

Speak Like a Confident Professional

Professional English

12 Words You Pronounce Wrong



English Jade

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Instructions Part One: Play the audio file called '1. Professional English LISTEN.mp3'.

- Listen to the audio file and read this document at the same time.

Introduction

You mispronounce hundreds of English words. The reason I know that is because my students always make the same pronunciation mistakes. Even the ones who have lived in the UK for many years, working in professional-level jobs, mispronounce basic words every day of their lives.

It's not my students' fault that they make these mistakes. It happens because English spelling often doesn't match the way words are pronounced. Students can't fix their pronunciation mistakes because they often don't realise that they are making any! And worse, their British colleagues are too polite to correct them, which means they carry on making the same mistakes in ignorance.

My lessons and courses teach you the sounds of English so that you can articulate English words clearly and accurately. I also share common pronunciation errors with you, so that you can remove these mistakes from your English.

The mistakes in your English are not unique – let's get rid of them systematically.

What follows in the rest of this lesson is a sample of my [English Jade](#) training method, which teaches you correct and confident English. Note that this lesson is separated into two parts.

12 Common Mistakes in Professional English: Part One

1. company (n)

Note: there is no 'o' sound in this word.

IPA	→	/kʌm.pə.ni/
Sounds Like	→	' kum -puh-nee' ✓
Mistake	→	/'kəʊm.pə.ni/ ✗

/ʌ/ words (low short <u>)	→	come	fun	but
□ same vowel as ' <u>com</u> pany'		/kʌm/	/fʌn/	/bʌt/
/əʊ/ words (long <o>)	→	comb	phone	boat
□ different vowel to ' <u>com</u> pany'		/kəʊm/	/fəʊn/	/bəʊt/

- There is no /b/ sound in '**comb**' (silent letter).
- The <ph> spelling in '**phone**' is pronounced /f/.

Improve your reading and spelling: vowel spelling patterns are highlighted in bold red text. These show you that the same vowel can be spelt in different ways.

2. public (adj) + (n)

Note: this word contains two short vowels.

IPA	→	/'pʌb.lɪk/
Sounds Like	→	' pub -lik' ✓
Mistake	→	/'pu:b.lɪk/✗

/ʌ/ words (low short <u>)	→	m ud	n one	r um
□ same vowel as 'p <u>u</u> blic'		/mʌd/	/nʌn/	/rʌm/
/u:/ words (simple long <u>)	→	m oo d	n oo n	r oo m
□ different vowel to 'p <u>u</u> blic'		/mu:d/	/nu:n/	/ru:m/

International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA): In this lesson, IPA symbols are shown under each example word /wɜ:d/.

In IPA, each of the 44 sounds of English is represented by a unique symbol. This language of symbols makes it possible to accurately transcribe (write down) the sounds inside words.

English spelling can't match the pronunciation of most words because we only have 26 letters to represent 44 sounds. Therefore, you need to learn IPA so that you can pronounce words directly from their transcriptions. Knowing how to do this ensures that you have the correct pronunciation.

Learning IPA sounds and symbols takes time. In the meantime, I have included a 'Sounds Like' spelling for each of the 12 commonly mispronounced words in this lesson (see inside the blue boxes). However, these phonetic spellings are of limited use to learners because it is impossible to accurately spell English words using the regular alphabet. This is why you must eventually learn IPA.

Sounds Like Examples:

'company' → '**kum**-puh-nee' (*bold text shows the main word stress)

'public' → '**pub**-lik'

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3. problem (n)

Note: this word contains short 'o', not long 'o'.

IPA	→	/'prɒb.ləm/
Sounds Like	→	' prob-lum ' ✓
Mistake	→	/'prəʊb.ləm/ *

/ɒ/ words (short 'o') → **cop** **sock** **not**
□ same vowel as 'problem' /kɒp/ /sɒk/ /nɒt/

/əʊ/ words (long 'o') → **cope** **soak** **note**
□ different vowel to 'problem' /kəʊp/ /səʊk/ /nəʊt/

Extra word information: word class, also called part of speech, is shown next to each commonly mispronounced word in brackets. Knowing a word's word class tells us what grammatical function it has in a sentence. In this lesson, the following abbreviations are used:

(n) = noun (v) = verb (adj) = adjective (adv) = adverb

4. hour (n)

Note: this word is a triphthong (it contains three consecutive vowels).

