



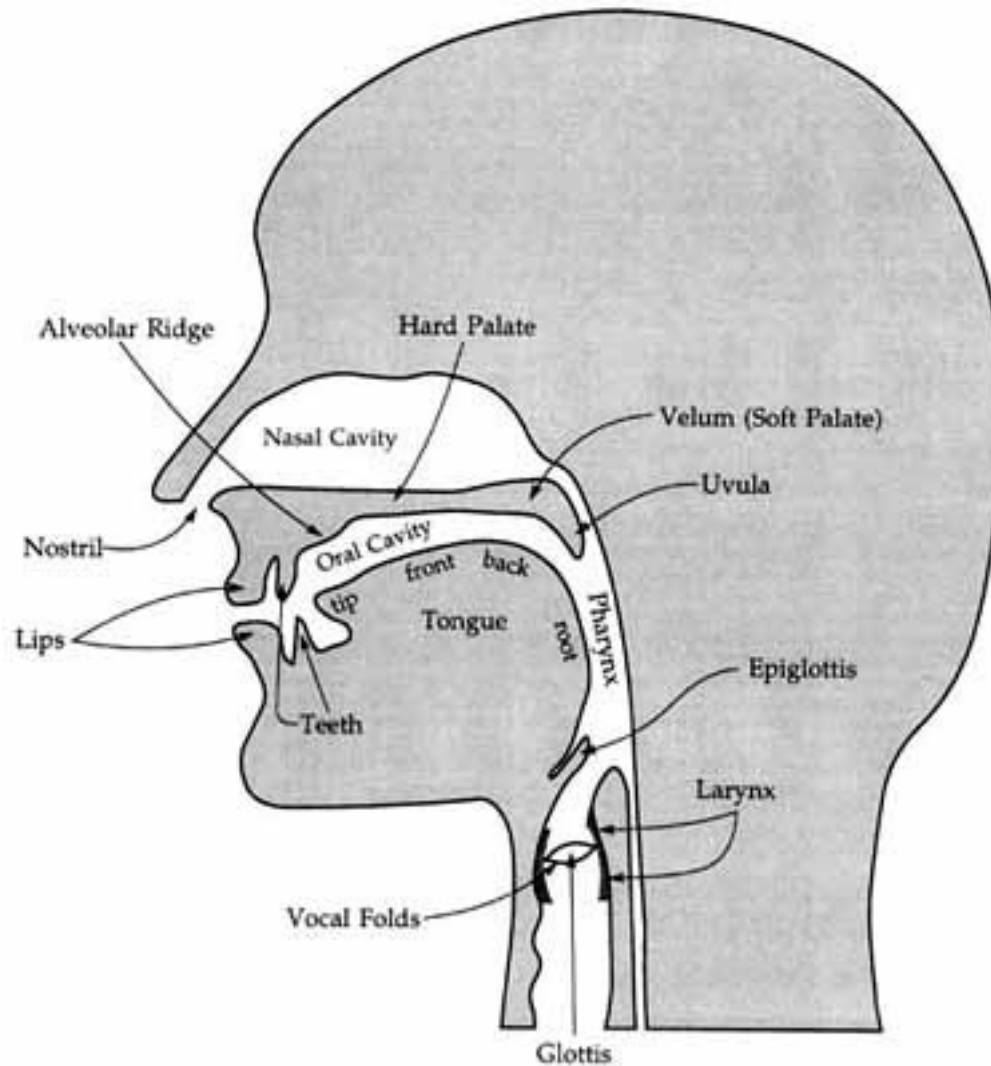
English Pronunciation

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A Student's Guide to Consonant Sounds



The Vocal Tract



Source: <http://jcarreras.homestead.com/files/phoneticsvocaltract.jpg>

Consonant Sounds

p

b

t

d

tʃ

dʒ

k

g

f

v

θ

ð

s

z

ʃ

ʒ

m

n

ŋ

h

l

r

w

j

Consonant Sounds - Stops

p	b
t	d
k	g

Consonant Sounds - Stops

What is the difference between...

the sounds in the 1st column /p t k/

and the sounds in the 2nd column /b d g/?

Consonant Sounds - Stops

- The sounds in the 1st column appear quieter:
 - There is no vocal cord vibration or “voice”
 - They are called “voiceless” consonants
- The sounds in the 2nd column appear louder:
 - The vocal cords start vibrating
 - They are called “voiced” consonants

Consonant Sounds - Stops

- The air stream is blocked (or 'stopped')
- Air builds up
- The air is released

Note: These sounds are also called 'Plosives'

Consonant Sounds - Stops

How is the airstream blocked...

