

ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION MASTERY

# Speak with Confidence

Develop confidence in  
the English skills you  
already have

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## Introduction and Purpose

Welcome to the start of your journey to improving your English pronunciation. Thank you for investing your time, money, and effort into this program. My goal is to help you improve not only speaking, but also help you feel more confident and comfortable with your English.

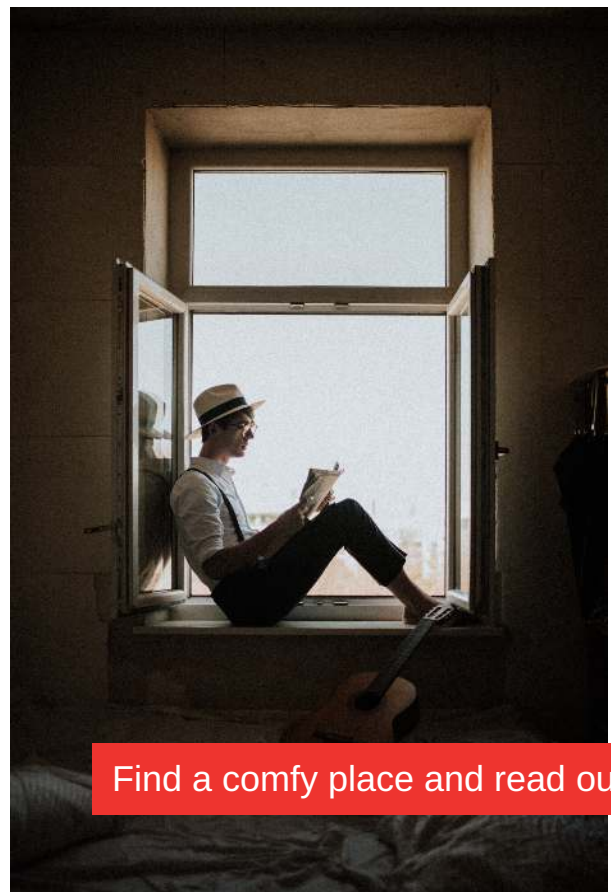
Feel free to *skip ahead* at any time.

The very first thing I want to ask you to do is read this document **out loud**. I will explain more about this later in the document, but for now, just trust me.

If you are in a place where you are able to do so, *read this out loud*.

Additionally, I want to highlight that this document is written in a very *informal* manner.

Though most of the grammar is correct, there may be some informal things that would not be correct in a formal or technical document. I don't recommend using this document as a guide for technical grammar. Just a heads up.



Find a comfy place and read out loud.

Again, you can [jump ahead](#) to the heart of the document and program if you'd like, but before I go there, I am going to provide some background on both the program and myself to give you more context on how it developed and why I believe it can truly benefit you.

Additionally, a “*Cheat Sheet*” or simplified guide can be found as an appendix or attachment to this guide at the end of the document. It will give you only the most important information for each section.

### *First, what is this “program”?*

This program is a resource for non-native English speakers to improve their English speaking, pronunciation, and accent. It is specifically designed to target the unique speaking challenges of native Spanish speakers from Latin America.

It includes the identification and explanation of each of these common challenges, including why they are so difficult, and finally step-by-step guidance on how to practice and improve each of the specific items.

The program is not for new English learners or beginner level students.

It is a tool for **intermediate and upper level** students who already have a strong or advanced understanding of English vocabulary and grammar.

The program is not designed to help you with vocabulary or grammar.

This is the English version of the guide. There is also a Spanish version being developed (*currently not available*) that may help you to understand some of the steps, depending on your level of English. However, I would encourage you to utilize the English version as much as possible.

### ***Second, where did this program come from?***

This guide was created from my own personal experience living in Colombia, learning Spanish (I'll explain why I feel this is valuable shortly), speaking with colleagues and friends, and teaching English for multiple years. I have heard hundreds and hundreds of native Spanish speakers speaking English, and I have heard almost all of them express anxiety, frustration, or even embarrassment about their accent or pronunciation.

When I began teaching English, my initial goal was to help my students learn whatever grammar or vocabulary topic was next on their English journey.

However, I quickly realized that even when the students understood everything clearly and could use the material perfectly, they were very nervous to actually *speak it* - even in a closed, safe classroom setting. It was even scarier for them when we tried to take the learning into the real world to practice. Does that sound like you?



As my classes continued and evolved, I began to realize that one of the biggest factors of teaching my students was giving them the confidence to use the language, to make mistakes, and to learn from them without feeling like they had failed.

So, I started asking the students straight out: “what makes you feel nervous?” I assumed it would be conditionals or irregular verbs or something technical we could practice more. But I was immediately proven wrong as every single student I asked said “My accent” or “My pronunciation”.

I had to take a step back and really try to understand this, and what I could try to do to help.

### *>> Short Detour >>*

At the same time, I was learning (and I am still learning) Spanish. I tried to think about this fear or nervousness in my own personal experience. When I did, I realized that it was there for me too! I was constantly worried about mispronouncing words or my “gringo” accent. Sometimes, I would be so anxious I wouldn’t even try to speak, or I would avoid going somewhere where I knew I would have to speak Spanish. I would even tell people not to call me or send me voice messages on WhatsApp because I was so nervous!



After thinking about this (and thinking about my students), I finally made the decision to just say: “I’m not going to worry about it anymore. I’m just going to speak, make mistakes, and people will correct me.” And you know what? They did. It worked! Just changing my mindset made me *better* at Spanish. Teaching English made me *better* at Spanish.

But also, people helping me and correcting me and teaching me how to properly say things made me better at Spanish. It gave me the confidence to speak that I never had before.

The last, unexpected benefit? When I spoke Spanish better, it “magically” made *listening* to Spanish easier! Of course, it wasn’t really magic. You see, when you practice speaking and speaking correctly, your ears are always listening. So, when you spend time practicing that proper pronunciation, your ears are adjusting and learning the proper sounds as well. This means that you become better at identifying those correct sounds when *other people* use them.

I will say that last part again: *improving your pronunciation will also improve your ability to listen to and understand native English speakers.*

[\*<< Back to the main topic <<\*](#)

So, I realized that my language could be improved dramatically just by focusing on my speaking. It gave me more confidence, helped my listening skills, and ultimately made me feel truly comfortable living in a Spanish speaking country. It was amazing.

And that comfort and confidence is what I want to help you achieve.

In the next sections, you will see groups of common challenges for native Spanish speakers speaking in English and how to understand them, break them down, and improve them.

It is not a magic trick - it will take effort and time.

But if you are consistent and continue working on the items in this program, you will truly transform your English abilities.

Read on, and I wish you the best of luck and confidence on your English speaking journey!

A photograph of a space shuttle launching, with a large plume of white smoke and fire at the base. The shuttle is ascending into a blue sky with scattered white clouds. The launch pad structure is visible on the left side of the frame.

**Ready. Set. Go!**

## Things to know before you begin

Before starting the program, I want to make sure we are using clear terms and that you understand what the guide is trying to communicate. Basically, I want to make sure we are speaking the same language, so you don't run into problems and get stuck...



Don't get stuck...

1. This program is *not* for beginner level English learners.
2. **Vowel.** In English, these are “a”, “e”, “i”, “o”, and “u”. Sometimes “y” can make an “ee” or “i” sound, but it is not technically considered a vowel.
3. **Consonant.** Any letter that is not a vowel. Some examples include “b”, “c”, “d”, “r”, “s”, and “t”.
4. **Key word.** Many of the practice techniques in this program will utilize a method with a “key word”. This is just a name for a word that you can say correctly already, almost every time. This word will be a guide for you to practice a specific sound and then expand it to other words.





5. The **levels** in this program are based upon the level of speaker I typically see having the difficulties. The levels roughly correspond as follows:

- Level 1 - Lower Intermediate - B1
- Level 2 - Upper Intermediate - B2
- Level 3 - Advanced - C1/C1+

Level 4 of the program is more general continuing practice, and is not associated with one specific English proficiency level.

Another way to think about the program levels is that many English teachers might let a lower intermediate student make some of the mistakes in Level 2 without doing a lot of correction (*some*, not all), because they are also learning new grammar structures, new conjugations, new vocabulary, and many other things at the same time. However, as the student progresses to the upper intermediate level, the instructors would correct the items in Level 2 more and more frequently.



That does not mean an advanced student will not have any issues with items in Level 1. It happens all the time. However, in order to break the items down into groups, I used this general approach.

6. **Additional Support.** If this feels like too much to do alone, don't worry! If you feel you would like to have a one-on-one session to identify the things you already know and the top items you should focus on, please visit our website at [www.EnglishPronunciationMastery.com](http://www.EnglishPronunciationMastery.com) or contact me directly at: [jordan@EnglishPronunciationMastery.com](mailto:jordan@EnglishPronunciationMastery.com)



## Table Of Contents

Introduction and Purpose	1
Things to know before you begin	7
Level 1 – Master the basics	11
Level 2 – Control the new sounds	35
Level 3 – Refine the hardest sounds	55
Level 4 – Always continue practicing - but practice the right things	69
Wrap Up	73
Cheat Sheet	74

## Level 1 – Master the basics

When starting on this task of improving your speaking, it may seem like too much at first. So here it is broken down into four different sections or levels. The first is Level 1 - Master the basics. Don't let the name fool you. These may be basic concepts, but they can be challenges for even the most advanced English learners.

Some of these you may already feel comfortable with, and that is fine. But I challenge you to practice each one of these out loud a few times to really be sure that you 100% have them correct.

