

Teacher's Guide to
Pronunciation in English for Medical Professionals

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FOCUS

In the past, much time has been spent in pronunciation courses on individual sounds. The disadvantage of this approach is that it is very difficult and time consuming for adult learners to make changes in this area. There is an individual sound section in this program in chapter six, but this is clearly secondary to the focus of the program.

The emphasis is on the big picture items: **stress, intonation, and rhythm**. Research indicates that improvement in these areas makes the biggest difference in intelligible speech.

TARGET AUDIENCE

Pronunciation in English for Medical Professionals was designed for ESL/ EFL students at the intermediate through advanced level.

Please note the following:

1. The videos that present the concepts have text for all the audio, so students can follow along, but students are not asked to reproduce this language as it is part of the presentation for the lesson.
2. The audio tracks feature three native speakers with an American, British, and Australian accent.
3. Students receive audio and visual feedback on answers throughout the practices:
 - In chapter one, the cuckoo plays in response to an incorrect answer. The woodblock sound plays in response to a correct answer, and students will also see the number for the syllable count show up in the box.
 - In chapter two, students will see the stressed syllable appear underlined in a different color in the box, along with the cuckoo and woodblock sounds for incorrect and correct answers respectively.
 - In chapter 3, the correct answers show the words turning color and being underlined.

- In chapter 4 and 5, additional visual feedback includes: down/up arrows for intonation, dashes for linking, and reduced phrases like “gonna” for “going to.”

APPLICATION ACTIVITIES

Pronunciation in English for Medical Professionals is unique in that the content in the application section is generated by students. These activities guide students in applying the pronunciation skills presented in the program to language they use every day. This will help bridge the gap between the classroom and the world outside, which is always a challenge.

CRITICAL PIECES OF EQUIPMENT

It is essential for each computer to be multi-media enabled with a microphone. Students must be able to use the record and playback feature in each practice and application, which allows them to listen to their own work, evaluate it, and make adjustments and record again. This will guide them in bridging the gap between the classroom and the world outside where the teacher and the software are not available to give them immediate feedback.

The program can be used in any of the following formats:

1. **A lab setting** as an individualized self-paced learning tool
2. **A distance learning course** where the sound files for the applications are saved and e-mailed to the teacher who gives feedback to students on their progress
3. An **electronic textbook** for a **pronunciation course**
This allows students to practice outside of the class with the program.

The chapters are color coded for ease of navigation. Note the bar of color at the top of each screen, which is matched to the color of the chapters on the Table of Contents. There are also specific instructions for recording in each chapter based on the teaching point.

ORGANIZATION

Chapter One, Syllables

The first chapter focuses on listening skills. It begins with syllables as students sometimes make errors by adding or leaving out a syllable in a word. It is critical that students be able to hear the vowel sound in a syllable.

A useful preliminary technique for this chapter is to have students "show you" the number of syllables they hear. It is important that this be a silent exercise with no

vocalization. The teacher models a word, and the students indicate the number of syllables by holding up the appropriate number of fingers. This technique can be used again in Chapter two to indicate the syllable that receives the most stress. This gives the teacher a very quick way to assess the entire group.

Chapter Review

Students receive audio and visual feedback on answers throughout the practices in each chapter, but the chapter review is structured more like a test with a final score.

Chapter Two, Stress in Words

Chapter two is the longest chapter as it introduces stress. Students coming from languages that do not have stress may need to spend more time here. The program builds sequentially, so students are asked to identify both syllable count and the stressed syllable in a word at the beginning of this chapter.

The use of the rubber band is introduced in chapter two. It is a very useful visual and kinesthetic tool to reinforce the concept of stress for students. Another option for showing syllables and stress in a word to a group is to have the teacher use a “knocking” gesture for each syllable and an “open palm” for the syllable that gets the most stress. So, for example, the word “expensive” would be shown by one knock, one open palm, and then one more knock for the third syllable in the word, "ex-PEN-sive."

Chapter two introduces rules for stress at word level. There are a number of practice and application activities that work to reinforce these rules. These varied activities will help students internalize the rules for stress in words.

Chapter two also addresses fossilized stress problems where students have learned the incorrect stress pattern for certain words. These old habits are hard to break, and it takes lots of practice to change them. The “guide words” have worked well to reinforce the correct patterns. Once the problem words have been identified, they can be paired with “guide words” and used for practice with partners at the beginning or end of each session.

