

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland

Believe in the power of connected speech!

A new 8-part pronunciation course

by Matt Purland

Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds

Contents:

P.2	Unit 6.1	Introduction
P.5	Unit 6.2	Deleting t
P.10	Unit 6.3	Deleting d
P.15	Unit 6.4	Deleting h
P.20	Unit 6.5	Deleting duplicate sounds
P.24	Answers to quizzes	

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

This document is a slightly updated version of Lesson 6 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](#).

Unit 6.1 Introduction

As previously discussed, the two aims of connected speech are to **remove the gaps** between words and **emphasise the sound spine**.

We do this by making **good** syllable connections, which are either **VC (vowel to consonant)** or with **friendly consonant sounds** m, n, l, and ng.

The actions we use are: **moving forward** consonant sounds (*Lessons 4 and 5*), **deleting** consonant sounds (*Lesson 6*), and **adding** consonant sounds (*Lesson 7*) while we are speaking.

Remember that **deleting** a consonant sound does the same thing for the sound spine as **moving it forward**, removing the focus from the consonant sound and giving the vowel sound space to be heard:

good time >> goo time
CC VC

Deleting and then adding a **glottal stop** is even more effective in giving emphasis and space to the vowel sound, because it replaces t or d – the hardest-sounding consonant sounds – with half a second of silence (clear space) after the vowel sound. For example:

hot dog >> ho_ dog
CC VC

In our study of connections, the actions to fix **bad** connections occurred like this:

move forward – 60% of the time
delete – 25% of the time
add – 15% of the time

The sounds we delete are:

t (62% of the time)
d (28% of the time)
h (10% of the time)
duplicate sounds (4% of the time)

Note: deleting consonant sounds only occurs in **CV** and **CC** connections – where there is a consonant sound at the end of the first syllable in a pair.

By definition, we cannot delete consonant sounds in **VV** connections.

In summary, we delete a consonant sound in five cases:

1. When **t** is at the end of the first syllable in a pair and the next sound is a consonant, for example:

hot dog >> ho_ dog

We add a **glottal stop** (represented by **_**) in place of the t: ho_ dog

2. a) When **d** is at the end of the first syllable in a pair and the next sound is **t**, for example:

hard time >> har time

We do not need to add a glottal stop.

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

2. b) When **d** is part of a **consonant blend** – two or more consonant sounds ending in **d**, like: **nd**. For example:

phoned you >> phone you

d is deleted, leaving the friendly consonant sound **n** to rest on: phone you. There is no need to add a glottal stop.

3. When a consonant sound ends the first syllable in a pair and meets **h** at the beginning of the second syllable. We generally delete **h** from one of three function words: **him**, **her**, and **his**. For example:

I like him, but... >> I li kim, but...

h is deleted, leaving a CV connection – like 'im – so we must move forward the **k** at the end of 'like' to get a VC connection: 'I li kim, but...'

4. **Duplicate sounds**: when the consonant sound at the end of the first syllable in a pair is the same as the consonant sound at the beginning of the next syllable. For example:

bus stop >> bu stop

The first **s** sound is deleted, leaving a VC connection: 'bu stop'. We do not add a glottal stop, apart from with the sounds **k**, **p**, and **t** (see p.20).

*Note: the sounds **j** / **ch** are pronounced in full, e.g., fudge jar and each chair.*

Quiz

#1. The aims of connected speech are: (Choose two.)

- a) To make friendly sound connections
- b) To remove the gaps between words
- c) To speak more informally
- d) To emphasise the sound spine

#2. We achieve this by creating _____ connections between _____ as we speak.

- a) bad, syllables
- b) good, syllables
- c) good, words
- d) friendly, syllables

#3. The sounds we delete are, in order of how often we delete them, _____.

- a) t, d, h, duplicate sounds
- b) t, h, d, duplicate sounds
- c) d, t, h, duplicate sounds
- d) t, d, duplicate sounds, h

#4. True or false? We delete **t** in a CC connection and replace it with a glottal stop.

- a) True.
- b) False.

#5. _____ sounds occur when two of the same sound meet in a sound connection, e.g., _____.

- a) Friendly, 'bus stop'
- b) CV, 'bus driver'
- c) Duplicate, 'bus driver'
- d) Duplicate, 'bus stop'

Discussion

1. Were you aware that we often delete these sounds in English as we speak: t, d, h, and duplicate sounds? Do you regularly delete any sounds in your L1? Give examples.

Practice

1. Practice the phrase 'hot day' on p.2. Write down more similar phrases, where t is deleted in a CC connection and replaced by a glottal stop. Practice saying them out loud.
2. Practice the phrase 'hard time' on p.2. Write down more similar phrases, where d is deleted because it meets t. Practice saying them out loud.
3. Practice the phrase 'phoned you' on p.3. Write down more similar phrases, where d is deleted because it is part of a blend. Practice saying them out loud.
4. Practice the phrase 'I like him' on p.3. Write down more similar phrases, where h is deleted at the start of a syllable in the words 'him', 'her', and 'his'. Practice saying them out loud.
5. Practice the phrase 'bus stop' on p.3. Write down more similar phrases, where two duplicate consonant sounds meet. Practice saying them out loud.