IPA	→	/aʊ.ə/
Sounds Like	→	'our' ✓
Mistake	→	/haʊ.ə/ *
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• there is no /h/ sound in 'hour' (silent letter).• 'hour' and 'our' sound the same (these words are homophones).

/aʊ/ words → **our** **out** **owl**
□ similar sound to 'hour' /aʊ.ə/ /aʊt/ /aʊl/

Initial /h/ words → **how** **house** **howl**
□ not like 'hour'; /h/ is pronounced /haʊ/ /haʊs/ /haʊl/

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5. busy (adj)

Note: there is no 'u' sound in this word.

IPA	→	/'bɪz.i/
Sounds Like	→	'biz-i' ✓
Mistake	→	/'bu:z.i/ ✗

/ɪ/ words (short <i>)

□ same vowel as 'busy'

→

sin

/sɪn/

bit

/bɪt/

drip

/drɪp/

/u:/ words (simple long <u>)

□ different vowel to 'busy'

→

soon

/su:n/

boot

/bu:t/

droop

/dru:p/

6. suit (n)

Note: there is no 'i' sound in this one syllable word.

IPA	→	/su:t/
Sounds Like	→	'suut' ✓
Mistake	→	/'su:.ɪt/ ✗

/u:/ words spelt <ui>

□ same vowel as 'suit'

→

bruise

/bru:z/

fruit

/fru:t/

juice

/dʒu:s/

longer words spelt <ui>

□ same vowel as 'suit'

→

suitable

/'su:.tə.bəl/

recruit

/rɪ'kru:t/

recruitment

/rɪ'kru:t.mənt/

7. minute (n)

Note: there is no 'u' sound in this word.

IPA	→	/'mɪn.ɪt/
Sounds Like	→	'min-it' ✓
Mistake	→	/mi:'nu:t/ ✗
		• 'minute' contains <u>two</u> short <i> vowels.

/ɪ/ words (short <i>)

□ same vowel as 'minute'

→

fit

/fɪt/

did

/dɪd/

it

/ɪt/

/i:/ words (long <i>)

□ different vowel to 'minute'

→

feet

/fi:t/

deed

/di:d/

eat

/i:t/

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8. schedule (n)

Note: the British and American pronunciations of this word are different. We will learn the British pronunciation. The American pronunciation is also included for comparison.

British Pronunciation	→	/'ʃed.ju:l/	(two syllables)
British Sounds Like	→	'shed-yool' ✓	
Mistake	→	/'sked.ju:.əl/ ✗	(three syllables)
American Pronunciation	→	/'ske.dʒu.əl/	(three syllables)
American sounds like	→	'ske-jew-ul'	(three syllables)

<sch> spelling is pronounced /ʃ/ → **schwa** **schlep** **schnapps**
/ʃwə/ /ʃlep/ /ʃnæps/
□ *foreign language word origin* → Hebrew Yiddish German

<sch> spelling pronounced /sk/ → **school** **scholar** **scheme**
□ *from Ancient Greek* /sku:l/ /'skɒl.ə/ /ski:m/

Foreign words: English contains many thousands of words which have been 'borrowed' from other languages. These borrowed words are often influenced by the spelling and pronunciation rules of the root language. Mispronunciations and misspellings occur, even among native speakers, because foreign origin words often look and sound odd in English.

Knowing the source language of borrowed words helps to improve your overall reading and pronunciation skills. This is because words that originate from the same foreign language, such as Ancient Greek, will often (but not always) share the same spelling and pronunciation patterns in English. When we notice these patterns, foreign words are no longer as 'difficult' for us to pronounce and spell.

