

An American flag with red and white stripes and a blue field with white stars, waving across the top of the cover.

Ideal for  
intermediate  
and advanced  
non-native  
speakers

# Improve Your American English Accent

Charlsie Childs



**Proven intensive program with your own private tutor**



**The effective way to overcome difficulties in six easy lessons**



**Listen-and-repeat exercises help you get it right the first time**

# Improve Your American English Accent

**Charlsie Childs**

# Introduction

*Improve Your American English Accent* is an audio course designed to help non-natives understand and produce the accents of North American English speakers. The course consists of six sessions on three compact disks and this accompanying booklet, which parallels the information on the disks. You are strongly encouraged to listen to each session a minimum of five times before going on to the next session. Also try to listen to each session at least three times before you look at the corresponding text in this booklet. (Many times new language learners hear what they expect to hear; you may be surprised by what you learn when you don't have expectations.)

Although the recordings can be studied on their own, this written guide to the material covered in the audio sessions will help reinforce your understanding. It also serves as a quick reference to the tracks on the three CDs.

In this guide, you will find summaries of the key instruction in each lesson, along with all the model words, phrases, and sentences to be repeated (marked by →). This booklet also provides the questions and answers to the main audio exercises on the recording, so do not look at these sections until you have completed the relevant exercise on the recording (at least three times).

## A quick review of grammar terms

(If you wish, there's room for translations of these terms into your first language.)

**Parts of Speech:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Noun:** \_\_\_\_\_ A naming word; e.g., man, woman, John, sun, country, life, action.

**Pronoun:** \_\_\_\_\_ A word that substitutes for a noun; e.g., it, that, I, you, us, ours.

**Infinitive:** \_\_\_\_\_ A word, usually preceded by *to*, that is used as a noun: e.g., to be, to go, to have, to work.

**Gerund:** \_\_\_\_\_ A word that finishes with *-ing* that is used as a noun: e.g., being, living, swimming, working.

**Singular:** \_\_\_\_\_ (one)

**Plural:** \_\_\_\_\_ (more than one)

**Verb:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Auxiliary Verb:** \_\_\_\_\_ A word that works with the main verb in a phrase; e.g., am, is, are, was, were, been, do, does, did, have, has, had.

**Modal Auxiliary Verb:** \_\_\_\_\_ A helping verb that gives us added information; e.g., can, could, might, should.

**Verb Forms:** \_\_\_\_\_ E.g., forms of **a regular verb**: work, works, working, worked; forms of **an irregular verb**: take, takes, taking, took, taken.

**Adjective:** \_\_\_\_\_ A word that describes a noun; it tells how many, which one, what kind; e.g., three, strange, little, old, blue.

**Present Participle:** \_\_\_\_\_ A word that has a verb or gerund form but functions as an adjective; e.g., the man *speaking*, *bleeding* heart, *sleeping* giant.

**Past Participle:** \_\_\_\_\_ A word with a verb form (e.g., -ed, -en) that can function as an adjective; e.g., *written* contract; *spoken* word; *baked* potato.

**Adverb:** \_\_\_\_\_ A word that describes a verb or adjective or another adverb; e.g., carefully, quickly, well, fast, very, quite, pretty.

**Preposition:** \_\_\_\_\_ E.g., of, in, on, at, with, to, from, between.

**Conjunction:** \_\_\_\_\_ E.g., and, but, however.

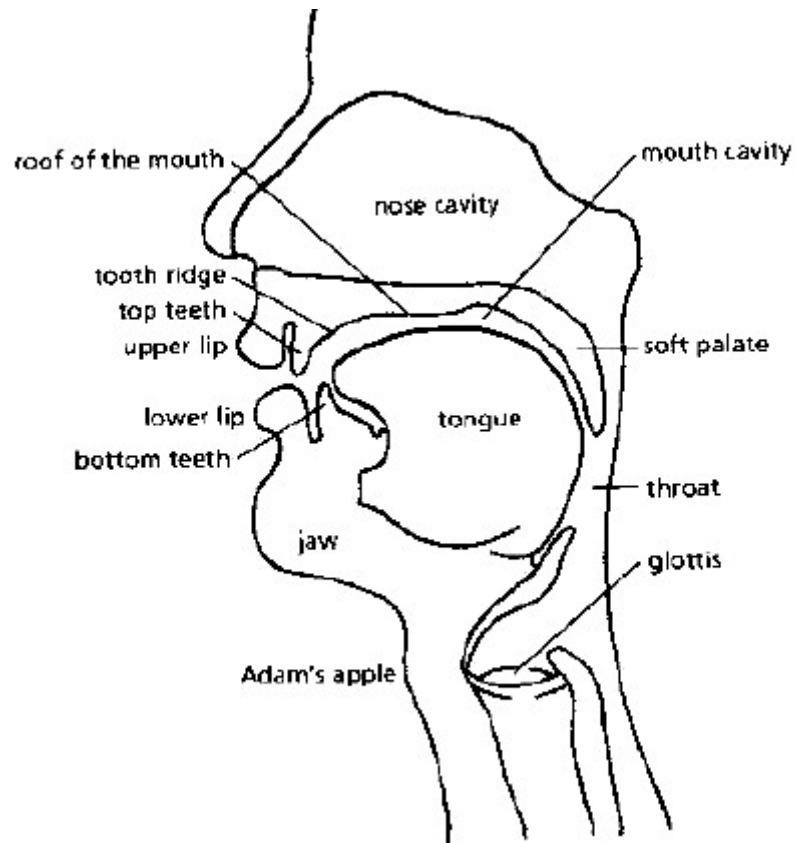
**Noun (or pronoun, gerund, or infinitive) Functions in a Sentence**

**Subject of the Verb:** \_\_\_\_\_ E.g., Good **health** is important; **it** is important; **exercising** is important; **to exercise** is important; **it** is important to exercise.

**Object of the Verb:** \_\_\_\_\_ E.g., I want good **health**; I want **it**; I want to have good health; I enjoy **having** good health; I enjoy **it**.

**Object of the Preposition:** \_\_\_\_\_ E.g., Long life is the result *of* good **health**; long life is the result *of* **it**; exercise is an aid *to* good **health**; exercising is an aid *to* **it**.

### Points of speech articulation



# Major North American English vowels

	1 beat seem teal		12 burn search turn		10 boot soon tool
HIGH VOWELS	2 bit sin till				9 book soot took
		3 bait same tail	11 but some tuck	8 boat soap told	
MID VOWELS		4 bet send tell	7 bought song tall		
		5 bat sand tan			
LOW VOWELS		6 baht psalm Tom			
	FRONT OF THE MOUTH	CENTER OF THE MOUTH		BACK OF THE MOUTH	

# Session One

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## 1.1. Introduction to *Improve Your American English Accent*

## 1.2. What's in Session One

- ✓ **vowels** (four easy ones)
- ✓ **syllables** in words and phrases
- ✓ word and syllable **stress**
- ✓ two kind of consonants: **stops and continuants**
- ✓ an important **extra sound** that we use **with final stops**
- ✓ the effect of **voicing** on stops

## 1.3. The vowels 1, 6, and 10

In most dialects of North American English, there are about **fifteen basic vowel sounds and combinations**; we make them by changing the shape of the mouth. But, remember, we're talking about vowel sounds, *not* vowel **letters**.

(Many students and teachers of English as a second language use this or some other number system to identify the most common North American English vowels—but native speakers generally don't know the numbers and don't use them.)

Vowel sound 1 : It's called a **high, front, tense** vowel because the tongue is high in the front of the mouth, and because the muscles of the throat and lips are very tight.

Vowel sound 6 : It's called a **low, central, lax** vowel because the tongue is low and in the center of the mouth, and the muscles are more or less relaxed.

Vowel sound 10 : It's called a **high, back, rounded** vowel because the tongue in the back of the mouth, and the lips make a circle.

I identify the vowels in these words:

➔ team ... 1 ; trod ... 6; true ... 10; June ... 10; jeans ... 1;  
fool ... 10; meet ... 1; mock ... 6; Bob ... 6; job ... 6;  
rude ... 10; street ... 1; stop ... 6; feel ... 1; hot ... 6

Note that in English, we use voice when we say any vowel. All English vowels are vocal.

