

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland

Believe in the power of connected speech!

A new 8-part pronunciation course

by Matt Purland

Lesson 3: Friendly 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 3 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 3.1 What are friendly consonant sounds?

In a **friendly connection** the sound at the end of the first syllable is m, n, ng, or l, and the sound it meets is a consonant sound, for example:

m	foa m party
n	bun n fight
ng	long ng day
l	tall l guy

m, n, ng, and l do not move forward in CC (consonant to consonant) connections.

We call m, n, ng, and l **friendly consonant sounds** because they are easy to pronounce with following consonant sounds.

In CV (consonant to vowel) connections the friendly consonant sounds m, n, and l **move forward**, like normal consonant sounds, to create VC connections:

m	foa m on	>>	foa m on
n	bun n in	>>	bun n in
l	tall l er	>>	tall l er

However, ng is different because it cannot move forward in CC *or* CV connections. It always stays in place, like an immovable rock:

ng (CV)	long ng evening
ng (CC)	long ng day

Along with **VC connections**, friendly consonant sounds provide us with **good** sound connections.

Friendly consonant sounds are equally as easy to pronounce as VC connections.

Compare:

be tter
home work

However, **friendly connections** are not **VC connections** – they do not make a vowel to consonant connection – but they work with VC connections to make our sentences easier to pronounce.

Do not make the mistake of labelling all **good** connections as friendly. Only about 20% of good connections are friendly, while the other 80% are VC connections.

Together the **good** connections total around 60% of all connections in English. The other 40% are **bad** connections and have to be changed by the speaker manually into either VC or friendly connections.

Native speakers do this automatically, while non-native speakers need to learn how to do it by practice.

Friendly consonant sounds are easy to pronounce next to consonant sounds because after saying **m**, **n**, **ng**, or **l**, our mouth and tongue are in a neutral position, ready to pronounce any consonant sound.

The tongue can rest on **m**, **n**, **ng**, or **l**, without having to link it to the first sound of the next syllable.

syllables ending in m	<i>tongue is down, mouth is closed</i>
syllables ending in n	<i>tongue is ready, mouth is closed</i>
syllables ending in ng	<i>tongue is down, mouth is closed</i>

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syllables ending in **l** *tongue is ready, mouth is closed*

Compare this with a **bad** CC connection: hot **d**ay

At the point of saying **t**, the tongue is fully engaged, and the mouth is open. We are in no way ready to begin the next consonant sound – **d** – so there will be an awkward connecting sound followed by a gap before the next word:

hot **d**ay

In fact, it would be difficult to even *try* to move forward friendly consonant sounds in a CC connection. Try saying these phrases, moving forward the friendly consonant sounds:

Tom h ad	>>	To m had
nan w as	>>	na n was
ring c ould	>>	ri n gcould
well d one	>>	we l done

It is more comfortable to leave them in place. For **ng** it is frankly impossible to move forward.

However, as we have seen, we do move forward **m**, **n**, and **l** in **CV connections**.

Friendly consonant sounds cannot appear in **VV (vowel to vowel) connections**, because, by definition, the two sounds have to be vowel sounds.

Quiz

#1. The four friendly consonant sounds are:

- a) m, p, ng, l
- b) m, n, ng, l
- c) m, n, k, ng
- d) m, n, ng, t

#2. Like VC connections, friendly consonant sounds enable _____ sound connections.

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

#3. True or false: friendly consonant sounds do not move forward in CC connections.

- a) True.
- b) False.

#4. True or false: every friendly consonant sound moves forward in CV connections.

- a) True.
- b) False.

#5. After pronouncing a friendly consonant sound as the first sound in a _____ connection, our mouth and tongue are in a _____ position, ready to pronounce the next consonant sound.

