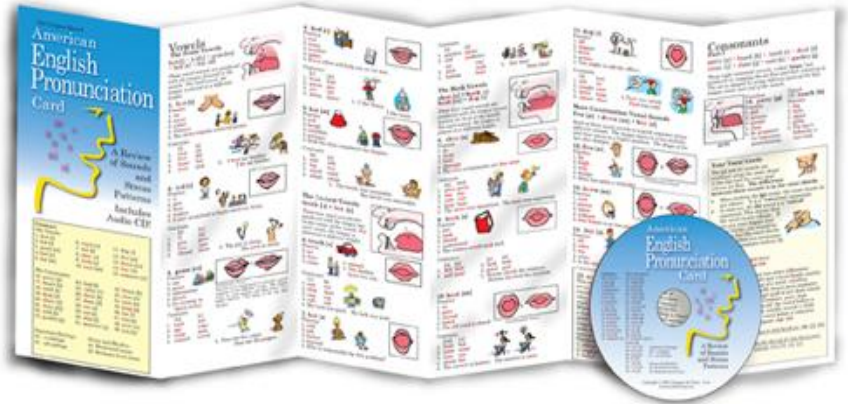


# The American English Pronunciation Card



## Instructor's Notes

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The American English Pronunciation Card was born – like many resources – out of necessity. I had been looking desperately for something that didn't exist. I needed a supplementary pronunciation text to add to my curriculum, but one that...

- was accessible (easy to use at a moment's notice).
- included treatments of all major consonant and vowel sounds in addition to word stress, sentence stress, and troublesome clusters (reasonably comprehensive).
- included an audio CD (so students could practice independently).
- was printed in full color (my students could not deal with those confusing black-and-white mouth drawings that look like they're from an orthodontics textbook).
- drew from only high frequency words for its examples (students do not gain much from example words that they do not know or will never use).
- was compact and affordable (less taxing on students' backs and wallets).

The American English Pronunciation Card is now that resource.

As noted above, the Pronunciation Card is a supplementary text designed to fit into courses which feature pronunciation as a component of a diverse curriculum. The Card can be used as a centerpiece for in-class pronunciation work, as a self-study guide for students, and as a diagnostic tool. This brief set of notes offers suggestions for all three of these applications.

## Sample In-Class Exercises

Preliminary note: You, as the instructor, should always model the target sound(s) before having students practice on their own. If possible, follow your demonstration with a brief recognition exercise to make sure students can not only *hear* the sound but also aurally *differentiate* it from others. For example, if modeling the vowel sound [i] (feet), read the first couple “practice” words in Lesson 1, and then read the first one or two “contrasts” (i.e., seat vs. sit) to assure that students are aware of the difference in these sounds.

1. **Individual Sounds.** Assign students, in pairs or small groups, to one of the vowel or consonant sounds in the Pronunciation Card. (Again, instructors should always model the target sound first.) Have each student say aloud each of the “Practice” examples, with the other group mates giving feedback as to whether the sound seems correctly uttered. Then, where contrasts are provided in the Card, have each student carefully say each of the contrastive pairs, with the other students noting which of the two sounds they think they heard. The resulting feedback should give the speaker an indication of his/her strength or weakness.
2. **Sound Pairings.** Follow the example above, except assign 2-3 consonant or vowel sounds concurrently with the goal of giving students extra practice differentiating these sounds. Pairings that are particularly troublesome to many students include:
  - a. [i] and [ɪ] (Lessons 1 and 2)
  - b. [u] and [ʊ] (Lessons 8 and 9)
  - c. [r] and [ɹ] (Lessons 36 and 37)
  - d. [t] and [ʈ] and [ʌ] (Lessons 18, 26, and 27)
  - e. [b] and [v] (Lessons 17 and 25)
  - f. [v] and [w] (Lessons 25 and 38)

Here are some extra sets of contrasts for the last two pairings above (the others have contrasts already provided in the Pronunciation Card):

<u>b</u> erry <u>v</u> ery	<u>v</u> ery <u>w</u> ary
<u>b</u> an <u>v</u> an	<u>v</u> ent <u>w</u> ent
<u>b</u> est <u>v</u> est	<u>v</u> ine <u>w</u> ine
<u>c</u> abs <u>v</u> alves	<u>r</u> oying <u>r</u> oying
<u>c</u> ur <u>v</u> e <u>c</u> ur <u>b</u>	<u>g</u> roo <u>v</u> e <u>g</u> rew

3. **Final -s Endings.** Review the pronunciation rules for –s endings (Lesson 40) and have students, in pairs or groups, practice the example words listed in that lesson. Then, as an extension, assign students one of these activities (or a variation thereof):
  - a. Have students compile a list of five to ten nouns, all in plural, that are associated with a particular field or occupation. Students read their lists in groups or to the class, paying particular attention to the accuracy of their –s endings.
  - b. Do the same exercise as above, but instead of nouns, have students compile a list of five to ten verbs associated with a particular field or occupation. The

students should then use those verbs in sentences with singular subjects. For example, a student could write, “A trial lawyer argues cases in court.” Again, students should carefully read their sentences aloud in class.

