in a sentence. Everything else can be reduced, i.e. made weaker (shorter) by being pronounced more quickly and without stress. We use contractions and weak forms to help us achieve this goal.

Where possible in spoken English, we use contractions and weak forms, e.g. “Are you going to buy...?” becomes uh y g n Bai...? The main aim for speakers is to get to the next stressed syllable as quickly as possible; to emphasise the content words – the point of what we are saying.

3.7 We reduce function words by using contractions and mega contractions.

A contraction is when two words are reduced and joined together to make one word. A mega contraction is when we reduce a normal contraction further. (See List of Contractions and Mega Contractions on P.14.)

Examples:

Full Form:

you are
I will
she has
he is going to
they would
they are
it will have

Normal Contraction:

you're
I'll
she's
he's gonna
they'd
they're
it'll've

Mega Contraction

(strong vowel sounds disappear):

y
uhl
shz
i zg n
th
th
uh lv

In a Phrase:

you're too late
I'll go in a minute
she's got two brothers
he's gonna buy a new car
they'd better be quick
they're really nice
it'll have finished by now

This system of reduced reductions works because native speakers *automatically* associate particular beginning sounds with particular pronouns:

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uh	= I
y	= you
h	= he
sh	= she
uh / uh_	= it
w	= we
th	= they

Activities:

1. Translate this phrase: s m v s g n...
2. Complete the table below:

Reducing Function Words with Contractions and Mega Contractions:

<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> <u>(strong vowel sounds disappear):</u>	<u>In a Phrase:</u>
1. _____	you're	2. _____	_____
she will	3. _____	shl	_____
they are going to	4. _____	th g n	_____
I would	5. _____	uhd	_____
he has	he's	6. _____	_____
7. _____	they'll have	8. _____	_____

Discussion Questions:

1. Do you typically use contractions when you speak in English? If not, why not?
2. Do you sometimes change contractions back into their full form when you are reading out loud from a text? If yes, why? How can you break this habit?
3. Have you ever heard native speakers using mega contractions, e.g. y instead of "you're", or w instead of "we're"? When and where? Were you able to understand what they meant, e.g. from the context?

3.8 We also reduce function words by using weak forms.

Many function words have both strong and weak forms, for example:

<u>Function Word:</u>	<u>Strong Form:</u>	<u>Weak Form:</u>
to	too	t
for	for	f
the	thee or thu	th
of	ov	uhv

...and so on. We usually use weak forms in spoken English rather than strong forms, because they reduce unstressed words further, and increase the contrast between the weak and strong syllables. Function words are not often used on their own, but are almost always sandwiched between content words, like this: "I went **for** a walk **in** the park." I would never need to say, for example:

"Hello! Am, to, the, by, the, to, a, of."

...but I could say:

"Hello! I'm running **to** the shop **by** the park **to** buy a loaf **of** bread."

The strong forms of function words are rarely used in a sentence, but when a learner begins to learn English, they may learn these words as individual words, and memorise the strong forms, forever afterwards using them when they speak – rather than the weak forms, which should be used, but which the learner has not studied. The strong sounds of words like "for", "to", "I", "but", "and", etc. become

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embedded in the learner's memory, rather than the weak forms: f , t , uh , buh_ , uhnd , etc.

Some learners may never learn the weak forms of function words.

Function words are the glue, or the cement, of the sentence, which keep the content words in place. So, if you use the full forms of these words in a sentence, the sentence stress is affected negatively and the stressed vowel sounds are harder to hear, reducing communication. When we reduce function words by using contractions and weak forms, the stressed vowel sounds are easier to hear. In reducing function words we generally change the strong vowel sound into a Schwa sound (an unstressed vowel sound) – or remove it altogether.

Examples:

<u>Normal Spelling:</u>	<u>Individual Word Form (Strong Form):</u>	<u>Sentence Form (Weak Form):</u>
and	and	uhn e.g. thi zn that
for	for	f e.g. Geu f r Work
to	too	t e.g. ai Won t Geu
a	ei	uh e.g. ai Nee d Lift (the Schwa sound is embedded – it occurs naturally when we say d)

(See P.10 for a comprehensive list of weak forms in English.)

Activities:

1. Practise saying the following words with both strong and weak forms:
the to of and you that because can your than
2. a) Listen to the full form and write the weak form, b) listen to the weak form and write the full form.

3.9 Most of the top 100 most common words in written English are function words, which have weak forms that students do not generally use.

The Oxford University list of the top 100 high-frequency words in written English is based on an analysis of the Oxford English Corpus of over one billion words carried out by Oxford Online, in association with the Oxford English Dictionary¹. (See word list on P.9.)

Of these 100 words, 67 are function words (including the first 27 most frequently used words in English!), e.g. be, to, for, of, etc. **the** is the #1 word in English. It has been estimated that this group of 100 words – and their variants, e.g. be, was, been, etc. – repeated again and again account for 50% of all the words in the Oxford English Corpus!

Since these function words are so commonly used (they are the words that fall in the gaps between the content words with the stressed syllables) it's vital for students to learn the weak form (reduced version) of each of them (see *Weak Forms – Lesson Plan*). Remember – we do not normally use the full form of these function words. A notable exception is when one of them occurs at the end of a sentence, e.g. "What did you say that for?" ("for" is pronounced: for). Another exception is when we use intonation (see 3.10, below), e.g. "That's what I think!" ("I" is pronounced: ai). The word "I" is stressed to emphasise a particular point, so we use the full form.

¹ Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Most_common_words_in_English, accessed on 04.04.2011

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Examples:

Word:	Reduction (NEA):	In a Phrase:
the	th	it's the best
to	t	I went to the shop
of	uhv	a piece of paper
and	uhnd	fish and chips
a	uh	I need a break
I	uh	I saw you
it	uht	it was good
for	f	go for a walk
with	w	I put it with the others
he	i	he said that
you	y	you need a haircut
from	frm	different from me

Activity:

1. Practise the phrases above using both the strong and weak form of each function word.
2. Write your own phrases for 5 of the function words, and practise them with a partner, using both the strong and weak form of each function word.
3. What are these common phrases:

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| a) th z _____ | e) k j? _____ |
| b) in t w _____ | f) sth _____ |
| c) b k z vth _____ | g) k dv _____ |
| d) j...? _____ | h) uh y g n? _____ |

(See *Weak Forms – Lesson Plan*.)

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever learned about weak forms in English before? If yes, when and where? What percentage of this course is brand new information for you?
2. Have you ever knowingly used mega contractions? Why do you think students tend to use the full forms of function words, rather than the weak forms, as they ought to?

3.10 We are not going to focus on intonation during this course.

On this course we are using Standard Pronunciation – also known as Received Pronunciation (RP). In this lesson we have looked at stress patterns – the sound spine – in sentences that use Standard Pronunciation. However, we can use stress differently, putting heavy stress (or emphasis) on a particular word or phrase, which then highlights the part of the sentence that we want to focus on. This is called **intonation**. It is really useful when we want to avoid misunderstandings or correct mistakes. However, we are not going to pay too much attention to intonation at this stage. As it says in the introduction to the *Talk a Lot Elementary Handbook*:

“The sentence stress activities in [Talk a Lot courses] are focused on neutral speech. Intonation is largely ignored ... in favour of grounding students in the basics of word stress, sentence stress, and connected speech techniques. The subtleties of intonation, and how meaning can be altered, can of course be practised in conjunction with Talk a Lot materials, but should perhaps come later on for new students of spoken English...”

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Lesson 3 – Stress

Examples:

- Customer: I'll have four eggs, please.
Shop assistant: Sorry, how many did you say?
Customer: **FOUR** eggs, please. I'd like **FOUR**. [*"four" has heavier stress than normal*]
The customer adds intonation to (emphasises) the keyword "eggs" to enable better understanding.
- Bob was happy because his boss gave him more overtime.
[Standard Pronunciation: neutral – without special intonation]
Who was happy? **Bob** was happy because his boss gave him more overtime.
How did he **feel** about it? Bob was **happy** because his boss gave him more overtime.
Why was Bob happy? Bob was happy because his boss gave him **more overtime**.
Who gave him more...? Bob was happy because his **boss** gave him more overtime.
...and so on.

Activities:













- Practise the sentences above with the particular intonation.
- Write your own example and practise it with a partner, e.g. "Are they **new** shoes?" / "Are they new **shoes**?" etc.

Discussion Questions:

- Do you use intonation in your first language? How is it similar to / different from its use in English?
- In what situations might you need to use intonation (heavy stress) to avoid a misunderstanding or correct a mistake? Think of a few example situations and roleplay them.

Final Thought:

If a listener can't understand your spoken English, it could be because...

Stress:	Vowel Sounds:	Result:
		 ?!
		 ?!
		 ?!
		

Homework:

- Learn the List of Common Weak Forms on P.10.
- Practise using the weak forms of function words when you speak and when reading out loud. If necessary, make a conscious decision to change how you pronounce function words.

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Lesson 3 – The 100 Most Common Words in Written English

The Oxford University list of the top 100 high-frequency words in written English is based on an analysis of the Oxford English Corpus, which is a collection of texts in English that has a combined total of over one billion words. This analysis was done by Oxford Online, in association with the Oxford English Dictionary. **Of these top 100 words, 60 are function words, including all but 2 of the top 30 words!** “the” is the most common word in written English.