## 1.4. Vowel sound 11

**Vowel 11** is called a **mid, central, lax** vowel; it's neutral --- *not* high, *not* low, *not* front, *not* back --- and very relaxed. Some people say it sounds like a punch in the stomach! It's not beautiful, but it's *very important* in North American English.

Some words that contrast these four vowel sounds:

1	10	6	11
sheet	shoot	shot	shut
beer	boot	baht	butt
read	rude	rod	Rudd
keep	coop	cop	cup

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to these words and identify vowels.

➔ team ... 1; June ... 10; pond ... 6; steed ... 1; pun ... 11;  
son ... 11; creep ... 1; drool ... 10; drum ... 11; dream ... 1;  
treat ... 1; truck ... 11; trod ... 6; truth ... 10; seen ... 1;  
fool ... 10; feel ... 1; east ... 1; come ... 11; do ... 10

## 1.5. Syllables

A syllable in English is one vowel or group of vowels that native speakers consider one vowel sound, and the consonants that are grouped with that vowel. **English syllables can end with either vowel or consonant sounds.**

➔ *one-syllable words*: right ... cost ... try ... play ... strike

➔ *two-syllable words*: flashlight ... ashtray ... exist ... weekend ... again

- ➔ *three-syllable words*: important ... visible ... occasion ... holiday ... origin
- ➔ *four-syllable words*: necessary ... occasional ... temporary
- ➔ *five-syllable words*: individual ... unnecessary ... imaginative ... periodical ... electricity

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to these words and decide the number of syllables each has.

- ➔ extravagant ... 4; clock ... 1; reach ... 1; record ... 2; record ... 2;
- ordinary ... 4; industry ... 3; industrial ... 4;
- apartment ... 3; accident ... 3; accidental ... 4;
- eventual ... 4; fly ... 1; flight ... 1; carrier ... 3;
- career ... 2; airline ... 2



## 1.6. Syllable stress

**Record** (the noun) and **record** (the verb) both have two syllables, but they sound very different because they are **stressed in different places**. (This difference in stress between nouns and verbs is common in English.)

**Record** (the noun) has the **greater stress** on the **first syllable**, and the vowel in the first syllable is pronounced more clearly. The second syllable is *not* as stressed, and the vowel in the second syllable is *not* pronounced as clearly.

**Record** (the verb) has the **greater stress** on the **second syllable**, and the vowel in the second syllable is pronounced more clearly. The first syllable is *not* as stressed, and the vowel in the first syllable is *not* pronounced as clearly.

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the words on this track and decide the number of syllables each has—and where the greatest stress is.

- ➔ **business** (2 syllables); **language** (2 syllables);
- association (5 syllables); **department** (3 syllables);
- necessity (4 syllables); **ordinarily** (5 syllables)

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the phrases on this track and decide the number of syllables each has—and where the greatest stress is.

➔ **post** office (3 syllables); take a **break** (3 syllables);  
open the **window** (5 syllables); under the **table** (5 syllables);  
every **weekday** (4 syllables); a happy **fellow** (5 syllables)



## 1.7. Consonants: Stop and continuants

We make both *p* and *m* by pressing the lips together, but the sounds are very different.

We call the *p* sound a *stop* because we must make the air **stop completely** for a moment. It is very important to make the air stop completely when we make the *p* (also the *b*) sound.

We call the *m* sound a *continuant* because we must permit **the air to continue to pass**. It is very important in English that stops and continuants sound different from each other.

### Consonant stops and continuants in English

*Stops* (the passage of air is stopped momentarily.)

p, b (cup, cub)

k, g (pick, pig)

t, d (pat, pad)

special *flap* sound between vowel  
(heating/heeding)

*Continuants* (the air continues to pass.)

m (come)

ng (ping)

n (pan)

r, l (hearing, healing)

f, v

h

w, wh

th (thin), th (this)

*sibilant* sounds: s, sh, z, zh

(All vowels are continuants.)

**combination** stops and continuants: x, ch, j (box, batch, badge)

This information is important because many languages don't have words that end in stops, and the speakers of those languages sometimes don't hear or say the final stops in English.



## 1.8. The glottal stop: An important extra stop sound

The glottis is the organ that makes voice. (See illustration on page ix.) It is made of two folds of skin, which are separated when the glottis is relaxed, and side by side when the glottis is tensed. When the folds are relaxed and apart, the air from our lungs passes freely between them. When the folds are tensed side by side, the air that passes between them makes the folds of skin vibrate, and we have voice.

Sometimes we make the two folds of skin strike against each other very quickly. We often make this stop—it's the sound we make when we say, "uh-oh." In some languages, this is a separate consonant sound, but in English we often use it with *d, t, k, g, b* or *p* when one of those sounds happens at the **end of a word or syllable**. (See illustration on page ix.) We close the vocal cords very sharply and make the air **stop** for just a moment. We don't let the air escape.

**This glottal stop** is the last sound of these words:

➔ *words*: light ... flight ... put ... take ... make ... trip ... report

➔ *multisyllable words*: stoplight ... apartment ... backseat ... assortment ... workload ... upbeat

➔ *phrases*: right now ... talk back ... cook the books ... hate mail ... fax machine ... back-breaking

You also hear it in words and syllables that end in *t* + a vowel + *n*. We don't say the vowel at all, so we say the *t* + *n*:

➔ button ... cotton .. kitten ... Clinton ... continent ... forgotten ... sentence

(In this book we'll use the symbol ! to signify when you should make a glottal stop)



## 1.9. Voicing and vowel duration

You know from section 1.8. that the glottis is the organ that makes voice. (See illustration on page ix.) When the folds of skin of the glottis are tensed side by side, the air that passes between them makes the folds vibrate, and we have voice. If you lightly touch the glottis (the “voice box” or “Adam’s apple”) when you are voicing, your finger will feel the vibration.

### Consonants: Voiced and voiceless

#### Sounds without voice

p

k

t

f

wh

th (thin)

s, sh, ch, x

h

#### Sounds with voice

b, m

g, ng

d, n

v

w

th (this)

z, zh (beige), j

r, l

(All English vowels are voiced.)

Knowing about voicing is important for several reasons. One reason is that voicing affects the vowel that comes before a voiced consonant. We say the vowel for a longer time when it comes just before a voiced sound. (In this book we’ll use the symbol : to signify that you should make the vowel sound for a longer time there.)

#### Without voiced sound

➔ He’s a batboy.

➔ She gets the ace.

➔ Tuck it in.

➔ It was a flight.

➔ I want to write.

#### With voiced sound

He’s a bad boy.

She gets the A’s.

Tug it in.

It was a fly.

I want to ride.



### 1.10. Stress in abbreviations and initials

When we say abbreviations made up of letters, we always put the most stress on the last letter.

→ OK ... IRS ... VIP ... UN ... PB&J ... UK ... UAE ... USA



### 1.11. Let's try to apply this information

→ We've gone in the YMCA.

→ They're talking about the IPO.

→ I don't like the place.

→ I don't like the plays.

→ What can you tell our D.A.?

→ Take the report to a V.P.



### 1.12. Assignment

Please listen to and practice Session One at least five times before going on the Session Two. The first three times, try to listen without using this book.

Please be sure you know all the grammar terms on pages vii-ix. We will use those terms later.



# Session Two

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## 1.13. What's in Session Two

- ✓ three more **vowels**: 3, 4 and 5
- ✓ **aspiration of stops**, depending on their placement in a word or phrase
- ✓ **linking** words together as native speakers do
- ✓ factors that affect the **pronunciation of nouns and verbs**
- ✓ **stress** with the **suffixes** *-ion*, *-sion*, *-tion*
- ✓ **stress** in **adjective + noun** phrases



## 1.14. The vowels: Review of vowels 6 and 11

Dodd	dud
shot	shut
Bob	bub
mod	mud
dock	duck
pot	putt

You see that many vowel 6 words are spelled with *o* + one or two consonants following. The letter is pronounced *o*, but the sound, 6, sounds more like "ah."



## 1.15. The vowels: Introducing vowels 3,4, and 5

Vowel sound 3: It's really **two front vowel sounds**; the tongue makes a middle, relaxed front vowel and then glides to a higher, tenser front vowel.