Without wasting any more time, let's get started on the Level 1 concepts! Here are the items we will cover in this first level:

1. Don't over-do the vowels.
2. Don't forget to pronounce the consonants.
3. One more vowel helper.
4. Don't roll your "r".
5. Another "r" rule: "r"  $\neq$  "d".
6. What are all these double letters about??
7. Don't forget the "to".
8. When to pronounce the "-ed".

## 1. Don't over-do the vowels.

### *Context*

One thing new English speakers tend to do is put too much stress on vowels. I don't mean an accent on a vowel. Every word has a proper pronunciation and position where the accent should be placed (for example, it is HAM-bur-ger, not ham-BUR-ger).

This is NOT what I mean. I mean that new English speakers tend to pronounce words like “iiiiii waaaaant tooooo gooooo toooo theeeee stoooooore” and put all of their focus on the vowels.

We do this when we are in the learning stages of a language because holding the vowel gives us time to think about what we want to say next. It takes us much longer at the beginning to form sentences and thoughts in a new language, and this is one thing our brain does to give us more time. Many students do this at the very beginning and eventually stop once they get more comfort with the language.





Unfortunately, speaking in this manner makes us sound very non-native, even if we don't have a very strong accent. It makes us sound as if we don't really know the language as well as we do. If this turns into a habit, it can continue to be an ongoing problem for even advanced speakers.

So how do we fix this? **Two parts.** We will cover one here and the other in the next item, as they are connected.

First, we will focus on the consonants in the word instead of the vowels. It is basically impossible to “hold” a consonant without doing it on purpose. But we will discuss this more in *Item 2*.

Second, we use filler words when we are thinking, the same way you do in Spanish. Think about how you speak in Spanish for just a second. How many times do you use “pues” or “entonces” or “no sé” or “sabes que?” or “o sea” or “a ver” (or something similar) as a way to take up some space while you form your sentence? Probably pretty often, right? We do the same thing in English - especially native speakers!

You may think it sounds backwards, and you may have even been taught not to use filler words, but these filler words actually make you sound *more* fluent, not less. You just have to practice using the English versions! The most common ones we typically use are:

**Well** - almost a direct translation for “pues”;

- Speaker 1: Do you want to go to the park today?
- Speaker 2: Well... I'm not sure. It looks like it will rain.

**Like** - not “I like something” and not usually as a comparison tool “the sun was *like* a warm blanket on a cold day”. Not those versions. This version is still translated as “como”, but it could also maybe be similar to “o sea”. Pero, no importa. You can almost use it however you want. If you have seen a movie from the US from the 90's, you have probably seen the typical pretty (but not too smart) girl character who says “like” like every like other like word. Of course, this is too much and sounds bad. But the idea is that the word can be used, like, anywhere.

**Hmm / mmm / umm** - similar to “eh” or “yumm” in Spanish, these are used to indicate that you are thinking about something. Maybe someone asked you a question and you are trying to think of your answer while you are responding.

- Speaker 1: Honey, what do you want for dinner?
- Speaker 2: Umm... I don't know, darling. Would you like to order pizza?  
Or
- Speaker 2: I don't know, darling. Umm, would you like to order pizza?  
Or
- Speaker 2: I don't know, darling. Would you like to, umm... order a pizza?

**I don't know** - pretty easy: when you don't know something.

**You know** - direct translation for “sabes que”.

There are of course more filler words, but these are very common. One thing you may notice is that many of these words or phrases express not knowing something.

This is because we are literally using a filler word to fill a space because we don't know what words we want to use yet!

So how can you incorporate these into your speaking without doing it too much? Simple. Just think about how you would use them in Spanish and start doing the same in English.

The easiest way to do that is to pick **two or three** English filler words and only focus on them. The recommendation of this guide is to focus on filler words that are direct translations to filler words in Spanish. Why? Because you already know *exactly how to use them*.

Putting this into practice, I recommend focusing on: *well / pues; hmm / eh; and you know / sabes que*.

How can we practice this right now? Well, that's easy! Below you will find 10 random questions.

Read them out loud as if you were asking yourself the question - and then immediately answer them without taking time to prepare an answer in your head first. Answer as if you were just having a casual conversation with a friend. If you can get a real friend or family member to ask you the questions, that's even better!

## English Pronunciation Mastery

Any moment that you don't immediately know what you want to say, I want you to add a filler word (whichever one you think is appropriate or feels natural). You know that we can use these words at the beginning or in the middle of a sentence, so don't be scared to use them anywhere you need to stop and think.

Now, move on to the questions or ask someone to ask you the following questions one at a time - they ask question number one, and you answer it, then they ask question number two, and you answer it, etc.



### *Practice*

*There is no right or wrong answer to these questions. The idea is to make you think and speak at the same time without focusing on vowels by using filler words.*

1. Who is the best movie or television actor ever?
2. Where is the best food in the world?
3. When was the Volkswagen company started?
4. Can you explain to me how an airplane flies?
5. What is a famous food or meal from your hometown or home country?
6. How do you make that food? What is the process?
7. What is a black hole?
8. Why is it important to change the oil in your car or motorcycle?
9. How big is the city that you live in?
10. How would you solve the traffic problems in your city?
11. If you don't live in a city with traffic problems, how would you solve the traffic problems in Los Angeles?



### 2. Don't forget to pronounce the consonants.

#### *Context*

Something that is done at the same time as and as a result of overusing the vowels is that consonants can be too short, or not spoken at all. If you focus too much on the vowels, at some point, you will not pronounce all the consonants.

Sometimes that is ok. English does have silent letters, it's true. But we need to make sure to pronounce all the letters that are NOT silent. When you practice your speaking, try to focus on pronouncing every single consonant clearly. This will help you with saying words completely, AND it will help you to not focus too much on the vowels.



### *Practice*

Practice for this is simple. As you are reading through this document, I just want you to make sure you say each consonant (i.e., non-vowel) that is not supposed to be silent - especially letters at the END of a word (we will cover this more in Level 3).

A more hands-on method for practicing this, is to rewrite sentences with all capital consonants and *then* read them out loud. For example:

I like eating bread. → i LiKe eaTING BReaD.

When you read the second version, your brain will automatically focus more on the consonants because they are bigger. To practice on your own:

1. Take 10 sentences - they can be from this guide, or any sentences you like.
2. Write them down.
3. Then write them down again with the consonants capitalized.
4. Now read the capitalized versions three times each.
5. Now go back and read the non-capitalized versions. Your brain and your ear should have the new way already incorporated into your speaking.

### 3. One more vowel helper.

#### *Context*

One thing that is very common in Spanish is to make vowels longer (similar to what we talked about in item 1 of this guide). The Spanish language is typically much more flowing and pretty than English, and sometimes it is almost spoken like a song. It can be very beautiful.

But we shouldn't use that with our English. Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending on your opinion), English is not a very "pretty" language. It has a large influence from German, and it can sound very quick or "choppy", as we typically use shorter sentences than Spanish (writing and speaking).

What does that mean? Well, in Spanish, you might turn a one-syllable word into multiple syllables to express a certain emotion. If you have ever seen the television show *Modern Family*, you have probably heard the Colombian actress Sofia Vergara speaking English. In real life, she speaks quite well, but she exaggerates her accent for the show.

Fortunately, we can use this to help with our pronunciation practice. In the show, her husband's name is "Jay". A short, one-syllable word. Usually, she pronounces it just like that: short.

However, when she is disappointed with him for some reason, she pronounces it muuuuch longer, and it starts to almost sound like a song. Sometimes it can be much more like: Jay-ee-EE-ee.

This is not bad or wrong, necessarily, and it is typically used to express excitement or frustration or another emotion and add more feeling to the word. Unfortunately, we don't do that very much in English. So, similar to item 1 in this guide, we want to try to limit that.

### *Practice*

Practice for this is very simple. Below is a list of 10 one-syllable names. I just want you to read them out loud. Butttttt I want you to pretend you are very frustrated or angry with the person whose name you are saying. Just try to keep the words as short as you can and keep them at one syllable, no matter what emotion you are feeling at the time.

<b>Emotion:</b>	<b>Excited</b>	<b>Frustrated</b>	<b>Angry</b>
1	Jay	Dee	Tom
2	Mike	Bob	May
3	Bill	Mark	Sam

## 4. Don't roll your "r".

### *Context*

In some languages (like Spanish), rolling the "r" or "rr" is more common than not rolling it. However, we don't do that in English. Ever. Literally, never. This sound does not exist in English.



Rolling sushi: good.  
Rolling "r": not good.

The more you can limit this rolled "rr" sound or even remove it from your English pronunciation, the smoother and more fluent it will sound.

Also, remember that the double consonant in English ("rr", "tt", "ss", "mm", etc.) does not mean a change in how we pronounce the consonant. It actually tells us how to pronounce the *vowel before the double consonant*. But we will talk more about this later in Level 1.

### *Practice*

Unfortunately, there is no one-size fits all method to remove this sound. Some Spanish speakers are so comfortable with the rolled "rr" that it can be very difficult to eliminate it. However, the best way to do it is:



1. **Remember that sound does not exist in English.**
2. Find a word that you can say correctly every time in English, and use this as a guide to practice the English “r” sound. It is typically easier to start with a word that has an “r” at the *end*, because students are less likely to roll this “r” (hair, here, lower, taller, better, etc.). Words with an “r”+“d” structure are typically the hardest (word, bird, lord, cord, etc.), so I would avoid those until you feel confident in your English “r” sounds. Whatever word you choose as your key word, make sure you can say it correctly every time.
3. Take your key word, and say it out loud correctly 20 - 30 times.
4. Now, try another “r” word. If you can do it correctly 20 times, go to a new word.
5. Continue this process.
6. If you notice yourself rolling an “r”, go back to your key word and say it 10-20 more times.