.....in these sounds?

p

b

.....in these sounds?

t

d

.....in these sounds?

k

g

Consonant Sounds - Stops

..by bringing both lips together

p

b

..by touching the alveolar ridge with the front part of the tongue

t

d

..by touching the velum (soft palate) with the back of the tongue

k

g

Consonant Sounds - Fricatives

f	v
θ	ð
s	z
ʃ	ʒ

Consonant Sounds - Fricatives

What is the difference between...

the sounds in the 1st column /f θ s ʃ/

and the sounds in the 2nd column /v ð z ʒ/?

Consonant Sounds - Fricatives

- The sounds in the 1st column appear quieter:
 - There is no vocal cord vibration or “voice”.
 - They are called “voiceless” consonants.
- The sounds in the 2nd column appear louder:
 - The vocal cords start vibrating
 - They are called “voiced” consonants.

Consonant Sounds - Fricatives

- The air stream is partially blocked in some way
- Air is forced out of the mouth through a small gap
- This creates 'frication' or turbulence

Consonant Sounds - Fricatives

How is the air partially blocked...

...in these sounds?

f

v

...in these sounds?

θ

ð

...in these sounds?

s

z

...in these sounds?

ʃ

ʒ

Consonant Sounds - Fricatives

The bottom lip is pressed lightly against the edge of the top front teeth

f

v

The tip/blade of the tongue is pressed lightly against the inside edge of the top front teeth

θ

ð

The tip/blade of the tongue is pressed lightly against the alveolar ridge

s

z

The tip/blade of the tongue is pressed towards a point between the alveolar ridge and hard palate

ʃ

ʒ

Consonant Sounds - Affricates

tʃ

dʒ

Consonant Sounds - Affricates

What is the difference between...

the sound in the 1st column /tʃ/

and the sound in the 2nd column /dʒ/?

Consonant Sounds - Affricates

- The sound in the 1st column is voiceless:
 - There is no vocal cord vibration or “voice”.
- The sound in the 2nd column is voiced:
 - The vocal cords start vibrating

Consonant Sounds - Affricates

- Affricates are made up of two sounds:
 - A plosive /t/ or /d/
 - and a fricative /ʃ/ or /ʒ/
- In both affricate sounds /tʃ dʒ/ the blade of the tongue is pressed towards a point between the alveolar ridge and the hard palate
- First the air is stopped (plosive), then air is forced out of the mouth through a small gap (fricative)

Consonant Sounds - Nasals

m

n

ŋ

Consonant Sounds - Nasals

Are these sounds
voiced or unvoiced?

Consonant Sounds - Nasals

- Voiced: Nasal sounds are produced with vocal cord vibration
- Air flow is blocked in the mouth and diverted through the nose

Consonant Sounds - Nasals

How is the air blocked and diverted through the nose....

...In this sound?

m

...In this sound?

n

...In this sound?

ŋ

Consonant Sounds - Nasals

How is the air blocked and diverted through the nose....

...by bringing the lips together

...by touching the alveolar ridge with the tip/blade of the tongue

...by touching the soft palate with the back of the tongue

m

n

ŋ

Consonants – Other Sounds

l	ɹ
w	j

Consonants – Other Sounds

Are these sounds
voiced or unvoiced?

Consonant – Other Sounds

Voiced: /l r w j/ are all produced with vocal cord vibration?

Consonants – /l/ and /ɹ/

The production of /l/

- The blade of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge
- Air escapes around the sides of the tongue

The production of /ɹ/

- The tip of the tongue is raised to the back part of the alveolar ridge
- The tongue does not touch the ridge

Consonants – /l/ and /ɹ/

The production of /l/

- The tip/blade of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge
- Air escapes around the sides of the tongue

The production of /ɹ/ (written as /r/ on some charts)

- The tip/blade of the tongue is raised to the back part of the alveolar ridge
- The tongue does not touch the ridge

Consonants – /h/

The production of /h/

- There is no vocal cord vibration; /h/ is voiceless
- There is no one tongue position for /h/!!!
- The position of the tongue, lips, and jaw for /h/ is the same as the following vowel sound.
- Air is forced through the mouth in a similar way to the fricative sounds.



References:

Underhill, A. (1994). *Sound Foundations*. Heinemann

For further practice see:

Hancock, M. (2003). *English Pronunciation in Use*. Cambridge University Press

Web-link to EFL Tutoring – Consonant Chart

<http://www.efltutoring.com/>