Unit 6.2 Deleting t

1. Deleting t

The most common sound to delete is t, which accounts for 62% of our deleted sounds.

While t moves forward in a CV connection – e.g., ‘get in’ >> ‘ge tin’ ([Lesson 4](#)) – we always delete t when it occurs at the end of a syllable and the next sound is a consonant.

We replace t with a glottal stop, represented by _ when t is deleted after a vowel sound or friendly consonant sound. For example:

bat cover	>>	ba_ cover
fit person	>>	fi_ person
went home	>>	wen_ home
got mail	>>	go_ mail

We delete t because it is difficult for us to pronounce it next to another consonant sound. It would create a noticeable gap between syllables, which is what we are trying to avoid.

Using a glottal stop allows us to hear and acknowledge the missing t, without pronouncing it. Without the glottal stop the phrase may sound meaningless. For example, compare ‘fi_ person’ with ‘fiperson’.

Without a glottal stop we may end up with a different phrase altogether. For example:

‘great weekend’ >> delete t >>
 with a glottal stop = ‘grea_ weekend’
 without a glottal stop = ‘grey weekend’

It may look like we hate t in spoken English, since we delete it every time it appears at the end of a syllable in CC connections. It is unfortunate, then, that t is such a common sound in English. It is the final sound of no fewer than thirteen one-syllable high-frequency words in the [100 Most Common Words in Written English](#) list:

that (8)	but (22)	get (47)	most (99)
it (11)	what (40)	just (57)	
not* (13)	out (43)	first (88)	
at (20)	about (45)	want (93)	

**We can also include common negative auxiliary forms which are contractions of ‘not’, for example: ‘don’t’, ‘doesn’t’, ‘didn’t’, ‘won’t’, ‘haven’t’, etc.*

As a final consonant sound, t is pretty much everywhere in English. It appears at the end of a syllable in most sentences, and when the connection is CC, t is deleted and usually replaced by a glottal stop.

The t sound can be spelled in six different ways at the end of a syllable, but the most common is simply with ‘-t’:

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

a) '-t'

art	last	must	part	short
cut	let	net	point	start
got	lot	next	put	visit
great	met	night	set	yet

The other ways of spelling t are: '-te', '-ed', '-ght', '-tt', and '-bt':

b) '-te'

ate	gate	mate	quite	vote
bite	invite	minute	rate	white
date	kite	note	site	write
fate	late	plate	update	wrote

c) '-ed' (regular verbs: if the infinitive ends in an unvoiced consonant sound, '-ed' = t)

baked	hoped	marked	picked	relaxed
blessed	kissed	matched	promised	stopped
checked	laughed	mixed	pushed	voiced
crashed	linked	passed	reached	watched

d) '-ght'

Along with common modal verbs 'might' and 'ought', other common words include:

alright	caught	flight	night	thought
bought	delight	fought	right	tight
bright	eight	height	sight	tonight
brought	fight	light	taught	weight

e) '-tt'

There are not many words ending in '-tt' in English. Several of them are related to 'watt', i.e., 'kilowatt' and 'megawatt'. The other common words ending in '-tt' are: 'matt', 'putt', 'mutt', 'mitt' and 'boycott'.

f) '-bt' (with silent letter 'b')

There are only two common words ending in '-bt': 'debt' and 'doubt'.

In addition to common words ending with t, there are also many common **suffixes** which end in t.

For example:

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

-ate	-est	-ist	-let
-ect	-fort	-it	-ort
-ert	-iate	-ite	-urt

As we saw in [Lesson 3](#), there are several common suffixes where, when we delete **t** at the end, we can rest on the friendly consonant sound **n** plus glottal stop. For example: -ant**t**, -ent**t**, -iant**t**, -ient**t**, and -ment**t**.

This is also true of common words ending in '-nt' and '-lt'. For example:

content panel	>>	conten_ panel
point was	>>	poin_ was
felt good	>>	fel_ good
salt cellar	>>	sal_ cellar

a) Common words ending in '-nt':

account	content	front	point	spent
amount	count	patient	present	talent
ant	current	payment	rent	want
client	event	plant	sent	went

b) Common words ending in '-lt':

adult	catapult	fault	insult	salt
belt	consult	felt	knelt	smelt
bolt	dealt	guilt	melt	spoilt
built	default	inbuilt	result	vault

c) Common words ending in '-mt':

There is only one common word ending in '-mt': 'dreamt'. These days it is more usual to use the regular '-ed' spelling: 'dreamed'.

Note: there are no English words ending in **ng + t**.