### 5. Another “r” rule: “r” ≠ “d”.

#### *Context*

Let’s go back to our friend Sofia Vergara from *Modern Family*. She can help us again with what not to do. When she pronounces her “r”, she does NOT roll it like Spanish. She does something different, but that is still incorrect.

Many times, she pronounces her “r” almost like a “d”. For example, “very” becomes “veh-dee” and “sorry” becomes “saw-dee”. “Tiring” becomes “tie-uh-ding”. This is typically only when an “r” comes before an “i”, “e”, or “y”. This is not an issue when a word starts with an “r”. We want to eliminate this.

To do this, we have to focus on our tongue and mouth position. When we make a “d” sound, typically our mouth is more open, and our tongue is more forward - sometimes touching or between our front teeth. This is great for a “d” or a “th” sound, but it is not what we want for an “r” sound.

To make the “r” sound, your mouth should be almost closed, and your tongue should be comfortably in the middle of your mouth - not up, not down, not touching any teeth. If you focus on this tongue and mouth position, with a little practice, it should very quickly clean up your “r” sound.

### *Practice*

1. For this practice, we will combine two methods: mouth and tongue positioning as discussed in the *Context* and key word usage.
2. For the mouth and tongue positioning, we have a list of words that alternate with ending in a “-dy” and an “-ry”. You will say the “-dy” word first and really focus on your mouth and tongue - think about how they feel and where they are. Also, your ears will hear the “-dy” sound and you will know this is NOT the sound you want for the “-ry” word. See Step 3 for the list of words.
3. Some of these are not real words, but it does not matter. The point is to focus on the sound, pronunciation, and accent - not the vocabulary. Go through them one time slowly. As you get more comfortable, gradually go through them faster and faster.

*The pronunciation guide for the “-ry” words is slightly exaggerated to make it easier to get comfortable with. To pronounce the word correctly, you must speed up the part before the “-r”. For example: “Larry”. The pronunciation guide says “Lay-er-ee”.*

*This is accurate. However, when we say this normally, the “Layer” part is spoken very quickly - we turn it into one syllable. Don’t worry about that yet. Just focus on the pronunciation slowly at first, and then speed it up as you get more comfortable.*

<b>-DY</b>	<b>-RY</b>
<b>Lady (Lay-dee)</b>	<b>Larry (Lay-er-ee)</b>
<b>Heady (Head-ee)</b>	<b>Very (vay-er-ee)</b>
<b>Tidy (Tie-dee)</b>	<b>Wiry (Why-er-ee)</b>
<b>Body (Bah-dee)</b>	<b>Worry (Were-ee)</b>
<b>Muddy (Mud-ee)</b>	<b>Furry (Furr-ee)</b>
<b>Daddy (Dad-ee)</b>	<b>Wary (Way-er-ee)</b>
<b>Raidy (Ray-dee)</b>	<b>Hairy (Hay-er-ee)</b>
<b>Teddy (Ted-ee)</b>	<b>Merry (May-er-ee)</b>
<b>Buddy (Bud-ee)</b>	<b>Curry (Curr-ee)</b>
<b>Cloddy (Clod-ee)</b>	<b>Sorry (Sore-ee)</b>

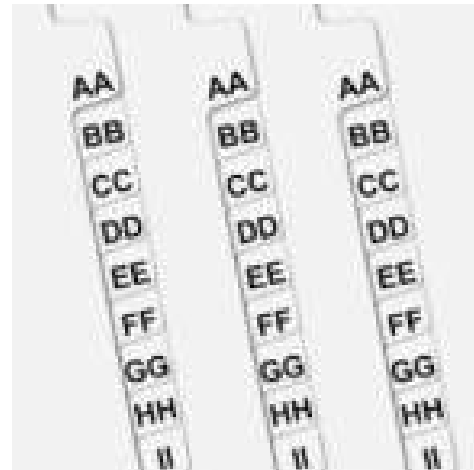
*\*Note: You will notice many of these words have double letters in them (e.g., “dd”, “rr”). In the next item, we will talk about what that means for pronunciation.*

4. To continue practicing, find one of the “-ry” words from Step 3 that you feel the most confident with (possibly “worry”, as the pronunciation guide may be the easiest to follow). Take that word and use it as your key word. Say it correctly 20 times in a row to master the mouth and tongue position and the sound.
5. Now, try one of the other words. Say it correctly 10 times. If you can, try a new word and continue. If not, go back to your key word and say it 10 more times, then try again with a new word.

## 6. What are all these double letters about??

### *Context*

Double letter consonants in English can be tricky at first. Spanish does not use them often except for “ll” and “rr”, and in Spanish the double letter version creates an entirely new sound and letter.



This is not the case in English. Double letter consonants do NOT tell us to pronounce the doubled letter differently. You don't have to learn any new sounds - don't worry. In English, double consonants are actually pretty helpful! You know how English vowels can be difficult and make multiple sounds (we will talk more about this in Level 2, don't worry)? The double letter consonant tells us how to pronounce the vowel immediately before the double consonant. It's like a cheat code for pronunciation.

For now, let's just focus on the two most common forms of vowels - the long vowel (example: “ee”; “me”, “bee”, “see”, etc.) and the short vowel (example: “eh”; “wet”, “bed”; “red”).



*The double consonant tells us we have to pronounce the vowel as the short form.* We never say “always” when it comes to English rules, but this one is pretty close to always. Let’s look at some examples:

1. Belly. This is pronounced “beh-lee”. We would never say “bee-lee”.
2. Penny. This is pronounced “peh-nee”. We would never say “pee-nee”.
3. Betty. This is pronounced “beh-tee”. We would never say “bee-tee”.

Those examples were for words where the vowel was “e”; but don’t worry. This rule works for all vowels:

1. Daddy → dah-dee (not “day-dee”)
2. Petty → peh-tee (not “pee-tee”)
3. Witty → wih-tee (not “wie-tee”)\*
4. Golly → gah-lee (not “goe-lee”)
5. Buddy → buh-dee (not “boo-dee”)

*\*Witty uses the short version of the vowel “i”. It is a very difficult sound for native Spanish speakers because it does not exist in Spanish. We will talk about this specific sound more in Level 3.*

There are two letters where the double letter also tells us the pronunciation of the consonant: “c” and “g”. These two letters are special because they can have multiple sounds.

The “c” can make a “ka” sound like a “k” or an “suh” sound like an “s”. A double “c” *usually* means that it should be pronounced like a “k”. However, there are not many double “c” words in everyday English, so don’t worry much about this.

The “gg” is more common, and much easier. *Usually*, a double “g” should be pronounced like the “g” in “girl” or “big” (*ex. bigger, hugger*). It should have a “guh” sound, NOT a “juh” sound. There are some cases where a double “g” will make a “juh” sound, but they are more rare (*ex. exaggerate*).

Double letter vowels *do exist*. However, it is almost always a double “o” or double “ee”, and they have specific sounds that they make basically all the time. The “oo” makes almost a long “u” sound, like in the word “boo” (like a ghost says to scare someone). The “ee” just makes a long “e” sound, like in the word “speed” (like an “i” in Spanish, como “listo”).

### *Practice*

This rule is pretty simple, and I think once you have read it and understand it, you shouldn’t need much practice. However, here is a list of double letter words to practice:

<b>Word</b>	<b>Pronunciation</b>
<b>Gummy</b>	<b>guh-mee</b>
<b>Rubber</b>	<b>ruh-ber</b>
<b>Robber</b>	<b>rah-ber</b>
<b>Bagger</b>	<b>bah-ger</b>
<b>Getter</b>	<b>geh-ter</b>
<b>Better</b>	<b>beh-ter</b>
<b>Sadder</b>	<b>sah-der (or sad-er, if that is easier)</b>
<b>Popper</b>	<b>pah-per</b>
<b>Hammer</b>	<b>hah-mer (or ham-er)</b>
<b>Dinner</b>	<b>dih-ner</b>

*\*Note: For some of these, the pronunciation of the vowel in the guide is not 100% accurate because it can be difficult to write out the exact sounds sometimes. However, the point is that you should NOT use the long vowel sound.*

### 7. Don't forget the "to".

#### *Context*

Infinitives in some languages (like Spanish) are just one word (escuchar, ver, mirar, etc.). That is NOT true for English. When we use the infinitive in English, we MUST say the "to" before the verb (to listen, to see, to watch, etc.). An example sentence is "I like TO watch tv." This is the correct form. Often, new speakers will say "I like watch tv." This is NOT correct. Don't forget the "to"!

This is in Level 1 because it is a pretty simple correction (just add the word "to"). But if you don't know what an infinitive is or how and when to use one, it will seem very confusing. If this is confusing for you, you will need to review your infinitive grammar. As this program is not a grammar course, I recommend going [here](#) to get more information and practice exercises.

#### *Practice*

There is no real practice for this item. It is something that most students can fix pretty quickly when they know it is a problem. For some example phrases, however, see below:

1. I want TO eat dinner.
2. I like TO travel.
3. It is hard TO wake up early.
4. I went home TO see my parents.

## 8. When to pronounce “-ed”.

### *Context*

When you read something in Spanish, you almost automatically know how to pronounce it.

