

## Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland

**Believe** in the power of connected speech!

A new 8-part pronunciation course

by Matt Purland

### Lesson 2: VC Connections

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This course may be adapted and used with students at any level.

This document is a slightly updated version of Lesson 2 of the online course.

The online course features **downloadable PowerPoint slides**, **interactive quizzes**, and **audio recordings** of each unit, as well as **discussion questions**, **practice activities**, and **links** to relevant additional information.

It is free and in the public domain.

You can access it [here](#).

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## Unit 2.1 What are VC connections?

VC connections are **vowel to consonant** connections between syllables.

• batter	ba	vowel sound a	consonant sound t	tter
• better	be	vowel sound e	consonant sound t	tter
• bitter	bi	vowel sound i	consonant sound t	tter
• butter	bu	vowel sound u	consonant sound t	tter

**VC connections** are easy to pronounce. They are **good** connections.

It is physically more **comfortable** for native speakers to pronounce VC connections than the other three kinds of connection.

It is much easier for us to pronounce consonant sounds at the *beginning* of a syllable than at the *end*:

ba ckdoor                      not                      back door

After making the vowel sound, our tongue, lips, and mouth are in a neutral position – ready to form any consonant sound.

This is a result of the way our tools for speaking – our mouths, tongues, larynxes, lips, etc. – have grown and developed as we have heard English being spoken since before we were born.

The other three possible sound connections are:

• CV	consonant sound to vowel sound	get it
• CC	consonant sound to consonant sound	look for
• VV	vowel sound to vowel sound	see it

They are not easy to pronounce and lead to awkward **gaps** between syllables and words.

They are **bad** connections which we change to VC or friendly.

Life would be much easier with only **VC connections** – like BA BA BA BA BA BA – but unfortunately the way our language is spelled forces us to deal with bad connections.

Along with **friendly connections** – syllables ending with the sounds **m, n, ng, or l** – VC connections are good connections.

Good connections occur approximately 60% of the time in everyday English.

Good connections are about four times more likely to be VC than friendly.

It is quite difficult to build a sentence with **only** VC connections:

ba tte ry life  
 be tter ba tte ry life  
 for the be tter ba tte ry life  
 go for the be tter ba tte ry life  
 how to go for the be tter ba tte ry life  
 show me how to go for the be tter ba tte ry life  
**Why do you show me how to go for the be tter ba tte ry life?**

Try to build your own sentence with only VC connections!

The aim of connected speech is to make all bad connections VC or friendly.

We do this by **moving forward, deleting, and adding** consonant sounds as we speak.

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Native speakers speak English **syllable by syllable**, connecting syllables by moving forward, deleting, and adding consonant sounds.

If you speak English **word by word** you end up with **gaps** between syllables and words, which will slow down your speech and sound bad to native speakers.

By **connecting** syllables, we remove the gaps between words and our speech becomes fluent.

You can learn to recognise VC connections.

Most will have a **vowel letter** meeting a **consonant letter**:

dri ving  
the gate  
a bout

However, sometimes the spelling of the vowel sound includes a **consonant letter** at the end of the syllable: '-w', '-y', '-r', and even '-gh':

w	how nice,	bow ling,	show me
y	may be,	py ja mas	say to
r	their friend,	car that,	our flight
gh	neigh bour	through the	dough was

They are NOT CC connections. They are all good VC connections.

The letters '-w', '-y', '-r', and '-gh' are **silent** at the end of a syllable in English.

Remember – we are focusing on the sounds rather than the spelling of words.

#### Quiz

#1. What is a VC connection?

- a) a vowel to vowel connection between syllables
- b) a consonant to vowel connection between syllables
- c) a vowel to consonant connection between syllables
- d) a consonant to consonant connection between syllables

#2. Which phrase has a VC connection between syllables?

- a) with us
- b) to me
- c) to us
- d) with me

#3. VC connections are:

- a) difficult to pronounce
- b) easy to pronounce

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#4. True or false: it is physically easier for native speakers to pronounce VC connections, compared to the other three connections.

- a) True.
- b) False.

#5. VC connections and \_\_\_\_\_ connections are both easy to pronounce, making them good connections.