➔ made ... pate ... shake

Vowel sound 4: It's called a **middle, front, lax** vowel because the sound is made in the front of the mouth, but it isn't very high or low in the mouth, and the tongue muscles are relatively relaxed.

➔ med ... pet ... shell

Vowel sound 5: It's called a **low, front, lax** vowel because the sound is made in the front of the mouth, and the tongue is low and relaxed. It's a very **animal-like** sound, not very beautiful, and a lot of new speakers feel shy about making it; but it's *very* important in North American English.

➔ mad ... pat ... shack

### Vowel discrimination practice

Here are some words that contrast these five vowel sounds.

3	4	5	6	11
Dade	dead	dad	Dodd	dud
shape	Shep	shad	shop	shut
made	med	mad	mod	mud
trait	tread	track	trod	trudge

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the words and identify vowels 3, 4, 5, 6, or 11.

➔ taste ... 3; track ... 5; knell ... 4; nod ... 6; sap ... 5;  
fan ... 5; fun ... 11; fast ... 5; job ... 6; jug ... 11; mom ... 6;  
mum ... 11; ten ... 4; up ... 11; flock ... 6; one ... 11;  
puck ... 11; pack ... 5; pet ... 4; ton ... 11



## 1.16. Different ways to pronounce stops

The way we pronounce a stop depends on the sounds that come before and after it.

### A quick review of stops and voicing

Voiceless stops	Voiced stops
p	b
t	d
k	g

When the stop is at the beginning of a syllable and a vowel follows, the voiceless stops are usually “exploded”—with force and lots of air:

➔ thoo ... thill ... thalk ... thake ... thime

➔ chome ... chall ... chook ... khill ... khid

➔ phass ... phick ... phocket ... phour ... pheak

When the stop is at the *end* of a syllable and a consonant follows, a *glottal stop* (see Session One, track 8) is substituted.

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the pronunciation of these words.

→ out ... put ... get ... meet ... report ... make ... truck ... pick ... quake ... mistake ...  
trip ... up ... cop ... shrimp ... sleep

You *must* make the air stop completely for a moment. Otherwise, your pronunciation is wrong, and native speakers will have trouble understanding you.



### 1.17. Linking words together (as the native speakers do)

When a word ends in a consonant but the next word begins with a vowel, we connect the ending consonant to the beginning vowel, and we say the consonant stops with force.

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Practice these phrases and sentences *without looking at this page*. (You'll hear sounds you didn't expect!)

→ take\_off ... come\_over ... feel\_OK ... pull\_out ... have\_another ... cold\_as\_ice ...  
kill\_an\_hour ... cream\_an\_sugar ... take\_a\_vacation ... have\_a\_wife ... has\_a\_husband ...  
walk\_in\_on ... watch\_a\_movie

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In the pronunciation transliterations that follow, these symbols are used:

! glottal stop (see 1.8)

: lengthened vowel (see 1.9)

# between-vowel flap (see 2.7)

\* schwa (see 2.11)

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→ He always comes in on time.

(He yawlw\*ys com zi n\*n ta:im.)

→ My watch says 7:02.

(My wahtch says sev\*-no-too.)

→ She works at 157 Post Oak.

(She werk! s\*t! one-fifty-sev\*n pos touk.)

→ Call 281-555-6789

(Call too-weight! wu:n, faiv-faiv-fai:iv, sik\_sev\*-neit!-na:in.)

→ Send it to the post office.

(Sen dit! t\* th\* pos toff\*ce.)

→ They're working on a project.

(They're wer ki ng\*n\* pra j\*ct.)

→ Take a minute to look over the report.

(Tei k\*min\*t! t\*loo kouv\*r th\* r\* port!.)



### 1.18. Three variations of -s/-es noun and verb endings

If a word ends in a *voiceless* sound, the (plural or present tense or possessive) -s ending will be voiceless, too.

→ Pat's ... cats ... hates

→ Pop's ... caps ... flips

→ Mick's ... cakes ... makes

→ Ralph's ... cliffs ... coughs

→ Ruth's ... myths

If a word ends in a *voiced* sound, the (plural or present tense or possessive) -s ending will be voiced, too—and the vowel before the voiced consonant will be *longer* (see CD 1, track 9).

→ Rudd's ... foods ... fades

(ru:dz ... foo:dz ... fe:idez)

→ Bob's ... cabs ... rubs

(bah:bz ... ca:bz ... ru:bz)

→ Meg's ... dogs ... digs

(me:gz ... daw:gz ... di:gz)

→ Phil's ... dolls ... feels

(fi:lz ... dah:lz ... fee:lz)

→ Tom's ... bombs ... comes

(tah:mz ... bah:mz ... cu:mz)

If the word ends in a *sibilant* (hissing sound such as **s, z, sh, ch, j, x**, etc.), we add an *extra syllable*.

- ➔ Ross's ... sentences ... misses
- ➔ Rose's ... noses ... muses
- ➔ Trish's ... brushes ... rushes
- ➔ Mitch's ... watches ... catches
- ➔ Hodge's ... pages ... rages
- ➔ Fox's ... boxes ... fixes

In these examples, sentences with lengthened vowels are followed by the pronunciation.

- ➔ Pat's son hates cats.  
(Sa:mz mah:m ra:ɪdz tre:ɪnz.)
- ➔ Ross's dresses have prices.  
(Si:dz spu:dz ma:ɪd su:dz.)
- ➔ Sol's dolls tell tales.  
(Sah:lz dah:lz te:l tei:lz.)
- ➔ Rick's ducks take walks.
- ➔ Rose's kid chooses her noses.



### 1.19. Syllable stress with suffixes *-ion*, *-sion*, *-tion*

The syllable with the most stress is the one just *before* the *-ion/-sion/-tion* suffix. That vowel is pronounced the most clearly. The vowels in the *less stressed* syllables are pronounced *less clearly* or sometimes not at all.

- ➔ fusion ... faction ... fiction ... nation ... addition ... edition ... invasion ...  
satisfaction ... distribution ... elimination ... privatization

Be very careful of your stress and *non*-stress.



## 1.20. Word stress in adjective + noun phrases

In phrases with adjectives and nouns, the nouns usually have more stress than the adjectives.

→ The old *man* ... a happy *day* ... three blind *mice* ... a nine-man *team* ... a two-car *garage* ... pretty little *children* ... a ferocious *dog*



## 1.21. Let's try to apply all this information

→ *Keep it clean.*

(Kee pit! clee:n.)

→ *Put that on the grass.*

(Put! tha #\*n th\* gra:ss.)

→ This is a nice *place*.

(Thi s\* z\* nais pleis.)

→ *Tell him what you want.*

(Te l\*m wha ch\* wahnt!.)

→ *Give them three gold coins.*

(Gi v\*m three gold co:inz.)

→ I've got four big *bags*.

(Aiv gaht! four bi:g ba:gz.)

→ She *walks* on the *beach* every *morning*.

(She wawk! s\*n th\* bee ch\*vry morn\*ng.)

→ *Take it to the post office.*

(Tei k\*t! t\* th\* pos toff\*ce.)



## 1.22. Assignment

Please listen to and practice Session Two at least five times before going on to Session Three. The first three times, try to listen without using this book.

If possible, ask a native speaker to read some of these phrases and sentences to you.

# Session Three

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## 2.1. What's in Session Three

- ✓ vowels 1, 2, 3, 4, and 12
- ✓ the three different ways of pronouncing *-ed* endings
- ✓ how and when *not* to stress words and syllables
- ✓ two more indispensable North American English speech sounds: the intervocalic *d* or *t* flap and the unstressed vowel schwa
- ✓ linking, using these two new sounds
- ✓ stress in noun + noun words and phrases
- ✓ stress in words with *-al*, *-ial*, or *-ual* suffixes

## 2.2. The vowels: 1 and 2

Vowel sound 2: It's a lot like vowel sound 1; it's a front vowel but not quite so high and not quite so tense as vowel sound 1:

<u>Vowel 1</u>	<u>Vowel 2</u>
Pete	pit
feel	fill
bead	bid
sheep	ship

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the words and identify vowels 1 or 2.