- a) CV, neutral
- b) CC, neutral
- c) neutral, CC
- d) sound, neutral

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Discussion

1. Do you use the sounds m, n, ng, and l in this way in your L1? Why? / Why not?

Practice

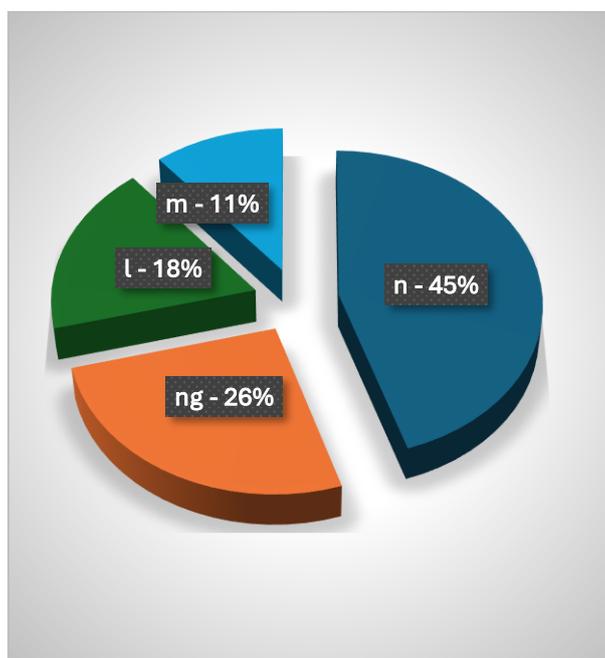
1. Practice the phrases with friendly consonant sounds on p.2.
2. Practice the phrases on p.2, as they change from bad CV connections into good VC connections.
3. Practice the phrases with ng on p.2, then write ten more phrases with a syllable ending in ng meeting a word – starting with either a vowel or consonant sound. For example: 'sing a song with love'. Practice saying them out loud.
4. Write a word ending in m, then a word starting with a consonant sound, e.g., 'home time'. Practice saying this friendly connection. Try writing more examples and say them out loud.
5. Write a word ending in n, then a word starting with a consonant sound, e.g., 'one day'. Practice saying this friendly connection. Try writing more examples and say them out loud.
6. Write a word ending in ng, then a word starting with a consonant sound, e.g., 'bring me'. Practice saying this friendly connection. Try writing more examples and say them out loud.
7. Write a word ending in l, then a word starting with a consonant sound, e.g., 'will you'. Practice saying this friendly connection. Try writing more examples and say them out loud.
8. In each case above, notice where your tongue is and how – after saying the friendly consonant sound – your mouth and tongue are ready to pronounce the next consonant sound.
9. Practice trying to move forward friendly consonant sounds in CC connections on p.3. Notice how difficult it is. That's why we don't do it!

Further Study

- [Friendly Consonant Sounds](#)

Unit 3.2 Breakdown of friendly consonant sounds

According to research, the breakdown of friendly consonant sound use in English is as follows:



We can see that **n** is the most common friendly consonant sound, at 45%, followed by **ng** (26%), **l** (18%), and finally **m** (11%).

Note: when 'n' meets 'k' or hard 'c' in English spelling the sound produced is **ng** + k, not n + k. For example:

think = think**k**, thank = thank**k**, uncle = un**ck**le, and so on

n is the easiest consonant sound to pronounce next to another consonant sound. This could be why native speakers often naturally change **ng** to **n** at the end of a gerund or ing form, e.g.,

I'm goin' out *instead of:* I'm going out

Although very common, this is not considered Standard English.

For a syllable with a friendly consonant sound at the end, the **syllable shape** can be V-C or C-C, but not C-V or V-V, because they do not end with a consonant sound. For example:

V-C	I'm, own, owl, ing
C-C	jam, win, pal, sing

In practice it is far more likely for an English syllable to begin with a consonant sound than a vowel sound, making a C-C syllable shape the most common for syllables ending with a friendly consonant sound.

As with all sound connections, we are focusing on the **sounds**, not the **spelling** of the words:

climb	the spelling ends with the letter 'b', but the sound is m
one	the spelling ends with the letter 'e', but the sound is n
whale	the spelling ends with the letter 'e', but the sound is l
Singh	the spelling ends with the letter 'h', but the sound is ng

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Quiz

#1. At 45%, _____ is the friendly consonant sound that occurs the most frequently.

- a) ng
- b) m
- c) l
- d) n

#2. _____ is the next most frequent friendly consonant sound, at 26%, followed by _____ (18%) and _____ (11%).

- a) ng, l, m
- b) l, m, ng
- c) ng, m, l
- d) m, l, ng

#3. When 'n' meets 'k' in English spelling the sound produced is _____ + k. For example: pink.

- a) n
- b) ng
- c) k
- d) nk

#4. An English syllable is far more likely to begin with a _____ sound than a _____ sound.

- a) vowel, consonant
- b) vowel, friendly consonant
- c) consonant, good
- d) consonant, vowel

#5. Which word does not end with a friendly consonant sound?