Unfortunately, this is not always true in English, and it is the cause of one of the most frustrating pronunciation problems for native Spanish speakers: the “-ed” at the end of a word – usually past tense verbs (worked, liked, rated, dated, etc.). Fortunately, there is a simple rule to make this much easier:

1. If the letter before the “-ed” is a “t” or a “d” you *pronounce* the “E” in “ed” (ex. dated, aided, divided, completed).
2. If the letter before the “-ed” is any other letter, you do **NOT** pronounce the “E” in the “ed”.  
For example, “packed” is pronounced “pack’d”. “Asked” is pronounced “ask’d”. Remove the “e” sound.
3. Exceptions: Some “-ed” words used as adjectives. Example: “wicked”. However, this is very, very rare compared to regular past tense verbs, so I would not worry about this until the rest of your pronunciation is at a high level.

### *Practice*

For this level, you only need to look at the letter right before the -ed. Is it a “d” or a “t”? Yes, that does mean there is another level for this later in the program! But for now, let’s keep our focus here.

Your exercise for this is simple: read the words in this list out loud and pronounce them the correct way. The answers are in the column to the right for you to check yourself.

## English Pronunciation Mastery

<b>Word</b>	<b>Pronunciation Answer</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Pronunciation Answer</b>
<b>Lived</b>	<b>Liv'd</b>	<b>Ratted</b>	<b>RattEd</b>
<b>Wished</b>	<b>Wish'd</b>	<b>Dabbed</b>	<b>Dabb'd</b>
<b>Dieted</b>	<b>DietEd</b>	<b>Defended</b>	<b>DefendEd</b>
<b>Smacked</b>	<b>Smack'd</b>	<b>Amassed</b>	<b>Amass'd</b>
<b>Talked</b>	<b>Talk'd</b>	<b>Watched</b>	<b>Watch'd</b>
<b>Stated</b>	<b>StatEd</b>	<b>Lasted</b>	<b>LastEd</b>
<b>Salted</b>	<b>SaltEd</b>	<b>Mastered</b>	<b>Master'd</b>
<b>Smelled</b>	<b>Smell'd</b>	<b>Watered</b>	<b>Water'd</b>
<b>Tipped</b>	<b>Tipp'd</b>	<b>Divided</b>	<b>DividEd</b>
<b>Tested</b>	<b>TestEd</b>	<b>Wasted</b>	<b>WastEd</b>
<b>Listened</b>	<b>Listen'd</b>	<b>Cooked</b>	<b>Cook'd</b>
<b>Faded</b>	<b>FadEd</b>	<b>Cleaned</b>	<b>Clean'd</b>

More practice: [100 Most Common "-ed" Words](#). You can go here and use this list to keep practicing. The same rule applies. "T" or "d", pronounce the "e".

*Congratulations! You've made it through Level 1! Time to move to Level 2 and keep progressing on your pronunciation journey.*



**Moving on up!**

## Level 2 – Control the new sounds

Level 1 focused on some basic pronunciation items that you may already feel pretty comfortable with, but that are also kind of general ideas (the infinitive piece and the “-ed” words are a little more specific, of course). Level 2 focuses on the different sounds in English compared to Spanish. Some of these are completely new and don’t exist in Spanish at all, and others are differences in *how* we say them.

Let’s get to it!

Here are the topics we will cover in Level 2:

1. Get the "TH" sound together!
2. Remove the "E" sound in front of the letter "S".
3. Vowels - there are a lot!
4. OU. Don't get out of touch.
5. The "y" and "j" problem.
6. Don't forget the "-t" at the end.
7. Don't forget the "-s" at the end.



# 1. Get the “TH” sound together!

### *Context*

You probably already know this sound or have seen this letter combination many times before - in English and in Spanish. This letter combination does exist in Spanish, but it is not very common. This is not a “new” sound, technically. However, the *way* we say it in English is different than in Spanish.

I am going to use an example here from my Colombian experience first, so it may not be universally applicable. But I want you to think of the pronunciation for the word “nada” in Spanish. Go ahead, say it out loud. Pay attention to the sound you make for the “d” in “nada”.

To a Spanish speaker, it is just a “d”. However, to a native English speaker, that sound is *much* closer to a “th”. If I were to spell that word in English, it would be “natha”. Think about that sound when you see an English “th”, and just make it a liiiiittle bit stronger.

If you are not Colombian or don’t feel like that example works for you, let’s look at an example from Spain. Think about Castillian Spanish (Castellano) for a moment... get that accent in your mind. Now, say “zapato” with that heavy Castillian/Andalucian accent. It sounds more like “sthapato”, yea?

That sound at the beginning of the word is a little dramatic and a little messy, but it is pretty close to an English “th” - if you remove the “ssss” sound from the beginning. With the “ssss” sound removed, you can take that as a guide to use for practicing your English “th”. But remember, you must remove the “ssss” sound. The English “th” sound is short and clean, not long and dramatic.

Again, it is a little exaggerated, but it is a good way to practice where your tongue should be positioned in your mouth for the “th” - forward in your mouth and between your top and bottom teeth, not behind them. It is almost like you are starting to stick your tongue out like a little kid playing.

If you keep your tongue behind your teeth, you will make a “t” sound or, more commonly, a “d” sound. You will hear many speakers say “dee game dis evening was dee best dat I have seen.” *This* is what we want to avoid.

For an explanation without Colombian or Castillian examples, to make this sound, put your tongue between your top and bottom teeth. Your tongue should stick out a little between your teeth, and as you push air out of your mouth, let some air escape between your tongue and teeth—that’s what makes the sound.

# th



Source:

[languageadvisor.net](http://languageadvisor.net)

### *Practice*

Practicing this sound will be similar to some other practices we have done. We will find a key word that you can pronounce correctly every time, and use that as a guide. We can even start with the Colombian or Castillian examples if that is easier. Let's do that here.

1. Take the word "natha" or "thapato" (remember, heavy Castillian accent). Whichever one you are more comfortable with, say it out loud 20 times, paying close attention to the "th" sound.
2. Now let's get an English word to work with. Let's try **think**. This is a word that is pretty common, but not as common as words like "the" or "this" which you may already pronounce a certain way and have a hard time changing at first.
3. Say *think* 10 times. Get it right all 10 times? Say it again 20 times.
4. Now try **thought**. 10 times. If you got it right, move to a new word. If not, go back to "think".
5. Now try some of the super common ones that we have to use all day, everyday: the, that, these, there, those, them, then.
6. If you make any mistakes, just remember your key word, and say it a few times to get the sound back. Then go back to the more challenging words.

### 2. Remove the “E” sound in front of the letter “S”.

#### *Context*

This is one of the most common challenges for native Spanish speakers speaking English, at all levels. It is something you will need to continue practicing. Why is it so hard? Because it doesn't exist in Spanish.

There are no words in Spanish that start with an “s” followed by a consonant. All of these words start with an “es” in Spanish (especial, estandar, estudiante, etc.).

If you are learning English, this is possibly the first time you have seen a word start with an “s” and another letter that is not a vowel.

Because of this, when you read a word that starts with an “s” followed by a consonant (for example, “special”), it is natural as a native special Spanish speaker to pronounce it as “e-special”. We need to focus on removing the “e-” sound from in front of these words. This will *immediately* improve your accent.

#### *Practice*

There is no magic formula for this one. You just need to practice a little bit everyday reading “s” words and paying attention to your pronunciation.

## English Pronunciation Mastery

You will probably discover that this is very easy when you are paying attention and focused on it, but that you make mistakes when you are thinking about something else. Don't worry! That is perfectly normal. This is one that takes a little bit of practice consistently until your brain "gets it".

You will probably also think it is harder when multiple "s" words are used together like the "native Spanish speaker speaking English" phrase I used earlier. Again, completely normal. It actually is good for us, because we can get more practice done faster!

Practice is very ssssimple. Just practice reading the following words without an "e" sound at the beginning of the word. At first, you can use the "sssss" trick. As you get more comfortable, you should make the "sssss" sssshorter and sshorter and shorter, until you are pronouncing the words normally. Don't worry if you don't know what some of the words mean yet. Just focus on the ssss.

<b>Straight</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Star</b>	<b>Slang</b>	<b>Stall</b>	<b>Smell</b>
<b>Spear</b>	<b>Spit</b>	<b>Steal</b>	<b>Spell</b>	<b>Skill</b>	<b>Share</b>
<b>Show</b>	<b>Shoe</b>	<b>Slow</b>	<b>Shun</b>	<b>Slip</b>	<b>Snail</b>
<b>Skin</b>	<b>Scan</b>	<b>Scare</b>	<b>Swear</b>	<b>Squint</b>	<b>Shin</b>
<b>Shrink</b>	<b>Stink</b>	<b>Still</b>	<b>Square</b>	<b>Scold</b>	<b>Scowl</b>
<b>Spot</b>	<b>Spoke</b>	<b>Speak</b>	<b>Spam</b>	<b>Spray</b>	<b>Spike</b>

After you are feeling confident with individual words, the next step is to practice full sentences, so that you can work on your “s” words even when your brain may not be 100% focused on them. Here are few example phrases for you to practice a little bit whenever you have spare time:

1. The special speaker stole the show by starting out strong.
2. Stealing from stores should result in a strong sentence from the justice system.
3. Shelly sold seashells down by the seashore (this is a common “trabalengua” in English).

### 3. Vowels – there are a lot!

#### *Context*

English has many vowel sounds that do not exist in Spanish. In general, one of the quickest ways to improve your English accent is to master the extra vowel sounds that we use in English.

In Spanish, each vowel makes one sound – always! In English, the letter “a” can make at least 3 sounds, “e” 3 sounds, “i” 3 sounds, “o” 2 sounds, and “u” 3 sounds.

That’s 14 sounds in English compared to 5 sounds in Spanish. This does not include when the vowels are combined together. Some sources have identified over 20 different vowel sounds in English!!

