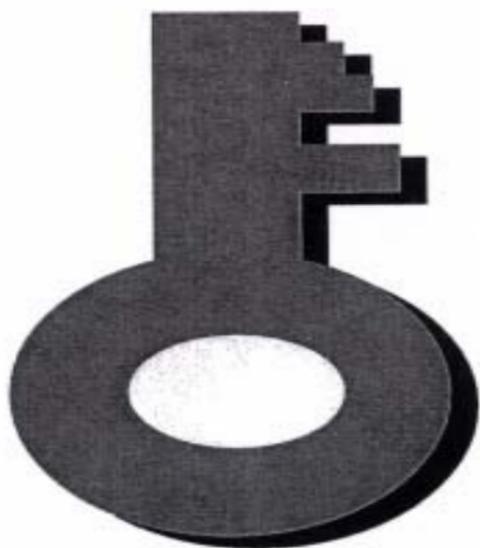


# **PRONUNCIATION KEYS**



**BRETT ALAN NELSON**

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AND TO ALL OF MY STUDENTS WHO  
HAVE HELPED BRING *PRONUNCIATION*  
*KEYS TO LIFE*

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## PRONUNCIATION KEYS

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## A Guide to Better English

Welcome to *Pronunciation Keys*, a fast, easy way to improve your English speaking and listening-comprehension skills. This system was designed to confront basic pronunciation problems I have encountered as an English teacher and introduces some innovative, yet simple, practice techniques. The main goal of *Pronunciation Keys* is to help you develop more natural-sounding speech so that you will be able to understand more of what you hear. This system is based on two fundamental beliefs:

1. IF YOU CAN SAY THE WORDS, YOU CAN *HEAR* THE WORDS! The closer your pronunciation is to that of native speakers, the easier it will be to understand their speech. (And of course, the better your pronunciation, the easier it will be to make *yourself* understood.)
2. English must be SEEN as well as heard! By watching and mimicking mouth and tongue movements, you can quickly learn to speak more clearly and naturally.

Another major element of *Pronunciation Keys* is its emphasis on *natural spoken English*. Because of this, the

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techniques, spellings, and sentence forms employed here may seem very new and unusual at times. By practicing with the material, however, you will learn to speak and listen more naturally, and will begin to understand those previously incomprehensible parts of English conversation—even in movies and on TV!

There are, of course, many different accents in English so defining “correct” pronunciation is extremely tricky. Because of this, *Pronunciation Keys* focuses on letter sounds, not on words, and these smaller elements are basically the same everywhere. Learn these sounds and all accents will become easier to understand—even your own.

### HOW DOES IT WORK?

The *Pronunciation Keys* manual and video begin with those letters and sounds that I have found to be the most problematic for non-native speakers. Basic instructions for correctly forming the sounds (i.e. mouth and tongue movements, breathing requirements, etc.) are provided in the book and on the video, followed by a practice group of sample words and sentences. We then cover some *reduced* words and troublesome contractions that are very common in spoken English in order to further develop listening-comprehension and speaking skills. Finally, we look at how stress works in

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English sentences to maintain rhythm and determine meaning.

The video provides a visual guide to English pronunciation and introduces some special practice techniques developed for this system. Translations are provided for all instructions and essential items. Non-essential information such as sentence meanings and incidental speech is not translated as the focus here is on *pronunciation*. (A complete video transcription, however, can be found in the back of this section.) Remember, the manual is only a guide; *it is more important to follow the tape*.

The material is divided into five sections. The most troublesome letters are presented in PART I and are entitled THE TERRIBLE TWELVE:

### **PART I: THE TERRIBLE TWELVE**

- |                  |                   |                 |
|------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <b>1. TH</b>     | <b>5. L</b>       | <b>9. H</b>     |
| <b>2. C/S/SC</b> | <b>6. F/PH/GH</b> | <b>10. QU</b>   |
| <b>3. R</b>      | <b>7. V</b>       | <b>11. SH</b>   |
| <b>4. ER</b>     | <b>8. B</b>       | <b>12. W/WH</b> |

Fun and challenging tongue twisters are used in this section to give your mouth a workout and to force you to enunciate (speak clearly). (*This technique is employed only for THE TERRIBLE TWELVE.*)

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PART II introduces another group of difficult sounds and is entitled THE NASTY NINE:

### **PART II: THE NASTY NINE**

- |             |              |               |
|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| <b>1. P</b> | <b>4. G</b>  | <b>7. CH</b>  |
| <b>2. Z</b> | <b>5. GU</b> | <b>8. WOR</b> |
| <b>3. D</b> | <b>6. M</b>  | <b>9. WA</b>  |

PART III covers some of the most natural reductions in conversational English and is entitled COMMON REDUCTIONS:

*Example:*

- “want to” ⇒ “wanna”
- “have to” ⇒ “havta” ⇒ “afta”

PART IV introduces a group of difficult sounds that occur in KILLER CONTRACTIONS:

*Example:*

- “Have” contractions with may, might, would, could,

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should, must, will: may've, might've, would've, could've, should've, must've, will've

PART V is a LIGHTNING REVIEW AND RHYTHM SECTION where all material is reviewed for practice using the sounds and words in sample sentences that are also highlighted to show how *stress* works in English.

It is important to keep in mind that *Pronunciation Keys* will not cure pronunciation and listening problems overnight, though they will improve quickly. Please practice with the video 2-3 times a week for at least four weeks followed by occasional review, particularly on persistent problems.

You will find that the methods and material in this manual and videotape steer away from traditional teaching formulas (and are hopefully more interesting) because the focus is on *informal* conversational English. Additionally, this material encompasses only those difficult points which are key to helping your pronunciation; *not every problem is covered*. Once you have learned these keys, however, your ability to listen and speak will improve naturally, regardless of your level.

Please follow the instructions in the manual and on the videotape very closely as many of the pronunciation techniques will be new to you. Most of all, have fun and believe in yourself, and welcome to the world of natural English!

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- a. Lots of cheek! Lots of Lip!
- b. NO TONGUE!
- c. Lots of jaw movement for practice—open your mouth widely.
- d. A little less breath than for “WOR.”
- e. Sounds like it should be spelled W+AH+TER (WATER) or W+AH+LK (WALK), etc.
- f. Speak slowly and enunciate.
- g. Repeat: walk, wall, wallet, wander, want, Wanda, water.

### **PART III: COMMON REDUCTIONS**

Reductions (shortened words and phrases) are *very* common in spoken English and are used to maintain rhythm. Generally, the faster the speech, the greater the reductions. Where necessary, different stages of reductions are examined here, but only the final, fastest stage is practiced as it is the most difficult to distinguish. Learning to reduce words is essential for natural-sounding speech. (We will see reductions again in PART IV.)

*IMPORTANT: The spellings in Parts III, IV, and V reflect*

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*natural speaking patterns and are written phonetically.*

### 1. **want to ⇒ wanna**

a. Repeat: wanna.

b. “I **wanna** go to the beach this summer.”

### 2. **wanted to ⇒ wanna-ta ⇒ wanna-da**

a. Repeat: wanna-da.

b. “He **wanna-da** come but he had to work late.”

### 3. **go to ⇒ gota ⇒ goda**

a. Repeat: goda.

b. “Let’s **goda** lunch after class.”

### 4. **going to ⇒ gonna ⇒ gunna**

a. Repeat: gunna.

b. “We’re **gunna** get some pizza.”

### 5. **got to ⇒ gotta ⇒ gada**

a. Repeat: gada.

b. “You’ve **gada** see Brad Pitt’s new movie.”

### 6. **have to ⇒ havta ⇒ afta**

a. Repeat: afta.

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b. "I want to go but I **afta** do my homework."

### 7. **need to** ⇒ **needa**

a. Repeat: needa.

b. "Do you **needa** go to the bathroom before we leave?"

### 8. **this would** ⇒ **thissed**

a. Repeat: thissed.

b. "You said **thissed** be easy."

### 9. **that would** ⇒ **thaddid**

a. Repeat: thaddid.

b. "Four o'clock tomorrow? **Thaddid** be fine. See you then."

### 10. **or** ⇒ **er**

a. Repeat: er.

b. "Is the party Friday **er** Saturday?"

### 11. **of** ⇒ **ev** or **uv** ⇒ **a**

a. Repeat: a.

b. "There's a lot **a** people here."