From Wikipedia:

*“Note that the items listed may represent more than one actual word; they are **lemmas**. For instance the entry “be” contains within it the occurrences of “are”, “is”, “were”, and “was”. **Note also that these top 100 lemmas listed below account for 50% of all the words in the Oxford English Corpus.**” [emphasis mine]*

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Most_common_words_in_English, accessed on 04.04.2011

Function words are highlighted and weak forms (where possible) are shown with the NEA:

1. the	th	36. all		71. than	thn
2. be	bi	37. would	wd	72. then	
3. to	t	38. there	th	73. now	
4. of	uhv	39. their	th	74. look	
5. and	uhn	40. what		75. only	
6. a	uh	41. so		76. come	
7. in		42. up		77. its	uh_s
8. that	th_	43. out	au_	78. over	
9. have	uhv	44. if	uhf	79. think	
10. I	uh	45. about	uh bau_	80. also	
11. it	i_	46. who		81. back	
12. for	f	47. get		82. after	
13. not		48. which		83. use	
14. on		49. go		84. two	
15. with	w	50. me	mi	85. how	
16. he	i	51. when		86. our	ar
17. as	uhz	52. make		87. work	
18. you	y	53. can	kn	88. first	
19. do	d	54. like		89. well	
20. at	uh_	55. time		90. way	
21. this		56. no		91. even	
22. but	b_	57. just		92. new	
23. his	iz	58. him	im	93. want	
24. by	b	59. know		94. because	b kz
25. from	frm	60. take		95. any	uh nii
26. they	th	61. person		96. these	
27. we	w	62. into		97. give	
28. say		63. year		98. day	
29. her	uh	64. your	y	99. most	
30. she	sh	65. good		100. us	uhz
31. or	uh	66. some	sm		
32. an	uhn	67. could	kd		
33. will	uhl	68. them	thm		
34. my	m	69. see			
35. one		70. other			

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List of Common Weak Forms in Spoken English

- In spoken English we often use the **weak forms of function words** instead of the strong forms to make the sound spine stand out more clearly. This is true of Standard Pronunciation, dialects, and accents
- The weak form is often made by replacing the vowel sound in the strong form with a **Schwa sound: uh**
- Most function words that have weak forms are **monosyllabic** – they have only one syllable
- If we use strong forms when we should use weak forms, we sound **too formal** and it is more difficult for people to understand us, because the sentence stress is incorrect. Communication is reduced
- If a function word comes **at the end of a sentence** we usually use its strong form, rather than its weak form, e.g. "What are you looking for?" (for) or, "Who are you writing to?" (too)
- If we want to show emphasis or contrast, we can vary the **intonation** by using strong forms where we would normally use weak forms, e.g. "What did *you* think of the book?" (yoo)

articles & determiners	weak	strong
a	uh	ei
an	uhn	an
any	uh nii	e nii
some	sm	sum
such	sch	such
that	th_	that
the	thi or th	thee

verb "be" & auxiliary verbs	weak	strong
am	uhm	am
are	uh	ar
be	bi	bee
been	bin or bn	been
is	uhz	iz
was	wz	woz
were	w	wer
do	duu or d	doo
does	dz	duz
had	hd or uhd	had
has	hz or uhz	haz
have	hv or uhv	hav
can	kn	kan
could	kd	kuud
must	mst or ms	must
shall	shl	shal
should	shd	shuud
will	uhl	wil
would	wd	wuud

conjunctions	weak	strong
and	uhn	and
because	b kz	bi koz
but	b_	but
if	uhf	if
or	uh	or
than	thn	than

prepositions	weak	strong
about	uh bau_	uh baut
as	uhz	az
at	uh_	at
by	b	bai
for	f	for
from	frm	from
of	uhv	ov
out	au_	aut
to	t	too
with	w	with

pronouns	weak	strong
he	hi or i	hee
her	h or uh	her
him	im	him
his	iz	hiz
I	uh	ai
it	i_	it
its	uh_s	its
me	mi	mee
my	m	mai
our	ar	auw
she	sh	shee
their	th	their
them	thm	them
there	th	their
they	th	thei
us	uhz	us
we	wi or w	wee
you	y	yoo
your	y	yor

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Lesson 3 – Weak Forms – Lesson Plan

This lesson is divided into four parts and lasts around 50-60 mins. It is suitable for Pre-Intermediate level and above:

Part 1:

Q. How many words are there in the English language?

A. Over 2 billion (Source: Oxford Corpus)

Q. Do you know these thirty words? (Word List, below)

A. Yes, of course.

These words are in the top 100 most common words in written English, according to Oxford University – out of more than two billion! “the” is the most common word in written English.

Q. What can you see here? What kind of words are there here?

A. Prepositions, articles, pronouns, auxiliary verbs, and conjunctions.

Q. What is the collective name for this kind of word?

A. Function words.

Q. Do you know how to pronounce these words?

A. Yes, of course.

Q. Can you read the thirty words out loud, please?

[A few students read the words out loud. In most cases they will pronounce the full form of each word, rather than the weak form. Let the students make mistakes at this stage, without correcting them:]

Word List:

the	your
to	some
of	them
and	than
a	because
that	as
have	be
I	at
for	from
with	we
you	will
he	into
an	do
there	could
can	so

Part 2:

Q. Now – can you read the twelve phrases out loud, please?

[A few students read the phrases out loud. In most cases they will pronounce the full form of each function word in a phrase, rather than the weak form, which will destroy the sentence stress. You might want to use just a few of the phrases – e.g. four – depending on time. Let the students make mistakes at this stage, without correcting them:]

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Lesson 3 – Weak Forms – Lesson Plan

Phrases:

1. it is the first of May
2. work with a new partner
3. there is a bottle of milk on the table
4. some fish and chips in the park
5. do you want to go to the shop?
6. they are from the City of York
7. there is a book over there
8. could you give me a call in a minute?
9. the plane from Paris arrives at nine
10. we are going to be late
11. he has not got any money because he is broke
12. we will put the cake into a box

Let's look at the first phrase: "it is the first of May". Would I say it like that? [word by word] No. [Elicit the contraction "it's" and the two weak forms – th and uhv .]

Part 3:

At the beginning of the lesson, I asked you: "Do you know how to pronounce these words?" You all said yes, and you read them out loud. But you pronounced each one [or, almost all of them] with their full form. How often do we need to say any of these words individually? Almost never. We never need to say simply, "than", or "from"! These words are *almost always* in between a set of content words. These words are the glue, or the cement, of the sentence, that keep the content words together. So, since we know how common these words are – in the top 100 out of over 2 billion! – **is the mispronunciation of these words the main cause of your problems with pronunciation?** It will be well worth your while to learn the correct pronunciation of each one:

[If possible, try to elicit the weak forms from the students, and write them on the board alongside the original list, using the NEA. Remind learners of the importance of the Schwa sound in unstressed syllables, which is written uh , and the glottal stop, which is written _ and usually replaces t at the end of a syllable:]

Word List:

the	th	your	y
to	t	some	sm
of	uhv	them	thm
and	uhn	than	thn
a	uh	because	b kz
that	th_	as	uhz
have	uhv	be	bi
I	uh	at	uh_
for	f	from	frm
with	w	we	wi
you	y	will	uhl
he	hi	into	in t
an	uhn	do	d
there	th	could	kd
can	kn	so	s

[The teacher could improvise short phrases to illustrate some of the weak forms, e.g. in "fish and chips" the word "and" is reduced to uhn – the d sound is removed due to Elision (see Lesson 4), etc. As you go through each word and its reduced form, emphasise the fact that in most cases the vowel sound is removed and only consonant sounds – or the Schwa sound – is left, e.g. the word "can" loses its strong a sound, and we hear only the two consonant sounds, which create a natural Schwa sound when we put them together.]

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Lesson 3 – Weak Forms – Lesson Plan

Part 4:

Now, armed with the knowledge of the correct pronunciation of each function word, let's return to the phrases. First, which words are stressed? Which word have the meaning? [i.e. the content words, underlined below] What happens to the function words in between? How can we reduce them so that they are as weak as possible, without deleting them – which would create a grammar error?]

[Students work on the task in pairs or small groups. If they are able to, they could write the NEA spelling of each phrase. After a short time, the teacher goes through each sentence on the board, eliciting feedback from the students. Pay particular attention to how the full form of function words, e.g. *for* changes to weak: *f*]

Phrases:

1. it is the <u>first</u> of <u>May</u>	i_ zth Fer st Vmei
2. <u>work</u> with a <u>new</u> <u>partner</u>	Wer kw th Nyoo Par_ n
3. there is a <u>bottle</u> of <u>milk</u> on the <u>table</u>	th z Bo_ uh l Vmil kon th Tei bl
4. some <u>fish</u> and <u>chips</u> in the <u>park</u>	sm Fi shn Chi psin th Park
5. do you <u>want</u> to <u>go</u> to the <u>shop</u> ?	j wo n Geu t th Shop?
6. they are from the <u>City</u> of <u>York</u>	th frm th Si_ ii y Vyork
7. there is a <u>book</u> over <u>there</u> *	th z Buu keu v Their
* the second "there" is an adverb. It is worth noting that function words at the end of a sentence should have full form (see notes)	
8. could you <u>give</u> me a <u>call</u> in a <u>minute</u> ?	k j Gi vmee y Kor li n Mi ni_?
9. the <u>plane</u> from <u>Paris</u> <u>arrives</u> at <u>nine</u>	th Plein frm Pa ri s Rai vz_ Nain
10. we are going to be <u>late</u> !	w g n bi Lei_?
11. he has <u>not</u> <u>got</u> any <u>money</u> because he is <u>broke</u>	hi Ya zn_ Go_ e nii Mu nii k zee Zbreuk
12. we will <u>put</u> the <u>cake</u> into a <u>box</u>	wl Puu_ th Kei kin t w Boks

Notes:

- Some function words keep their full form when they are used at the end of a sentence, e.g. object pronouns like "him", "them", and "us". Also, the prepositions "in" and "on" don't have weak form, but the n sound at the end of each word is a friendly consonant sound (see Lesson 4), which enables a smooth transition to the next sound.
- Summary of the problem: students learn function words with their full form and a strong vowel sound, e.g. a, and, at, etc. but not as part of a sentence. We hardly ever use function words individually, so students use the full form in a sentence when they should use the weak form – which they have never formally learned. **So, change the strong vowel sound in a function word into a Schwa sound, or remove it completely!**
- Where possible in spoken English, we use contractions with the weak forms, e.g. "Are you going to...?" becomes uh y g n...? The main aim for speakers is to get to the content words – to the point of what we are saying. Here are some very common contraction combos:

there is a...	=	th z...	could you...?	=	k j...?
into a...	=	in t w	because of...	=	b k z...
do you...?	=	j...?	it is the...	=	sth...