(See [Lesson 3](#).)

Practice: **t** is deleted and replaced by a glottal stop in CC connections:

(CC) get the at seven airport to flight was hit by

(CC) that door at the what day eight will get there

(CC) about that start uni get married without my debit card

(CC) meet you don't like haven't got important to suit which

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

Quiz

- #1. We delete t because it is difficult for us to pronounce it next to another _____ sound.
- vowel
 - deleted
 - consonant
 - friendly
- #2. If we do not add a glottal stop when we delete t, we might end up with a _____ phrase, e.g., _____ becomes _____.
- different, 'grey weekend', 'great weekend'
 - similar, 'great weekend', 'grey weekend'
 - different, 'great weekend', 'grape weekend'
 - different, 'great weekend', 'grey weekend'
- #3. t is the final sound of no fewer than _____ one-syllable high-frequency words, e.g., _____.
- thirteen, 'that', 'it', 'not', 'quit'
 - thirteen, 'that', 'it', 'not', 'but'
 - ten, 'that', 'it', 'not', 'but'
 - thirteen, 'mint', 'it', 'not', 'but'
- #4. There are _____ different ways to spell t at the end of a syllable, including: _____.
- six, '-t', '-te', '-ed', '-gft'
 - eight, '-t', '-te', '-ed', '-ght'
 - six, '-t', '-te', '-ed', '-ght'
 - six, '-th', '-te', '-ed', '-ght'
- #5. When we delete t at the end of a syllable, we can often rest on a _____.
- friendly consonant sound
 - CV connection
 - consonant blend
 - voiced consonant sound

Discussion

- Did you know that t can be spelled six different ways at the end of a syllable? Have you ever thought about studying the different ways that sounds are spelled in English? (See [Hard Words](#) – free English pronunciation course.)

Practice

- Practice the phrases at the top of p.5. Focus on getting the glottal stop right. Don't make it too noticeable. It should serve to emphasise the vowel sound rather than stand out as a feature.
- Practice the phrases on the right without the glottal stop and then with the glottal stop. Note how strange they sound without the glottal stop. It is a common pronunciation error to delete the t but not add the glottal stop, which stands in place of the deleted t.
- Look at the high-frequency words on p.5. Say them out loud, then practice making phrases with CC connections – e.g. 'that day' – then putting the phrases into sentences – e.g. 'I saw Lisa that day' = 'tha_ day'. Practice saying them out loud.

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

4. Practice saying the words ending with t on p.6 out loud. Can you add any more examples to each group?
5. Use the words on p.6 to create new phrases with CC connections, e.g., 'art school' = 'ar_ school'. Practice saying them out loud, deleting t, then adding a glottal stop, if necessary. Note that you only need to add a glottal stop if t is deleted next to a vowel sound or friendly consonant sound. Put your phrases into whole sentences and say them out loud.
6. Look at the common suffixes on p.7. Think of words that use each suffix and put them into CC connections, e.g., 'delicate matter'. Practice saying them out loud, deleting t and adding a glottal stop, if necessary. Try putting them into sentences and saying them out loud.
7. Can you find any more suffixes that end with t? Complete the previous exercise using the new suffixes that you have found.
8. Practice the four phrases on the right on p.7, beginning with 'conten_ panel'. Practice resting on the friendly consonant sound, after deleting the t. Say them without the glottal stop. Notice how odd and unlike English they sound. Say the two word lists on p.7 out loud. Make phrases and add them to sentences. Practice saying them out loud, focusing on resting on the friendly consonant sound.
9. Practice saying the phrases on p.7 out loud. Focus on deleting the t and adding a glottal stop in each phrase. Record yourself saying them, then listen back; slow down the recording and listen to the sound connections. How did you do?
10. Use the words on the worksheet [200 One-Syllable Words that End with 't'](#) to make new phrases with CC connections. Practice saying them out loud, deleting t and adding a glottal stop, where necessary.
11. Do the same with phrases that you find in a real text.

Further Study

- [Glottal Stops](#)
- [200 One-Syllable Words that End with 't'](#)

Unit 6.3 Deleting d

2. Deleting d

As we know, t and d are a consonant pair ([Lesson 4](#)) – in effect the same sound, just with voiced (d) and unvoiced (t) versions. t is more difficult to pronounce than d, and must be deleted in CC connections, and usually be replaced by a glottal stop.

d is a little easier to pronounce than t, and can often **move forward** in CC connections, changing to the very light unvoiced t ([Lesson 4](#)). For example:

head girl	>>	he tgirl
had some	>>	ha tsome
dad rock	>>	da trock
food van	>>	foo tvan

As we discovered in [Lesson 4](#), d moves forward as d in **CV connections**. For example:

had a	>>	ha da
would it	>>	woul dit
you'd ask	>>	you dask
showed us	>>	show dus

However, 28% of the sounds we delete are d. So, when do we delete d?

a) When d is at the end of the first syllable in a pair and the next sound is t. For example: hard t time = har t time

b) When d is part of a **consonant blend** – two or more consonant sounds ending in d, like: nd. For example: phoned you = phone you

There is no glottal stop needed in either connection.