- a) CV
- b) voiced
- c) VV
- d) friendly

### Discussion

1. Are VC connections important in pronouncing your L1?
2. Are you comfortable pronouncing CC, CV, and VV connections in your L1, despite them being bad connections in English?
3. Do you find it easier to pronounce bad connections than good VC and friendly connections in English? If yes, why?
4. Do you have silent letters in your L1? Give some examples of words with silent letters.
5. What do you know about the letters '-w', '-y', '-r' in English? Did you know that they are usually silent at the end of a syllable, unless the next sound is a vowel sound, when they become activated as consonant sounds, e.g., 'how it' = HOW WIT?

### Practice

1. Write ten words or phrases with VC connections, e.g., 'ba tter'.
2. Practice the words starting with 'b' at the top of p.2. Enjoy the smooth VC connections.
3. Practice saying nonsense phrases with only VC connections, e.g., 'BABABABABA', 'MAMAMAMAMA', 'BIBIBIBIBI', etc. Hopefully, after completing this course, all your English speech will contain VC and friendly connections.
4. Try to build a normal sentence that makes sense with only VC connections. How easy is it? Do you feel limited? VC connections are usually only one type of connection in regular sentences.
5. Words of more than one syllable usually have VC or friendly connections when we break them into syllables. Write 10 words with three syllables or more that have only VC connections, e.g., A MA ZING. Say them aloud.
6. Practice saying the phrases with good connections on p.3.
7. Write down more English words ending in '-w', '-y', '-r', and '-gh'. Note that these consonant sounds are usually silent at the end of a syllable.

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## Further Study

- [VC Connections](#)
- [Silent Letters](#)

## Unit 2.2 Syllable breaking and contractions

We can break most English words into **syllables** with only VC or friendly connections.

Words that do not break this way may be either compound nouns (two words together) like 'grand **ma**' (CC) or ing form/gerunds where the verb ends in a vowel sound, e.g., 'say **ing**' (VV).

There are not many regular words that cannot be divided into syllables with good connections, but here are two examples:

'part **ner**' (CC) and 'state **ment**' (CC)

So, when breaking up a sentence into **syllables**, try to make VC and friendly connections where possible. It will save you time later!

Our preference for **contractions** like 'wanna' instead of 'want to' is down to our desire for VC connections:

I want <b>to</b>	<i>changes to</i>	I wa <b>nna</b>
CC		VC

The difficult CC connection with two t sounds meeting becomes an easy **VC connection**.

See also:

I have <b>got</b> to	<i>changes to</i>	I go <b>tta</b>
CC CC		VC
I am go <b>ing</b> to	<i>changes to</i>	I'm go <b>nna</b>
VV F VV F		F VC

and don't forget: **gimme** (give me), **lemme** (let me), **hafta** (have to), **dunno** (don't know), **coulda** (could have), **kinda** (kind of), etc.

### Quiz

#1. True or false: most words can be broken into syllables with only VC or friendly connections.

- a) True.
- b) False.

#2. Some \_\_\_\_\_ do not break into good connections because they are two words stuck together, like 'grand ma'.

- a) compound nouns
- b) compound articles
- c) prepositions
- d) sentences

#3. We use \_\_\_\_\_ to get VC connections, like want to >> wanna.

- a) adjectives
- b) phrasal verbs
- c) connections
- d) contractions

#4. Which word is not a well-known contraction?

- a) kinda
- b) wilma
- c) gimme
- d) hafta

#5. 'I'm gonna' means:

- a) I am going
- b) I'm going to be
- c) I am going to
- d) I am going there (in the future)

#### Discussion

1. Do you use contractions in English, e.g., 'she is' becomes 'she's' and 'they are' becomes 'they're'? If not, why not?
2. Did you know that native speakers rarely use full forms when they could use contractions – apart from for emphasis? For example, 'NO, IT IS NOT!'
3. Do you think it is 'bad' English to say 'I wanna go out' instead of 'I want to go out'? If yes, why?
4. Were you taught to speak English in full forms only, speaking word by word? If yes, how are you going to 'unlearn' those bad habits?

