

60 hard words to pronounce in English

Six groups, one trap each. CAPITALS mark the stressed syllable; IPA is American English. Tick a box every time you say a word out loud, and do one group a day. From vocalimage.app/en/accent/hard-words-to-pronounce/.

Silent letters the letters you don't say

WORD	IPA (US)	SAY IT LIKE	COMMON SLIP	SAID IT 3×
Wednesday	/ˈwenzdeɪ/	WENZ-day	three syllables: "wed-nes-day"	☐ ☐ ☐
island	/ˈaɪlənd/	EYE-lund	saying the S	☐ ☐ ☐
debt	/det/	DET	saying the B	☐ ☐ ☐
receipt	/rɪˈsi:t/	rih-SEET	saying the P	☐ ☐ ☐
salmon	/ˈsæmən/	SAM-un	saying the L	☐ ☐ ☐
knife	/naɪf/	NIFE	saying the K	☐ ☐ ☐
subtle	/ˈsʌtəl/	SUT-ul	saying the B	☐ ☐ ☐
muscle	/ˈmʌsəl/	MUSS-ul	"mus-kul"	☐ ☐ ☐
listen	/ˈlɪsən/	LISS-un	saying the T	☐ ☐ ☐
often	/ˈɔːfən/	OFF-un	none: "OFF-tun" is correct too	☐ ☐ ☐

The -ough trap one spelling, half a dozen sounds

WORD	IPA (US)	SAY IT LIKE	COMMON SLIP	SAID IT 3×
though	/ðou/	THOH (rhymes with go)	reading it like "through"	☐ ☐ ☐
through	/θruː/	THROO (rhymes with blue)	"throw" or "thruff"	☐ ☐ ☐
thorough	/ˈθɜːrou/	THUR-oh	mixing it up with "through"; British: THUH-ruh	☐ ☐ ☐
thought	/θɔːt/	THAWT	"tot": the TH turned into T	☐ ☐ ☐
tough	/tʌf/	TUFF	"toe"	☐ ☐ ☐
cough	/kɔːf/	KAWF	"cow"	☐ ☐ ☐
dough	/dou/	DOH	"duff"	☐ ☐ ☐
bough	/bau/	BOW (rhymes with cow)	"buff" or "bo"	☐ ☐ ☐
drought	/draut/	DROWT (rhymes with out)	"drawt", read like "thought"	☐ ☐ ☐
borough	/ˈbɜːrou/	BUR-oh	"borrow"; British: BUH-ruh	☐ ☐ ☐

TH and consonant clusters too many sounds in a row

WORD	IPA (US)	SAY IT LIKE	COMMON SLIP	SAID IT 3×
three	/θriːz/	THREE (tongue between the teeth)	"tree" or "free"	☐ ☐ ☐
clothes	/kloʊðz/	KLOHTHZ, in fast speech KLOHZ	two syllables: "clo-thes"	☐ ☐ ☐
months	/mʌnθs/	MUNTHS	"monts" or "mont"	☐ ☐ ☐
sixth	/sɪksθ/	SIKSTH	"sikst" or "siks"	☐ ☐ ☐
twelfth	/twelfθ/	TWELFTH	"twelf"	☐ ☐ ☐
strengths	/streŋkθs/	STRENGKTHS	"strengs", or "e-strengths"	☐ ☐ ☐
texts	/teksts/	TEKSTS	"teks" or "tek-sez"	☐ ☐ ☐
rhythm	/ˈrɪðəm/	RITH-um	"rit-mus"	☐ ☐ ☐
breathe	/briːð/	BREETH, with the soft TH of this	saying "breath" /breθ/	☐ ☐ ☐
anesthetist	/əˈnesθətɪst/	uh-NES-thuh-tist	swapping the S and the TH	☐ ☐ ☐

