

What You Will Find in This Text

To help you along the way to proficiency, here is a description of the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2, “Phonetics: Sound/Symbol Recognition,” introduces you to the phonetic symbols used to identify the 17 familiar consonant symbols such as [p] and [d], the 8 unfamiliar consonant symbols such as /sh/ [ʃ] and /th/ [θ], the 14 vowels, and 5 diphthongs symbols of United States English. These are presented to you in a step-by-step method that simplifies your acquisition of this information. To further assist you in learning the sound/symbol inventory, games such as card games, word searches, riddles, concentration/memory games, and dice are suggested to make learning fun. Continue playing these games until you are competent in fluently using the symbols and their sounds. The overall purpose of this chapter is to assist you in learning the sounds/symbols used to identify the sounds of United States English.

Chapter 3, “The English Language and United States English Dialects,” takes you for a ride on a time machine as you journey from Old English to modern times. You will observe the wide variety of languages that comprise the English vocabulary, sometimes resulting from invasions by other countries or for religious or political reasons. You may be surprised to learn that Queen Victoria’s first language was French

and that she was later tutored in English. Before the Great Vowel Change toward the end of the period of Middle English, these pairs of words had the same vowel sound: *name/father*, *wine/mean*. In early Modern English during Shakespeare’s time, *reason* had the same vowel sound as *raisin* and *face* as *ask*. After we depart from the Atlantic shore of England and land on the shoreline of the United States, you will learn, among many things, the contributions of the American Indians and the slaves to the sound system and vocabulary of United States English. Also, you may find it interesting that Boston has at least five different accents depending on which side of the river you live on.

Chapter 4, “United States English Spelling and Pronunciation Differences,” invites you to explore the historical spelling of words and the changes that have occurred over time, evolving to the current generation of instant messaging and texting. Some learners that speak English as a second language might already appreciate the discrepancies that exist in the pronunciation rules (or lack of rules): *tough-bough-cough-dough*. Some of you may become directly involved in literacy programs and find the information in this chapter most helpful.

Chapter 5, “The Three Ss: Sounds, Syllables, and Suprasegmentals,” offers a discussion on sound and

how it relates to human listening. You will learn about the three components that interact to produce human speech: (1) energy, (2) sound sources, and (3) the role of resonance. It may surprise you to learn that some spoken languages include *oral clicks* and *glottal stops* to communicate. You will learn about **syllables** and how challenging their identification can be. For example, you will probably readily agree that the word *boundary* has three syllables, but will we agree in the division? Is it *bound-a-ry* or *boun-da-ry* or is the word reduced to two syllables, *boun-dray*? You will learn about the role that prosodic features or suprasegments such as rate, rhythm, intonation, loudness, and stress play in human speech production. Take, for example, the word *present*. Unless you recognize which syllable receives the primary stress, you will not know whether it is used as a noun or a verb: “I will **present** her with a **present**.” Suprasegmental features play important roles in accent reduction and correction of monotone speech. At the end of this chapter, you will find some challenging exercises that require you to identify the number of sounds, number of syllables, and which syllable has the primary stress. These exercises are included to assist you in reducing your *alphabet–orthographic* spelling habits and in concentrating on your phonetic transcription skills.

Chapter 6, “Anatomy and Physiology of the Speech and Hearing Mechanisms,” provides you with basic information on the parts of the body that are responsible for the production of speech sounds and the reception of these sounds. As mentioned earlier, three distinct features are used to describe the human speech sounds of United States English: plus or minus voicing, the [b] versus the [p] sound; modification of the airflow, [p] stop-release versus [f] constricted/continuous; and placement of the articulators, [b] bilabial (lips) versus [f] lower lip and upper teeth (dental). You will become familiar with these distinctive features and be able to recognize/describe each sound by its anatomic and physiologic features. For example, a voiceless, lingua (tongue), dental, plosive sound is [t].