(we reduce "it is" to s because we are so used to this pattern that we don't need to hear "it is" every time. s is enough to communicate. And anyway, we want to get on to the point of the sentence – the content words.)

could have	=	k dv
you are going to	=	y g n

(see also *Levels of Reduction with Contractions, P.X*)

- These reductions work because our brains are programmed to understand these patterns, e.g. w for "we". There is only one pronoun that starts with w, etc.

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Lesson 3 – List of Contractions and Mega Contractions

Note: this list includes the most common verb forms. It is by no means exhaustive

Verb: be (present simple / continuous)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> <u>(strong vowel sounds disappear):</u>
I am	I'm	uhm
you are	you're	y
he is	he's	iz
she is	she's	shz
it is	it's	i_z
we are	we're	w
they are	they're	th
Example:	He's really nice.	i Zriy lii Nais.

Verb: be (past simple / continuous)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> <u>(strong vowel sounds disappear):</u>
I was	none	uh wz
you were	none	y w
he was	none	i wz
she was	none	sh wz
it was	none	i_ wz
we were	none	w w
they were	none	th w
Example:	She was late.	sh w Zlei_.

Verb: have (present perfect)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> <u>(strong vowel sounds disappear):</u>
I have	I've	uhv
you have	you've	yv
he has	he's	iz
she has	she's	shz
it has	it's	i_z
we have	we've	wv
they have	they've	thv
Example:	They've just left.	th Vju Sleft.

Verb: have (past perfect)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> <u>(strong vowel sounds disappear):</u>
I had	I'd	uhd
you had	you'd	yd
he had	he'd	id
she had	she'd	shd
it had	it'd	i_ uh
we had	we'd	wd
they had	they'd	thd
Example:	She'd been told about it.	sh dbin Teul d bau ti_.

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Lesson 3 – List of Contractions and Mega Contractions

Verb: will (future simple)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I will	I'll	uhl
you will	you'll	yl
he will	he'll	il
she will	she'll	shl
it will	it'll	il
we will	we'll	wl
they will	they'll	thl
Example:	I'll see you soon.	uhl See y Soon.

Verb Form: will have (future perfect)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I will have	I'll have	uh lv
you will have	you'll have	y lv
he will have	he'll have	i lv
she will have	she'll have	sh lv
it will have	it'll have	i lv
we will have	we'll have	w lv
they will have	they'll have	th lv
Example:	It'll have finished by then.	i l Fi ni shbai then.

Verb Form: be going to (future)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I am going to	I'm going to	uhm g n
you are going to	you're going to	y g n
he is going to	he's going to	i zg n
she is going to	she's going to	sh zg n
it is going to	it's going to	i_ zg n
we are going to	we're going to	w g n
they are going to	they're going to	th g n
Example:	We're going to have lunch.	w g n Ha Vlunch.

Verb Form: would (conditional)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I would	I'd	uhd
you would	you'd	yd
he would	he'd	id
she would	she'd	shd
it would	it'd	i_ uh
we would	we'd	wd
they would	they'd	thd
Example:	You'd be surprised.	y dbii s Praizt.

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Lesson 3 – List of Contractions and Mega Contractions

Verb:	can (modal auxiliary)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
you can	none	y kn
Example:	You can tell me later.	y kn Tel mi Lei_ uh.

Verb:	could (modal auxiliary)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
They could	none	thei kd
Example:	They could go too.	thei k_ Geu Too.

Verb:	should (modal auxiliary)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I should	none	uh shd
Example:	I should get ready for work.	uh sh_ Ge_ Re dii f Werk.

Verb:	must (modal auxiliary)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
You must	none	y ms
Example:	You must be happy about it.	y ms bii Ha pii y bau_ ti_.

Verb Form:	have to (modal auxiliary)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I have to	none	uh ha ft
Example:	I have to go now.	uh ha ft Geu Nau.

Verb:	might (modal auxiliary)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (t replaced by glottal stop):
We might	none	w mai_
Example:	We might be on time.	w mai_ bii yon Taim.

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Lesson 3 – List of Contractions and Mega Contractions

Verb Form: could have (modal auxiliary)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I could have	I could've	uh k dv
Example:	I could've done better.	uh k d Vdun Be_ uh.

Verb Form: should have (modal auxiliary)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I should have	I should've	uh sh dv
Example:	I should've told you.	uh sh d Fteul j.

Verb Form: must have (modal auxiliary)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
It must have	it must've	i_ m stv
Example:	It must've been great!	i_ m st vbin Grei_!

Verb Form: might have (modal auxiliary)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
They might have	they might've	th mai tv
Example:	They might've got lost.	th mai t Vgo_ Lost.

Verb Form: be (negative)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I am not he is not	I'm not he isn't	uh Mno_ i Yin_
Example:	I'm not sure about this.	uh Mno_ Shor r bau_ this.

Verb Form: do (negative auxiliary)		
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (t replaced by glottal stop):
I do not she does not	I don't she doesn't	uh Deun_ sh Dn_
Example:	She doesn't like toast.	sh Dn_ Lai Kteust.

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Lesson 3 – List of Contractions and Mega Contractions

Verb Form	do (auxiliary question)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
Do you like...?	d'you like...?	j Laik...?
Does she like...?	none	d shi Laik...?
Example:	D'you like eggs?	j Lai Kegz?

Verb Form:	have (negative auxiliary)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (strong vowel sounds disappear):
I have not	I haven't / I ain't	uh Ya vn_ / uh Yein_
she has not	she hasn't	sh Yan_
Example:	I haven't got any money.	uh Ya vn_ Go_ e nii Mu nii.

Verb Form:	will (negative auxiliary)	
<u>Full Form:</u>	<u>Normal Contraction:</u>	<u>Mega Contraction</u> (t replaced by glottal stop):
I will not	I won't	uh Weun_
he will not	he won't	i Weun_
Example:	I won't be able to.	uh Weun_ bi Yei bl too.

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Lesson 4:

Connected Speech

Lesson 4:

Connected Speech

Reference:***Talk a Lot Handbook***

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 3.1 | Connected Sentence Cards |
| 4.1 | Connected Speech Templates |
| 11.1 | What is Connected Speech? |
| 13.3-13.7 | Analysis of Discussion Words |

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Lesson 4 – Connected Speech

- 4.1** Even with the stress and vowel sounds correct in a sentence, we still sound wrong when we don't use connected speech, because we are speaking word by word

- 4.2** We speak English syllable by syllable, not word by word

- 4.3** However, English words don't fit together very well. They are like badly-fitting puzzle pieces

- 4.4** We use the Features of Connected Speech to solve this problem. They can be learned using the mnemonic GLACIER

- 4.5** There are four possible sound connections between syllables

- 4.6** cc sound connections are the hardest to pronounce

- 4.7** The aim is to speak with only vc (vowel sound to consonant sound) sound connections between syllables, and we use connected speech techniques to achieve this

- 4.8** Friendly consonant sounds assist with cc sound connections, because they are happy to sit next to other consonant sounds

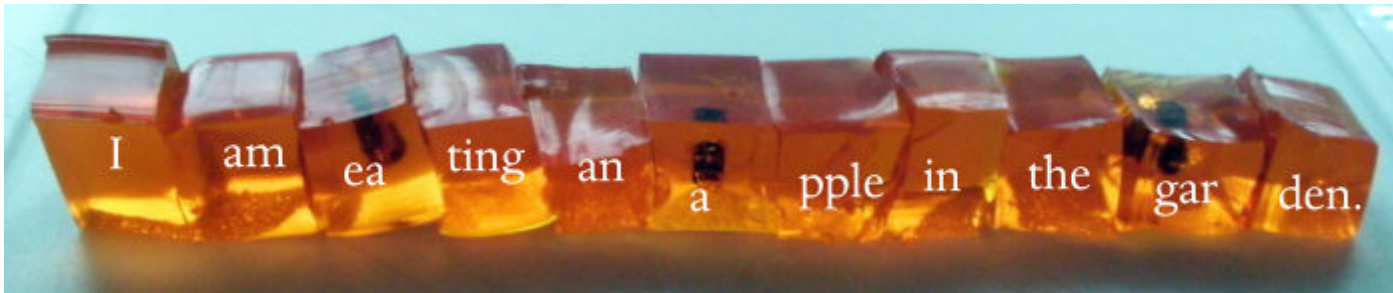
What I found most surprising / interesting today:

What I need to revise again after this lesson:

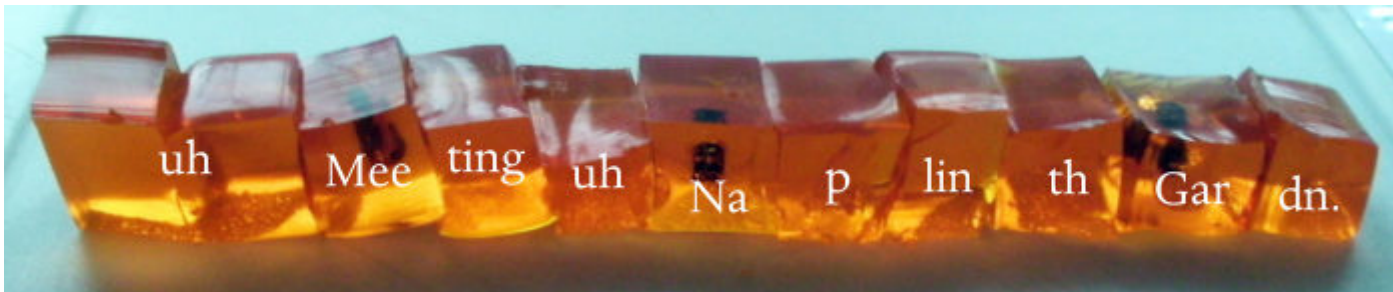
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The Jelly Cube Comparison – Example



regular spelling



NEA spelling

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Lesson 4 – Connected Speech

4.1 Even with the stress and vowel sounds correct in a sentence, we still sound wrong when we don't use connected speech, because we are speaking word by word.

The Jelly Cube Comparison:

Imagine each syllable in a sentence as a wobbly cube of jelly. Inside some of them is a hard round centre. The syllables with the hard centres are the stressed syllables. The hard centre represents the vowel sound on the stressed syllable, and the wobbly jelly around it represents the consonant sounds (see Fig. 1). When a syllable is pronounced separately, all of the sounds – vowel sound and consonant sounds – can be pronounced clearly, but when syllables meet they squash together – like cubes of jelly do – and the consonant sound(s) on either side are affected. As they merge together, they may change or disappear completely. The unstressed syllables can be squeezed the most, because they don't have a strong vowel sound (a hard round centre) but they cannot be left out – that would create a grammatical mistake. Furthermore, if you squeeze (reduce) a stressed syllable too much the hard centre will burst and the vowel sound will disappear, leading to miscommunication.

The process of changing syllables so that they fit together well – like cubes of jelly that squeeze and merge together – is what we call **connected speech**.

Writing Comparison:

When we write with our normal handwriting we don't print each letter separately. At school we are quickly taught to use joined-up handwriting. Sometimes people can't read my handwriting if I write quickly or carelessly, but if I write each letter separately (e.g. on a whiteboard in a classroom) it is very easy to read it. It's the same with connected speech. If I speak word by word – pronouncing each syllable, vowel sound and consonant sound clearly – it is easy to understand me, although I sound unnatural and not like a native speaker of English. The listener may experience fatigue listening to me, because they have to work much harder to identify the sound spine. If I speak quickly using connected speech, although I sound natural, it is much harder for people not used to listening to connected speech techniques to understand, or "catch" what I say.

Examples:

1. The cat was sitting on the floor.
2. I'm working at the bank at the moment.

Activity:

- Show the sentence stress in the sentences above using real jelly cubes and hard centres! (Note: don't eat the unstressed syllables until after the lesson!)

4.2 We speak English syllable by syllable, not word by word.

We don't pronounce every word individually, but rather connect words together syllable by syllable.

Examples:

1. How common one-syllable words are in English. (See Talk a Lot Handbook p.13.3-13.7)
2. I. Don't. Speak. Like. This, b_ wi thmor Fleu.

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you know already about connected speech in English?

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Lesson 4 – Connected Speech

2. Do you connect syllables in a similar way in your first language? Say a sentence slowly in your language, and explain what happens between the syllables.

4.3 However, English words don't fit together very well. They are like badly-fitting puzzle pieces.

In spoken English, words don't fit together properly. If I try to pronounce each word individually, I sound overformal and "foreign". It is difficult to sound natural while speaking English because the syllables don't connect together naturally. English spelling works against pronunciation by often preventing vc sound connections (see below). For example, there are too many words and syllables that both start and end with a consonant sound. In short, the syllables in our language don't usually connect with vc sound connections – as we wish them to.

Activity:

- Practise reading the following sentences... a) word by word, b) syllable by syllable:

1. I'm working at the bank at the moment.
2. The cat was sitting on the floor.

Which syllable connections cause a problem? Why?

Discussion Questions:

1. Think about how you learned English. Were you drilled word by word, or in short chunks with several syllables in each? Do you speak word by word now? If so, how are you going to "un-learn" this habit?
2. When you speak in English, do you notice that sound connections between syllables are not smooth, but uneven? For example, you pronounce the phrase "buy it" like Bai it instead of Bai yit (i.e. without intrusion). Or, you pronounce the phrase "have to" like Hav too instead of Ha ftoo (i.e. without FCL)?

4.4 We use the Features of Connected Speech to solve this problem. They can be learned using the mnemonic GLACIER.

Examples:

Feature:	Definition:	Example(s)
Glottal stop	an empty space without sound: _	_____
Linking (FCL)	syllables connect together	_____
Assimilation	a sound changes	_____
Contraction	a word is shortened	_____
Intrusion	a new sound appears – y, w, or r	_____
Elision	a sound disappears	_____
R-linking	syllables connect with a r sound	_____

Activity:

1. Match a phrase to each feature of connected speech above:

- | | | |
|----------------|--------------|----------|
| a) my mate Pat | d) there is | g) it is |
| b) clean bike | e) grey eyes | |
| c) bad dog | f) like it | |

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2. Work with a partner and think of some more example phrases for each feature.

Discussion Questions:

1. Are you already familiar with any or all of these features of connected speech? If yes, where did you learn them? Are you already using any or all of them when you speak in English?
2. Do you use any of these features of connected speech in your first language? If yes, which ones?
3. How confident are you in deleting the t sound at the end of a syllable and inserting a glottal stop instead? (See Lesson 3.) How are you planning to include this technique, along with the other features of connected speech, into your normal English speech?
4. What strategies can you use to practise the features of connected speech and improve your spoken English skills?

4.5 There are four possible sound connections between syllables.

vc (vowel sound to consonant sound)	e.g. "my car"	mai Kar = easy to pronounce
vv (vowel sound to vowel sound)	e.g. "we are"	wee ar = difficult to pronounce
cv (consonant sound to vowel sound)	e.g. "it is"	it iz = difficult to pronounce
cc (consonant sound to consonant sound)	e.g. "that book"	that buuk = difficult to pronounce

vc is the easiest and most natural sound connection for native speakers of English to pronounce.

Summary of what usually happens with each sound connection:

vc = OK – easy to pronounce	cv = Final Consonant Linking (FCL)
vv = Intrusion with y, w, or r	cc = Elision, Glottal Stop, Assimilation, or FCL

Examples:

What we typically see with each type of sound connection:

vc This sound connection is easy to pronounce. Feature of connected speech: **none required!**

vv This sound connection is difficult to pronounce, so we add a new consonant sound between the two syllables: y, w, or r. See below for further details. Feature of connected speech: **intrusion**

<u>Example:</u>	<u>Problem:</u>	<u>Solution:</u>
buy it... you and... teacher is	Bai it yoo uhnd Tee ch iz	Bai yit yoo wnd Tee ch riz

cv This sound connection is difficult to pronounce, so we often connect the consonant sound at the end of the first syllable with the vowel sound at the beginning of the next. Feature of connected speech: **linking (FCL = Final Consonant Linking)**

<u>Ending Sound:</u>	<u>Example:</u>	<u>Problem:</u>	<u>Solution:</u>
d	bed and...	Bed uhnd	Be dnd
k	take any...	Teik e nii	Tei ke nii
m	I'm only...	aim eun lii	ai meun lii
sh	push Alex...	Push A lex	Puu Sha lix
t	get up*	Get Up	Ge Tup

*Generally speaking, phrasal verbs provide a good example of this

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Activity:

- Match these phrases to the three groups: **vc**, **vv**, or **cv**:

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------|----------------|
| 1. see Oliver | 4. no way | 7. four events |
| 2. the day | 5. cup of | 8. put off |
| 3. nice office | 6. queue up | 9. my car |

4.6 cc sound connections are the hardest to pronounce.

This is the most difficult type of sound connection, and therefore the most radical action is required – including the use of **four** different features of connected speech. Because cc connections are so hard to pronounce (the jagged edges of the badly-fitting puzzle pieces) we become impatient with our language and simply delete (elision and glottal stop), change (assimilation), or link (FCL) the problematic consonant sound at the end of the first syllable. In each case our aim is to change the sound connection to a vc sound connection.