Obviously, that is a lot to learn and practice, and a big difference from Spanish.

Fortunately, most of them are easy to do, but you need to practice *when* to use them.

For this guide, we will focus on only 10 sounds - two sounds for each vowel. These are the “short” sound (sometimes called the “soft” sound), and the “long” sound. We talked about this a little in Level 1, but we will go over each one here. However, the short “i” sound will be discussed in more detail later in Level 3, as it is one of the hardest sounds to teach, and one of the hardest for students to learn and master.

Additionally, a third version of the “u” sound will be covered in Level 3.

### *Practice*

Practice for this will mostly consist of examples of each sound so you can clearly see the difference between the two versions of each letter. Let's jump right in:

#### **A**

- **Short A (ah):** call, car, ball, bat, pack, sad, tag, black, part
- **Long A (ay):** bake, game, name, bait, hate, lake, tape, cave

#### **E**

- **Short E (eh):** beg, bet, neck, let, leg, pen, head, dex, wreck
- **Long E (ee):** Bee, be, see, tree, key, me, tea, speak, sheet

#### **I**

- **Short I (ih):** big, pig, this, it, is, shift, six, mix, pick, lip, kit
- **Long I (ai):** ride, side, fight, fly, cry, white, sky, high, bike

#### **O**

- **Short O (ow):** hot, shop, lock, mop, pot, bot, tock, flock, mob
- **Long O (oe):** cold, old, code, gold, show, hope, pole, boat, both

#### **U**

- **Short U (uh):** up, bug, hut, suck, shut, tuck, lump, gum, gun, sun
- **Long U (oo):** moo, move, shute / shoot, chew, dude, rude, new

As you can see, the long “u” sound can be made by multiple different letter combinations. Don't worry too much about that. Just focus on being able to make the sound for now.



### 4. OU. Don't get out of touch.

#### *Context*

In addition to the vowel sounds covered in item 3, another very common vowel sound is the vowel combination of “o” and “u” → “ou”. This vowel combo makes five possible sounds:

- 1) “oww” like in “out”;
- 2) “uh” like in “touch”;
- 3) “u” like in “you”;
- 4) “o” like in “soul” (the sound is a long “o”, like “go”); and,
- 5) “aww” like in “bought” (the sound is like “saw”).

For a native Spanish speaker, the sound you most naturally try to make when you see “ou” is more of a long “o” like “go” or “soul”. This is because you will instinctively read the “o” first and make that sound. However, we need to be aware that this letter combination can make other sounds.

Unfortunately, there is no rule for *when* to use each sound. This means that I cannot give you a simple trick to remember to get these right. Instead, we will focus on pronouncing each of the “ou” sounds correctly, and I will give you some of the most common words for each pronunciation.

### *Practice*

Take a look at the following sentence and try to say it out loud:

*English can be understood through tough thorough thought.*

This is one of the most frustrating sentences that I have gone through with my students. Don't feel bad if it is challenging or even impossible at first.

This sentence is difficult because the four words at the end are all spelled very similarly, but they all make a different sound for the "ou" letter combination.

1. Through uses the long "u" sound, like in "you";
2. Tough uses the short "u" sound, like in "fun" or "uh";
3. Thorough has two vowels. The "Thor" sounds like "Thur" in "Thursday". The "ou" sound uses the long "o", like in "go". All together, it sounds like "thuh-roe" (some regional accents may pronounce it differently though);
4. Thought uses the "aww" sound, like in "law", "call", or "saw".

Now, read this sentence out loud:

*English can be understood thru tuff thuh-roe thawt.*

A little easier?

## English Pronunciation Mastery

Again, there is no rule for when to make each “ou” sound. So, I want you to focus on being able to confidently pronounce each sound, and then use the following list of common words as a base for your “ou” practice:

<b>Long “o” - “go”</b>	<b>Long “u” - “you”</b>	<b>“aww” - “saw”</b>	<b>Short “u” - “up”</b>	<b>“Oww” - “cow”</b>
<b>Thorough</b>	<b>Through</b>	<b>Thought</b>	<b>Tough</b>	<b>Out</b>
<b>Though</b>	<b>You</b>	<b>Bought</b>	<b>Enough</b>	<b>Couch</b>
<b>Soul</b>	<b>Soup</b>	<b>Cough</b>	<b>Country</b>	<b>Mouth</b>
<b>Although</b>	<b>Group</b>	<b>Fought</b>	<b>Touch</b>	<b>South</b>
<b>Dough (Donut)</b>	<b>Routine</b>	<b>Brought</b>	<b>Couple</b>	<b>Loud</b>
<b>Source</b>	<b>Coupon</b>	<b>Sought</b>	<b>Cousin</b>	<b>Found</b>
<b>Shoulder</b>	<b>Acoustic</b>	<b>Ought</b>	<b>Obvious</b>	<b>House</b>
<b>Four</b>	<b>Toucan</b>	<b>Trough</b>	<b>Nervous</b>	<b>Sound</b>
<b>Your</b>	<b>Cougar</b>	----	<b>Serious</b>	<b>Doubt</b>

*\*Note: there are not many words like “thought” that make the “aww” sound, so you may not recognize some of the words in that list. Additionally, you can probably see a pattern as they almost always have “-ough” or “-ought”.*

### 5. The “y” and “j” problem.

#### *Context*

These two letters are fairly simple letters, but they create problems for native Spanish speakers learning English (and for native English speakers learning Spanish) because their pronunciation is almost switched!



As an example, let’s look at the following name: “Yordan”. Say it out loud as you would say it in Spanish. Got it? Unfortunately, we don’t pronounce it the same way in English. In fact, we spell this name differently in English so we can make the same sound. How do we spell this name in English? “Jordan”. However, if you read “Jordan” in Spanish, it changes to something like “Hordan”. So you can see how this can be confusing, right?

But you can remember this to help: **English “J” = Spanish “Y”**. This is not true *always* (nothing in English is), but for most words in English that begin with a “j”, you can use this guide.

On the other side of the coin, we have the opposite problem for “y” words in English. Think of the word “you”. If you pronounce this in Spanish, it is more like “joo”. We can’t do that in English.

In English, the “y” sound at the beginning of words should usually (though not *always*) be very similar another sound you have in Spanish: the “LL”. Think of the Spanish word “cuchillo” or “lluvia”. That “LL” sound is the sound an English “y” makes.

So for this, we can remember that typically: **English “y” = Spanish “LL”**.

*\*Note: I know that different areas in Latin America have harder or softer pronunciation of the “LL”. In some places “llamar” is pronounced like “yamar” (think of the English “y” sound), and in others it is closer to “jamar” (again, the English “j” sound (or the Spanish “y” sound)). I tried to choose examples of the “LL” where I have almost always heard it with the softer “LL” sound. This softer “LL” sound is the one that is similar to the English “y” sound.*

Another key word we can use from Spanish is “hielo”. The “hie” at the beginning of the word makes a similar sound to the English “y”. When I hear this word in Spanish, to me it sounds like “yay-lo”. Keep this word in mind if you need another guide.

### *Practice*

For practice on this one, I am going to provide a list of words, and a Spanish equivalent for you to help really master the sound. Read the “Spanish” version to make sure you have the right sound in your head, and then read the English version, using the correct sound. Obviously some of the “Spanish” words are not real words. But they are there to help you “find the sound”.

## English Pronunciation Mastery

<b>Spanish “Y”</b>	<b>English “J”</b>	<b>Spanish “LL”</b>	<b>English “Y”</b>
<b>Yeison</b>	<b>Jason</b>	<b>Lloo</b>	<b>You</b>
<b>Yordan</b>	<b>Jordan</b>	<b>Lles</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Yonathan</b>	<b>Jonathan</b>	<b>Llung</b>	<b>Young</b>
<b>Yump</b>	<b>Jump</b>	<b>Llesterday</b>	<b>Yesterday</b>
<b>Yust</b>	<b>Just</b>	<b>Llellow</b>	<b>Yellow</b>
<b>Yail</b>	<b>Jail</b>	<b>Lleer</b>	<b>Year</b>
<b>Yaw</b>	<b>Jaw</b>	<b>Llogurt</b>	<b>Yogurt</b>
<b>Yaguar</b>	<b>Jaguar</b>	<b>Llore</b>	<b>Your</b>
<b>Yack</b>	<b>Jack</b>	<b>Lloga</b>	<b>Yoga</b>

### 6. Don't forget the "-t" at the end.

#### *Context*



They say an elephant never forgets...

It seems pretty simple, but forgetting to pronounce “-t” completely at the end of a word is one of the most common pronunciation issues and can really hurt your accent.

For example, let's look at this phrase: **I don't want hot breakfast.** Very commonly, a beginner or intermediate English learner will pronounce this as “I don wan hah breakfuss”. Don't forget the “-t”! This should be “I don'T wanT hoT breakfasT.” You don't need to exaggerate the “-t”, but don't forget it.

Why is this important? Let's look at a real life work example. Let's say your boss calls you one night after work and asks you: “Can you come into work early tomorrow morning?”



You reply: “I can’t”, but you don’t pronounce the “-t” at the end of “can’t”. What did your boss hear? That’s right, your boss heard “I can”, and now he is expecting you to be at the office early tomorrow.

Maybe a little dramatic, but you can see the point that the “-t” changes the meaning of the word completely. We can’t forget it!

### *Practice*

Similar to the exercise for “removing the ‘e’ from in front of the ‘s’”, fixing this issue comes from a little practice each day until it becomes automatic. You can exaggerate the “-t” at the end a little at the beginning if that makes it easier for you. However, as you get more comfortable with it, try to make it a little more natural.