Let's look at both situations in more detail.

a) When d is at the end of the first syllable in a pair and the next sound is t. For example: hard t time

The reason for deleting d next to t is that if we moved forward d, it would change to the unvoiced t, creating a duplicate sound – two t's. When duplicate sounds meet, the first one is always deleted (see Unit 6.5, below).

For example:

add text	>>	a text	hard trip	>>	har trip
bid to	>>	bi to	head to	>>	hea to
could take	>>	coul take	red truck	>>	re truck
dad to	>>	da to	should try	>>	shoul try
good train	>>	goo train	speed test	>>	spee test

Of course, we also delete d when it meets another d, for example: bad d day. We do not add a glottal stop: 'ba d day'. The first sound is deleted as a duplicate sound (see below).

There are four words ending in d in the 100 Most Common Words in Written English list:

and (5), would (37), good (65), could (67)

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

d is most often spelled with ‘-d’. For example:

bed	fed	head	mud	road
bid	food	kid	need	said
board	had	lead	record	speed
did	hard	led	red	third

There are two common words in which d is spelled with ‘-dd’: ‘add’ and ‘odd’. Other spellings of d are: ‘-de’ and ‘-ld’:

a) ‘-de’

aside	divide	include	pride	side
beside	grade	inside	provide	tide
decade	guide	made	ride	trade
decide	hide	mode	rode	wide

b) ‘-ld’ (including silent letter ‘l’)

The only common words are the **modal verbs**: ‘could’, ‘should’, and ‘would’.

In addition to common words ending with d, there are also many **common suffixes** which end in d. For example:

-ade -ard -ed -id -ide -land -oid

Finally, d is the sound at the end of **regular verbs** which end with a **vowel sound** (e.g., agreed, continu**ed**, deliver**ed**, enjoy**ed**, etc.) or a **voiced consonant sound** (e.g., call**ed**, happen**ed**, seem**ed**, liv**ed**, etc.).

b) When d is part of a **consonant blend** – two or more consonant sounds ending in d, like: nd. For example: ph**oned** you = ph**one** you.

As mentioned, a consonant blend is a combination of two or more consonant sounds which are **heard together** in a word. We delete the d and do not add a glottal stop.

This does not include silent letters, e.g., ‘l’ in ‘could’ is not part of a blend.

Three common final consonant **blends** which end in d are listed below. Notice that in each case when we delete d, we can rest on a **friendly consonant sound**, n, m, or l:

nd	bound to	>>	boun to
md	seem ed that	>>	seem that
ld	wild g oose	>>	wil goose

Common words with final consonant blends ending in ‘-nd’:

and went	>>	an went	husband was	>>	husban was
band knew	>>	ban knew	phoned me	>>	phone me
found some	>>	foun some	send me	>>	sen me
grand ma	>>	gran ma	thousand times	>>	thousan times
hand ball	>>	han ball	wind farm	>>	win farm

Common **regular verbs** with final consonant blends ending in '-md':

blamed them	>>	blame them	fumed dad	>>	fume dad
claimed that	>>	claim that	roamed freely	>>	roam freely
famed for	>>	fame for	seemed to	>>	seem to
filmed them	>>	film them	tamed tigers	>>	tame tigers
framed photo	>>	frame photo	teamed with	>>	team with

You may be concerned about making a grammatical mistake by, for example, changing past tense 'blamed' to infinitive 'blame'.

Don't be. We understand that this is past tense from the context, e.g., 'He blamed them for what they did.'

The last word 'did' confirms that it is past tense. We do not register the loss of *d* as a grammatical error, because in fast speech it sounds natural and correct.

Common words with final consonant blends ending in '-ld':

build many	>>	buil many	old man	>>	ol man
child benefit	>>	chil benefit	sold some	>>	sol some
field work	>>	fiel work	told them	>>	tol them
gold coin	>>	gol coin	wild panda	>>	wil panda
mild climate	>>	mil climate	world cup	>>	worl cup

Other blends are possible, too, but they require two actions ([Lesson 8](#)). In each case, **delete** the *d* and then **move forward** the first consonant sound. For example:

ch + d	reached the	>>	rea chthe
k + d	liked the	>>	li kethe
z + d	used the	>>	u sthe

(z changes to s in a CC connection)

Practice: **d** is deleted in CC connections – before *t* or when part of a **blend**:

(CC) grandmother decided to used my card to wind farm

(CC) blood test husband wears and jam reached the bound to

(CC) wild geese field work goldfish find them thousand pounds

(CC) windscreen need to behind my mild climate head to

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

Quiz

- #1. d and t are a consonant pair in which _____ is voiced and _____ is unvoiced.
- t, d
 - d, t
 - t, th
 - d, dd
- #2. True or false? d is easier to pronounce than t and often moves forward in CC connections.
- True.
 - False.
- #3. We delete d when: (Choose two.)
- d is at the beginning of the first syllable in a pair and the next sound is t.
 - d is part of a CV (consonant to vowel) connection.
 - d is at the end of the first syllable in a pair and the next sound is t.
 - d is part of a consonant blend – two or more consonant sounds ending in d, like: nd.
- #4. The consonant sound d is usually spelled _____ at the end of a syllable.
- '-dd'
 - '-ld'
 - '-d'
 - '-de'
- #5. Which sentence has an example of d being deleted as part of a consonant blend?
- He seem to be amused.
 - He seemed to be amused.
 - He seems to be amused.
 - He is seeming to be amused.

Discussion

1. What do you know about consonant blends in English? Do you have consonant blends in your L1? Give a few examples.
2. Does it worry you to say 'He seem to be OK' as past tense, instead of 'He seemed to be OK?' Yet, we do this in fast speech. What is important is the stressed vowel sound of the verb: ee, not the consonant sound at the end. Will you let yourself overcome the fear of seeming incorrect according to your years of study of English, and accept that the actions of connected speech are what we do?

Practice

1. Practice the first four phrases on p.10. Focus on the right-hand phrases. The t sound should be very quiet and light – barely noticeable, but there, as a representative of the deleted d. Do you find the phrases on the right easier to pronounce than their original versions? Why? / Why not?
2. Practice the second four phrases on p.10, with d moving forward in the CV connections.
3. Practice the ten phrases on p.10, with d deleted and no glottal stop in place of it. Write five more similar phrases and practice them out loud.

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

4. Practice saying the words ending with *d* on p.11 out loud. Can you add any more examples to each group?
5. Use the words on p.11 to create new phrases with CC connections, e.g., 'road sign' = ROA TSIGN. Practice saying them out loud, either deleting *d* (if it meets *t*) or moving it forward and changing it to *t*. Put your phrases into whole sentences and say them out loud.
6. Look at the common suffixes on p.11. Think of words that use each suffix and put them into CC connections, e.g., 'lemonade stand'. Practice saying them out loud, deleting *d* or moving it forward and changing it to *t*. Try putting them into sentences and saying them out loud.
7. Can you find any more suffixes that end with *d*? Complete the previous exercise using the new suffixes.
8. Look at the regular verbs on pp.11-12. Make a list of ten more common regular verbs that end with a) a vowel sound, b) a voiced consonant sound and add '-ed'. Practice making phrases with them in CC connections, deleting or moving forward *d* as required, e.g., 'agreed to' = AGREE TO.
9. Look at the [common consonant blends in English](#) worksheet. Focus on the final consonant blends with 'ld' and 'nd'.
10. Look at the three common final consonant blends on p.11. Find more blends with ld, md, and nd. Write a list of words for each blend, then make phrases and say them out loud, deleting the *d* in each phrase. How does it feel to you, saying 'boun to' instead of your usual 'bound to', with *d* pronounced? Does it feel wrong? Yet, it is correct in spoken English.
11. Practice the three sets of phrases on p.12 out loud. Put them into sentences and say them out loud, observing other connected speech rules.
12. Look at the other possible blends on p.12. Can you think of any more final consonant blends ending in *d*? For example, *g + d* >> 'logged the' = LO GTHE.
13. Practice saying the two sets of phrases on p.12 out loud. Focus on deleting the *d* in each phrase. Make sure that you know why the *d* is deleted in each phrase: either because of *t* or a blend. Record yourself saying them, then listen back; slow down the recording and listen to the sound connections. How did you do?

Further Study

- [Common Consonant Blends in English](#)
- [Regular Verbs](#)

Unit 6.4 Deleting h

3. Deleting h

This only occurs when the first sound in a pair is a consonant sound, and the second is h from one of these three function words: **him**, **her**, **his** – or variants **himself** and **herself**.

We delete h, creating a **CV connection**.

Then we have to move forward the consonant sound, to get a VC connection.

For example:

I gave him a book.	>>	I ga vi ma book.
He made her some soup.	>>	He ma der some soup.
I bought his car.	>>	I bor ti scar.

As you can see, we sometimes need **two or more actions** to get the VC or friendly connection ([Lesson 8](#)).

When it comes to deleting sounds, we delete h 10% of the time, making it the third most common sound to delete, after t and d. It does not need to happen very often, but it can happen.

We do it to make the function words **him**, **her**, and **his** sound weaker. In turn this makes the stressed syllables sound stronger – emphasising the **sound spine**. There is no mountain without the valleys! Function words are the weak-stressed ‘valleys’ and must be **reduced** rather than pronounced loudly with equal stress to content words:

him	>>	im	
her	>>	er	<i>a schwa sound; sounds like article ‘a’</i>
his	>>	iz	

If you put stress on them – by pronouncing ‘h’ + a strong vowel sound – we may have problems identifying the strong syllables which should have the strong vowel sounds. In short, it messes up the **sound spine** ([Lesson 1](#)).