- a) sale
- b) bone
- c) gate
- d) comb

Practice

1. Look at the words with ng + k on p.5. Write down ten more examples of words with the spelling 'nk' which sounds like ng + k, e.g., 'pink'. Make up phrases with them – both CV connections ('pink elephant' = ping kelephant) and CC connections ('pink dress' = ping kdress). Practice saying them out loud, resting on the ng sound.
2. Write ten words with a V-C syllable shape ending in a friendly consonant sound, e.g., 'own'. Make a natural phrase with each one meeting a consonant sound, e.g., 'own goal'. Practice these friendly connections. Notice that they are as easy to pronounce as VC connections.

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3. Write ten words with a C-C syllable shape ending in a friendly consonant sound, e.g., 'jam'. Make a natural phrase with each one meeting a consonant sound, e.g., 'jam tart'. Practice these friendly connections. Again, notice that they are as easy to pronounce as VC connections
4. Say the words 'climb', 'one', 'whale', and 'Singh' on p.5 out loud. Find more words that fit each pattern, e.g., 'thumb', 'done', 'hole', and so on, then make a phrase with each one meeting a consonant sound. Practice these friendly connections.

Unit 3.3 Where do we find friendly consonant sounds?

There are many **common words** in English that end with the four friendly consonant sounds m, n, ng, and l, including 19 of the 100 most frequently occurring words in written English¹.

Read the list of **high-frequency words** that end with friendly consonant sounds out loud. Notice that n is the most common sound, followed by m, then l. ng mainly occurs in gerunds and ing form verbs:

n (rank out of 100)	m (rank out of 100)	l (rank out of 100)
in (7)	from (25)	will / 'll (33)
on (14)	time (55)	all (36)
an (32)	him (58)	well (89)
one (35)	some (66)	
when (51)	them (68)	
can (53)	come (76)	
person (61)		
than (71)		
then (72)		
even (91)		

Very often when we **delete** a consonant sound at the end of a syllable, we meet a friendly consonant sound, which means we can rest on it and the connection is good. For example:

and	we usually delete the d of 'and' in a phrase, e.g., 'fish an' chips'
want	we delete the t in a CC connection and add a glottal stop : 'When do you wan' to go?'
went	we delete the t in a CC connection and add a glottal stop: 'We wen' to the shop.'

Practice reading out loud this list of common **numbers** that end with friendly consonant sounds. Read a few of them together and notice the easy connections:

Twelve of the first twenty numbers in English end with n:

one, seven, nine, ten, eleven, all -teen numbers (13-19), twenty (twen + ty)
 seventy (seven + ty), ninety (nine + ty), hundred (hun + dred), million, billion

Common **suffixes** ending with m, n, ng, and l. Notice how n dominates again:

-com, -dom, -im, -ism, -ium, -some, -um

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Most_common_words_in_English

-ain, -an, -ane, -cian, -ean, -eign, -en, -enne, -gon, -ian, -in, -ine,
-ion, -on, -oon, -phone, -ren, -sion, -son, -tain, -teen, -thon, -tion

-ing (which often changes to -in')

-al, -eal, -el, -ial, -le, -ol, -ple, -tal, -ual, -ule

There are also many suffixes where, when you delete the **t** in a CC connection, you get the friendly consonant sound **n**, for example:

-ant, -ent, -iant, -ient, -ment, etc.

Below there are some examples of CC connections with words ending in these suffixes. In each case **t** is deleted and replaced with a glottal stop:

vac ant flat	>>	vacan_ flat
inst ant noodles	>>	instan_ noodles
rec ent study	>>	recen_ study
par ent who	>>	paren_ who
brill iant day	>>	brillian_ day
val iant knight	>>	valian_ knight
cli ent focused	>>	clien_ focused
anc ient language	>>	ancien_ language

Here are a few common **prefixes** ending in **m**, **n**, and **l**:

com-, im-

an-, con-, down-, en-, in-, non-, un-

il-, ill-, mal-

Prefixes ending in **ng** are much more difficult to find, but here are a few from medical English:

laryng-	<i>connected with the larynx, e.g. 'laryngectomy'</i>
myring-	<i>connected with the eardrum, e.g. 'myringitis'</i>
salping-	<i>connected with fallopian tubes, e.g. 'salpingectomy'</i>

If we extend the list of the most common words in written English to the top 1,000, there are many very common **content words** that also end with the sounds **m**, **n**, **ng**, and **l**. Most of them are one-syllable words too, for example: 'time', 'seen', 'thing', 'call', and so on.

