

# UNDERSTANDING

## *English Pronunciation*

*An integrated practice course*



*To be used with accompanying audio recording.*

By *Susan Boyer*

***UNDERSTANDING***  
***English***  
***Pronunciation***

*An integrated practice course*

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## ***ABOUT THIS BOOK***

*Understanding English Pronunciation - an integrated practice course* has been designed so students can work through it in class with other students, or alone, without the help of a teacher. Each unit of the course is based on a different topic and focuses on different sounds and features of English pronunciation.

Each unit is divided into different parts which introduce and practise various aspects of pronunciation in a systematic and enjoyable way, while also providing interesting topics through which to practise pronunciation.

**Unit 1 provides an introduction to English pronunciation, using a dictionary, and a listening test.**

**Units 2 – 12 contain the following sections:**

*Preliminary Listening* introduces the particular vowel sounds in focus for the unit.

### ***Part 1 - Introduction to the topic***

Part 1 introduces the topic and vocabulary needed to analyse the particular sounds in focus. In Part 1A you will listen to the text, focus on the meaning and become familiar with the vocabulary.

### ***Part 2 - Focus on Pronunciation***

In Part 2 you will analyse the sounds featured in the text in Part 1, as well as additional features of English pronunciation.

### ***Part 3 - Extending the topic***

This section introduces more vocabulary which contain the sounds in focus as well as extending the topic.

### ***Part 4 - Analysing the sounds***

This section focuses on sound discrimination and helps you to 'tune your ears' to particular sounds of English.

### ***Part 5 - Understanding the link between spoken and written English***

You will analyse ways of spelling the sounds in focus and see some patterns to English spelling.

### ***Part 6 - Spelling Check - Dictation***

Now it's time to test yourself and see what you have learnt by trying the spelling check. You are asked to complete the text as you listen again to the text that was introduced in Part 1.

### ***Part 7 - Further Listening and Speaking Practice***

This section provides more valuable listening and speaking practice as you:

- a) listen to and practise questions or conversation relating to the topic of the unit.
- b) distinguish between, and practise pronouncing the featured sounds fluently so that you are understood by other people.
- c) practise features of English pronunciation such as stress and intonation, along with fluency.

### ***Part 8 and 9 - Review or extension activity***

These sections summarise or extend the topic through informative activities, while providing further pronunciation practice of the featured sounds. In some units, additional sounds are practised.

## *Dear Student of English*

Welcome to *Understanding English Pronunciation - an integrated practice course*. This book, along with its accompanying audio recording, has been designed to help you to understand English pronunciation and to speak English more clearly and fluently.

As you listen to the audio recording you will hear the speakers give models of the pronunciation of individual words, as well as words within sentences and conversations.

### Important note to students about pronunciation

- It is important to realise that the pronunciation of a sound can change, depending on the other sounds around it in a word and that the pronunciation of words can change depending on how they are used in a sentence. The pronunciation of a word spoken slowly or singly may be different from the pronunciation of the same word spoken within the context of natural conversation. This principle applies to most languages – not only English.
- It is important to realise that no two people (even speakers of the same language) pronounce sounds and words *exactly* the same way. That's why you can recognise someone you know by their voice even when you can't see them!

Look at the examples of the word *pronunciation* written in different handwriting below. The letters are written differently but you can see they form the same word.

*pronunciation* pronunciation **pronunciation** pronunciation pronunciation

It is similar with spoken language. Though different speakers of the same language may pronounce words with slightly different pronunciation, listeners need to be able to recognise and understand which words are being spoken. For example, you will notice that the speakers on the audio recording pronounce the words 'answer' and 'example' a little differently from each other. However, as the words are easily understood by all speakers of English, the variation in pronunciation does not cause communication problems.

The important thing to remember when learning a new language is that your pronunciation needs to be intelligible. This means that you can be understood without difficulty. The aim of this course is to build your confidence when listening to speakers of English and help you to improve your pronunciation of English.

I hope you enjoy and benefit from using *Understanding English Pronunciation*.

