

Why study pronunciation?

If you don't know how English pronunciation works then you may be making mistakes not only in your speaking but also in your listening. This may result in it being hard for you to understand spoken English or it may be that people don't understand what you say. For example, do you know the difference in pronunciation and meaning of: *Accuse me* and *Excuse me*?

Pronunciation, like other skills such as reading and writing, is an important element of language learning. There are standard ways of saying the sounds that make up words and groups of words. As with other languages there are a number of different standard varieties of English such as British English, Australian English, American English, etc. This means that an English speaker of a recognized variety will make and expect to hear sounds and groups of words in a sentence that fit with any one of the standard varieties. Therefore, although there is flexibility in the way you can pronounce English, if you want to be clearly understood when you speak it and if you want to be able to easily understand what others are saying, you should study

pronunciation and make yourself aware of areas you find different or difficult.

The leaflets below show you how you can do this in an effective and rewarding way.

The aim of this leaflet

This introductory leaflet is a guide to our advice sheets for pronunciation learning (**P2-P8**). It provides a brief description of the advice sheets, so that you can decide which ones are useful for you and so you can discover the kind of help and resources that are available for you in the Language Commons.

Advice sheets

If you have decided to improve your pronunciation but do not know how to start, take a look at the following.

- **Deciding what area(s) of pronunciation to work on (P2)**
If you are not sure what is involved in pronunciation and how to start selecting what to study, this advice sheet is going to be useful for you.
- **Selecting materials for pronunciation (P3)**

This advice sheet introduces you to the materials on pronunciation available online and in the Language Commons and suggests ways to select materials for your own study.

- **Developing a program of study (P4)**
If you are not very confident about learning pronunciation on your own, this advice sheet will help you.
- **Recognizing phonetic symbols (P5)**
English only has 26 letters to spell words but English speakers use around 43 sounds (depending on your accent). You can see why phonetic symbols (the 'letters' for the sounds) are important. They are really useful in helping you see clearly, how a word is actually pronounced. Most dictionaries show both UK and US pronunciation. This advice sheet introduces you to the IPA phonetic symbols commonly used in dictionaries. Recognizing the sound symbols can be very useful. You don't need to learn the symbols by heart because every dictionary has an easy-to-follow chart so you need only to find the chart in the

dictionary, familiarize yourself with the symbols and check how a word is pronounced when you look it up.

- **Glossary (P6)**

This advice sheet provides a list of terms commonly found in pronunciation books. Brief explanations and examples of these terms are also given.

- **Common Pronunciation Problems for Cantonese Speakers (P7)**

This advice sheet provides information on areas of English pronunciation that Cantonese speakers may have difficulty with.

- **Common Pronunciation Problems for Putonghua Speakers (P8)**

This advice sheet provides information on areas of English pronunciation that Putonghua speakers may have difficulty with.

And now...

After browsing through the advice sheets, you should have an idea of what to do and how to do it. Improving pronunciation is a long-term process and requires constant practice. Sometimes you may feel bored or frustrated or think that you are not progressing at all. If you would like any help or advice, or just a chat about your progress,

please get in touch - **we are here to support your independent learning!** To contact us:

- Make an appointment to see an adviser. For details of advisers and their availability, please go to <https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-adviser-timetable/>.
- E-mail your questions to **iLANG** (ilang@ust.hk).
- Ask at the reception counter of the Language Commons — if the receptionist cannot help you directly, s/he will pass your query on to one of the advisers.

What else can you do?

- Browse the many physical (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/language-commons/#resources>) and online materials (<https://ilang.cle.ust.hk/resources-speaking/>) for Pronunciation.
- Join a Pronunciation activity or short course (<http://ilang.cle.ust.hk/speaking/>).

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