Quiz

#1. True or false: more high-frequency words end in **m** than the other friendly consonant sounds.

- a) True.
- b) False.

#2. When we delete a consonant sound, e.g., d and t, we often get a _____ sound, e.g., 'and', 'want', and 'went'.

- a) VC
- b) friendly consonant
- c) consonant
- d) vowel

#3. We usually _____ the d of 'and' in a phrase, e.g., 'fish an' chips.'

- a) move forward
- b) add
- c) change
- d) delete

#4. _____ of the first twenty numbers in English end with n.

- a) Ten
- b) Eleven
- c) Twelve
- d) Twenty

#5. Many common _____ end with friendly consonant sounds, which helps us to make _____ connections.

- a) prefixes, VC
- b) suffixes, good
- c) suffixes, CC
- d) words, CV

Discussion

1. Do you find friendly connections in English easy to pronounce? Why? / Why not?
2. Do you find friendly connections easier to pronounce than VC connections – or vice versa? Why? / Why not?

Practice

1. In each exercise below, when saying friendly connections out loud, notice how easy they are to pronounce compared to bad sound connections: CV, CC, and VV.
2. Read the list of high-frequency words on p.8 out loud. Make up short phrases by adding following words that start with a consonant sound, e.g., 'in the hall' and 'on time'. Say them out loud.
3. Make a note of the syllable shape of each high-frequency word, e.g., 'in' is V-C and 'from' is C-C. Learn which words will cause bad connections due to their shape. Hint: any words which do not have a C-V shape, like 'go'.
4. Practice saying the phrases with 'and', 'want', and 'went' on p.8. Think of five more phrases with '____ and ____', like 'fish and chips'. We always delete the d in 'and' in CC connections, because it is in a blend. (See Lesson 6.)
5. Practice reading the numbers on p.8 out loud. Make up short phrases by adding following words that start with a consonant sound, e.g., 'one day' and 'ten people'. Say them out loud.

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6. Choose a few of the suffixes on pp.8-9. Write down five words with each suffix and make up short phrases by adding following words that start with a consonant sound, e.g., 'the intercom works'. Say them out loud.
7. Learn the list of suffixes on pp.8-9, in relation to friendly consonant sounds. Note how many there are and how helpful this is for us as we use connected speech. Note that 'ing', which is common in English as the continuous verb form and in gerunds, ends with the friendly consonant sound ng.
8. Look at the suffixes with '-nt' on p.9. Make up phrases with words ending in these suffixes meeting consonant sounds, e.g., 'vibrant colour' = vibran_ colour. Practice saying them, deleting the t, adding a glottal stop, and resting on the n.
9. Choose a few of the prefixes on p.9. Create words by adding following syllables that start with a consonant sound, e.g., 'com-petition'. Say them out loud.
10. Write down twenty common content words that end with a friendly consonant sound, e.g. 'mine'.

Further Study

- [Suffixes](#)
- [Prefixes](#)

Unit 3.4 Practice with words ending with friendly consonant sounds

While saying the following words out loud, notice that they are as easy to pronounce as VC connections.

Compare them with the phrases in Lesson 2.

1. Practice saying the following common words ending in friendly consonant sound **m** in CC connections:

dam ham jam lamb mam Pam Sam
dim him Jim Kim limb rim sim Tim
beam deem meme ream seem team
dumb gum hum mum numb sum yum

2. Practice saying the following common words ending in friendly consonant sound **n** in CC connections:

ban can fan Jan man nan pan ran tan
Ben den fen hen Ken men pen ten when
bin din fin gin kin Lynn pin tin win
been dean keen lean mean seen wean

3. Practice saying the following common words ending in friendly consonant sound **ng** in CC connections:

bang fang gang hang pang rang sang tang
dung hung lung rung sung tongue young
bong gong long pong wrong strong song
Bing ding king ping ring sing thing wing

4. Practice saying the following common words ending in friendly consonant sound **l** in CC connections:

ball call fall gall hall maul pall tall wall
bell cell dell fell gel Nell sell tell well yell
bill dill fill Jill mill nil pill Rhyll till will
bail fail gale hale mail nail pail sale tale

Quiz

#1. True or false: friendly connections are just as easy to pronounce as VC connections.