➔ heat ... 1; hit ... 2; hit ... 2; heat ... 1; fill ... 2; fill ... 2;  
feel ... 1; fill ... 2; feel ... 1; bean ... 1; bin ... 2; bean ... 1;  
bin ... 2; bin ... 2; bin ... 2; cheap ... 1; cheap ... 1;  
chip ... 2; cheap ... 1; chip ... 2; chip ... 2; cheap ... 1;  
cheap ... 1



## 2.3. The vowels: Front vowels 1, 2, 3, and 4

Here are some words that contrast **four vowel sounds**: 1, 2, 3, and 4.

1	2	3	4
Pete	pit	pate	pet
feel	fill	fail	fell
head	bid	made	bed
sheep	ship	shape	Shep

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the words and identify vowels 1, 2, 3, or 4.

➔ heat ... 1; hit ... 2; pill ... 2; head ... 4; fill ... 2; fill ... 2;  
 fell ... 4; fill ... 2; fail ... 3; bean ... 1; bin ... 2; bane ... 3;  
 ben ... 4; bid ... 2; bead ... 1; cheap ... 1; sheep ... 1;  
 shape ... 3; cheap ... 1; chip ... 2; ship ... 2; Pete ... 1;  
 pit ... 2; ship ... 2; bead ... 1; bed ... 4; bid ... 2; bed ... 4;  
 bit ... 2; beat ... 1



## 2.4. The vowels: Vowel 12

Vowel sound 12: It's called a retroflex because many people curl the front of the tongue back a little bit when they make this sound.

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to vowel sound 12, then look at the **many spellings** English permits for this sound.

➔ words ... first ... sir ... third ... world ... earth ... purple ... certain ... curtain

This isn't an easy sound to learn; it needs a lot of practice.



## 2.5. The three -ed/ verb endings (the regular endings for simple past and past participle forms)

1. With the exception of the *t* sound, if the simple verb form ends with a *voiceless* sound (see page 6), the -ed ending will also be voiceless; it will sound like *t*.

➔ jumped ... liked ... laughed ... missed ... watched

2. With the exception of the *d* sound, if the simple verb form ends with a *voiced* sound, the *-ed* ending will also be voiced; it will sound like *d—and* the vowel *before* the voiced consonant will sound l-o-n-g-e-r.

→ robbed ... phoned ... called ... seemed ... judged ... snoozed ... played ... nagged

3. When the simple form of the verb ends with a *d* or *t*, the *-ed* ending will be *an extra syllable*. But the vowel in that syllable will *not* be pronounced clearly.

→ added ... needed ... tested ... ended ... trusted



## 2.6. Practice using the *-ed* endings

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to and practice these sentences – particularly the *-ed* endings and the linking. Some of the pronunciations might surprise you!

→ They danced in the moonlight.  
(Th\*y **dan** st\*n th\* moonlight!.)

→ We walked on the beach.  
(We **wawk!** t\*n th\* beetch.)

→ You tricked us.  
(Y\* **trik!** tuss.)

→ I called a friend of mine.  
(I **cawl** d\* **fren** d\*v mai:n.)

→ She poured a glass of wine.  
(She **por** #\* **gla** s\*v wai:n.)

→ He used all the towels.  
(He yooz **daw:l** th\* tow:lz.)

→ We pasted it on the fridge.  
(We **peis** t\* #\* #ahn th\* fri:dj.)

→ You needed a hand.  
(Y\* **nee** #\* #\* ha:nd.)

→ We loaded our camera.  
(We **lo** #\* #\*r camr\*.)



## 2.7. The between-vowel (intervocalic) *d* or *t* flap

(It's indispensable, but most North American English speakers have never heard of it.)

This is a very quick and light stop; we make it by touching the tip of the tongue lightly against the tooth ridge (see page ix). It sounds a lot like the *r* of many languages (Spanish, for example), but not *r* of North American English, and it happens only **when the *d* or *t* is between two vowels**. (In this book we'll use the symbol # to signify that you should use a flap instead of *d* or *t* sound.)

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to and practice these sentences: *t* or *d* flap and the linking.

→ knotted ... nodded

→ patted ... padded

→ heated ... heeded

(They sound almost the same in most North American English dialects.)



## 2.8. Practice using the *d* or *t* flap

→ What are you doing?

(Hw\* #r y\* doo\*ng?)

→ Did I tell you what happened?

(Di #ai tell y\* wh\*t! happn:d?)

→ Could I open a window?

(Cou #ai yo p\* n\* windo:w?)

→ They can finish a photo in one hour.

(Th\*y kn fi n\* sh\* fo #o w\* n\* nau:er.)

→ He stood on the stair.

(He stoo #\*n th\* ste:r.)

→ We needed a break.

(We nee #\* #\* breik!.)



## 2.9. Stress in adjectives with *-al*, *-ial*, or *-ual* suffixes

In words of *more than two syllables*, the greatest stress is usually two syllables before *-al*.

→ general ... genial ... usual ... visual ... material ... exceptional ... medial ... radical ...  
economical ... cultural ... international



## 2.10. Stress in noun + noun phrases

In compound nouns (nouns made up of two or more nouns) or noun + noun phrases, we almost always put the stress on the *first* noun.

→ *truck* driver ... *police* officer ... *baby* sitter ...  
efficiency report ... *water* glass ... *button* hole ...  
hospitality room ... *birthday* party ... *wrist*watch ...  
*business* letter ... *CD* player



## 2.11. To stress or not to stress: the schwa

We normally *stress* the most important words—the *content words* in a phrase or sentence: *nouns, main verbs, adjectives, and adverbs*. We do it by pronouncing the vowels of the most stressed syllables with more force and clarity, and often with a change of pitch, and for a l-o-n-g-e-r time.

We normally *don't stress* the less important words: the *function words* in a phrase or sentence: *articles, prepositions, pronouns, and helping verbs*. We do that by pronouncing the vowels of those less stressed syllables with less force and less clarity.

### The unstressed vowel sound: schwa

This is often some kind of variation of vowel sound 11, because it's not high, not low, not front, not back. *It's a neutral sound—an unclear sound.* (In this book we'll use the symbol \* to signify that the vowel is not clear there.) It is very important *not* to stress or pronounce too clearly the vowels in unstressed words or syllables; otherwise you'll confuse native speakers!

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to and practice these phrases—being very careful about stress and non-stress.

→ one of the **people** ... **mouse** on the **roof** ... **take** a **bite** ... **explain** his **position** ...  
one of the last **remaining** **examples** ... over to his **mother's** **house** ... under every  
desk



## 2.12. Stress and non-stress in some useful words

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to and practice these words—being very careful about stress and non-stress

→ ex**travagant** ... **record** ... *record* ... *ordinary* ... *industry* ... *industrial* ... *apartment*  
... *accident* ... *accidental* ... *eventual* ... *fly* ... *flight* ... *carrier* ... *career* ... *assortment*  
... *development* ... *necessary* ... *elementary* ... *management*



## 2.13. Let's try to apply all this information

**AUDIO PRACTICE:** Listen to and practice these sentences—being very careful about stress and non-stress.

- We've gone in the YMCA.  
(We've **gah** n\*n th\* wai-yem-see-ye:i.)
- They're talking about the IPO.  
(th\*'re **taw** k\* ng\* baut! th\* yai-pee-yoh:.)
- I like the place.  
(I **laik**! th\* **pleis**.)
- I don't like the plays.  
(I **don't**! laik! th\* **plei:z**.)
- What can you tell our D.A.?  
(Hwat! kn y\* **te** l\*r dee-ye:i?)
- Take the report to a V.P.  
(Teik! th\* r\* **port**! to w\* vee-pee:.)
- What are you doing?  
(Hwa #r y\* **doo**\*ng?)
- Did I tell you what happened?  
(D\* #ai tel y\* hw\*t! **happnd**?)

- Could I open a window?  
(Cou #ai **yo** p\* n\* **window**?)
- They can finish a photo in an hour.  
(Th\*y kn **fin**\* sh\* **fo** #o w\* n\* **nau;er**.)
- He stood on the stair.  
(He **stoo** #\*n th\* **ste:r**.)
- We needed a hand.  
(W\* **nee**#\* #\* **ha:nd**.)