#### Practice

1. Write 10 words with three syllables or more that have only VC connections, e.g., TE LE VI SION.
2. Write 10 compound nouns that have bad connections as well as VC connections, e.g., GRAND MO THER.
3. Write ten gerunds that have VV connections instead of VC connections, e.g. SAY ING.
4. Find more words like PART NER and STATE MENT that do not have VC connections, but are not compound nouns or gerunds.

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5. Write ten words that have more than one syllable. Break them into syllables using VC and friendly connections. Practice saying them out loud.
6. Practice reading the list of contractions out loud. What other English contractions do you know? How often do you use contractions in English?
7. Write ten sentences containing contractions and practice saying them out loud. The point is that written English is different from spoken English, so we can write 'Give me the phone, because I have to call my friend', but we may say, 'Gimme the phone, 'cos I hafta call my friend'. If you speak English as you write it, your speech will sound stilted and unnatural.

#### Further Study

- [List of contractions](#)



## Unit 2.3 Syllable shapes

Finally, to guarantee VC connections, the **syllable shapes** in a sentence should be C-V – starting with a consonant sound and ending with a vowel sound, for example:

C-V C-V C-V C-V C-V  
The new toy for Jay...  
VC VC VC VC

Try to continue this sentence with syllables with C-V shapes. It won't be easy, because the words we need, like 'is', 'was', or 'will' do not have C-V shapes. They will cause bad connections, for example:

C-V C-V C-V C-V C-V **V-C C-C C-C**  
The new toy for Jay is great, but...  
VC VC VC VC **VV CC CC**

Some **high-frequency words** which often appear in English have the shape C-V, e.g.

the be to for

Unfortunately, only 31% of the most common high-frequency words in written English have the shape **C-V**.

The remaining 69% are:

- **V-C** e.g., of, and, in
- **C-C** e.g., that, have, with
- **V-V** e.g., a, I, or

Written English, then, is totally different from spoken English.

Non-native speakers try to pronounce each word separately – as carefully and correctly as they can:

The next train will arrive in a minute.

...but it sounds **wrong**.

While native speakers make up '**nonsense**' words as we connect English syllables together:

The ne kstrain willa rye vinna minnit.

...and it sounds **correct**.

**We** do it automatically, thanks to our long understanding of English.

**You** have to learn to do it.

And you can!

## Quiz

#1. To guarantee VC connections in a sentence, the syllable shapes should be:

- a) V-C
- b) C-C
- c) C-V
- d) friendly

#2. True or false: the syllables in this sentence have only C-V shapes: 'He saw too far'.

- a) True.
- b) False.

#3. Which word below does not have a C-V shape?

- a) for
- b) be
- c) the
- d) him

#4. When C-V syllables meet, they create \_\_\_\_\_ VC connections.

- a) good
- b) bad
- c) indifferent
- d) friendly

#5. Other syllable shapes, like V-C, \_\_\_\_\_, and C-C, create problems when we speak, which must be corrected by connected speech.

- a) V-V
- b) C-V

## Discussion

1. Have you ever considered the shape of words before, i.e. whether they begin or end with a consonant or vowel sound, and how that affects pronunciation in English?
2. Are you able to learn groups of words with each syllable shape as a way of speeding up the process of using connected speech?
3. Have you become conditioned to speaking English word by word – i.e. incorrectly – through study and practice with poor spoken English modelling? How can you learn to accept and incorporate connected speech into your everyday spoken English?

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4. Do you believe that syllables like 'The ne kstrain willa rye vinna minnit' are silly and not 'proper' English? Are you committed to speaking English word by word, or are you open to learning to speak English syllable by syllable?

#### Practice

1. Write ten words that have a C-V syllable shape, e.g., 'for'. This is the right kind of syllable shape for spoken English. (Think BA BA BA BA BA...)
2. Write ten words that have a V-C syllable shape, e.g., 'of'. This syllable shape will lead to a bad connection on both sides, because VC connections cannot result.
3. Write ten words that have a C-C syllable shape, e.g., 'that'. This syllable shape will lead to a bad connection on the right side only, which cannot produce a VC connection, so it must be corrected.
4. Write ten words that have a V-V syllable shape, e.g., 'a'. This syllable shape may lead to a bad connection on both sides (CV on the left and VV on the right), but definitely on the left side, because the preceding syllable needs to meet a consonant sound, not a vowel sound.
5. Write down lists of common words that have each syllable shape and learn them. For example, 'for' (C-V) is good, but 'and' (V-C) is bad, and so on.
6. Practice saying the two 'train' sentences on p.9. Which one sounds more natural to you? Why?
7. Study the list of high-frequency words – [100 Most Common Words in Written English](#). Group them by syllable shape. Get to know which very common words will cause problems that have to be corrected by connected speech.