Examples:

Here are some typical examples of things we do to make cc sound connections easier to pronounce:

- Delete **t** or **d** at the end of a syllable when it meets another consonant sound. Use glottal stops to cut off the previous sound, leaving a tiny gap in place of the missing sound. Result = vc sound connection.
Features of connected speech: **elision** and **glottal stop**

Practise: art lesson great time bread bin closed bag

- Write more examples: _____

- Delete duplicate sounds that meet, e.g. in the phrase “black clock” there will be only one **k** sound where the syllables meet – at the beginning of the second syllable: Bla_ klok. Glottal stops may or may not be used in this kind of situation. Result = vc sound connection. Features of connected speech: **elision** and **glottal stop**

Practise: rode down pack case big game closed door

- Write more examples: _____

- Delete **h** at the beginning of a syllable when the previous sound is a consonant sound, e.g. “Is he?” This gives us a cv sound connection, which can be remedied with FCL: i zee? Result = vc sound connection. Features of connected speech: **elision** and **FCL**

Practise: put him deep hole push hard right heel

- Write more examples: _____

- Replace **tt** at the end of a syllable with **f**, then move it forward with FCL. It is easier to pronounce **f** next to another consonant sound, than **tt**, e.g. “both people” becomes: Beu Fpee pl. Result = vc sound connection. Note: although common, this is considered “sloppy” and less “correct” than Standard Pronunciation. Features of connected speech: **assimilation** and **FCL**

Practise: bath time both people toothbrush cloth bag

- Write more examples: _____

Replace **th** at the end of a syllable with **v**, then move it forward with FCL. It is easier to pronounce **v** next to another consonant sound, than **th**, e.g. “with two” becomes: wi Vtoo. Result = vc sound

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connection. Again, despite being widespread in various English accents, this is considered less “correct” than Standard Pronunciation. Features of connected speech: **assimilation** and **FCL**

Practise: clothes hanger bathe for... youths that... soothe him

- Write more examples: _____
- 1. When a l sound at the end of a syllable meets another consonant sound at the start of the next syllable, it often changes to w, which is then moved forward with FCL, e.g. “will you?” becomes: wi wyoo? or wi wy? (the pronoun “you” is reduced further). Result = vc sound connection Features of connected speech: **assimilation** and **FCL**

Practise: bulldog pull down you’ll be school bus

- Write more examples: _____
- 2. We also use **final consonant linking (FCL)** with cc sound connections in other situations, for example:

<u>First Sound:</u>	<u>Example:</u>	<u>Problem:</u>	<u>Solution:</u>
ch	beach which...	Beech wich	Bee chwich
g	big dog	Big Dog	Bi Gdog
k	locked in	Lokt in	Lo ktin
p	escape the...	uh Skeip th	uh Skei pth

4.7 The aim is to speak with only vc (vowel sound to consonant sound) sound connections between syllables, and we use connected speech techniques to achieve this.

We use connected speech to flatten out the irregularly shaped syllables and make vc sound connections between them. Physiologically, it is much easier for English native speakers to talk using vc sound connections, e.g. ma ma ma ma, than with the other kinds of sound connections. We are much more comfortable with consonant sounds at the start of a syllable – even several together – than at the end. This is a result of the way our tools for speaking – our mouths, tongues, throats, and lips, etc. have grown and developed since we were first able to hear English being spoken around us – i.e. in our mother’s wombs.

Examples:

1. bigger, bigger, bigger, bigger
2. The perfect syllable for speaking in English is cv. It starts with a consonant sound and ends with a vowel sound, e.g. words like: “the”, “so”, “she”, “they”, etc.

cv syllables in a sequence guarantee vc sound connections:

CV CV CV CV CV CV CV CV CV CV CV CV, etc.

3. Examples of English words with only vc sound connections:

<u>Normal Spelling:</u>	<u>NEA Spelling:</u>
ge ne ra tion	je n Rei shn
me lo dra ma tic	me l dr Ma tik
mo no po ly	m No p lii

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4. Examples of phrases with only vc sound connections:

- a) The baker flew to Paris.
- b) A new car for my mother.

This contrasts nicely with tongue twisters – phrases that are deliberately difficult to say because of awkward sound connections:

- Bugs black blood, bugs black blood, bugs black blood, bugs black blood
- Round the rugged rock the ragged rascal ran
- Red lorry yellow lorry, red lorry yellow lorry
- How much wood would a woodchuck chuck if a woodchuck could chuck wood?

In the list of the 100 Most Common Words in Written English that we looked at in Lesson 3, there are 31 one-syllable words that fit the cv pattern:

the	do	she	go	see	day
be	by	my	me	now	
to	they	there	no	two	
for	we	their	know	how	
he	say	so	year	way	
you	her	who	your	new	

Try reading one of them individually, over and over, then several of the words in groups of five or ten. Easy isn't it?

Activities:

1. Think of some words with only vc sound connections. Practise repeating them.
2. Write your own phrases and sentences with only vc sound connections. Practise repeating them.
3. Find some more tongue twisters, or write your own.
4. Compare: sentences with only vc sound connections and tongue twisters.

4.8 Friendly consonant sounds help with cc sound connections because they are happy to sit next to other consonant sounds.

Having talked a lot about problematic consonant sounds, there are **a few** consonant sounds which are quite happy to work with other consonant sounds. These are called **friendly consonant sounds** and they are:

n, m, and ng

(note that **l** can sometimes be a friendly consonant sound too)

Friendly consonant sounds are our heroes in the world of consonant sounds, because when one of them occurs at the end of a syllable and a consonant sound follows, they make the sound connection easy – just like a vc sound connection. **n, m, and ng** “play nice” with other consonant sounds! This is because after making each of these sounds **the tongue and mouth are in a neutral position**, and therefore ready to pronounce any other sound. The tongue can *rest* on the friendly consonant sound without linking it to the beginning of the next syllable.

Examples:

1. fountain, maintain, mountain, etc.

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2. Let's look at some examples of friendly consonant sounds in action. Try saying each phrase out loud. Notice how the syllables with **n**, **m**, or **ng** at the end are easy to pronounce beside the next syllable, which starts with a consonant sound. There is a smooth sound connection:

n e.g. run towards, wanted, painted, can do, stranger, London

m e.g. time to, him because, climb down, simply, come here

ng e.g. ring true, sing five, going back, hang there, eating crisps, along with, penguin

Note: the friendly consonant sounds **n** and **m** are only used with **cc** sound connections. When a friendly consonant sound occurs at a **cv** sound connection, FCL takes place, as in these examples:

<u>First Sound:</u>	<u>Example:</u>	<u>Problem:</u>	<u>Solution:</u>
m	I'm only...	aim eun lii	ai meun lii
n	bin out	Bin aut	Bi naut

ng is different in that it cannot be moved forward with FCL. We simply have to rest on **ng**, whether a vowel sound or consonant sound follows, for example:

<u>First Sound:</u>	<u>Example:</u>	<u>No Problem:</u>	<u>No Solution Required:</u>
ng	ring up	Ring Up	Ri Ngup
ng	going out	Geu wing Aut	Geu wi Ngaut

3. High-frequency words in English that end with **n**, **m**, or **ng**:

In the list of the 100 Most Common Words in Written English from Lesson 3, there are 11 monosyllabic high-frequency words that finish with either **n**, **m**, or **ng**. Their frequent reoccurrence has the effect of "oiling the wheels" of spoken English. The great thing is that these words are everywhere in English:

(list position is shown in brackets)

I'm (=2)	an (32)
am (=2),	him (58)
in (7),	some (66)
on (14),	them (68)
from (25)	

We can say that "and" (5) is an honorary member of this group too, because **d** is often deleted with elision, e.g. "fish and chips" = Fi shn Chipz.

Activity: say what kind of word each one is, e.g. "in" is a preposition, etc.

It is also worth noting that many common **suffixes** (i.e. word **endings**) finish with **n**, **m**, or **ng**:

suffixes: -an, -ane, -com, -en, -ian, -im, -in, -ing (which changes to -in, see above), -ism, -on, -phone, -sion, -tain, -teen (i.e. every number from 13-19), -tion, -um, -ant ("t" is deleted with elision)

There are also several common **prefixes** that end with **n**, **m**, or **ng**:

prefixes: com-, con-, en-, im-, in-, non-, un-

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If we extend the list of the most common words in spoken English to the top 1,000, there are many very common **content words** that also end with n, m, or ng, **and most of them are one-syllable words too**, for example: “thing”, “again”, and “time”, etc.

Activities:

1. All of these content words are in the list of the top 1,000 high frequency words in written English¹. Put them into four groups:

same	learn	done	again	mum	clean	run	soon	come	long
gone	home	son	young	time	game	often	brown		

nouns:

main verbs:

adjectives:

adverbs:

2. Look at how many numbers in English end with n, m, or ng :

twelve of the first twenty **numbers** end with n : one, seven, nine, ten, eleven,
all -teen numbers (13-19), twenty (twen + ty), seventy (seven + ty), hundred (hun + dred),
thousand (with d deleted by elision), million, billion, etc.

*Note: among the friendly consonant sounds, the n sound is easier to pronounce with other consonant sounds than ng. An example of this is when we frequently change ng at the end of an -ing word (a gerund or verb participle) to n, for example: **going** changes to **goin'**, **doing** changes to **doin'**, etc.*

3. List some more common words that end with n, m, or ng, and put them into different groups, according to the kind of word, e.g. nouns, main verbs, adjectives, as above.
4. Practise repeating these words which have only vc and friendly consonant sounds between syllables:

Normal Spelling:

can ce lla tion
e mer gen cy
im po ssi ble
main te nance

NEA Spelling:

kan s Lei shn
i Mer jn sii
im Po s bl
Mein t nns

5. Think of some more words which have only vc and friendly consonant sound connections. Practise repeating them.

We can put these words together to make **phrases** with only vc and friendly consonant sound connections, e.g.