## 2.14. Assignment

Please listen to and practice Session Three at least five times before going on to Session Four. The first three times, try to listen without using this book. Start putting these exercises into practice so you can begin to change your accent. Choose at least three sentences from this session to use in a conversation with native speakers, if you can.

*For example:*

What are you doing?

What can you tell us?

Could I open a window? (or Could I ask a favor?)



## Session Four

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### 2.15. What's in Session Four

- ✓ vowels 8, 9 and 10
- ✓ some very useful contractions
- ✓ reducing the *b* sound in common function words
- ✓ helping verbs can/can't, will, could, would
- ✓ stress in suffix *-ity*

### 2.16. Vowels: Vowel sound 8

Vowel sound 8: It's called a **back** vowel, but it's really a **glide** because the sound starts a lot like the *o* in other languages, but then it gets higher and tenser, and it changes to a *u* sound: *o-u*.

➔ no ... go ... show ... coat ... boat ... more ... soap ... fold ... bowling ... coke

### 2.17. Vowels: Back vowels 8, 9, and 10

Vowel sound 10: You remember it's called a high, back vowel, and you probably have it in your first language.

Vowel sound 9: It's called a **high, back vowel**, too, and it's a little hard to distinguish because it sounds a lot like vowel sound 10; the lips are rounded, as in 8 and 10, but it's not quite as high or tense or rounded as 10.

Here are some words that contrast these four vowel sounds.

8	9	10
pole	pull	pool
foal	full	fool
float	foot	food
showed	should	shooed

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the words and identify vowel sounds 8, 9 or 10.

→ you ... 10; yo ... 8; good ... 9; true ... 10; goad ... 8; crude ... 10; crook ... 9;  
croak ... 8; flew ... 10; flow ... 8; look ... 9; Luke ... 10; group ... 10;  
truth ... 10; goo ... 10

## 2.18. Contractions: Is

Native English speakers of all dialects often connect their words and make them shorter.

The -s sounds different, depending on whether the sound just before it is voiced or unvoiced. If the preceding sound is voiced, the -s sound is voiced; if the preceding sound is unvoiced, the -s sound is unvoiced.

→ he's ... she's ... it's ... that's ... this's ... what's ... when's ... where's ... how's

→ He's a hero. (He z\* hero.) ...  
She's on a trip. (She z\* n\* trip!.) ...  
It's still old. (I t's sti lold.) ...  
That's funny. (That! sfunny.)

→ This is a mystery. (Thi s\* z\* mistry.) ...  
What's he doing? (Hwat! see doo\*ng?) ...  
Where's it going? (Hwer z\*t! go\*ng?)

→ When's she arriving? (Hwen she y\* ra:i v\*ng?)

## 2.19. Contractions: Are

→ We're ... you're ... they're ... how're ... when're ... what're

→ You're late. (Yr lait!.) ...  
We're sorry. (W\*r sawry.) ...  
They're wrong. (Th\*r-rong.)

→ What're you doing? (Hw\* #r y\* doo\*ng?) ...  
When're we leaving? (Hwe nr w\* lee:v\*ng?)

→ Why're you sitting? (Hwai: yr y\* si#\*ng?)

## 2.20. Contractions: Does

(This is most common in questions; listen for **flaps**.) (See CD 2, track 7.)

- ➔ What does ... Where does ... When does ... Why does ... How does
- ➔ What does it mean? (Hwa #\* z\*t! mea:n?) ...  
Where does it go? (Hwer #\* z\*t! go:u?)
- ➔ When does he leave? (Hwen d\* zee lee:v?) ...  
Why does she do that? (Hwai #\* shee doo that!?)
- ➔ How does it happen? (Hau #\* z\*t! hapn?)

## 2.21. Contractions: Did

- ➔ What did ... Where did ... When did ... Why did ... How did
- ➔ What did it mean? (Hwa #\*i #\*t! mea:n?) ...  
Where did it go? (Hwer #\* #\*t! go:u?)
- ➔ When did he leave? (Hwen d\* #ee lee:v?) ...  
Why did she do that? (Hwai #\* chee dou that!?)
- ➔ How did it happen? (Hau #\* #\*t! hapn?)

## 2.22 Contractions: Will

- ➔ I'll ... you'll ... he'll .. she'll ... it'll ... we'll ... they'll ... this'll ... that'll ... what'll ...  
when'll ... where'll ... how'll ... who'll
- ➔ What'll we do? (Hwa #l we doo?) ...  
When'll you come? (Hwe nl y\* cu:m?)
- ➔ Where'll they go? (Hwe r\*ll th\*y go:u?) ...  
I'll let you know. (Ail let! ch\* no:u.)
- ➔ We'll see you later. (W\*I see y\* lei#r.) ...  
He'll never make it. (H\*I ne vr me:i k\*t!.)

## 2.23. Contractions: Would

(In contractions, *would* and *did* often sound the same. You have to know your grammar to know the correct word.)

- ➔ I'd ... you'd ... he'd ... she'd ... it'd ... we'd ... they'd ... this'd ... that'd ... when'd ... where'd ... how'd
- ➔ I'd like to see a menu. (Ai dlaik! t\* see y\* meh nyoo.) ...  
He'd often call his family. (Hee #offn caw l\*z famly.)
- ➔ She'd let you know. (Sheed let! ch\* no:u.) ...  
We'd see you later. (Weed see y\* lei#r.) ...  
He'd never make it. (Heed nevr mai kit!.)

## 2.24. Contractions: Can and can't

When we say *can* in the middle of a sentence, we say the vowel almost not at all; the word *can* sounds like "*kn*."

- ➔ I can tell. (Ai kn te:l.) ...  
He can count. (he kn caunt!.) ...  
Can I go? (K\* nai go:u?)
- ➔ Where can they go? (Hwer kn they go:u?) ...  
How can you tell? (Hau k\* ny\* te:l?)
- ➔ Can you give me change? (Kn y\* giv me chei:nj?) ...  
Where can I get a drink? (Hwer k\* nai ge #\* drink?)

When we say *can't* in the middle of a sentence, we say the vowel very clearly, and we often pronounce the last 't as a flap or a glottal stop.

- ➔ I can't tell. (Ai kant! te:l.) ...  
He can't count. (He kant! caunt!.) ...  
Can't I go? (Kan #ai go:u?) ...  
Why can't they go? (Hwai kant! they go:u?)

Here are some short sentences that contrast *can* and *can't*,

I can tell.	I can't tell
He can count.	He can't count.
Can I go?	Can't I go?
How can he tell?	Why can't he tell?
Where can I get change?	Why can't I get change?



## 2.25. Reducing the *h* in words that are not important

In the middle of a stream of speech—a sentence, for example—we often don't say the *h* sound in:

- **pronouns:** he ... his ... her ... hers ... him
- Yes he will. (**Ye** see **will**.) ...  
No he won't. (**No** wee **won't!**.) ...  
That's his car. (**That!** s\*z ca:r.)
- That's her brother. (**That!** ser **brothr**.) ...  
Tell her the story. (**Te** lɹ th\* **story**.)
- Don't tell him the secret. (**Don't!** te l\*m th\* **secr\*t**.)
  
- **helping verbs:** have ... has ... had
- Where have his kids gone? (**Hwer** viz kids gaw:n.)
- What have you put in my pocket?  
(**Hw\*** #\* vy\* **pu** #\*n mai **pahk\*t?**)
- Where has he lived in Asia? (**Hwe** r\* zee liv d\* **nEi:** zh\*?)



## 2.26. Stress with the common suffix *-ity*

In words ending with *-ity*, the greatest stress will be on the syllable just before this suffix:

- *real* ... *reality*; *human* ... *humanity*; *electric* ... *electricity*;  
*moral* ... *morality*; *objective* ... *objectivity*; *necessary* ... *necessity*



## 2.27. Assignment

Please listen to and practice Session Four at least five times before going on to Session Five. The first three times, try to listen without using the book.

Practice using some of these sentences—especially the questions—when you're with native speakers. Choose some for practice every day.