Here are some phrases for you to use to practice:

1. That cat caught it! It wasn’t even close!
2. At eight o’clock, Matt will start to cut the meat.
3. I want to eat at that restaurant that Brett suggested.
4. The elephant can’t hunt at night, but the bat can.
5. Pepper Potts spotted Tony Stark right next to Target and Walmart.

### 7. Don't forget the “-s” at the end.

#### *Context*

Just like the “-t” at the end of words, the “-s” or “-es” at the end is easy to forget.

Don't forget it!

Also, **do not confuse this** with the “es” sound at the *beginning* of words that we talked about before.

In English, we do have a “silent S”, but it is not very common, and it is usually not at the end of the word (some US state names or people's last names are exceptions – Illinois (Ill-i-noy), Arkansas (Ar-kan-saw), etc.).

We typically never say “always” when talking about English rules, because there is usually an exception, but we can say that at least 95% of the time (probably more), the “-s” or “-es” at the end of the word should be pronounced.

This is important for pronunciation and your accent, but also for proper grammar when we conjugate verbs (“he likes” = correct vs. “he like” = wrong).



Say it loud!

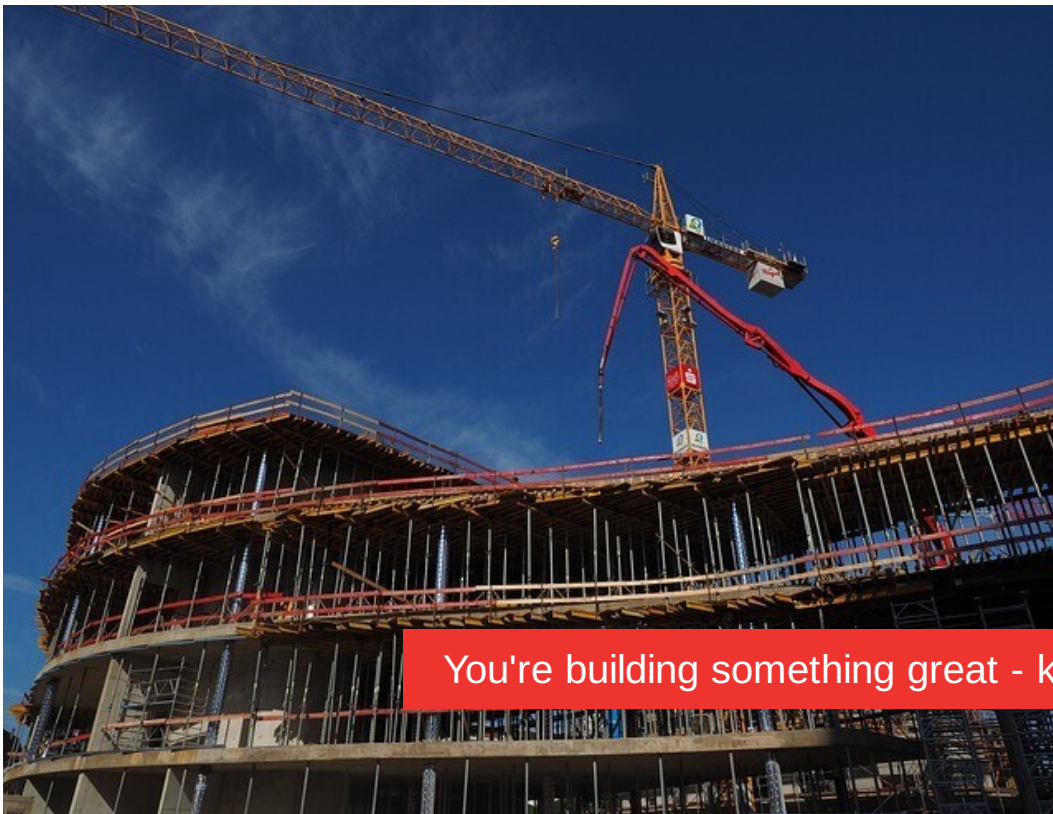
### *Practice*

Again, this is one that you will need to practice a little bit over a period of time until it becomes automatic. Like the “-t”, you can exaggerate a little at the beginning if you need to, but work on moving it to be more natural as you get more comfortable.

Here are some phrases to practice:

1. Apples, peaches, plums, and bananas are types of fruits.
2. Wants, wishes, and desires are those things a magic genie grants.
3. Choose two types of pizzas this weekend for those parties after his games.
4. Chris wishes his friends lived closer to his house.
5. Missy sings songs on the bus, but this bothers the other passengers.

*Congratulations! You've made it through Level 2! You are over halfway through the guide! Time to move to Level 3. It may be the most challenging level, but it will also greatly enhance your accent and speaking. I know you can handle it, so get ready to keep progressing on your pronunciation journey!*



[Back to contents](#)

### Level 3 – Refine the hardest sounds

Welcome to Level 3! Levels 1 and 2 focused on changing some habits and mastering some new sounds. Level 3 focuses on the fine tuning of some sounds you already know and the introduction of two new ways to pronounce some letter groupings that you already know. This level is much shorter than the previous levels, but it will still take time and effort to master.

Here are the challenges that we will tackle in Level 3:

1. Make your mouth work on the "t".
2. The soft / short "i" sound.
3. When a "u" is a "yu".
4. Advanced "-ed" pronunciation.

### 1. Make your mouth work on the “t”.

#### *Context*

Yes, this letter exists in Spanish.

Yes, this sound exists in Spanish.



BUT we use our mouth and tongue differently in English to make this sound: the “t”.

In Spanish, often your tongue will remain forward and between your teeth for this letter. Let’s look at a quick example. Say the following phrase as you normally would in Spanish: “a ti te gusta”. Now, say it again, but pay extra attention to your tongue on the “t” sounds in this phrase (“ti” and “te”). Most likely, it will feel relaxed and open (and comfortable) for your tongue.

In addition, to a native English listener, a native Spanish speaker saying this phrase sounds much more like “a thi the gustha” or even “a di de gusda”. That is a little exaggerated of course, but it is important to try to show the difference in the sounds. This “th” sound is created because, in Spanish, your tongue is typically more forward and even between your front teeth (like the “th” sound we discussed in Level 2). The “d” sound is very similar to the “t” sound, but again, your tongue is more forward (not quite between your teeth though) and relaxed.

In English, this letter is spoken very differently. To pronounce the “t”, your tongue should be behind your teeth and touching the roof (top) of your mouth. It is faster, and it is more controlled and sharp.

You should also push a little air out of your mouth when you make this sound.

This is the “gringo T” sound you have probably heard native English speakers use when trying to learn Spanish.

We want to try to make the “t” sound very clear in English, so that it doesn’t sound like a “th” or a “d”.

### *Practice*

1. For this practice, we will combine two methods: mouth and tongue positioning as discussed in the *Context* and key word usage.
2. For the mouth and tongue positioning, we have a list of words that alternate with “d”, “-th”, and “t” sounds. You will say the “d” word first, and then the “th” word, and really focus on your mouth and tongue - think about how they feel and where they are. Also, your ears will hear the “d” and “th” sounds and you will know these are NOT the sounds you want for the “t” word. See Step 3 for the list of words.
3. Some of these are not real words, but it does not matter. The point is to focus on the sound, pronunciation, and accent - not the vocabulary. Go through them one time slowly. As you get more comfortable, gradually go through them faster and faster.

*\*Note: It may also help to pretend there are accents on the “d” and “t” words. Pretend the accent on the “d” words is at the beginning (ex: bídder) and the accent on the “t” words is at the end (ex: bittér). Only do this at the beginning if you are having trouble with the sounds.*

## English Pronunciation Mastery

<b>D</b>	<b>TH</b>	<b>T</b>
<b>(tongue forward, relaxed)</b>	<b>(tongue forward, between teeth)</b>	<b>(tongue forward, touching roof of the mouth, very sharp, fast, and controlled, push air out of your mouth)</b>
<b>Bed</b>	<b>Beth</b>	<b>Bet</b>
<b>Wedder</b>	<b>Weather</b>	<b>Wetter</b>
<b>Ladder</b>	<b>Lather</b>	<b>Latter</b>
<b>Modder</b>	<b>Mother</b>	<b>Motter</b>
<b>Header</b>	<b>Heather</b>	<b>Hetter</b>
<b>Bad</b>	<b>Bath</b>	<b>Bat</b>
<b>Radder</b>	<b>Rather</b>	<b>Ratter</b>
<b>Bidder</b>	<b>Bither</b>	<b>Bitter</b>
<b>Dead</b>	<b>Death</b>	<b>Debt (the “b” is silent)</b>
<b>Wid</b>	<b>With</b>	<b>Wit</b>

4. To continue practicing, find one of the “t” words from Step 3 that you feel the most confident with. Take that word and use it as your key word. Say it correctly 20 times in a row to really master the mouth and tongue position and the sound.
5. Now, try one of the other words. Say it correctly 10 times. If you can do that successfully, try a new word and continue. If you cannot, go back to your key word and say it 10 more times, then try again with a new word.



### 2. The soft/short “i” sound.

#### *Context*

This is it. Probably the hardest sound to learn in English for native Spanish speakers - because it does not exist in Spanish! However, it is VERY common. For example, if you just read the first two sentences of this section, you should have used 11 (!) short “i” sounds (This, is, it, in, English, native, Spanish, it, exist, in, Spanish).

As I mentioned before, the short (or soft) “i” sound is one of the most difficult to master. It can be compared to an “i” in Spanish a little, but it is different – it is shorter.