- un ne ce ssa ry main te nance
- pho to gra pher can ce lla tion
- An im po ssi bly cha ri ta ble A me ri can pro fe ssor can ce lling an a ppear ance.
- Mark the stressed syllables and practise repeating them. How do you feel? Compare them with the tongue twisters, above.
- Write your own words and phrases.

¹ Source: <http://www.bckelk.ukfsn.org/words/uk1000n.html>, accessed on 14.05.11

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Discussion Questions:

1. Were you aware of the friendly consonant sounds in English before doing this course?
2. What have you enjoyed the most so far about doing this course? What has been the hardest part of this course to learn so far?
3. How much do you think you have taken in so far, after the first four lessons? What do you need to look at again? Ask your teacher for extra help, where required.

Homework:

- Revise the lessons notes for Lessons 1-4. Complete any of the activities that you haven't done yet. Make a note of any questions that come up as you work.

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Lesson 4 – vc Sound Connections – Further Study

The following words all have only vc sound connections. This is the easiest kind of sound connection for us to pronounce. They words roll off the tongue easily because the syllables connect together well, and there is no need to use connected speech techniques. Notice in the NEA spelling that there are fewer vowel letters and more schwa sounds (including embedded schwa sounds), as well as more consonant clusters. **Write your own examples in the right-hand columns:**

Regular spelling:	NEA spelling:	Regular spelling:	NEA spelling:
ae ro dy na mic	eir r dai Na mik	_____	_____
A me ri can	uh Me ri kn	_____	_____
cha ri ta ble	Cha r t bl	_____	_____
de ter mi na tion	d ter mi Nei shn	_____	_____
fur ther more	fer th More	_____	_____
ge ne ra tion	je n Rei shn	_____	_____
i llu mi na ting	i Loo mi nei ting	_____	_____
li mi ta tion	li mi Tei shn	_____	_____
lo co mo tive	leu k Meu tiv	_____	_____
lo lli pop	Lo lli pop	_____	_____
me lo dra ma tic	me l dr Ma tik	_____	_____
me ta pho ri cal	me t Pho ri kl	_____	_____
mo no po ly	m No p lii	_____	_____
neigh bour hood	Nei b hood	_____	_____
o ppor tu ni ty	o p Choo n tii	_____	_____
o ppo si shn	o p Zi shn	_____	_____
pho to gra pher	f To gr f	_____	_____
po li ti cal	p Li ti kl	_____	_____
po pu la ri ty	po py La r tii	_____	_____
po se ssion	p Ze shn	_____	_____
pro ce ssor	Preu se s	_____	_____
pro fe ssor	pr Fe s	_____	_____
rea da ble	Ree d bl	_____	_____
re gu lar ly	Re gy l lii	_____	_____
re pe ti tive	ri Pe t tiv	_____	_____
re vo lu tio na ry	re v Loo sh n rii	_____	_____
spee do me ter	spee Do mi t	_____	_____
su per mar ket	Soo p mar kit	_____	_____
sur pri sing	s Prai zing	_____	_____
to ge ther ness	t Ge th ns	_____	_____
to mat to	t Mar teu	_____	_____
wa sha ble	Wo sh bl	_____	_____
wa ter proof	Wor t proof	_____	_____

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Lesson 4 – vc Sound Connections – Further Study

The following words all have only vc and friendly consonant sound connections – n, m, and ng . **Write your own examples in the right-hand columns:**

Regular spelling:	NEA spelling:	Regular spelling:	NEA spelling:
a ccoun tant	uh Kaun tnt	_____	_____
am bu lance	Am by lns	_____	_____
can ce lla tion	kan s Lei shn	_____	_____
co mmen ta tor	Ko men tei t	_____	_____
de ten tion	d Ten shn	_____	_____
e mer gen cy	i Mer jn sii	_____	_____
im pe ne tra ble	im Pe n tr bl	_____	_____
im po ssi ble	im Po s bl	_____	_____
main te nance	Mein t nns	_____	_____
moun tai nee ring	maun t Niy ring	_____	_____
o ccu pa tion al	o ky Pei sh nl	_____	_____
pan de mo nium	pan d Meu niym	_____	_____
re pre sen ta tive	re pr Zen t tiv	_____	_____
sen ti men tal	sen t Men tl	_____	_____
un ne ce ssa ry	un Ne s se rii	_____	_____

We can put these words together to make phrases with only vc sound connections, e.g.

An im po ssi bly cha ri ta ble A me ri can pro fe ssor can ce lling is an e mer gen cy!

Can you think of any more? Write your own phrases below:

[illegible]

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Lesson 5:

Practice and Analysis of Results

Lesson 5:

Praktische Analyseverfahren

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Lessons 5 – Practice and Analysis of Results

After completing the **theory** in Lessons 1-4, it is time for students to **practise** what they have learned so far. This pack contains materials for practising this method in a practical, step-by-step way. Students can repeat this practise material as often as they wish – either at home or in the classroom. If you have time for a six-lesson course, you could do Lessons 1-4, then two practice and evaluation lessons. Or there might be time for more practice lessons – it depends on how you organise your course. You could do the practise and evaluation in one lesson – if you have a fairly long session – or do the practice in one lesson and evaluate your results in the next, alternating each time.

Contents:

Page 1: Practice Page 1 – Blank

This page contains the main activity for practising the method studied during Lessons 1-4.

Page 2: Practice Page 1 – Example

This is an example of a completed Practice Page 1.

Page 3: Practice Page 1 – Syllable by Syllable (Notes for Students)

This is an analysis of the work done during the example Practice Page 1 activity.

Page 5: Cut-Up NEA Sentence – Example

The Cut-Up NEA Sentence activity provides a way of analysing the final syllable by syllable version of the sentence that students create during the Practice Page 1 activity. On this page you can see an example of the finished sentence from the Practice Page 1 example. The blank template is on the following page. You could cut up the cards, mix them up, and get students to put the sentence in order, sounding out each syllable as they go. They could count how many sounds are in each syllable, and decide whether the syllable starts and ends with a vowel or consonant. There is a section at either edge of each card which students can shade in if the adjacent sound is a consonant, and leave blank if the sound is a vowel sound. This helps students to notice the cv structure of the perfect syllable (it starts with a consonant sound and ends with a vowel sound), and the role friendly consonant sounds play – these syllable cards are the only ones which are shaded on both ends.

Page 6: Cut-Up NEA Sentence – Blank

A blank template for you to use with the sentences that students generate while using Practice Page 1.

Page 7: Practice Page 1 – Notes for Teachers

These notes offer general guidance for using the Practice Page 1 activity.

Page 10: Practice Page 2 – Blank

This is an alternative way of practising the method. It covers the same ground as Practice Page 1, but in a slightly more clinical and analytical way. Students could use both practice pages, or choose the one that they prefer.

Page 11: Practice Page 2 – Instructions

These instructions are for students to follow as they work through the Practice Page 2 activity.

Page 12: Practice Page 2 – Example

This is an example of a completed Practice Page 2.

Page 13: Practice Page 2 – Example (Notes)

This is an analysis of the work done during the example Practice Page 2 activity.

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IMPORTANT!
At each stage, **sound out**
the individual phonemes,
words, and sentences!

Practice Page 1

1. a) Write a word or phrase in each box below, on the topic of:

person

thing

topic

place / person / time

b) Underline the stressed syllable in each word or phrase

2. a) Write each word/phrase using the New English Alphabet. Check unstressed syllables for reduction

Per sn #
phonemic IDs

Tting #
phonemic IDs

Pleis / Per sn / Taim #
phonemic IDs

b) Write the number of phonemes the word contains on the right

c) Write the ID number of each phoneme, using the New English Alphabet handout

d) Which letters from the normal spelling (in 1.) are not pronounced? Cross them out

3. a) Add a main verb and function words to make a simple sentence in:

verb form

simple sentence (normal spelling)

b) Find the content words and underline the stressed syllable in each one

c) Write the sentence again, syllable by syllable (where possible, use **vc** sound connections)

simple sentence (normal spelling) – syllable by syllable

notes: *sound connections*

d) Mark the sound connection between each pair of syllables: **vc**, **cv**, **vv**, or **cc**

e) Circle the **vc** sound connections – these are easy to pronounce :o)

f) Circle connections with friendly consonant sounds **n**, **m**, **ng**, and **l** – these are easy too!

4. a) Make notes about each problem sound connection. Consider what usually happens, i.e.

vc = OK – easy to pronounce

vv = Intrusion with **y**, **w**, or **r**

cv = Final Consonant Linking (FCL)

cc = Elision, Glottal Stop, Assimilation, or FCL

b) Can we shorten any syllables with contractions? Cross out the unnecessary letters

c) Are there any function words that have weak forms? If there are, circle them

5. a) Write the sentence syllable by syllable using the New English Alphabet:

simple sentence (NEA spelling) – syllable by syllable

b) Circle the vowel sound on each stressed syllable to find the **sound spine**

6. Introduce some “wh” question words to make sentence blocks, e.g. what, where, when, etc.

Talk a Lot

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IMPORTANT!
At each stage, **sound out**
the individual phonemes,
words, and sentences!