# Session Five

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## 3.1. What's in Session Five

- ✓ vowels 6, 7, 8, 11, and the schwa
- ✓ more practice with contractions
- ✓ usual pitch changes in (declarative) sentences
- ✓ forming new sounds when linking words together
- ✓ pronunciation differences in *can/can't*, *could/couldn't*, *would/wouldn't*, and *should/shouldn't*
- ✓ more practice with linking, especially with the schwa and the flap
- ✓ reducing the *h* sound in less important words: pronouns and helping verbs
- ✓ linking two vowels together
- ✓ non-stress in less important words

Are you beginning to understand now why English spelling is a problem, even for native speakers?

Many vowels, when they are not stressed, sound like a schwa; it's hard to know how to spell an unstressed vowel sound.

The *d* and the *t*, when one happens between two vowels (except for the vowel duration) can sound just alike; they can both sound like a flap.

Two sounds that are next to each other can result in a different sound, not exactly one or the other.



## 3.2. The vowels: lower vowels 6, 7, 8, and 11

Vowel sound 7: It's called a low back vowel, and it's very similar to vowel sound 6. In fact, many dialects of North American English use only 6, and don't use 7 at all.

Here are some words that contrast these four vowel sounds.

6	7	8	11
cod	cawed	code	cud
baht	bought	boat	but
cot	caught	coat	cut
mod	Maude	mode	mud

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the words and identify vowels 6, 7, 8, or 11.

➔ got ... 6; goat ... 8; got ... 6; gut ... 11; un- ... 11; on ... 7; dock ... 6; duck ... 11;  
goal ... 8; gull ... 11; gall ... 7; chock ... 6; chuck ... 11; choke ... 8; chalk ... 7;  
flawed ... 7; flood ... 11; flowed ... 8; sawed ... 7; sod ... 6; sewed ... 8; suds ... 11;  
joke ... 8; jock ... 6



### 3.3. Practicing stress, pitch, linking, and reductions in declarative sentences

Remember to:

1. Make the pitch of the voice go *up* on the first *important word*.
2. Make the pitch go even *higher* on the *last important word*, but---
3. Make the pitch go *down* on the *last syllable* in the sentence.
4. Say the vowels of *important* words and syllables *clearly*, but say the vowels of less important words and unstressed syllables less clearly.
5. Drop the *b* sound in pronouns and helping verbs when they are in the middle of the sentence.
6. Join final consonants to vowels that follow. (Examples: told him = tol dim; took him = too kim; break it = brei kit)
7. Make a flap of *t* or *d* when it is between vowels. (Examples: put it away = pu #\* #\* wei; go to = gah#\*; break it up = brei ki #up; but it's = b\* #its)
8. Make stops *stop*! And remember glottal stops when unvoiced stops are followed by consonants. (Examples: feivrit! moovee star; explei nit!; get! back! to werk!)

## Let's try to apply all this information

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to the same sentences and draw a line through the most stressed words.

- ➔ I told him I could make it.  
(I **tol** d\* mai cd **mei** kit!.)
- ➔ They want you to put it away.  
(They **wahn** ch\* t\* **pu**#i #\* **wei**.)
- ➔ I took him to the emergency room.  
(I **too** k\*m t\* the-y\* **mer jn** cy room.)
- ➔ He's my favorite movie star.  
(He's my **feiv** r\*t! **moovee** star.)
- ➔ She wishes she could try all over again.  
(She **wishes** she cd **tra**i ya **lovr** r\*gen.)
- ➔ You've got to explain it to my boss.  
(You've **gah**#\* wek! **splei** n\*t! t\* my **bawss**.)
- ➔ They've had to break it up and get back to work.  
(They'v **had** t\* brei k\* #**up** 'n' ge!t **back**! t\* **werk**!.)
- ➔ That's the third time he's done that same thing.  
(Tha!'s th\* **third** tai meez dun th\*t! **seim** **thing**.)
- ➔ Houston may be pretty hot, but it's never boring.  
(**Houston** may be pr\*#y **hot**!, bu #it!s **never** boring.)



### 3.4. Practicing non-stress

**AUDIO EXERCISE:** Listen to these same sentences and draw a line through the least stressed words.

- ➔ I told him I could make it.  
(I **tol** d\* mai cd **mei** kit!.)
- ➔ They want you to put it away.  
(They **wahn** ch\* t\* **pu**#i #\* **wei**.)
- ➔ I took him to the emergency room.  
(I **too** k\*m t\* the-y\* **mer jn** cy room.)
- ➔ He's my favorite move star.  
(He's my **feiv** r\*t! **moovee** star.)
- ➔ She wishes she could try all over again.  
(She **wishez** she cd **tra**i ya **lovr** r\*gen.)

- You've got to explain it to my boss.  
(You've **gah**#\* wek! **splei** n\*t! t\* my **bawss**.)
- They've had to break it up and get back to work.  
(They'v **had** t\* brei k\* **#up** 'n' ge!t **back**! t\* **werk**!.)
- That's the third time he's done that same thing.  
(Tha!s th\* **third** tai meez dun th\*t! **seim** thing.)
- Houston may be pretty hot, but it's never boring.  
(Houston may be pr\*#y **hot**!, bu #it!s **never** boring.)



### 3.5. Summary of some important speech aspects

#### Linking last and first vowels together



**3.6.** When joining a *front vowel* (numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, or *oi* or *ai*) to another vowel, we put a little *y* between them. (Example: We *y*always)

- He *y*only ... she *y*ever ... I *y*understand ... they *y*often ... the *y*oldest

Example sentences:

- We *y*always read our mail.
- He *y*only wants a book.
- Does she *y*ever do anything else?
- I *y*understand the situation.
- They *y*often come in late.
- The *y*oldest member isn't here.



**3.7.** When joining a *back vowel* (numbers 7, 8, 9, 10, or *au*) to another vowel, we put a little *w* between them. (Example: You *w*often)

- Go *w*out ... you *w*always ... show *w*it ... go *w*away ... do *w*our best ... true *w*or false

Example sentences:

- Why don't you go *w*out?
- You *w*always leave early.

- ➔ Don't you want to show <sub>w</sub>it off?
- ➔ When are they going to go <sub>w</sub>away?
- ➔ We <sub>y</sub>always try to do <sub>w</sub>our best.
- ➔ I don't know if it's true <sub>w</sub>or false.



### 3.8. Forming new sounds by joining sounds together.

We often change sounds when we connect them.

**Did you:** The *-d* of *did* combines with the *y-* of *you*, and makes a *j* sound.

- ➔ Did you see him? (Di j\* see y\*m?) ...
- What did you say? (Hwa #\* j\* se:i?) ...
- Where did you go? (Hwer #\* j\* go:u?)

**Could you and Would you:** also make a *j* sound.

- ➔ Could you do it? (Cou j\* doo w\*t?) ...
- Could you tell him? (Cou j\* te l\*m?) ...
- What could you do? (Hwat! cou j\* doo:?)
- ➔ Would you do it? (Wou j\* doo w\*t!?) ...
- Would you tell her? (Wou j\* te l\*r?)
- ➔ Why would you do that? (Hwa:i you j\* doo that!?)

**Can't you, Don't you, and Won't you:** The *-t* of *can't* combines with the *y* of *you* and makes a *ch* sound.

- ➔ Can't you understand? (Can't! choo wundrsta:nd?)
- ➔ Why can't you decide? (Hwai can't! ch\* #\*sa:ɪd?)



### 3.9. Linking words with the same (or closely related) sounds

When the last sound of the first word is the same (or almost the same) as the first sound of the second word, we say the sound only once, but we hold it for a longer time.

- ➔ Take us<sub>\_</sub>swimming ... I can't<sub>\_</sub>tell ... Mike<sub>\_</sub>comes ... laugh<sub>\_</sub>fully ... sad<sub>\_</sub>detail ... one<sub>\_</sub>never knows ... pop<sub>\_</sub>pills ... wash<sub>\_</sub>shirts ... that<sub>\_</sub>tall man



### 3.10. Practice with some common helping verbs

When we say these helping verbs in the *affirmative* (yes), we usually *don't* say the vowel clearly. When we say these helping verbs in the *negative* (no), we usually *do* say the vowel clearly, and we often *end with a glottal stop*.

#### Can/Can't

- I can give you an answer.  
(I kn **give** y\* w\* nansr.)
- I can't give you an answer.  
(I **can't!** gi vy\* w\* nansr.)
- Can you get it done by tomorrow?  
(Kn y\* ge #\*t!-done by t\*maw r\*?)
- Can't you get it done by tomorrow?  
(Kan! ch\* ge #\*t!-done by t\*maw r\*?)