#### Further Study

- [Syllable Shapes \[Video Class\]](#)
- [List of Common One-Syllable Words Ordered by Syllable Shape](#)

## Unit 2.4 Practice with VC connections

Practice the phrases which have only VC connections.

Notice how easy they are to pronounce. This is due to using only C-V syllable shapes (excluding the final syllable, at times), which create only VC connections:

1 VC connection:

dri ving  
cro ssing  
the gate  
a bus  
a rrive  
a bout  
air port  
our flight  
Car diff  
cy cle

2 VC connections:

u sua lly  
O li ver  
de ci ded  
fa mi ly  
o ffi cer  
ma na ger  
our daugh ter  
far too long  
Ro ber to  
her cou sins

3 VC connections:

de va sta ted  
to ma to soup  
re ce ptio nist  
spe cta cu lar  
show their pa ssports  
my si ster was  
near Ri ver Road  
ma na ger thinks  
a fter the storm  
the py ja mas

4 VC connections:

u ni ver si ty  
a fter we fi nish  
the su per mar ket  
the mo tor ra cing  
are you go nna watch  
pro ba bly ta king  
ho li day to Greece

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5 VC connections:

to go to the ga rage  
to mo row for the school  
to the ci ty mu seum

6 VC connections:

they go to the ci ne ma

7 VC connections:

to the phar ma cy to mo row

### Quiz

#1. Break this word into two syllables with a VC connection: running.

- a) runn ing
- b) ru nning
- c) r unning
- d) run ning

#2. Break this word into three syllables with two VC connections: holiday.

- a) hol i day
- b) ho lid ay
- c) ho li day
- d) holi day

#3. Which phrase has only VC connections?

- a) to ma to soup
- b) chi cken noo dle soup
- c) len til soup
- d) split pea soup

#4. Which phrase has two VC connections and one VV connection?

- a) our daugh ter was
- b) our daugh ter is
- c) our daugh ters are
- d) our daugh ters were

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#5. Break this phrase into three VC connections: teacher training.

- a) teach er trai ning
- b) tea cher train ing
- c) tea cher trai ning
- d) teacher train ning

### Practice

1. Practice the phrases with VC connections on pp.12-13. How natural do they feel to you?
2. Write your own phrases containing between 1-7 VC connections. Notice the C-V syllable shapes. Practice saying the phrases aloud. This is how we would like all English speech to sound.
3. Copy sentences from a real text, e.g., a book or news report, and break the words up into syllables. Find phrases with VC connections and repeat them out loud. What is the longest chain of syllables with VC connections you can find?

## Unit 2.5 Reduplicatives

Let's have some **fun** to finish!

The following words are **reduplicative rhyming words**, meaning words that have internal rhyme. This kind of word often contains good examples of **VC connections**.

Match each reduplicative with a clue and practice saying them, noticing their VC connections.

## Reduplicatives – Quiz 1

*laughter    romantic    farewell    crying    too perfect*  
*dog noise    dance    argument    stuck up    not difficult*

1. argy-bargy *noun*
2. boohoo *exclamation*
3. boogie-woogie *noun*
4. bow-wow *exclamation*
5. bye-bye *exclamation*
6. easy-peasy (lemon squeezy) *adjective*
7. goody-goody *noun*
8. ha ha! *exclamation*
9. hoity-toity *adjective*
10. lovey-dovey *adjective*

## Reduplicatives – Quiz 2

*children's play equipment    hello    very small    ineffectual    fantastic*  
*communication device    be indecisive    a new day    overweight    carelessly*

