

Mastering Pronunciation: Tips for Educators

*Alberta Routes
Tip Sheet 21*

1. Focus on Intelligibility, Not Perfection

- **Intelligibility** is how well a listener (especially a non-sympathetic one) can understand the speaker's message.
- Start with the pronunciation issues that most interfere with being understood (e.g. consonants /l/ vs. /r/ or syllable stress).

2. Break Pronunciation into Manageable Pieces

- a. **Segmentals:** Teach consonant and vowel sounds clearly.
 - Use mirrors or diagrams to show tongue and lip placement.
 - Practice minimal pairs (e.g., "rice" vs. "lice").
- b. **Suprasegmentals:** Focus on rhythm, stress, and intonation.
 - Clap or tap out syllables to practice word stress.
 - Highlight stressed words in sentences (e.g., "I live in CA-na-da").

3. Prioritize Goals Together

- Work with learners to set achievable goals.
- Start with sounds or patterns that are most important for their needs (e.g., professional settings).
- Avoid overwhelming learners by correcting every mistake. Focus on one or two areas at a time.

4. Engage Multiple Senses

- **Listening:** Use audio recordings to compare correct and incorrect sounds.
- **Speaking:** Have learners record themselves and compare with models.
- **Movement:** Use physical activities like clapping or gesturing to reinforce stress and intonation.

5. Make Practice Fun and Relevant

- Use real-life scenarios, like ordering food or asking for directions.
- Incorporate storytelling, where learners create and share stories using target sounds.

6. Encourage Practice Beyond the Classroom

- Suggest online tools like [English Accent Coach](#) or apps for additional practice.
- Encourage learners to listen to English music, podcasts, or videos to hear natural pronunciation.

Key Reminders

- This is not about "fixing" an accent; it's about improving communication.
- Celebrate progress, no matter how small!
- Always be patient and supportive—learning pronunciation takes time.

A Predictable Teaching-Learning Framework

1. Demonstrate & Describe

- Show and explain how sounds are produced in the mouth and throat. Use visuals, tools, and clear examples.

2. Listen

- Encourage learners to listen to the target sounds often, in many different ways. Help them recognize the difference between their own sounds and the correct ones.

3. Controlled Practice

- Focus on specific sounds with activities like repeating words and using tools (e.g. mirrors or elastic bands) to ensure learners practice accurately. Correct mistakes in this stage.

4. Guided Practice

- Have learners practice in pairs or small groups using structured activities, such as fill-in-the-blank sentences or matching sounds to words, with guidance from you.

5. Communicative Practice

- Encourage real-life practice through role-playing or conversations. This helps learners use their pronunciation skills in everyday situations.

Helpful Pronunciation Teaching Resources

Resources	Description
<u>Minimal pairs worksheets</u>	The page offers ESL worksheets on minimal pairs to help learners practice distinguishing and pronouncing similar-sounding words.
<u>Pronunciation Practice Activities</u>	The document is a sample worksheet from <i>Cambridge English Pronunciation in Use</i> , offering exercises to help ESL learners improve their pronunciation by practicing specific sounds, stress patterns, and minimal pairs.
<u>[YouTube]</u>	Macmillan Education. Pronunciation Skills: Consonants part 8 /p/ /b/ /t/ /d/.
<u>ESL Lab</u>	Known for its free listening activities, ESL Lab has a wide variety of exercises that also focus on pronunciation, helping learners to improve their speaking skills in context.
<u>BBC Pronunciation</u>	The BBC offers excellent videos and audio clips focusing on English pronunciation. They cover everything from individual sounds to intonation and stress.
<u>Forvo</u>	Forvo is a website where you can listen to native speakers pronounce words in English and other languages. It's excellent for learning the correct pronunciation of individual words.

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