Chapter 7, “Vowels and Diphthongs,” provides an overview of the characteristics of American English vowels and **diphthongs**. Using the oral cavity (mouth) as a reference, the placement of the tongue within the oral cavity is indicated by perimeters of high-, mid-, low- and front, central, and back. Other characteristics include tongue tenseness (eeee) or laxness (aaaa) and if the lips are round (oooo) or unround (eeee).

Chapters 8, 9, and 10 each present a comprehensive discussion of the vowels and diphthongs. In addition to

a description of how each sound is produced, information regarding the following is provided:

1. Different spelling of the sound: [e] *gate, they*.
2. Different sounds for the same letter: *a* in *father, ask*.
3. Rules for spelling and pronunciation of the sound. For example, some consonants that follow the [e] sound are silent, as in *weigh, day*.
4. Drill work of words that contain each vowel or diphthong.
5. Auditory discrimination exercises.
6. Allophonic and dialect variations.
7. Nonnative speaker pronunciation.
8. Common speech sound deviations.
9. Competency quizzes.

Chapter 11, “The Three Rs: A Consonant and Two Vowels,” clusters together the different sounds/symbols for the *r* alphabet letter. For example, the traditional letter *r* is the phonetic [r] symbol for words such as *ring, train*; the *r* becomes an intervocalic stressed vowel sound in such words as *bird, fur*; and it becomes the unstressed counterpart in *mother, father*. The same sub-topics are discussed as those that appear in the previous chapters on vowels and diphthongs, and there are ample opportunities to engage in transcription exercises. The chapter concludes with a skill-building exercise that challenges your knowledge of the three basic characteristics of each of the /r/ sounds.

Chapter 12, “United States English Consonants,” introduces you to the characteristics of the 25 consonants as determined by placement of the articulation, manner in which the airflow is modified, and plus or minus voicing. The content of this chapter provides you with the foundation to build on as you learn more specifics about each consonant sound in the following chapters.

Chapter 13, “Familiar Phonetic Symbols: Stop Consonants Analysis and Transcription,” provides you with comprehensive information regarding the six stop consonants, [p], [b], [t], [d], [k], and [g]. You will learn about the following:

1. Identification and description of how the consonant sounds are produced
2. Different spellings for each sound and different sounds for each of the corresponding orthographic letters
3. Rules for spelling and pronunciation of each sound

What You Will Find in This Text

4. Various “sound contexts” in which each sound occurs
5. Examples of cognates and other minimal pairs for auditory discrimination
6. Examples of allophonic variations, dialect differences, and nonnative speaker difficulties
7. Normal development and disordered production of each sound
8. Phonetic transcription exercises throughout the chapter and competency quiz

These eight items are presented in each of the following four chapters.

Chapters 14 and 15 present the fricative sounds and familiar symbols [f], [v], [s], [z], and [h]. Unfamiliar symbols include the voiced [ð] and unvoiced [θ] /th/, the /sh/ [ʃ], [ʒ], as in *azure*, and the [ʍ], as in *when*.

Chapter 16, “Affricative Consonants: Two Sounds Combine to Make One,” provides a comprehensive discussion of one set of affricative consonants [dʒ],

jam [dʒæm] and [tʃ] *chin* [tʃɪn]. The main difference in these two cognate pairs is that the [dʒ] is voiced and the [tʃ] is unvoiced. Placement of the articulators and manner of airflow are the same.

Chapter 17, “Nasal and Oral Resonance Consonants Analysis and Transcription,” offers a discussion of the three nasal resonance consonants [m], [n], and [ŋ] and the four oral resonance consonants [w], [j], [l], and [r].

Chapter 18, “Clinical Application: ‘Make Your Own Articulation Test,’” is the chapter you have been waiting for . . . the *application* of the sound/symbol system in clinical settings. You use your creativity in the development of an articulation test. Yes, your original test!

Post Script

Appendix A, “fʌn wɪθ fənetiks,” includes phonetic activities using game techniques such as phonetic dice, matching, anagrams, word riddles, word searches, various card games, and skill-building activities.

Appendix B includes instructions for “Phonetic Dice” game.