One trick to practice this sound in English is to remember to say this letter *faster* than an “ee” sound. After all, it is called the “short” “i” because it is spoken much shorter, or faster.

Also, when you say this form of the letter (as in “in”, “it”, “this”, “trick”, and “exist”), pay attention to your mouth. Your mouth should open more for the EE sound, and should open LESS for the short “i” sound.

That's nice, right? But not really very helpful without some practice. Don't worry! The easiest way to learn and practice this sound is with our key word approach - to find a word with a short "i" sound that you already can pronounce perfectly EVERY SINGLE TIME.

Let's look at one of the words from the first section that I am almost sure you can pronounce without thinking: Spanish. When you pronounce this, you do not say span-eeeeesh. You say it much faster and shorter: span-ish. This "i" in the "ish" is a short "i". This is what we will use to begin to practice (if you need another word that works better for you, we can find one; don't worry).

### *Practice*

1. Say "Spanish" 10 times. Say it 10 more times. Concentrate on the short "i" sound.
2. Now remove the "Sp", and only say "anish". Say it 20 times. Focus on that sound. Try to "save" it in your mind.
3. Now remove the "a", and only say "nish". Say it 20 more times, again, focusing on the short "i" sound.
4. Now remove the "n", and only say "ish". Say it 20 times. Again, focus on that sound.



## English Pronunciation Mastery

- Now remove the “h”, and only say “is” (recognize that word, right?). Say it 20 times.
- Now remove the “s”, and only say the “i”. This is the hardest step! Say it 30 times.
- Now, go back and say “Spanish” 10 times again. Got that sound in your head? Good!
- Now take that sound and use it to practice these new words that ALL use the short “i” sound:

---

**is      it      this      if      lift      exist      sit**

---

**in      ill      sick      tick      kick      lick      quick**

---

**lit      pit      hit      dig      pig      him      kit**

---

**lid      miss      kiss      pill      ship      skin      stick**

- You should notice that some of these are easier and some are harder. Try to identify the words that are more difficult for you and do some extra practice with them. If you feel like you are losing the correct sound, go back to step one and find the sound again with “Spanish” (or whatever key word works best for you).

### 3. When a “u” is a “yu”.

*Context*

As we have talked about before, English can be tricky for many reasons. One of the most common reasons though, is that English vowels make multiple sounds, while Spanish vowels only make one sound each.

For the most part, being familiar and confident with the short and long versions of each vowel will greatly enhance your pronunciation. However, there is one special case that I want to add for you to focus on and practice. The “u” with an invisible “y” in front of it. Sounds crazy, right? Let’s look at some examples:

<b>Word</b>	<b>How you expect to pronounce it</b>	<b>How you SHOULD pronounce it</b>
<b>Educate</b>	<b>Eh-doo-cate</b>	<b>Ehd-you-cate</b>
<b>Evacuate</b>	<b>Ee-vac-oo-ate</b>	<b>Ee-vac-you-ate</b>
<b>Regular</b>	<b>Reh-goo-ler</b>	<b>Reg*-you-ler</b>

*\*Note: this “g” is the hard “g” sound like a double “gg” (ex: “bigger”), NOT the soft “g” sound that sounds like a “j” (ex: “giraffe”).*

Unfortunately, there is NO rule for when to pronounce the “u” like a “yu”. All I can do here is show you that it exists, help you say it correctly, and give you some practice with some common “yu” words.

## *Practice*

As stated above, there is no rule for when to make the “yu” sound, so we are just going to look at a list of common words that use (“youse”) this “yu” sound for pronunciation.

---

<b>Use</b> → <b>Youse</b>	<b>Speculate</b> → <b>Spec-you-late</b>	<b>Usual</b> → <b>Youse-you-al</b>
<b>Immune</b> → <b>Ihm-youne</b>	<b>Dispute</b> → <b>Dihsp-youte</b>	<b>Singular</b> → <b>Sing-you-ler</b>
<b>Confuse</b> → <b>Con-f-youse</b>	<b>Excuse</b> → <b>Ex-c-youse</b>	<b>Fuel</b> → <b>F-you-el</b>
<b>Humor</b> → <b>H-you-mor</b>	<b>Human</b> → <b>H-you-man</b>	<b>Compute</b> → <b>Comp-yout</b>
<b>Huge</b> → <b>H-younge</b>	<b>Curriculum</b> → <b>Curr-ihc-you-lum</b>	<b>Uniform</b> → <b>You-nih-form</b>
<b>Puny</b> → <b>P-you-nee</b>	<b>Cucumber</b> → <b>C-you-cum-ber</b>	<b>Cute</b> → <b>C-yout</b>

---

Out of all of these and the examples in the *Context* section, I would recommend focusing on “**use**” (and “used” and “using”), “**regular**”, “**educate**” (and “education”), “**human**”, and “**usual**”. These are probably the most common and will help you to pronounce the sound correctly and recognize it when you hear it.

## 4. Advanced “-ed” pronunciation.

**\*\*\*Important\*\*\*** Only work on the material in this section after you are at least 90% accurate on the “-ed” pronunciation section in Level 1.



Talking about the past tense...

### *Context*

Earlier, we learned a simple rule to know when and how to pronounce the “-ed” for past tense regular verbs. However, you may notice native or more advanced speakers make their “-ed” sound like a “t” sometimes.

This is more advanced “-ed” pronunciation, and fortunately (or unfortunately, if you are getting tired of rules), we have rules for it too! There is not much background to discuss here, so I will just present the rules for you.

For the following **sounds** (not necessarily the letter) before the “-ed” we make a “t” sound at the end of the word:

## English Pronunciation Mastery

Letter / Sound	Example	Pronunciation
"p"	helped	helpt
"k"	looked	lookt
"sk"	asked	askt
"f"	sniffed	snifft
"gh"	laughed	lafft
"sh"	wished	wisht
"ch"	watched	watcht
"ss"	kissed	kisst
"c"	danced	danst
"x"	faxed	faxt

That's it! This rule does not change the rule we learned in Level 1. We still use the "t" or "d" pronounce the "e" rule. This just changes *how* we pronounce words that do not have a "t" or "d" before the "-ed".

The reason for this depends on if the last letter before the "-ed" is *voiced* or *unvoiced*. It may sound strange, but it is not too complicated. A letter is *unvoiced* if we just use air to make the sound (think of the "ss" in "kiss"). We are not using our vocal chords to make this sound - just air.

*Voiced* sounds are those sounds where we actually create a sound with our vocal chords (like the “n” in “learn”).

If you are unsure if a sound is voiced or unvoiced, put your hand on your throat when you say the sound. If it is voiced, you will feel a vibration, or movement, in your throat. If it is unvoiced, you will feel nothing in your throat.

### *Practice*

For this level, we will use the same words as we did in Level 1, but now we will take our practice to the next level. You still need to identify if the word has a “d” or a “t” before the “-ed”. But now we will add the advanced step of asking if the letter before the “-ed” is voiced or unvoiced.

Your exercise for this is simple: read the words in this list out loud and pronounce them the correct way. The answers are in the column to the right for you to check yourself.