Deleting h from the beginning of these function words is acceptable in **Standard English**. The trick is to do it in fast speech so that the listener is unaware of the ‘h’ being dropped and focuses instead on the sound spine.

Some native speakers of English take the deletion of h further and delete it from many or even *every* word beginning with the letter ‘h’.

For example:

I’ll ‘ave an ‘oliday in ‘arrogate with ‘elen.

(I’ll **h**ave a **h**oliday in **H**arrogate with **H**elen.)

What ‘appened at the ‘ospital, ‘arold?

(What **h**appened at the **h**ospital, **H**arold?)

This is much more noticeable. The deletion is pronounced in an obvious way and not hidden in fast speech. It is very common in many accents and dialects of English, e.g., **Estuary English**, which is most associated with London and the area around the Thames Estuary.

It is not considered standard English, so we do not focus on it during this course.

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

Of course, a few common English words beginning with the letter 'h' already have the 'h' dropped in pronunciation. For example: **heir**, **homage**, **honest**, **honour**, and **hour**.

h is usually spelled: 'h-':

There are five high-frequency words beginning with h in the 100 Most Common Words in Written English list. We can discount the first two – 'have' (9) and 'he' (16) – because we normally pronounce the h in these words.

We delete the h in the other three words, though: '**his**' (23), '**her**' (29), and '**him**' (58).

a) More common words beginning with 'h-':

had	has	head	here	home
half	hat	heart	hi	hot
hand	have	hello	high	house
happy	he	help	hit	how

h is spelled 'wh-' in a few important words, including: '**who**', '**whom**', '**whoever**', '**whose**', '**whole**', '**wholesale**', '**wholesome**', and '**wholly**'.

I do not want to be too prescriptive, because it may be that, in fast speech, other **function words** beginning with h may be deleted too. For example:

I said **he** just left. >> I **sai de** ju sleft. ('h' is deleted in 'he')

However, we should be careful not to **overdo** the deletion of h, because then we may move away from Standard English towards accent, dialect, and slang.

A note about deleting h and t:

As described above, when t meets another consonant sound, we delete it and add a glottal stop. For example:

I got him a new bike. >> I go_ him a new bike.

With the words **him**, **her**, and **his**, however, this rule is ignored. After deleting the h, in the resulting CV connection, we move forward the t and the result sounds more fluent:

I go ti ma new bike.

Here are more examples with **her** and **his**. Further contractions may also be possible:

I wan_ her to stay. >> I wan ter to stay. >> I wanna to stay.
I pu_ his cake there. >> I pu ti sca kthere. >> I pudis ca kthere.

VC Connections:

In fast speech, we may also delete the h at the beginning of **him**, **her**, **his**, **himself**, and **herself** in **VC connections**. This creates a VV connection ([Lesson 7](#)). We delete the h then add w, y, or r:

show him	>>	show [w] im	+ w
buy his	>>	buy [y] iz	+ y
saw her	>>	saw [r]	+ r

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

However, this is moving away from Standard English. It is not normally necessary to alter a VC connection ([Lesson 2](#)).

Practice: **h** is deleted at the beginning of a syllable in CC connections, then the first consonant moves forward:

ask h er	>>	a sker
get h erself	>>	ge ter self
tell h im	>>	te lim
teach h imself	>>	tea chim self
book h is	>>	boo kis
like h erself	>>	li ker self
drive h is	>>	dri vis
read h er	>>	rea der
put h im	>>	pu tim
question h imself	>>	que stio nim self

Practice **deleting h** and **moving forward** in these short phrases:

with her grandma	[wi tha]	bought herself	[bor te self]
when he was young	[whe ne was]	that his friend	[tha tiz]
I think he said	[thing ke said]	knitted him	[kni te dim]
ask about her	[a bou ta]	on his way to work	[o niz]
has to find his	[fin diz]	lose her phone	[lo za]
selling her house*	[se lling a]	taking her puppy*	[ta king a]

*Note that when the first syllable ends with *ng*, it does not move forward (Lesson 3).

Quiz

#1. We can delete **h** from the following words in fast speech: (Choose three.)

- a) help
- b) him
- c) hi
- d) her
- e) his
- f) hot

#2. By deleting **h** as the second sound in a CC connection, we create a _____ connection, meaning the consonant sound has to _____.

- a) CC, move forward
- b) CV, be deleted
- c) CV, move forward
- d) VC, move forward

#3. True or false. Some native speakers decide to delete **h** from the beginning of many or all English words.

- a) True.
- b) False.

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

#4. The sound h is spelled 'wh-' in several common words, including: (Choose up to three.)