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*patterns.*

*\* The verbs shall, ought, dare, and need are more common in formal English and will not be practiced in this section.*

1. **“Will”** contractions with I, you, he, she, we, they, somebody, someone, “name,” it, this, that, etc.
  - a. Speak very slowly, enunciate, and **STICK YOUR TONGUE OUT!**
  - b. *I’ll, you’ll, he’ll, she’ll, we’ll, they’ll, somebody’ll, someone’ll, anybody’ll, mom’ll, Dave’ll, it’ll this’ll, that’ll.*
  - c. Relax, repeat slowly, and then gradually increase speed: **“Dave’ll** be here at 5:00.”  
**“We’ll** meet you at the airport.”
2. **“Have”** contractions with I, you, we, they, etc.
  - a. Practice this as **ONE SOUND** (syllable).
  - b. Speak slowly, enunciate, and **BREATHE THROUGHOUT!**
  - c. *I’ve, you’ve, we’ve, they’ve.*
  - d. Relax, repeat slowly, and then gradually increase speed: **“They’ve** never seen it before.”

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“**I’ve** got a bad cold.”

3. “**Have**” contractions with may, might, would, could, should, must, will, these, those, etc.
  - a. There are two sounds here though one is soft.
  - b. The “ve” in these contractions really sounds like “ev” or “uv.”
  - c. REMEMBER, “V” is for “VIBRATION.”
  - d. *May’uv, might’uv, would’uv, could’uv, should’uv, must’uv, will’uv, these’uv, those’uv.*
  - e. Relax, repeat slowly, enunciate, breathe throughout, and gradually increase speed:

“**I should’uv** called you.”

- f. Now REDUCE these contractions further by dropping the “uv” and adding “a”:

“**He might’a** called, but I’m not sure.”

“**You should’a** bought more milk.”

4. “**Would**” contractions with I, you, he, she, we, they, parents, friends, “name,” etc.
  - a. DON’T touch your teeth together at any time.
  - b. *I’d, you’d, he’d, she’d, we’d, they’d, Tom’ed, Karen’ed.*
  - c. Relax, repeat slowly, enunciate, and gradually increase speed:

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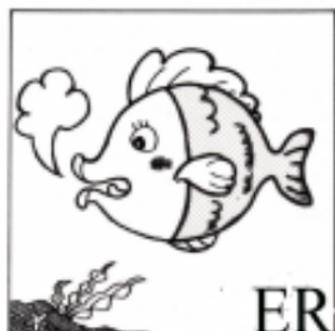
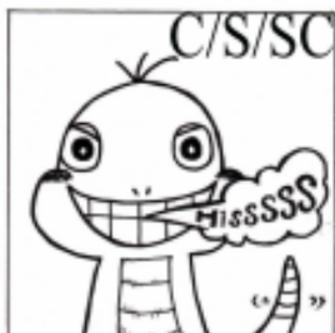
**ILLUSTRATIONS  
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FOR**

**PART I: THE  
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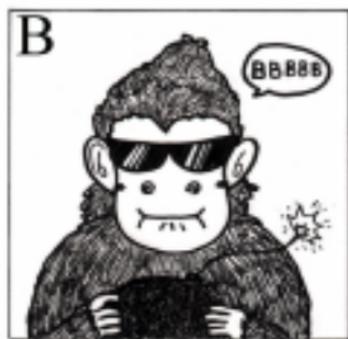
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**PART II: THE  
NASTY NINE**

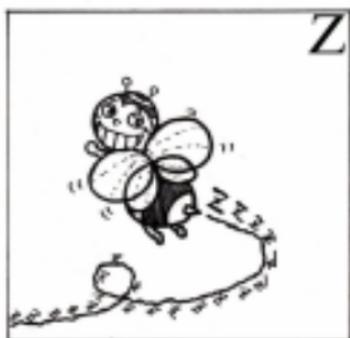
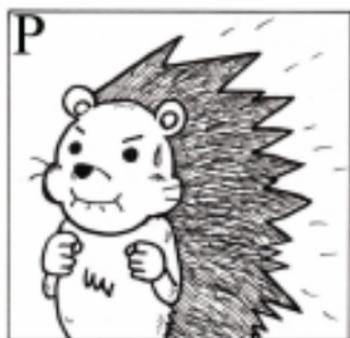
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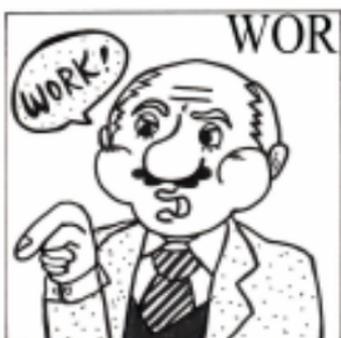
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