- c. Give students a list of plural nouns and third-person singular verbs. The list should have approximately equal representation from the three categories of final –s pronunciations: [ɪz], [s], and [z]. Have students work in groups and categorize each word in the list. Here is a sample list: cats, computers, bushes, touches, takes, reads, rises, paths, assumes, buildings, drops, elements, forces, girls, houses. (There are five from each category: [ɪz]=bushes, touches, rises, forces, houses; [s]=cats, takes, paths, drops, elements; [z]=computers, reads, assumes, buildings, girls.
4. **–ed Endings.** Review the pronunciation rules for –ed endings (Lesson 41) and have students, in pairs or groups, practice the example words listed in that lesson. Then, as an extension, assign students one of these activities (or a variation thereof):
    - a. Give the students the assignment of telling a story of their choice – a myth, a legend, a folk tale, a fable, etc. – to the class. The tale should use the simple past tense as the predominant tense. Students should practice the story enough before their presentations so that they can pronounce –ed endings in their stories confidently and correctly when.
    - b. Have students compile a list of five to ten regular verbs which describe the things that they did the day before. The students should then compose sentences with those verbs. For example, a student could write, “I cooked dinner for my family.” Again, students should carefully read their sentences aloud in class.
    - c. Give students a list of verbs and participial adjectives with –ed endings. The list should have approximately equal representation from the three categories of final –ed pronunciations: [ɪd], [t], and [d]. Have students work in groups and categorize the list. Here is a sample list: turned, closed, voted, worked, attempted, named, controlled, dressed, helped, ended, established, lowered, itched, graded, predicted. (There are five from each category: [ɪd]=voted, attempted, ended, graded, predicted; [t]=worked, dressed, helped, established, itched; [d]=turned, closed, named, controlled, lowered.
  5. **Sentence-level Stress.** The element of rhythm can be a very difficult one for students to understand and gain control over. In addition to reviewing together the explanation and examples in the Card (Lesson 43), it may be helpful to point out the similarity between patterns of word stress and those of sentence stress:

• • •	• • •
understood	Bring the wood.

• • • • •	• • • • •
identification	I sat at the station.

For extra practice with stress and “unstressed” (including reductions), you can go over these common patterns with students:

• . •

1. black ‘n white (black and white)
2. two ‘r three (two or three)

• . . •

3. Why didja call? (Why did you call?)
4. Who c’n ya ask? (Who can you ask?)

. • . • . •

5. The work was done by noon.
6. The snow has blocked the street.

. • . . • . . •

7. Her feelings were hurt by her friend.
8. Computers are easy to use.

Emphasize to students that stressed words – words that are central to a sentence’s meaning – are louder, longer, and higher in tone than unstressed words. These words are often:

- nouns
- main verbs
- adjectives
- adverbs
- negative expressions (e.g., won’t, can’t)

Unstressed words – words that are grammatically necessary but not very important to the meaning of a sentence – are spoken quickly, softly, and less precisely than stressed words, and they frequently become reduced. These words are often:

- articles
- prepositions
- conjunctions
- auxiliary verbs

## The Pronunciation Card as a Diagnostic Tool

You can get a fairly thorough inventory of a student's strengths and weaknesses by having the student read through the entirety of the Card – about a 15-minute activity – while you take notes. The organization of the Card provides a natural checklist. The following table template can be used as a basis to document a student's speech profile.

Elements of Speech	Strengths	Difficulties	Examples
Vowel sounds			
Consonant sounds			
Grammatical endings			
Word stress			
Rhythm in sentences			
Delivery		(e.g., too fast, too soft)	
Other			

In the last two rows of this rubric, space has been provided for elements not discretely addressed in the *Pronunciation Card* but which can be important factors of clear communication. For example, for many students, if they simply slow down and speak up, many of their other pronunciation issues become negligible.

## The Pronunciation Card as a Self-Study Tool

If a student uses the Card as a self-study tool, several important habits are necessary for the student to achieve substantive results:

1. **Repetition.** The student must have the self-discipline to practice regularly and often.
2. **Practicing aloud.** All practice sessions must involve practicing out loud in a concentrative and self-assessing manner. To this end, students should record their own voices as often as possible to compare their pronunciation and rhythm to that on the Pronunciation Card audio program. Students should also be encouraged to enlist the help of friends, classmates or relatives to listen and offer feedback. Practicing in front of a mirror can also help students to achieve the proper mouth and tongue position.

3. **Self-monitoring.** Ultimately, students will only reach their full potential if they strive to gain the ability to self-monitor themselves without the aid of the Pronunciation Card, a tape recorder, or listener feedback. That is, students must develop the habit of listening to themselves as they speak, in whatever context that may be, and self-correcting whenever possible. Only through regular practice will students gain the ability to do this. Another key to success in this regard is for the student to develop pronunciation “priorities.” After all, it is unrealistic for a student to self-monitor their entire range of phonemes and stresses at the same time. Students should choose one or two specific goals at a time and work on these goals for a set amount of time – perhaps weeks, perhaps months – before turning to the next pronunciation goals on their priority list.