1. roly-poly *adjective*
2. seesaw *noun*
3. shilly-shally *verb*
4. super-duper *adjective*
5. teeny-weeny *adjective*
6. wakey-wakey *exclamation*
7. walkie-talkie *noun*
8. willy-nilly *adverb*
9. wishy-washy *adjective*
10. yoo-hoo! *exclamation*

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## Quiz

- #1. What is a reduplicative rhyming word?
- a) a word that rhymes with another word
  - b) a word that has external rhyme
  - c) a word that rhymes with itself
  - d) a word that has internal rhyme
- #2. Reduplicatives often contain good examples of \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) VC connections
  - b) CV connections
  - c) CC connections
  - d) friendly consonant sounds
- #3. 'boogie-woogie' is a kind of:
- a) consonant sound
  - b) dance
  - c) table
  - d) musical toy
- #4. 'teeny-weeny' is an adjective meaning very \_\_\_\_\_.
- a) big
  - b) long
  - c) small
  - d) nice
- #5. If you 'shilly-shally' you behave in \_\_\_\_\_ manner.
- a) an offensive
  - b) an indecisive
  - c) a decisive
  - d) a formal



### Discussion

1. Do you have reduplicative words in your L1? If yes, give some examples. If no, why not?
2. Why do you think reduplicative words – e.g. ‘wakey-wakey’ (wake up) – developed in English? What purpose do they serve? Who is likely to use them – and when?

### Practice

1. Complete the activities on p.15.
2. Make a sentence containing each reduplicative word.
3. Research the topic of reduplicatives and find more of these words online. Put together a list in alphabetical order and learn it. Try to use them naturally when you speak English.
4. Try to build a sentence with more than one reduplicative word and say it aloud, e.g., ‘The English test was easy-peasy for the hoity-toity goody-goody!’

### Further Study

- [Reduplicatives \[Video Class\]](#)

## Answers to quizzes

P. 3 Unit 2.1 1. c) 2. b) 3. b) 4. a) 5. d)

P.6 Unit 2.2 1. a) 2. a) 3. d) 4. b) 5. c)

P.10 Unit 2.3 1. c) 2. a) 3. d) 4. a) 5. a)

P.13 Unit 2.4 1. b) 2. c) 3. a) 4. b) 5. c)

P.15 Unit 2.5 Reduplicatives – Quiz 1

- |                               |                    |                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. argy-bargy                 | <i>noun</i>        | <i>argument</i>      |
| 2. boohoo                     | <i>exclamation</i> | <i>crying</i>        |
| 3. boogie-woogie              | <i>noun</i>        | <i>dance</i>         |
| 4. bow-wow                    | <i>exclamation</i> | <i>dog noise</i>     |
| 5. bye-bye                    | <i>exclamation</i> | <i>farewell</i>      |
| 6. easy-peasy (lemon squeezy) | <i>adjective</i>   | <i>not difficult</i> |
| 7. goody-goody                | <i>noun</i>        | <i>too perfect</i>   |
| 8. ha ha!                     | <i>exclamation</i> | <i>laughter</i>      |
| 9. hoity-toity                | <i>adjective</i>   | <i>stuck up</i>      |
| 10. lovey-dovey               | <i>adjective</i>   | <i>romantic</i>      |

P.15 Unit 2.5 Reduplicatives – Quiz 2

- |                  |                    |                                  |
|------------------|--------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. roly-poly     | <i>adjective</i>   | <i>overweight</i>                |
| 2. seesaw        | <i>noun</i>        | <i>children's play equipment</i> |
| 3. shilly-shally | <i>verb</i>        | <i>be indecisive</i>             |
| 4. super-duper   | <i>adjective</i>   | <i>fantastic</i>                 |
| 5. teeny-weeny   | <i>adjective</i>   | <i>very small</i>                |
| 6. wakey-wakey   | <i>exclamation</i> | <i>a new day</i>                 |
| 7. walkie-talkie | <i>noun</i>        | <i>communication device</i>      |
| 8. willy-nilly   | <i>adverb</i>      | <i>carelessly</i>                |
| 9. wishy-washy   | <i>adjective</i>   | <i>ineffectual</i>               |
| 10. yoo-hoo!     | <i>exclamation</i> | <i>hello</i>                     |

P.16 Unit 2.5 1. d) 2. a) 3. b) 4. c) 5. b)