*Susan Boyer*

## Suggestions for students working through this course independently:

- Practise speaking English every day. Try to use the new words you have learnt.
- Write new or difficult words onto small cards or a small notebook that you can carry in your pocket or wallet. Remember to check the stress patterns and mark the words so that you can practise the correct pronunciation.
- Listen to English speakers every day. Ask the meaning and pronunciation of unfamiliar words.
- When listening to speakers of English, notice the way words are linked; notice how intonation is used to convey meaning and notice how speakers pause to focus on important information.
- When using this book with the audio recording, practise saying the new words aloud. Record your voice so that you can check your pronunciation.
- After listening several times to the recorded sentences in Part 7 (Units 2 – 12), practise reading the sentences aloud. Record your voice so that you can check your pronunciation.
- As you listen to your voice (on the recording), write the sentences you hear. Then compare your written sentences with the sentences in the book. Do you say the same words as the speaker on the recording?
- Compare your pronunciation with the speaker on the *Understanding English Pronunciation* recording. Do you stress the same words? Do you use the same intonation?

## Symbols for instruction used in this book:



means listen to the audio recording



means do the written exercise



means discuss or practise

You will need to check words in a dictionary, so have a good dictionary nearby while you are studying. Because English words are not always pronounced as they are spelt, you will also need to use a dictionary to learn the correct pronunciation. A good dictionary will give you clear examples of pronunciation and a Pronunciation Key.

## Glossary of pronunciation terms

Use this list as a reference as you are using this book:

<b>vowel letters</b>	There are <b>five vowel letters</b> in the English alphabet. These are: <b>a, e, i, o, u</b> .
<b>vowel sounds and symbols</b>	There are <b>twelve vowel sounds</b> in English represented by phonemic <b>symbols</b> . There are seven short sounds: /æ/, /e/, /ə/, /ʊ/, /ʌ/, /ɪ/, /ɒ/ * as well as five longer sounds, /ɑ:/, /i:/, /ɔ:/, /ɜ:/, /u:/ - a long sound is often indicated by :  *Note: Some varieties of North American English do not use the vowel sound /ɒ/ as in the word 'hot'; The short sound /ɒ/ is replaced by the longer sound /ɑ:/ making 'hot' sound like 'heart'.
<b>schwa</b>	The most frequently used of all English vowel sounds, is the <b>unstressed</b> sound /ə/. The sound and symbol /ə/ are called ' <b>schwa</b> '.
<b>diphthongs</b>	Diphthong sounds are made from two vowel sounds put together. There are eight diphthongs: /eɪ/, /aɪ/, /ɔɪ/, /eə/, /ɪə/, /ʊə/, /aʊ/ and /əʊ/ (also shown as /oʊ/ For examples of words containing these sounds see the Phonemic Chart (p. 154)
<b>consonant letters</b>	The letters in the English alphabet which are not vowels are called consonants. These are: <b>b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z</b> .
<b>consonant sounds</b>	Additional <b>consonant sounds</b> (represented by the following symbols) are: /θ/, /ð/, /ʃ/, /tʃ/, /ʒ/, /dʒ/, /ŋ/. Check the phonemic chart (p. 154) for examples.
<b>syllable</b>	Spoken words are formed with <b>syllables</b> , meaning <b>units of sound</b> . A syllable is a unit of unbroken sound, usually containing a vowel sound.
<b>contraction</b>	When two words are contracted (shortened) and linked together they form a contraction. The missing letters are shown with an apostrophe ( ' ). For example, I have = I've; we would = we'd; he will = he'll.
<b>word stress</b>	In words with more than one syllable, one syllable is usually stronger (spoken more clearly) than the other(s). The term <b>stressed</b> syllable refers to the strongest (primary) syllable in words of more than one syllable. eg. ' <b>tr</b> avel
<b>utterance</b>	An utterance is a spoken message. It can be a complete sentence or one or two words. eg 'Oh no!' 'When?'
<b>stress within utterances</b>	In spoken English, words which carry the main message of the sentence contain <b>stressed</b> syllables. Stressing the important words helps the listener to hear the message of the speaker. eg. I <b>want</b> to go <b>home</b> .
<b>prominent words</b>	These are the words that the speaker makes <b>most</b> prominent in an utterance. They signal the most important piece of information. They are also called <b>focus words</b> . See Unit 4, Part 7 for an explanation and examples.
<b>connected speech</b>	When native speakers of English talk with natural conversational speed, they use <b>connected</b> speech. This means they speak <b>fluently</b> . Their words are not spoken separately but are <b>linked</b> together, without stopping after each word.
<b>intonation</b>	Intonation refers to the rising and falling tones in our voice, which in English, are used to express meaning. See Unit 5, Part 7 for some general patterns.