The word 'schedule' derives from the Ancient Greek word 'skhedē', which entered English via Latin. Since it is originally an Ancient Greek word, we would expect it to be pronounced /sk/ like 'school', 'scholar' and 'scheme', which are also words with Ancient Greek roots. However, in British English, 'schedule' is pronounced with an initial /ʃ/ sound, which breaks the spelling and pronunciation pattern.

Consequently, we can say that the American /sk/ pronunciation of schedule /'ske.dʒu.əl/ is the most logical pronunciation of the word. However, it is considered incorrect in British English.

In British English, you **should** pronounce 'schedule' with a 'sh' sound.

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9. employee (n)

Note: this word contains a short <i> in the first syllable, and a long <i> in the final syllable.

IPA	→	/,ɪm.plɔɪ'ɪ:/	(three syllables)
Sounds Like	→	'im- <i>ploy-ee</i> ' ✓	
Mistake	→	/'em.plɔɪ.i/ ✗	

 spelling pronounced /ɪm/ → **embrace** **empower** **embedded**
□ same first syllable as 'employee' /ɪm'breɪs/ /ɪm'paʊ.ə/ /ɪm'bed.ɪd/

/i:/ words (long <i>) → **trainee** **absentee** **attende**
□ stressed final syllable like 'employee' /,treɪ'ni:/ /,æb.sən'ti:/ /ə.ten'di:/

10. immediately (adv)

Note: this word has five syllables.

IPA	→	/ɪ'mi:.di.ət.li/	(five syllables)
Sounds Like	→	'i- mee -dee-ut-lee' ✓	
Mistake	→	/ɪ,mɪ:.di:'ert.li/ ✗	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Three of the vowels are long <i>.• The fourth syllable of 'immediately' is <u>unstressed</u> and contains a schwa.	

<a> is pronounced schwa /ə/ → **alphabet** **thousand** **salad**
□ same <a> schwa as 'immediately' /'æɪ.lfə.bet/ /'θaʊ.zənd/ /'sæl.əd/

<a> is pronounced /eɪ/ (long <a>) → **ate** **age** **able**
□ different vowel to 'immediately' /eɪt/ /eɪdʒ/ /'eɪ.bəl/

Efficient Learning: in my pronunciation lessons, words are learnt in groups. I show you the patterns behind English spelling and pronunciation by grouping similar words together. Learning in this way allows the correct pronunciation to stick in your memory and is much more effective than learning random, individual words.

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11. purchase (n) + (v)

Note: the second syllable is unstressed.

IPA	→	/ˈpɜː.tʃəs/	(two syllables)
Sounds Like	→	'per-chis ✓	
Mistake	→	/ˈpɜː.tʃeɪs/✗	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The second syllable is unstressed. It does not sound the same as 'chase' (v) /tʃeɪs/.

/ɜː/ words spelt <ur> → **turn** **surf** **turkey**
□ the same vowel as 'purchase' /tɜːn/ /sɜːf/ /ˈtɜː.ki/

/eɪ/ words spelt <ace> → **face** **chase** **phrase**
□ different vowel to 'purchase' /feɪs/ /tʃeɪs/ /freɪz/

12. management (n)

Note: there is no 'a' sound in the second syllable of this word.

IPA	→	/ˈmæn.ɪdʒ.mənt/	(three syllables)
Sounds Like	→	man-ij-munt ✓	
Mistake	→	/ˈmæn.eɪdʒ.mənt/✗	
			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The second and third syllables are unstressed (pronounced with schwa).

<age> spelling is pronounced /ɪdʒ/ → **village** **cottage** **cabbage**
□ pronounced like 'management' /ˈvɪl.ɪdʒ/ /ˈkɒt.ɪdʒ/ /ˈkæb.ɪdʒ/

<ment> suffix is unstressed → **assessment** **excitement** **agreement**
□ pronounced like 'management' /əˈses.mənt/ /ɪkˈsaɪt.mənt/ /əˈɡriː.mənt/

Part One of this Lesson is now complete. ✓