Practice Page 1 – Example

1. a) Write a word or phrase in each box below, on the topic of:

FOOD

chef

potatoes

saucepan

b) Underline the stressed syllable in each word or phrase

2. a) Write each word/phrase using the New English Alphabet. Check unstressed syllables for reduction

Shef

3

p Tei teuz

6

Sor spn

5

36, 10, 16

33, 37, 12, 37, 15, 47

35, 31, 35, 33, 27

b) Write the number of phonemes the word contains on the right

c) Write the ID number of each phoneme, using the New English Alphabet handout

d) Which letters from the normal spelling (in 1.) are not pronounced? Cross them out

3. a) Add a main verb and function words to make a simple sentence in:

present continuous

The chef is boiling some potatoes in a saucepan.

b) Find the content words and underline the stressed syllable in each one

c) Write the sentence again, syllable by syllable (where possible, use **vc** sound connections)

The chef is boiling some potatoes in a saucepan.

vc cv cc vc cc cc vc vc cv cv vc vc

FCL FCL (contraction)

FCL FCL

d) Mark the sound connection between each pair of syllables: **vc**, **cv**, **vv**, or **cc**

e) Circle the **vc** sound connections – these are easy to pronounce :o)

f) Circle connections with friendly consonant sounds **n**, **m**, **ng**, and **l** – these are easy too!

4. a) Make notes about each problem sound connection. Consider what usually happens, i.e.

vc = OK – easy to pronounce

cv = Final Consonant Linking (FCL)

vv = Intrusion with **y**, **w**, or **r**

cc = Elision, Glottal Stop, Assimilation, or FCL

b) Can we shorten any syllables with contractions? Cross out the unnecessary letters

c) Are there any function words that have weak forms? If there are, circle them

5. a) Write the sentence syllable by syllable using the New English Alphabet:

th She Fsb oyling sm p Tei teu zi n Sor spn.

b) Circle the vowel sound on each stressed syllable to find the **sound spine**

6. Introduce some “wh” question words to make sentence blocks, e.g. what, where, when, etc.

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Practice Page 1 – Syllable by Syllable (Notes for Students)

The original words (NEA spelling): Shef p Tei teuz Sor spn

The simple sentence (NEA spelling): th She Fsboi ling sm p Tei teu zi n Sor spn.

- *To guarantee vc sound connections, each syllable should start with a consonant sound and end with a vowel sound – or one of the friendly consonant sounds, **n**, **m**, **ng**, or **l***
- *Don't forget that a sound on its own will have an embedded Schwa sound at the end, e.g. th, p, and n in this sentence*

th

This syllable represents the weak form of “the”. There is no written vowel sound – the Schwa sound at the end is embedded.

She

This syllable is written with a capital letter because it is a stressed syllable. The stressed vowel sound is **e**. The final consonant sound of the word “chef” – **f** – moves forward to start the next syllable, leaving a vc sound connection. The “ch” in the written spelling is misleading to students, because we usually associate it with the **ch** sound in “cheese”, rather than the **sh** in “ship”.

Fsboi

The three consonant sounds at the beginning of this syllable may look rather strange on the page, but it's natural for an English native speaker to dump consonants at the beginning of a syllable, so that a vc sound connection can be made. This syllable is stressed, so it starts with a capital letter and contains a stressed vowel sound – the diphthong **oy**.

ling

This is an unstressed syllable. We know from Lesson 3 that suffixes are not usually stressed, e.g. the “ing” in “boiling”. This syllable finishes with a friendly consonant sound – **ng** – which gives us a smooth transition to the first sound of the next syllable – the consonant sound **s**.

sm

This syllable represents the weak form of “some”. It is unstressed, so there isn't a vowel sound, apart from the Schwa sound which occurs naturally in the middle between the two consonant sounds when I say them together.

p

This is another unstressed syllable. There isn't a written vowel sound, although we automatically add a Schwa sound after saying this syllable out loud.

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Practice Page 1 – Syllable by Syllable (Notes for Students)

Tei

This is a stressed syllable, so it starts with a capital letter. It contains the stressed vowel sound *ei*, which is one of four stressed vowel sounds – the most important sounds in the sentence.

teu

This is an unstressed syllable. Although the vowel sound *eu* is a diphthong, it is unstressed. The final consonant sound *z* from the original word *p Tei teuz* is lost from this syllable, moving forward to begin the next syllable, which makes a *vc* sound connection instead of the former *cv* sound connection: *teu zin* instead of *teuz in*. The *vc* sound connection is much easier to pronounce.

zi

This is an unstressed syllable. The vowel sound *i* is nice and short, making it easy to pronounce quickly.

n

This is an unstressed syllable. There is no written vowel sound, but there is an embedded Schwa sound which provides the sound representing the word “a” – *uh*.

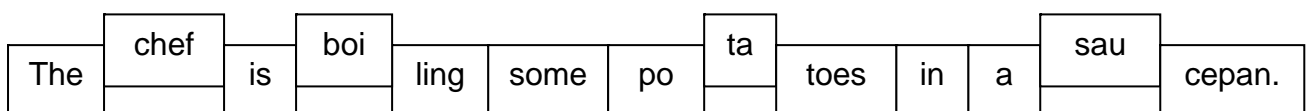
Sor

This is a stressed syllable, so it begins with a capital letter. It contains the stressed vowel sound *or* – one of the four most important sounds in the sentence. The letter “r” in the phonetic spelling of the sound *or* is part of the vowel sound, and therefore not pronounced as the consonant sound *r*. The final consonant sound *s* from the first part of the original word – *Sors* (“sauce”) – leaves this syllable and moves forward to start the next one, making a *vc* sound connection instead of a *cc* one: *Sor spn* instead of *Sors pn*. This *vc* sound connection is much easier to pronounce.

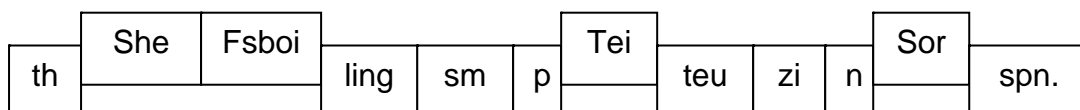
spn

This is an unstressed syllable. The only vowel sound is the Schwa sound, which is made naturally when we pronounce *p* and *n* together. The unstressed syllable makes the other syllable in the word – the strong-stressed syllable – much stronger and more prominent.

The sentence at stage 3. c). Stressed syllables are raised:



The sentence at stage 5. a). Stressed syllables are raised:



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Cut-Up NEA Sentence – Example

Instructions: each card shows the sounds of one syllable from this sentence. **Sound out** each syllable, then put the cards in order.

The chef is boiling some potatoes in a saucepan.

th She Fsboy ling sm p Tei teu zi n Sor spn.


A		B		C	
1	spn		n		teu
2	ling		Fsboy		She
3	zi		p		Sor
4	Tei		th		sm

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Cut-Up NEA Sentence – Blank

Instructions: each card shows the sounds of one syllable from this sentence. **Sound out** each syllable, then put the cards in order.



simple sentence (normal spelling)

simple sentence (NEA spelling – syllable by syllable)

	A			B			C		
1									
2									
3									
4									

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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).

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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 need 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:

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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.

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Practice Page 2

Getting from Written English to Spoken English

_____	words
_____	syllables
_____	glottal stops: _
_____	schwa sounds: uh

1. & 2. Written English: _____

6.																	
5.																	
3.																	
4.																	
7.																	
12.																	
13.																	
8.																	
9.																	
10.																	
11.																	
15.																	
14.																	
16.																	

Notes: _____

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IMPORTANT!

At each stage, **sound out** the individual phonemes, words, and sentences!

Practice Page 2 – Instructions

1. Write a short sentence, or part of a sentence ("Written English"). About 8-10 syllables will be fine.
2. Check grammar, vocabulary, and comprehension. Write the number of words and syllables.
3. Write the sentence to show the separate syllables ("Syllable by Syllable" version).
4. Underline the content words.
5. Mark the stressed syllable in each content word with a stress mark: ' .
6. Mark the vowel sound on each stressed syllable using the NEA.
7. Mark the sound connection between each pair of syllables – vc, cv, vv, or cc. Circle vc sound connections – they are easy to pronounce.
8. Identify any friendly consonant sounds at the end of syllables: n, m, and ng. Mark them with an F and circle the sound connections.
9. Identify any l sounds at the end of syllables. Mark with an L.
10. Identify any glottal stops _ by looking for t and d sounds at the end of syllables. Mark each one with an underscore symbol _ and write how many there are.
11. Notice any possible places for contractions. Mark them with a C. Look for weak forms of function words. Identify any schwa sounds. Mark each one with uh and write how many there are.
12. Mark which Features of Connected Speech we need to use (see below).
13. Write the missing or new sounds using the NEA, e.g. ei or sh , etc.
14. Write the "Spoken English" version of the sentence – syllable by syllable – using the NEA, with a capital letter at the beginning of each stressed syllable.
15. Mark each stressed syllable with a stress mark ' , as 5. above.
16. Mark the new sound connections, which should now be either vc or F.
17. Practise saying the "Spoken English" version out loud, with the stresses. Slowly at first, then getting faster.
18. Repeat this process often with different sentences, or parts of sentences, until you learn this method. You will begin to see the same patterns occurring.

