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## **Pronunciation – Connected Speech**

The 8 Voiced and Unvoiced Consonant Pairs in English

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

#### 15 voiced consonant sounds:

b	d	g	j		m	n	ng	r	th
big	do	get	join	love	make	nose	sing	rose	this
V	W	у	Z	ZZ					
van	week	yet	zip	vision					

#### 10 unvoiced consonant sounds:

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

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

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

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

a  $large \ plate \qquad j > p \qquad changes \ to: \quad ch > p \qquad uh \ \underline{Lar} \ \underline{Ch} pleit \ \underline{CC}$ 

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

### The 8 Voiced and Unvoiced Consonant Pairs in English:

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

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

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

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

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