#### Would/Wouldn't (Don't say the /.)

- That would be good news.  
(Tha #\*d be **good** newz.)
- That wouldn't be good news.  
(Th\*t! **wudn't!** be **good** newz.)
- Would you like some coffee?  
(Wou j\* **laik!** s\*m **coffee?**)
- Wouldn't you like some coffee?  
(**Wouldn't!** ch\* **laik!** s\*m **coffee?**)
- They would often have adventures.  
(They #offn ha v\*dvenchrz.)
- They wouldn't often have adventures.  
(They **woudn doffn** ha v\*dvenchrz.)

#### Could/Couldn't (Don't say the /.)

- We could do something different.  
(Wee c\*d-**doo** s\*mthng **diffrent!**)
- We couldn't do anything different.  
(Wee c\*d-nt! doo **wenythng diffrent!**)

- Could you turn down the sound?  
(Coud-j\* turn down th\* sa:und?)
- Couldn't you turn down the sound?  
(Coudn't!-ch\* turn down th\* sa:und?)
- She could help herself.  
(She c\*d hel p\*rsel.)
- She couldn't help herself.  
(She couldn't! hel p\*rsel.)

**Should/Shouldn't** (Don't say the /.)

- You should get a new car.  
(Y\* shd ge #\* new car.)
- You shouldn't get a new car.  
(Y\* shoudn't! g\* #\* new car.)
- Should I forget it?  
(Sh #ai frge #\*t!?)
- Shouldn't I forget it?  
(Shoudn dai frge #\*t!?)
- I should ask him.  
(I sh #as k\*m.)
- I shouldn't ask him.  
(I shoudn'-das k\*m.)



### 3.11. Assignment

Listen to and practice Session Five at least five times before going on to Session Six. The first three times, try to listen without using this book.

Choose some sentences to use in your real conversations with native speakers. Listen carefully to the speech of native speakers, and choose some of their sentences to use in your real conversations.



# Session Six

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## 3.12. What's in Session Six

- ✓ **pitch patterns** in declarative sentences; information questions, yes/no questions, either/or (choice) questions, and tag (attached) questions
- ✓ using unusual **stress patterns**
- ✓ practicing **linking** and **reduction** of sounds

### Usual pitch patterns in English statements

In the most common kind of sentence—the declarative sentence, or statement—

1. pitch goes *up* on the *first important* word
2. pitch (usually) goes *up* on the *last important* word
3. pitch goes *down* on the *last syllable*

*Example* (The last word is the last important word, but the last syllable isn't the stressed syllable.):

➔ His father left him a fortune.

(H\*s<sup>fa</sup>-thr<sup>lef</sup>-t\*-m\*<sup>for</sup>-ch\*n.)

stressed words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs): **father, left, fortune**

unstressed words (pronouns, helping verbs, prepositions, articles): his, him, a

linked sounds: left (h)im a---lef t\* m\*; fortune---for-ch\*n

When the last syllable *is* the last stressed syllable of the last important word, the voice has to go *up* and then *down*—all in the same syllable.

*Example* (The last word is the last important word, and the last syllable is also the stressed syllable.):

➔ The tip-off was at eight.

(Th\*<sup>ti</sup>-poff w\*-z\*-#e-i-tl.)

stressed words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs): **tip-off, eight**

unstressed words (pronouns, helping verbs, prepositions, articles): the, was, at  
linked sounds: **tip-off**---ti-poff; was **at eight**---w\* z\* #eit

**AUDIO PRACTICE:** listen to and practice these sentences *without looking at this page*.

➔ What time is check-out time?

(<sup>What!</sup> tai<sup>m\*</sup> z<sup>che-</sup> kout! ta:im?)

stressed words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs): **time, check-out time**

unstressed words (pronouns, helping verbs, prepositions, articles): is

linked sounds: what time is---hwat-tai-m\*z; check-out time---che-kout! taim

➔ We could afford the expenditure.

(We cou #\*-<sup>fo:rd</sup> thee-y\*k<sup>spen-</sup> d\*-chr.)

stressed words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs): **afford, expenditure**

unstressed words (pronouns, helping verbs, prepositions, articles): we, could, the

linked sounds: could afford---cou-#\*-fo:rd;

the expenditure---thee-y\*k-spen-d\*-chr

➔ We couldn't afford the expense.

(We <sup>cou-</sup> dn t\*-<sup>fo:rd</sup> thee-y\*k-<sup>spe-</sup> nts.)

stressed words (nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs): **couldn't, afford, expense**

unstressed words (pronouns, helping verbs, prepositions, articles): we, the

linked sounds: couldn't afford---cou-dnt\*fo:rd;

the expense---thee-y\*k-spents

➔ We could afford the expenditure.

➔ We couldn't afford the expenditure.

- We could afford the expense.
- We couldn't afford the expense.

### 3.13. Pitch pattern change after a subject has been introduced

After a subject has been introduced, we change the rule a little. We drop the pitch when we mention the word again. The speaker and listener know this isn't new information.

- His father left him a fortune. What's he going to do with the fortune?
- I met a woman who's been married seven times. I asked the woman about her marriages.
- In April they submitted a report. We asked them to come in and discuss the report.
- What's an atomic microscope? I don't know what an atomic microscope *is*.

### 3.14. Usual pitch patterns in English information questions

In questions beginning with **Who, What, When, Where, Why, How**, etc.:

1. pitch goes *up* on the *first important* word (usually the question word)
2. pitch (usually) goes *up* on the *last important* word
3. pitch goes *down* on the *last syllable*

- What's his phone number?  
(<sup>H</sup>wat! s\* z <sup>f</sup>one-<sup>n</sup>umbr?)
- What's his address?  
(<sup>H</sup>wat! s\* -z\* -<sup>d</sup>re-<sup>e</sup>ss?)
- What's his name?  
(<sup>H</sup>wat! s\* z <sup>n</sup>a-<sup>i</sup>m?)
- Where did she tell you?  
(<sup>H</sup>wer #\* -chee <sup>t</sup>el<sup>y</sup>\*)

- Where did she say?  
(<sup>Hwer</sup> #\* -chee <sup>se:-</sup><sub>i</sub>?)
- What's the check-out time?  
(<sup>Hwat!s</sup> th\* che-kout! <sup>ta:im</sup>?)
- What's the time?  
(<sup>Hwat!s</sup> th\* ta:-<sub>im</sub>?)
- Where did he get his haircut?  
(<sup>Hwer</sup> #\* -#ee <sup>ge-</sup> #\*z <sup>heir-</sup><sub>cut</sub>?)
- Where did he get his hair?  
(<sup>Hwer</sup> #\* -#ee <sup>ge-</sup> #\*z <sup>he:-</sup><sub>ir</sub>?)
- How long have you lived in an apartment?  
(<sup>How</sup> la-ng\* -vy\* <sup>liv-</sup>d\*n n\* <sup>part!-</sup><sub>mnt!</sub>?)
- How long have you lived here?  
(<sup>How</sup> la-ng\* -vy\* <sup>livd!</sup><sub>hir</sub>?)



### 3.15. Usual pitch patterns in North American English yes/no questions

In questions beginning with **I s, A re, W ere, H ave, H ad, D o, D oes, D id, W ould, W ill, C an, S houldn't**, etc.:

1. pitch goes *up* on the *first important* word (usually the question word)
2. pitch goes *up higher* on the *last important* word

- What's her name?  
(<sup>Hwat!</sup> s\*r <sup>ne:-</sup><sub>im</sub>?)
- Is her name Betty?  
(<sup>I</sup> -zr nai:m <sup>Be-#ee</sup>?)
- Who did he telephone?  
(<sup>Hoo</sup> #\* -#ee <sup>te-</sup>l\*<sub>-fou:n</sub>?)
- Did he call his wife?  
(<sup>D\*</sup> -#ee <sup>ca-</sup>l\*z <sup>wa:-</sup><sub>if</sub>?)