Sound Connections:

vc	vowel sound to consonant sound	>
cv	consonant sound to vowel sound	>
vv	vowel sound to vowel sound	>
cc	consonant sound to consonant sound	>

Result (Features of Connected Speech):

	<i>OK – easy to pronounce. No change required!</i>
FCL	Final Consonant Linking
I	Intrusion
E	Elision
G	Glottal Stop
A	Assimilation
FCL	Final Consonant Linking

Description:

The final consonant sound of the first syllable becomes the first sound of the next
A new consonant sound appears – y, w, or r
A sound disappears, e.g. t or d from the end of a syllable
A very short gap, represented by _ . This replaces the missing sound
A sound changes, e.g. l changes to w
See above

Other Features of Connected Speech:

F	=	friendly consonant sounds: n, m, ng, and l
C	=	Contraction: a phrase is shortened, e.g. "do not" > "don't"

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Practice Page 2 – Example

Getting from Written English to Spoken English

7 words

9 syllables

0 glottal stops: _

4 schwa sounds: uh

1. & 2. Written English:

The man with the umbrella was late.

6.			a							e					ei		
5.			i							i					i		
3.	The		man		with		the		um		bre		lla		was		late.
4.																	
7.		vc		cc		cc		vv		cc		vc		vc		cc	
12.						E		I							FCL		
13.						th		y									
8.				F						F							
9.																	
10.																	
11.	uh							uh				uh		uh			
15.			i							i						i	
14.	th		Man		wi		thii		ym		Bre		l		w		Zleit.
16.		vc		F		vc		vc		F		vc		vc		vc	

Notes:

2 x th =
duplicate
sounds, so get
rid of the first

th changes
to thii when
it meets a
vowel sound

Final NEA version of the sentence:

th Man wi thii ym Bre l w Zleit.

vowel sound
o is replaced
by a schwa
sound

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Practice Page 2 – Example (Notes)

What follows is a step by step commentary on the example from P.12:

1. It is best to keep the sentence fairly short. This sentence has nine syllables, which is fine. The more syllables in the sentence, the more work you will have to do. You could also use short phrases, e.g. groups of words with two, three, or four syllables, to practise this method.
2. There's no point in continuing unless you understand the sentence! Also, it is a bit pointless to spend a lot of time working on a sentence that is grammatically incorrect, or doesn't make sense. Take time to check it and get it right before continuing.
3. When a word has more than one syllable, look for the syllable breaks in the word by saying it out loud. Try to break up the word into syllables so that the sound connections are vc or have friendly consonant sounds whenever possible, e.g. in this example the word "umbrella" is broken up into: "um bre lla", rather than the more awkward "umb rell a".
F vc cc cv
4. In this example the content words are: "man" (noun), "umbrella" (noun), and "late" (adverb). All the other words are unstressed – either function words or verb "be", which is usually unstressed.
5. When a content word has only one syllable, like "man" or "late", the stress is simple to find because the whole syllable is stressed. The word "umbrella" is stressed on the second syllable. You can use a dictionary to find out the word stress for any word.
6. "man" has a short a sound, "bre" has a short e sound, while "late" has a long diphthong sound ei . This stressed sounds are the most important sounds in the sentence and should be heard in sequence clearly. They are the sound spine of the sentence.
7. and 8. These steps are really important, because from the sound connections you can work out which features of connected speech to use. You can see what needs to happen with each sound connection in the instructions on P.11. At this stage we are trying to find the number of problematic sound connections. We narrow them down by eliminating the easy vc and friendly consonant sound connections from our enquiries. So in our example sentence, although there are eight sound connections, three are vc and two have friendly consonant sounds, which leaves only three problematic sound connections between syllables:

"with the" "the um" "was late"

Leave the vc and friendly sounds connections, because they are fine, and focus your attention on the problematic sound connections.

9. The sound l is also a friendly consonant sound, so it can be included in step 8. above. However, we make a point of noting the l sound in this activity because it is different from the other friendly consonant sounds in that it can often change (via Assimilation) into a vowel sound with a w ending:

e.g. the pronunciation of "all right" Orl Rait can change to Orw Rait

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Practice Page 2 – Example (Notes)

There are no syllables that end with **l** in this sentence, so the boxes on line 9. stay blank.

10. In this sentence there are no sound connections which require the use of a glottal stop, so the boxes on line 10. stay blank too.

11. The aim at this stage is to reduce the function words using contractions and weak forms.

Contractions: in this sentence there are no words which can be combined with a contraction, so we don't need to write **C** in any of the boxes on line 11. This is because the verb form is past simple, rather than, for example, present continuous, where there would be a place for a contraction (e.g. "She is" could change to "She's", and so on).

Weak forms: in this sentence there are four syllables where the vowel sound should be a schwa sound **uh** rather than a strong vowel sound, e.g. **e** or **u** . They are: "The", "um", "lla", and "was". For the monosyllabic function words "the" and "was" we use the weak form of each word (see Lesson 3). The word "umbrella" is stressed in the middle, so to make this stress stronger we have to reduce the syllable on either side: "um" and "lla". If we use the full form of each of these syllables, e.g. **um bre lar** then each syllable will be stressed, making it difficult for the listener to hear the stressed vowel sound, which is vital for forming the sound spine.

12. and 13. Here we need to focus on the three problematic sound connections. In the first one – "with the" – which is a **cc** sound connection, we can see two occurrences of the same sound **th** – which we can call a duplicate sound. With duplicate sounds we simply remove the first one using Elision, so here we need to remove **th** from the end of "with" to make the **vc** sound connection **wi thii** . We make a note of the removed sound on line 13.

The next problematic sound connection is "the um", which is a **vv** sound connection, so we have to use Intrusion. Say the first syllable – **thii** – and hold the vowel sound. What consonant sound comes naturally at this point – **y**, **w**, or **r** ? Of course, **y** comes naturally at the end of **thii** – because our mouth and tongue are in a good position to pronounce it, so we insert a consonant sound **y** between the two vowel sounds to make the **vc** sound connection. We note down the new sound on line 13. Incidentally, we cannot use the weak form of "the" here, i.e. **th** , because we should always use the longer form **thii** when the next sound is a vowel sound.

The final problematic sound connection is "was late", which is a **cc** sound connection, so we have four options (see instructions on P.11). Try saying this phrase out loud again and again – slowly at first, then getting faster and faster. Let's use a process of elimination. Should we use Elision and a Glottal Stop? Is there a **t** or **d** sound at the end of the first syllable? No. Do we need to change the **s** sound? No, because it glides nicely into the next consonant sound. We simply need to move the **s** forward so that it begins the next syllable instead of ending the first. We use FCL – Final Consonant Linking. There are no removed or new sounds to write on line 13, so we leave the space blank.

14. At this stage we take everything that we have learned about the phrase or sentence so far and try to write it how it sounds, using the NEA. This will let us see the difference between the original written version (the "word by word" version that has familiar spelling) and the "syllable

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Practice Page 2 – Example (Notes)

by syllable” version, which is a written record of how we actually speak. (See Lesson 2 for more about using the NEA.)

15. This step is the same as step 5, above. It is repeated on purpose to remind you at this moment of the importance of the stressed syllables in the sentence.

16. This is the magical part where you can see clearly that all of the sound connections are now either vc or friendly consonant sound connections. It is like the moment when the magician pulls a rabbit out of a hat and says to the audience “Ta daaa!” Through the use of connected speech, you have ironed out all the lumps and bumps in the sentence – the problematic sound connections which stop you from sounding natural – and ended up with a sequence of syllables which are easy to pronounce together in fast speech, and within which the sound spine rings out loud and clear, thanks to the process of stress and reduction.

17. You should have been “sounding out” the phonemes and words as you went along. When you have the finished product – the NEA spelling of the phrase or sentence – the sound spelling – you should practice saying it again and again, syllable by syllable – starting off slowly (even pronouncing each syllable separately, in or out of sequence) then gradually getting faster and faster.

18. The more often you practise this way of getting from written English to spoken English, the more comfortable you will become with it, because you will see that the same patterns repeat again and again. For example, the phrase “to the” in both of the following sentences will always be pronounced with weak forms in exactly the same way – t th .

I went to the shop...

ai Wen_ t th Shop...

Jo ran to the car...

Jeu Ran t th Kar...

and so on. Practice makes perfect! The more often you practise a skill, the better you will become at using it.

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Certificate in Spoken English

This is to certify that:

has completed the _____ week **Talk a Lot Foundation Course** in spoken English at this establishment and has achieved the following grade:

Grade: _____

Achievement: _____

Subjects Covered:

- ✓ Spelling and Sounds
- ✓ Stress
- ✓ Connected Speech
- ✓ Theory of Pronunciation
- ✓ Practical Training

Date: _____

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Signed: _____ (Course Teacher) Date: _____

Signed: _____ (Centre Manager) Date: _____

School Name and Address:

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Let's learn to speak English really well – with correct sounds, stress and connected speech. This course can help YOU!

Talk a Lot Foundation Course is a great opportunity to study the theory of pronunciation – **how to speak English**. We are going to learn how to get from written words on a page to spoken English – using sounds, stress, and connected speech. This highly practical and interactive course contains loads of useful information that students and teachers should know at the beginning of a regular Talk a Lot course – including an introduction to the theory of pronunciation, as practised during every Talk a Lot lesson.

Talk a Lot Foundation Course is suitable for students at the following levels:

<i>Student's Level:</i>	<i>Common European Framework (CEFR):</i>	<i>Cambridge Assessment:</i>
Pre-Intermediate	to B1	PET
Intermediate	to B2	FCE
Advanced	to C1	CAE

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So far, Talk a Lot books have been downloaded more than 500,000 times - and counting! Here are some recent comments from course participants:

"It was a good lesson to know how English sounds are actually pronounced!" Hiroki
"Good teacher, learned a lot about the English language. The worksheets are very informative too.." Peter

"Really Matt is a perfect teacher and so helpful trying to improve your English language. Thanks Matt!" Silme

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