- a) 'who'
- b) 'when'
- c) 'whoever'
- d) 'which'
- e) 'how'
- f) 'whole'

#5. Which example shows h being deleted in a good VC connection, creating a VV connection that needs to have a consonant sound added?

- a) showed him >> show dim
- b) show him >> show wim
- c) tell her >> te ller
- d) meet him >> mee tim

Discussion

1. Do you know any native speakers of English who consistently 'drop' the h from the beginning of words. Do they have a particular accent? What does 'h-dropping' tell us about class? What effect does it have on your ears?
2. Look at the phrase 'I said he just left' on p.16. Do you believe that we should extend 'h-dropping' to other function words beginning with h, e.g., 'he'? Why? / Why not?

Practice

1. Write down ten phrases where the first word ends with a consonant sound and the second word is 'him', e.g. 'tell him'. Practice saying them out loud, deleting the h and moving forward the consonant sound. Record yourself and listen back, slowing down the recording. How did you do?
2. Do the same with 'her', 'his', 'himself', and 'herself'. Put these phrases into sentences and keep your speech fairly fast, not drawing attention to the deleted h, e.g., 'Tell him we're ready to go' = te lim. How do you feel saying these phrases without the h?
3. Practice the three phrases at the top of p.15. Focus on deleting h and moving forward the final consonant sounds.
4. Practice the sentences with too much 'h-dropping' on p.15 out loud. How do they sound to you? Why is this considered 'wrong' in Standard English? Search online for the topic of 'h-dropping' and see what the experts say. Do you agree with them?
5. Practice saying the words beginning with h at the top of p.16 out loud. Can you add any more examples?
6. Look at the text beneath this word list. Can you find any more examples of when the sound h is spelled with 'wh', like 'who'?
7. Practice saying the sentence on p.16: 'I got him a new bike.' Say it with t deleted, plus a glottal stop, then with h deleted and t moved forward. Which sounds more fluent? The latter is the preferred option in connected speech.
8. Practice the other sentences on p.16 too. How do you feel about the contractions: 'WANNA' = 'WANT HER' and 'PUDIS' = 'PUT HIS'? The main aim is to hear the respective stressed

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

vowel sounds loudly and clearly: o from 'want' and uu from 'put'. We achieve this, so communication occurs. Make up your own sentences to practice saying out loud.

9. Make a note of the important exception to the VC connection rule, shown on pp.16-17. We do take a perfect VC connection, e.g., 'show him', delete h, creating a bad VV connection (on purpose), which requires the insertion of w to make it right. (See [Lesson 7: Adding Sounds.](#)) Write more phrases that start off as good VC connections but change to bad VV connections and then need correcting. Practice them out loud.
10. Practice saying the first list of phrases on p.17 out loud. Focus on deleting the h in each phrase and moving forward the previous consonant sound. Record yourself saying them, then listen back, slow down the recording and listen to the sound connections. How did you do?
11. Practice the second list of phrases on p.17 out loud. Can you add any more short phrases? Practice them out loud.

Further Study

- [What is English Pronunciation?](#)

Unit 6.5 Deleting duplicate sounds

4. Deleting duplicate sounds

The other time (4%) when we delete a sound is when there are two of the same consonant sounds in a **CC connection**. In these cases, we delete the first sound. The result in each case is usually a VC or friendly connection.

For example:

l > l	tell Lena	>>	te Lena	result: no glottal stop – VC connection
s > s	dance solo	>>	dan solo	result: no glottal stop – friendly connection

We do not add a glottal stop with **voiced** consonant sounds, e.g.

g > g	bag grab	>>	ba grab
-------	----------	----	---------

We add a glottal stop when the sounds are **unvoiced** k, p, and t:

k > k	quick coffee	>>	qui_ coffee	result: glottal stop
p > p	keep product	>>	kee_ product	result: glottal stop
t > t	heat timer	>>	hea_ timer	result: glottal stop

We do not need to pronounce both sounds because our brains register both words, without having to hear every consonant sound. We delete the first sound because it is very difficult for us to pronounce both consonant sounds together in a **CC connection**. It is *possible*, but it is *awkward*.

It may, however, be normal practice in your language, in which case it may feel perfectly natural to you. It doesn't to us!

Duplicate sounds occur fairly rarely – 4% of the time when deleting sounds, according to research – but we need to know what to do when it does happen. Remember, this only applies in CC connections. For VV connections, see [Lesson 7](#).