[Click here for a demo on using guide words.](#)

Finally, the schwa sound is introduced in chapter two. For many students, this is the first time they have heard of this sound. It is an important sound because it allows English speakers to highlight the stressed syllable and minimize the unstressed syllable. In this final section of chapter 2, students identify the syllable count, stressed syllable, and schwa sound/sounds in a word.

Chapter Review

Students receive audio and visual feedback on answers throughout the practices in each chapter, but the chapter review is structured more like a test with a final score.

Chapter Three, Stress in Sentences

Stress Skill 1, stress in sentences, needs some introduction, depending on the audience. If the students have had less formal education in English, you may need to start by eliciting examples of nouns, main verbs, adverbs, and so on. It can be useful to have the class divided into groups that brainstorm words in these categories and then post them, so that participants start to internalize the terms.

Chapter four begins with "content words" and then adds the concept of the "focus word" in a phrase. Visual reinforcement for the concepts show the content words turning red and the focus words turning red and being underlined. Again, the program is sequential, so students move from sentences to paragraphs in this chapter. There are also a number of dictation exercises to reinforce the concepts of content and focus words in this chapter.

Chapter Review

Students receive audio and visual feedback on answers throughout the practices in each chapter, but the chapter review is structured more like a test with a final score.

Chapter Four, Intonation

The "thumbs up" and "thumbs down" signal is a useful technique with work on intonation in questions. The teacher models the two types of questions, *information* and *yes/no*, and students note whether the intonation goes up or down at the end using the "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" signal. This chapter moves from intonation in questions and statements to intonation with choices and finally, intonation to signal intention.

Intonation is a complicated subject, which could easily rate its own book. The teacher needs to assess whether students are ready to deal with the nuances or just identify and reproduce the basics.

Chapter Review

Students receive audio and visual feedback on answers throughout the practices in each chapter, but the chapter review is structured more like a test with a final score.

Chapter Five, Rhythm

Rhythm reinforces stress and intonation; rhythm is where students put it all together. This chapter introduces reduction and linking. Some students balk at

reducing words like "going to" to "gonna," and the teacher needs to be sensitive to this and emphasize that being able to hear the reduced word is the first priority even if they do not want to reproduce it.

Chapter Review

Students receive audio and visual feedback on answers throughout the practices in each chapter, but the chapter review is structured more like a test with a final score.

Chapter Six, IPA and Problem Sounds

There is a sample of the IPA similar to *Longman's Dictionary of American English* at the beginning of this chapter. The examples for each sound are modeled and students can review these audio files by clicking on the symbol to hear the examples.

The problem sounds section can be used early on if there is a problem and a need to work with these. The teacher may want to address other individual sound problems, but again keeping in mind that these are secondary, in terms of intelligibility, to stress, intonation, and rhythm. Students who produce individual sounds perfectly with incorrect stress still have the audience asking, *Excuse me, what did you say?*

Final Review

This final chapter has rotating versions with question items rotating within each version. Based on their scores in the final review, students may need to review the program.

FURTHER RESOURCES

Kenworthy, Joanne *Teaching English Pronunciation*, (Longman Handbook for Language Teachers 1987)

Detailed Content

Syllables

What are Syllables?

Counting Syllables

Counting Syllables with Past tense

“t” “d” ending

Syllables and "s" Endings

Stress in Words

What is stress?

Identifying the stressed syllable in a word

Rules for stress in adjectives/nouns

Building Communication skills in English

- Rules for stress in verbs
- Rules for stress in words with suffixes
- Stress in compound nouns
- Stress in phrasal verbs
- Stress with acronyms
- Correcting fossilized stress- (bad habits)
- Reduced syllables
- Identifying the schwa

Stress in Sentences

- Rules for sentence level stress
- Identifying sentence level stress
- Identifying focus words in sentences

Intonation

- What is intonation?
- Identifying intonation drops
- Identifying intonation rises
- Intonation with numbers
- Intonation with yes/no questions
- Intonation with information questions
- Intonation with choices
- Intonation and Expectation
- Changing the focus with intonation
- Identifying new vs. old information with intonation

Rhythm

- What is rhythm?
- Linking with vowels
- Linking with consonants
- Reducing "h"
- Reduced words

Individual sounds

- The IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet)
- Problem sounds: x, l, th, r, p, f, & n

FURTHER RESOURCES

Kenworthy, Joanne *Teaching English Pronunciation*, (Longman Handbook for Language Teachers 1987)