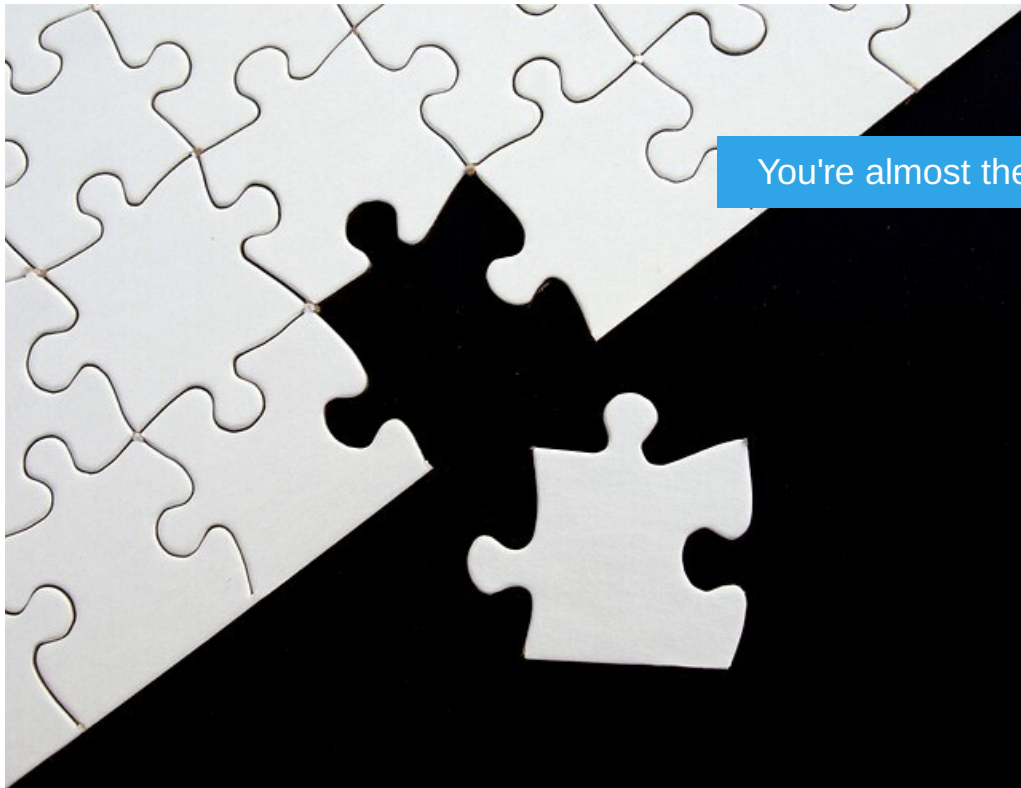
## English Pronunciation Mastery

<b>Word</b>	<b>Pronunciation Answer</b>	<b>Word</b>	<b>Pronunciation Answer</b>
<b>Lived</b>	<b>Liv'd</b>	<b>Ratted</b>	<b>RattEd</b>
<b>Wished</b>	<b>Wish't</b>	<b>Dabbed</b>	<b>Dabb'd</b>
<b>Dieted</b>	<b>DietEd</b>	<b>Defended</b>	<b>DefendEd</b>
<b>Smacked</b>	<b>Smack't</b>	<b>Amassed</b>	<b>Amass't</b>
<b>Talked</b>	<b>Talk't</b>	<b>Watched</b>	<b>Watch't</b>
<b>Stated</b>	<b>StatEd</b>	<b>Lasted</b>	<b>LastEd</b>
<b>Salted</b>	<b>SaltEd</b>	<b>Mastered</b>	<b>Master'd</b>
<b>Smelled</b>	<b>Smell'd</b>	<b>Watered</b>	<b>Water'd</b>
<b>Tipped</b>	<b>Tipp't</b>	<b>Divided</b>	<b>DividEd</b>
<b>Tested</b>	<b>TestEd</b>	<b>Wasted</b>	<b>WastEd</b>
<b>Listened</b>	<b>Listen'd</b>	<b>Cooked</b>	<b>Cook't</b>
<b>Faded</b>	<b>FadEd</b>	<b>Cleaned</b>	<b>Clean'd</b>

More practice: [100 Most Common "-ed" Words](#). You can go here and use this list to keep practicing. The same rules apply:

- “T” or “d”, pronounce the “e”
- Voiced → ‘d
- Unvoiced → ‘t

*Congratulations! You've made it through the hardest part! By now, you should be feeling much more confident and comfortable with your pronunciation than ever before. Move on to Level 4 to see how you can continue practicing and improving!*



### **Level 4 – Always continue practicing - but practice the right things**

Welcome to Level 4! You've made it through the hardest part. This level is not like the others. It is more like recommendations for you as you continue forward on your English journey.

I will recommend some ways to continue practicing and improving for the long-term, and also discuss one thing you may have been told to practice, but that I would recommend waiting on.

Here are the topics for Level 4:

1. [Don't worry about "connected speech" too early.](#)
2. [Read out loud.](#)
3. [Take notes.](#)

### 1. Don't worry about "connected speech" too early.

Connected speech is an advanced, elegant, and very fluent manner of speaking in English. When certain sounds are in a sequence, we can "drop" or remove a sound or a letter to make the "flow" of the speech sound smoother.

Yes, this is nice. Yes, this is pretty. Yes, this is elegant.

***BUT ONLY IF YOU DROP THE CORRECT LETTERS OR SOUNDS.***

If you try to do this with the wrong letters, it will make your speech sound LESS fluent, not more. My advice is do not focus on this before the C1 level. Master the correct sounds and pronunciations mentioned in this guide FIRST, then you can explore this topic with confidence.

### 2. Read out loud.

A good friend told me when I was beginning to learn Spanish that my brain has heard a lot of Spanish, and it is smarter than I think. She said I should read in Spanish out loud, because many times my brain will recognize when I make a pronunciation mistake.



Maybe it can't tell me the exact correct pronunciation, but it will tell me when something sounds strange. Then I can look up how to pronounce that word or ask a friend.

It sounds simple, and maybe even crazy or impossible, but it is true! The more I read out loud, the better my Spanish pronunciation became.

This is true for your English too! I would bet that you have heard a lot of English in your life (think of all the songs you've heard, and movies and TV shows you've watched - even if you didn't understand everything), and your brain remembers much more than you might believe.

At the very beginning of this guide, I asked you to read out loud - now you know why. As you continue practicing and growing with your English, I would recommend that when you have the opportunity, keep reading out loud - even in small amounts. You'll be surprised at what your brain tells you!

### 3. Take notes.

As you continue along your English journey, you will of course find new words and sounds that are challenging to pronounce, or exceptions to some of the rules we have covered here in the program.

That is ok! It's actually a *good* thing. That means that your pronunciation and listening skills are improving to the point where you can identify new or different sounds or exceptions. That is *fantastic!*

But how do you take that and turn it into something valuable? It is actually pretty simple.

Just take notes.



Whenever you encounter a new or difficult sound or something you think is an exception to a rule, write it down! Then compare the word to what is in the program. If it is something we covered, review that section and see if you can understand it better.

If it is something not covered in the program, try to find an example of it online that helps you to understand it.

Keep a notebook or journal of these new or challenging words so that you can go back and review periodically. That is the foundation for continued learning and improvement!

### Wrap Up

If you've made it this far, congratulations! I hope the information and exercises in this guide have helped you with your technical pronunciation skills, but more importantly, I hope that they have helped you feel more confident speaking English.

As we mentioned at the beginning of this guide, this is not for beginner English learners. So if you are here, you already had the knowledge to communicate in English. My goal and my hope was to help you feel more comfortable and more confident using the English skills you already had.

I would like to leave you with one last piece of advice. Always remember, even native speakers make "mistakes". It is just a part of language and communicating. Don't worry about being perfect. It won't happen. Even worse, trying to be perfect will frustrate you and make you even more worried about your speaking.

Instead of trying to be "perfect", take the things you've learned on your English journey (including those from this guide) and just try to use them and be a little better each time, a little better each day. Know that you will make mistakes, but use them as opportunities to learn and improve.

Thank you for the time and effort that you have put into this program and invested in yourself and improving your English. I hope to see you in a session and hear how you have improved or have the opportunity to help you with any challenges you may have!

## Cheat Sheet



# English Pronunciation Mastery

## Pronunciation Cheat Sheet

Level	Item	Topic	Problem	Improvement
1	1	Don't over-do the vowels	Focusing too much on vowel sounds in words while we think of what to say next.	Add filler words like "umm", "well", and "I don't know".
	2	Don't forget to pronounce the consonants	Leaving out consonants because we are focusing on the vowels too much.	Exaggerate the consonants. I LiKe To eaT PIZZaS.
	3	One more vowel helper	Making one-syllable words like "Jay" have extra syllables ("Jay-ee-EE-ee") when excited or angry.	Recognize when you do this. Keep everything short.
	4	Don't roll your "r"	Native Spanish speakers roll the letter "r" in Spanish. We don't do that in English.	Key word practice with a word you can get right 100%.
	5	Another "r" rule: "r" ≠/= "d"	We don't roll our "r", but we also can't turn it into a "d" sound (very --> veh-dee).	Mouth position of the "r" - almost closed, tongue in the middle of the mouth.
	6	What are all these double letters about??	Double letters are not pronounced differently. They tell us what sound the vowel before makes.	Remember double letters tell us the vowel before is short.
	7	Don't forget the "to"	Forgetting the "to" when using an infinitive ("I like eat" instead of "I like TO eat").	Practice your infinitive grammar and remember when to use them.
	8	When to pronounce the "-ed"	Pronouncing the "E" in "-ed" when we shouldn't or leaving it out when it should be pronounced.	If the letter before the "-ed" is "t" or "d", pronounce the "-Ed". Otherwise, don't.
2	1	Get the "th" sound together	Turning the "th" sound into a "t" or "d".	"th" should be like the Spanish "d" in "nada" or "z" in "zapato" with a heavy Castellano accent.
	2	Remove the "e" sound in front of the letter "s"	Adding an "e" sound in front of words that start with "s" ("special" --> "especial").	Remove the "e". Remove the "e". Remove the "e".
	3	Vowels - there are a lot	Not being able to make the long and short sounds of each vowel.	Practice both sounds of each vowel.
	4	OU. Don't get out of touch	Pronouncing all "ou"s the same. "OU" can make 5 different sounds.	Learn all 5 "ou" sounds. No rule when to use them, unfortunately.
	5	The "y" and "j" problem	Pronouncing an English "y" like a Spanish "j".	English "y" = Spanish "LL". English "j" = Spanish "y".
	6	Don't forget the "-t" at the end	Forgetting the "-t" at the end of words ("I don't want to eat" --> "I don wan to ee").	Like Level 1, Item 2, exaggerate the "-t" at the end of words.
	7	Don't forget the "-s" at the end	Forgetting the "-s" or "-es" at the end of words.	Exaggerate these. They impact pronunciation AND grammar.
3	1	Make your mouth work on the "t"	Turning the "t" sound into a "th" or "d" sound.	Practice the mouth and tongue position for a "gringo T" (behind teeth and top of mouth).
	2	The soft / short "i" sound	Turning the short "i" sound into a long "e" sound ("This" --> "Theese").	Key word practice with a word you can get right 100% (it, trick, exist, Spanish, etc.).
	3	When a "u" is a "yu"	Not pronouncing the "hidden" "y" in some "u" words.	Educate = ed-you-cate. Regular = reg-you-ler. No rule for when this happens.
	4	Advanced "-ed" pronunciation	Sometimes the "-ed" sounds like an "-t".	If last letter before "-ed" is voiced --> "-d" (learned = learn'd). If unvoiced --> "-t" (kissed = kiss't).
4	1	Don't worry about "connected speech" too early	Trying to use a very advanced topic too soon, and you use it incorrectly.	Don't worry about "connected speech" until you have mastered the other items in the guide.
	2	Read out loud	-	Reading out loud helps you self-correct some pronunciation mistakes or identify problem words.
	3	Take notes	-	Make notes about new problem words or sounds so you can look them up and practice them.

# Speak. With. Confidence.

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