- What do you think of it?  
(<sup>Hwa</sup> #\* y\* <sup>thing-</sup><sub>k\*v\*tl?</sub>)
- Do you like it?  
(D\*-y\* <sup>lai-</sup><sub>k\*tl?</sub>)
- Where did he want her to go?  
(<sup>Hwer</sup> #\* #ee <sup>wa-</sup>nr #\* <sup>go-</sup><sub>ou?</sub>)
- Did he want her to go home?  
(D\*-#ee <sup>wa-</sup>nr #\* g\* <sup>ho:-</sup><sub>oum?</sub>)



### 3.16. Usual pitch patterns in North American English either/or (choice) questions

Pitch goes *up* on the *first choice(s)*, and it goes *down* on the *last choice*.

- Are you a coffee drinker or a tea drinker?  
(\*re yuw \*ka-fee drinkr \*-r\*<sup>tee</sup><sub>drinkr?</sub>)
- Do you have boys or girls?  
(D\* y\* hav <sup>bo:-</sup><sub>i</sub> z\*r <sup>ger:-</sup><sub>lz?</sub>)
- Did you want to talk to them or us or the boss?  
(D\*-j\* <sup>wu-</sup>n\* tak t\* <sup>theh-</sup>m\* <sup>-</sup>ru<sup>ss</sup> er th\* <sup>baw:-</sup><sub>ss?</sub>)
- Can we meet on Monday, Wednesday, or Friday?  
(Kn we <sup>mee-</sup>#\*n Mun-<sup>dee</sup>, Wenz-<sup>dee</sup>-y\*r <sup>Frai-</sup><sub>der?</sub>)
- Does coffee or tea wake you up? (Which one?)  
(D\*z <sup>ka-fee</sup> y\*r <sup>tea</sup><sub>wei-kyu-wup?</sub>)
- Did the boys or the girls win the race? (Which ones?)  
(D\*d th\* <sup>bo:-</sup><sub>i</sub> z\*r th\* <sup>gerl-</sup><sub>zwin</sub> th\* <sup>reis?</sup>)
- Did you or they or the boss want to talk to us?  
(D\*-<sup>joo</sup>-w\*r <sup>they-</sup>y\*r th\* <sup>bawss</sup><sub>wa-n\* tak! too-wus?</sub>)
- Is Monday, Wednesday, or Friday better for you?  
(\*s Mun-<sup>dei</sup>, Wenz-<sup>dei</sup>-y\*r <sup>Frai-</sup><sub>#ei be #\*r f\*r you?</sub>)



### 3.17. Usual pitch patterns in North American English attached questions

- You told them the truth.  
(Y\* tol-d\*m th\* tru:<sub>uth</sub>.)
- You aren't from Argentina.  
(You-<sup>warnt!</sup> fr\*-mArgen-ti-na.)
- People shouldn't smoke.  
(Pee-pl **shud-nt!** <sup>smo-</sup>oke!.)
- They've worked hard.  
(They-<sup>vwerkt!</sup> ha:-<sub>a:rd</sub>.)
- We haven't paid our taxes.  
(We havn't! pei- #\*r tak-<sub>s\*z</sub>.)

The voice goes up or down in tag (attached) questions, depending on the speaker's meaning. If the speaker isn't sure about what he is saying, the voice goes *up*. The up pitch at the end of the sentence tells the listener that the speaker *thinks* the information is correct but *isn't sure*.

- You told them the truth, didn't you?  
(Y\* tol-d\*m th\* tru:-<sub>uth</sub>, **didn-**<sup>ch\*</sup>?)
- You aren't from Argentina, are you?  
(You-<sup>warnt!</sup> fr\*-mArg\*n-ti-na, **are** <sup>y\*</sup>?)
- People shouldn't smoke, should they?  
(Pee-pl **shud-nt!** <sup>smo-</sup>oke!, **shoud** <sup>they?</sup>)
- They've worked hard, haven't they?  
(They-<sup>vwerkt!</sup> ha:-<sub>ard</sub>, **havn't** <sup>they?</sup>)
- We haven't paid our taxes, have we?  
(We havn't! pei- #\*r tak-<sub>s\*z</sub>, **hav** <sup>we?</sup>)

If the speaker is fairly sure about what he is saying, the voice goes *down*. The down pitch at the end of the sentence tells the listener that the speaker *is pretty sure* the information is correct.

- You told them the truth, didn't you?  
(Y\* tol-d\*m th\* tru:-<sub>uth</sub>, **didn**-<sub>ch</sub>?)
- You aren't from Argentina, are you?  
(You-<sup>warnt!</sup> fr\*-mArg\*n-ti-<sub>n</sub>\*, **are** <sub>y</sub>?)
- People shouldn't smoke, should they?  
(Pee-pl **shud**-nt! <sup>smo-</sup><sub>oke!</sub>, **shoud** <sub>they</sub>?)
- They've worked hard, haven't they?  
(They-<sup>vwerkt!</sup> ha:-<sub>ard</sub>, **havn't** <sub>they</sub>?)
- We haven't paid our taxes, have we?  
(We <sup>havn't!</sup> pei-#\*r <sup>tak-</sup><sub>s\*z</sub>, **ha** <sub>vwe</sub>?)



### 3.18. Breaking the rules of stress in special situations

(Native speakers often break the rules.)

Normally, we *don't* stress the little function (structure) words—a/an/the, the pronouns, the prepositions, the affirmative (positive) helping verbs.

And normally we *do* stress the important (content) words: the nouns, the verbs, the adjectives, and the adverbs.

1. We stress the *first* important word by using force, by saying the vowel in the most stressed syllable clearly, and by raising (or lowering) the pitch.
2. We stress the *last* important word by using force, by saying the vowel in the most stressed syllable clearly, and by *raising the pitch even higher*.
3. We say the pitch of the last syllable *very low*. If the last syllable of the sentence is also the stressed syllable, we make the voice go *up* and then *down*, all in the same syllable.

*But* English permits us *to change the stress rules* when we want to point to something special.

- John asked us to call his office.  
(Ja nask!-tus t\* cah:-|\*\_-za-<sub>f\*ss</sub>.)
- **John** asked us to call his office.  
(**Mary** didn't ask us to do it.)

- John **asked** us to call his office.  
(He didn't **order** us to do it.)
- John asked **us** to call his office.  
(He didn't ask **you** to do it.)
- John asked us to **call** his office.  
(he didn't ask us to **visit** it.)
- John asked us to call **his** office.  
(He didn't ask us to call **your** office.)
- John asked us to call his **office**.  
(He didn't ask us to call his **home**.)

In Texas, we use this famous phrase as a welcome:

- **My** house is **your** house.



### 3.19. Let's try to apply all this information

- Keep it clean.  
(<sup>Kee</sup>-pit! <sup>clee</sup>:-<sup>een</sup>.)
- Put that on the grass.  
(<sup>Put</sup>! tha-#on th\* <sup>gra</sup>:-<sup>ass</sup>.)
- This is a nice place.  
(<sup>Thi</sup>-s\*-z\* <sup>naiss</sup> <sup>plei</sup>:-<sup>is</sup>.)
- Tell him what you want.  
(<sup>Te</sup>-l\*m <sup>hw</sup>\*-ch\* <sup>wa</sup>:-<sup>ant</sup>.)
- Give them thress gold coins.  
(<sup>Gi</sup>-v\*m <sup>three</sup> **gold** <sup>co</sup>:-<sup>inz</sup>.)
- I've got four big bags.  
(<sup>Aiv</sup> gat! <sup>four</sup> **big** <sup>ba</sup>:-<sup>agz</sup>.)
- She walks on the beach every morning.  
(She <sup>wawk</sup>!-s\*n th\* <sup>beet</sup>-ch\*v-ry <sup>mor</sup>-<sup>n\*ng</sup>.)
- Talk it to the post office.  
(<sup>Tei</sup>-k\*t! t\* th\* <sup>pos</sup>-<sup>toff\*ss</sup>.)



### 3.20. Assignment

Now the hard part begins. Choose a few phrases every day to use in conversations—with native speakers, if possible.

Spend some time every day listening to the way native speakers say things. Write a few phrases, sentences, and pronunciations down, practice them, and use them in your own conversations.

Increase your listening time, little by little, every day. Write down what you hear. Little by little, every day, put some of these phrases and sentences into your own speech.