



Learninc

Pronunciation | **/t/ /d/**



Pronunciation /t/ /d/

Before we start: An introduction to the IPA

Throughout this course, you'll see us use some strange symbols like /ʃ/ or /ʊ/. Don't worry! You didn't accidentally sign up for a Greek class. What you're seeing here is something called the International Phonetic Alphabet or IPA.

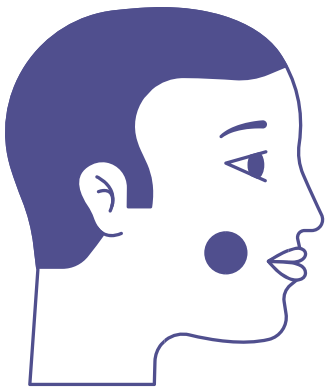
Although they may look like letters, these symbols are a bit different since each of them represents a unique sound. So, while a letter like "s" could represent different sounds like the /s/ in sand, the /ʃ/ in sure, or the /dʒ/ in Asia, a phonetic symbol will always be pronounced the same, regardless of what letter represents it in writing. In fact, you might have already come across phonetic symbols in dictionaries, where they're used to show how a word is pronounced.

If you're thinking "but I don't want to learn a new alphabet, English is hard enough as it is!" don't worry, you won't have to! We don't expect you to learn the whole Phonetic Alphabet, but using it makes it easier to talk about sounds. Plus, knowing some of these symbols and recognizing them in dictionary entries will come in handy in your accent reduction journey. So, with that in mind, we're giving you a free IPA chart that you can download below so you can follow along with our videos and exercises.

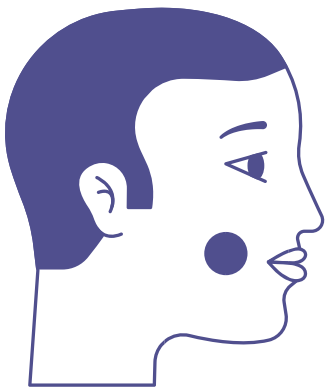
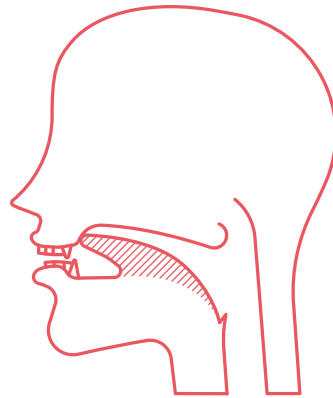
i: sleep	I ship	ʊ good	u: moon	Iə here	eɪ stay		
e bed	ə her	ɜ: bird	ɔ: door	ʊə sure	ɔɪ boy	əʊ soap	
æ cat	ʌ up	ɑ: car	ɒ on	eə hair	aɪ my	aʊ now	
p park	b bike	t tree	d day	tʃ chocolate	dʒ June	k cat	g go
f for	v very	θ think	ð this	s sorry	z zoo	ʃ shout	ʒ vision
m man	n never	ɪŋ sing	h hat	l love	r red	w what	j yes

The 44 phonemes, based on the Adrian Underhill layout, adapted by Inc.

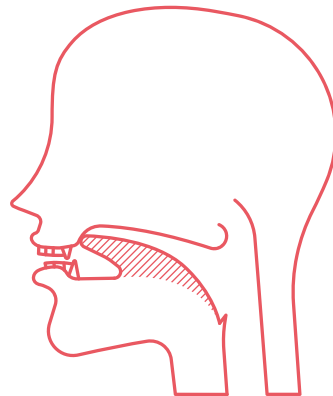
Learn to pronounce the /t/ and /d/ sounds



t



/t/ d
/d/ d



In this lesson, we'll be taking a look at the pronunciation of the English t (as in top, mat, and definitely) and d (as in do, mad, and medicine). But, wait... Aren't "d" and "t" the same sounds as in Spanish? Not quite!

Even though you might be understood just fine if you pronounce ts and ds the "Spanish way", native speakers will hear the difference, and this distracts from what you're trying to convey. For this reason, it's important you work on learning the English pronunciation of these sounds.

But, before we start, a quick disclaimer: this lesson will deal with the t and d sounds mentioned above, but that's not the only way in which these letters can be pronounced. For instance, when ts and ds are between vowels (like in the words matter or badder), their pronunciation can vary considerably. And, in words like imagination, they can even turn into a "sh" sound". Those variations, however, will be left for some other time, since today we'll focus on "true" /t/ and /d/ sounds, like in the words time and dime.

The Spanish way

Before we get into the nitty-gritty of English ts and ds, let's take a look at the Spanish way of pronouncing them so we can start from what you already know.

In Spanish, t and d are dental plosive sounds. To understand what this means, try saying a couple of Spanish words with t and d aloud and focus on the position of your tongue and how the air flows out of your mouth when you pronounce these sounds. You'll notice that, to pronounce Spanish ts and ds, you have to stop airflow completely for a fraction of a second by pushing the tip of your tongue against your front teeth. The fact that you push your tongue against your teeth is why the sound is called "dental", and the fact that you stop airflow completely is why it's called "plosive".

What about the difference between t and d? As we'll see many times throughout this course, it's all about voiced versus unvoiced sounds. If you place your hand on your throat while pronouncing "d" you should feel some vibrations coming from your vocal cords, since this is a voiced sound. If you do the same while pronouncing "t", however, you shouldn't feel anything, as this is an unvoiced sound.

So, now that you understand how you pronounce ts and ds in Spanish, let's learn the proper way to do it in English.

The English way

In the previous section, we identified three variables to pronouncing Spanish t and d sounds: they're both dental (pronounced by pushing your tongue against your front teeth), they're both plosive (pronounced by briefly stopping the airflow coming out of your mouth), and they are differentiated from each other by whether they're voiced or not (we use our vocal cords to pronounce d sounds, but we don't to pronounce t sounds). The good news is, only one of these variables changes in English!



Pronunciation /t/ /d/

Just as in Spanish, English ts are voiceless, while ds are voiced. And, just as in Spanish as well, both sounds are plosive. The difference lies in how you stop the airflow: English ts and ds are alveolar, meaning you stop the air by pressing your tongue against the alveolar ridge of your mouth.

So, what is the alveolar ridge? As we've discussed when learning other sounds, the alveolar ridge is just behind your front teeth. To find it, you can run your tongue across the roof of your mouth until you find a bumpy area. That's precisely where your tongue should be placed when you pronounce English ts and ds.