Practice with all possible **voiced** consonant sounds (no glottal stop):

b	Rob bought	>>	Ro bought	
d	rode down	>>	ro down	
g	big game	>>	bi game	
l	full lake	>>	fu lake	
m	home maker	>>	ho maker	
n	pin number	>>	pi number	
th	with the	>>	wi the	
v	have value	>>	ha value	
z	Paul's zoo	>>	Paul zoo	<i>friendly con.</i>

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

Not Possible:

j	<i>it is necessary to pronounce both j sounds without moving forward, e.g., hedge joins</i>
ng	<i>ng cannot start a syllable</i>
w	<i>w is only part of a vowel sound at the end of a syllable</i>
y	<i>y is only part of a vowel sound at the end of a syllable</i>
r	<i>r is only part of a vowel sound at the end of a syllable</i>
zz	<i>zz cannot end or start a syllable</i>

Practice with all possible **unvoiced** consonant sounds:

f	have faith (v changes to f)	>>	ha faith
k	pack clothes (glottal stop)	>>	pa_ clothes
p	hip patient (glottal stop)	>>	hi_ patient
s	boss said	>>	bo said
sh	brush should	>>	bru should
t	hot take (glottal stop)	>>	ho_ take
tt	worth thinking	>>	wor thinking

Not Possible:

ch	<i>like its partner j, it is necessary to pronounce both ch sounds without moving forward, e.g., watch chain</i>
h	<i>h is not pronounced at the end of a syllable</i>
hh	<i>hh is not used in Standard English</i>

Practice: the **first sound** is deleted in CC connections if there are **duplicate** sounds:

(CC) this session his zoo hit tale wash sheets gap pool

(CC) beneath theatre of fun wood door all ladies rob banks

Practice: the **first sound** is deleted in CC connections if there are **duplicate** sounds (*except j and ch*):

(CC) site table rich chap black car shelf full fridge joke

(CC) said Dan save four fourth thought shrub border thick card

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

Quiz

- #1. Duplicate sounds are the _____ common kind of sound that require deletion.
- most
 - least
- #2. Which phrases have examples of duplicate sounds? (Choose two.)
- hot coffee
 - quick coffee
 - go out
 - hot topic
- #3. We do not need to add a glottal stop unless the duplicate sounds are _____. (Choose up to three.)
- k
 - p
 - b
 - d
 - t
 - g
- #4. Some consonant sounds cannot be _____ sounds, like ng, which cannot be at the start of a syllable, and _____ which are only part of a vowel sound at the end of a syllable.
- duplicate, m, n, ng
 - friendly, w, y, r
 - duplicate, c, q, x
 - duplicate, w, y, r
- #5. j and ch are different because we have to pronounce them both when they meet as duplicate sounds, e.g., (Choose two.)
- fudge shop
 - rich chap
 - rich fudge
 - fudge jar

Practice

- Practice the first two phrases on p.20, moving from bad connection to good connection. How do they feel when you say them? What is the difference to you?
- Practice the next four phrases on p.20. Pay particular attention to the three unvoiced consonant sounds that need a glottal stop when they meet a duplicate sound: k, p, and t. Note this exception.
- Write five phrases with words that have duplicate sounds when they meet, e.g., 'bag grab'. Practice saying them as bad CC connections, then change them to VC connections by deleting the first consonant sound. How does it feel? What is the difference for you?
- Practice saying the bad then good connections in the group of nine phrases on p.20 out loud. Try to put them into short sentences, e.g., 'Rob bought a new car.' Say them out loud, paying attention to the other elements of connected speech that come into play. Record yourself, slow it down, then check how you sound.

Learn Connected Speech with Matt Purland – [Lesson 6: Deleting Sounds](#)

5. Make a note of the nine exceptions on p.21 – the consonant sounds which cannot meet a duplicate, for various reasons. Make sure that you understand the reasons for these exceptions.
6. Focus on making phrases where j meets j and ch meets ch. In these cases, we must pronounce both sounds equally – we cannot delete the first sound. Practice your phrases out loud. Get used to this very small anomaly in connected speech.
7. Practice saying the bad then good connections in the phrases beginning with 'have faith' on p.21 out loud. Pay particular attention to k, p, and t, which need a glottal stop. Try to put them into short sentences, e.g., 'My boss said that I did well.' Say them out loud, paying attention to the other elements of connected speech that come into play. Record yourself, slow it down, then check how you sound.
8. Practice saying the phrases at the bottom of p.21 out loud. Focus on deleting the first consonant in each phrase (if necessary). Note the two phrases with j and ch, where you cannot delete the first sound: 'fridge joke' and 'rich chap'. Note also the five phrases with k, p, and t, which require a glottal stop. Record yourself saying them, then listen back, slow down the recording and listen to the sound connections. How did you do?

Answers to quizzes:

P.3	Unit 6.1	1. b), d) 2. b) 3. a) 4. a) 5. d)
P.8	Unit 6.2	1. c) 2. d) 3. b) 4.c) 5. a)
P.13	Unit 6.3	1. b) 2. a) 3. c), d) 4. c) 5. a)
P.17	Unit 6.4	1. b), d), e) 2. c) 3. a) 4. a), c), f) 5. b)
P.22	Unit 6.5	1. b) 2. b), d) 3. a), b), e) 4. d) 5. b), d)