R and L together

WORD	IPA (US)	SAY IT LIKE	COMMON SLIP	SAID IT 3×
squirrel	/ˈskwɜːrəl/	SKWUR-ul	"skwi-rel"; British: SKWIR-ul	☐ ☐ ☐
rural	/ˈrʊrəl/	ROOR-ul	swallowing the middle: "rul"	☐ ☐ ☐
world	/wɜːrld/	WURLD	"word" or "vorld"	☐ ☐ ☐
girl	/gɜːrl/	GURL	"gel" or "ger-ul"	☐ ☐ ☐
February	/ˈfebruəri/	FEB-roo-air-ee	none: "FEB-yoo-air-ee" is standard too	☐ ☐ ☐
library	/ˈlaɪbrəri/	LIE-brair-ee	"lie-berry", dropping the first R	☐ ☐ ☐
really	/ˈriːəli/	REE-uh-lee	R said as L: "leally"	☐ ☐ ☐
plural	/ˈplʊrəl/	PLOOR-ul	a full A at the end: "ploo-RAL"	☐ ☐ ☐
mirror	/ˈmɪrər/	MIR-er	"mee-ROAR"	☐ ☐ ☐
jewelry	/ˈdʒuːəlri/	JOO-ul-ree	sounds swapped: "JOO-luh-ree"	☐ ☐ ☐

Stress and squashed syllables

WORD	IPA (US)	SAY IT LIKE	COMMON SLIP	SAID IT 3×
comfortable	/ˈkʌmftərbəl/	KUMF-ter-bul	stress on TA: "com-for-TA-ble"	□□□
vegetable	/ˈvedʒtəbəl/	VEJ-tuh-bul	"ve-ge-TA-ble"	□□□
chocolate	/ˈtʃɔːklət/	CHAWK-lit	"cho-co-LATE", rhyming with late	□□□
interesting	/ˈɪnrəstɪŋ/	IN-truh-sting	"in-ter-EST-ing"	□□□
photographer	/fəˈtɑːgrəfər/	fuh-TOG-ruh-fer	stress kept from photograph: "PHO-to-gra-pher"	□□□
determine	/dɪˈtɜːrmɪn/	dih-TUR-min	"de-ter-MINE"	□□□
development	/dɪˈveləpmənt/	dih-VEL-up-ment	"de-ve-LOP-ment"	□□□
hotel	/hoʊˈtel/	hoh-TEL	"HO-tel"	□□□
record (noun · verb)	/ˈrekərd/ · /rɪˈkɔːrd/	REK-erd · rih-KORD	the same stress for both	□□□
economic	/ˌekəˈnɑːmɪk/	ek-uh-NOM-ik	stress kept from economy: "e-CO-no-mic"	□□□

The hardest words even native speakers trip

WORD	IPA (US)	SAY IT LIKE	COMMON SLIP	SAID IT 3×
Worcestershire	/ˈwʊstərʃər/	WUSS-ter-sheer	"wor-SES-ter-shire"	□□□
colonel	/ˈkɜːrnəl/	KER-nul (like kernel)	"co-lo-nel"	□□□
anemone	/əˈneməni/	uh-NEM-uh-nee	"AN-uh-mone"	□□□
epitome	/ɪˈpɪtəmi/	ih-PIT-uh-mee	"EP-ih-tome"	□□□
hyperbole	/haɪˈpɜːrbəli/	hy-PER-buh-lee	"HY-per-bowl"	□□□
quinoa	/ˈkiːnwɑː/	KEEN-wah	"kwih-NO-uh"	□□□
phenomenon	/fəˈnɑːmɪnən/	fuh-NOM-ih-nun	an M for the final N: "phe-NOM-e-mon"	□□□
onomatopoeia	/ˌɑːnəˌmætəˈpiːə/	ON-uh-mat-uh-PEE-uh	"o-no-ma-to-POY-a"	□□□
otorhinolaryngologist	/ˌoʊtəʊˌraɪnəʊˌlærənˈɡɑːlədʒɪst/	OH-toh-RY-noh-LAIR-un-GOL-uh-jist	losing your place halfway	□□□
pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis	/ˌnuːmənoʊˌʌltrəˌmaɪkrəˈskaɪˌpɪkˌsɪlɪkoʊvɑːlˌkeɪnoʊˌkoʊniˈoʊsɪs/	NOO-muh-noh-UL-truh-MY-kruh-SKOP-ik-SIL-ih-koh-vol-KAY-noh-koh-nee-OH-sis	running out of breath	□□□

Explanations and practice tips: vocalimage.app/en/accent/hard-words-to-pronounce/ · Check how your English sounds in 15 seconds, free: vocalimage.app/en/tests/4-accent/