

Say It Right!

Commonly mispronounced English words

Pronunciation lesson B2–C1

How to use this sheet: read the word, then say it using the **Sounds like** column. CAPITAL letters show the **stressed** syllable. The IPA (British English) is there for reference.

1 · Silent letters

Some letters are written but never spoken.

WORD	SOUNDS LIKE	IPA	WATCH OUT
Wednesday	**WENZ-day**	/ˈwenzdeɪ/	Don't say the first **d**.
island	**EYE-lund**	/ˈaɪlənd/	The **s** is silent.
salmon	**SAM-un**	/ˈsæmən/	The **l** is silent.
receipt	**ri-SEET**	/rɪˈsiːt/	The **p** is silent.
subtle	**SUT-ul**	/ˈsʌtl/	The **b** is silent.
castle	**KAH-sul**	/ˈkɑːsl/	The **t** is silent.

2 · Swallowed syllables

Natural speech drops a syllable in these words.

WORD	SOUNDS LIKE	IPA	WATCH OUT
comfortable	**KUMF-tuh-bul**	/ˈkʌmftəbl/	3 syllables, not com-FOR-table.
vegetable	**VEJ-tuh-bul**	/ˈvedʒtəbl/	3 syllables, not ve-ge-TA-ble.
chocolate	**CHOK-lut**	/ˈtʃɒklət/	2 syllables.
different	**DIF-runt**	/ˈdɪfrənt/	2 syllables.
interesting	**IN-truh-sting**	/ˈɪntrəstɪŋ/	Stress the first syllable.
February	**FEB-roo-uh-ree**	/ˈfebruəri/	Say the first **r**.

3 · Spelling traps

The spelling gives almost no clue to the sound.

WORD	SOUNDS LIKE	IPA	WATCH OUT
colonel	**KUR-nul**	/ˈkɜːnl/	Sounds exactly like *kernel*.
choir	**KWIRE**	/ˈkwaɪə/	Starts with a **kw** sound.
queue	**KYOO**	/kjuː/	Four silent letters!
recipe	**RES-uh-pee**	/ˈresəpi/	3 syllables, ends in **-pee**.
epitome	**ih-PIT-uh-mee**	/ɪˈpɪtəmi/	4 syllables, not EP-i-tome.
height	**HITE**	/haɪt/	Ends in **t**, not *th*.

4 · Stress & sneaky extra sounds

Watch where the strong syllable falls.

WORD	SOUNDS LIKE	IPA	WATCH OUT
pronunciation	**pruh-nun-see-AY-shun**	/prəˌnʌnsiˈeɪʃn/	No *noun* in it!
photographer	**fuh-TOG-ruh-fuh**	/fəˈtɒgrəfə/	Stress moves: PHO-to-graph → pho-TO-grapher.
determine	**di-TUR-min**	/dɪˈtɜːmɪn/	Ends in **-min**, not -mine.
mischievous	**MIS-chi-vus**	/ˈmɪstʃɪvəs/	3 syllables, no *-vious*.
especially	**ih-SPESH-uh-lee**	/ɪˈspeʃəli/	No **x** sound: not ex-pecially.
espresso	**es-PRESS-oh**	/eˈspresəʊ/	Not ex-presso.

Practice time!

A · Read aloud — slowly, then fast

1. On **Wednesday**, the **colonel** ate **salmon** on an **island**.
2. This **vegetable** soup **recipe** is **especially comfortable** food in **February**.
3. The **choir** waited in a **queue** for **chocolate** and **espresso**.
4. The **mischievous photographer** kept the **receipt** from the **castle**.
5. Your **pronunciation** is the **epitome** of **subtle** progress!

B · Tick the correct pronunciation

salmon
- ◯ a) SAL-mon
- ◯ b) SAM-un

colonel
- ◯ a) KUR-nul
- ◯ b) ko-lo-NEL

comfortable
- ◯ a) com-FOR-ta-ble
- ◯ b) KUMF-tuh-bul

queue
- ◯ a) KYOO
- ◯ b) KWEH-way

epitome
- ◯ a) EP-i-tome
- ◯ b) ih-PIT-uh-mee

especially
- ◯ a) ex-PESH-uh-lee
- ◯ b) ih-SPESH-uh-lee

C · Spot it!

Cross out the **silent letter** in each word:

island · receipt · subtle · castle · salmon · Wednesday

Then **underline the stressed syllable**:

photographer · determine · interesting · pronunciation

Teacher's tips

- Record yourself reading Exercise A, then compare with a dictionary.
- Clap the syllables: *comf-ta-ble* = 3 claps, not 4.
- Spelling ≠ sound in English. When in doubt, check the dictionary before you say it.

Answers

B: salmon b · colonel a · comfortable b · queue a · epitome b · especially b

C: **i**sland, recei**p**t, su**b**tle, cas**t**le, sa**l**mon, We**d**nesday · pho-**TOG**-rapher, de-**TER**-mine, **IN**-teresting, pro-nun-ci-**A**-tion