- a) True.
- b) False.

#2. Which word sounds the most different to the others?

- a) dumb
- b) gum
- c) hum
- d) mum
- e) numb
- f) son

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#3. Which word sounds the most different to the others?

- a) been
- b) dean
- c) keen
- d) lean
- e) meme
- f) seen

#4. Which word sounds the most different to the others?

- a) ding
- b) think
- c) king
- d) ring
- e) sing
- f) wing

#5. Which word sounds the most different to the others?

- a) fail
- b) gale
- c) hale
- d) mail
- e) same
- f) whale

Practice

1. Read the word lists on p.12 out loud.
2. P.12 can be used for reference. It lists common one-syllable words ending in each friendly consonant sound. You may use them to create phrases and sentences with friendly connections. For example, with m: 'the dam broke', 'ham sandwich', and 'do you like jam with peanut butter?' Practice saying them out loud.
3. Can you add any more one-syllable words to each list? Practice saying them out loud.
4. Try to build sentences which contain two, three, or four friendly connections, with different friendly consonant sounds, e.g., 'Jan will take a young man's ham sandwich.' Say them out loud.

Unit 3.5 Practice phrases with VC and friendly connections

Practice the following example phrases which have only **friendly** and **VC connections**. Notice how easy they are to pronounce compared to phrases with only bad connections.

*Note: it is rare to find a phrase or sentence with **only** friendly connections. Friendly connections can be found in most sentences mixing with other connections, both good and bad.*

a) with **m**

from Hea throw, time does, mum lives, mu seum with
im por tant, from Marks, im pre ssion, team reached
some wild, storm was

b) with **n**:

se ven twen ty, Co pen ha gen, train to, in Ber gen
can celled, pa ssen gers, on ho li day, E din burgh
di sa ppoin ted, in this

c) with **ng**:

CC connections:

dri ving to, cro ssing the, play ing with Fran(g) kie bought (ng + k)

CV connections:

mo ving in, si tting on, we dding and, loo king at, ge tting a

d) with **l**:

will be, cy cle to, we'll need, chil dren, whole fa mi ly
she'll give, Mi chael was, we'll have, you'll make
u sual to, all year, gol den

e) mixed:

un(g) cle vi si ted (ng + k), co mman ding o ffi cer, sho pping cen tre
small fa shion bou tique, Don(g) ca ster (ng + k) Fal cons
time loo king at, cli mbing in the moun tains, won der ful way
been pre di cting sleet, will be di sa ppoin ted
lea ving them to day, win dow sho pping in the

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Quiz

#1. It is _____ to find a phrase or sentence which has only friendly connections.

- a) rare
- b) common

#2. Break this word into three syllables, with one VC connection and one friendly connection: passengers.

- a) pass en gers
- b) pa ssen gers
- c) pass eng ers
- d) pa sseng ers

#3. Break this phrase into four syllables, with one VC connection and two friendly connections: seven-twenty.

- a) seven twen ty
- b) se ven twenty
- c) sev en twen ty
- d) se ven twen ty

#4. Break this phrase into five syllables, with two VC connections and two friendly connections: small fashion boutique.

- a) small fa shion bout ique
- b) small fa shio nbou tique
- c) small fa shion bou tique
- d) small fash ion bou tique

#5. Break this phrase into six syllables, with three VC connections and two friendly connections: will be disappointed.

- a) will bed i sa ppoin ted
- b) will be di sapp oin ted
- c) will be di sa ppoi nted
- d) will be di sa ppoin ted

Practice

1. Practice the phrases with VC and friendly connections on p.14. How easy do they feel to you?
2. Write your own phrases with only VC and friendly connections. Practice saying them aloud. This is how we would like all English speech to sound.
3. Copy sentences from a real text, e.g., a book or a web page, and break the words up into syllables. Find phrases with friendly connections and repeat them out loud. What is the longest chain of syllables with friendly connections you can find?

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Answers to quizzes:

P.3	Unit 3.1	1. b) 2. c) 3. a) 4. b) 5. b)
P.6	Unit 3.2	1. d) 2. a) 3. b) 4.d) 5. c)
P.9	Unit 3.3	1. b) 2. b) 3. d) 4. c) 5. b)
P.12	Unit 3.4	1. a) 2. f) 3. e) 4. b) 5. e)
P.15	Unit 3.5	1. a) 2. b) 3. d) 4. c) 5. d)