

minimal

pairs

EnglishClub

with WAV sound files

house

EnglishClub

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Introduction

I was recently asked by my colleagues at [EnglishClub.com](https://www.englishclub.com) to use my voice to narrate a full list of words (“minimal pairs”) to aid students of English with pronunciation—these words you will find here. A minimal pair is a pair of words that vary by only a single sound, usually meaning sounds that may confuse English learners, like the /f/ and /v/ in fan and van, or the /e/ and /ɪ/ in desk and disk. Clear text is provided here with accompanying audio to assist you with often confusing pronunciation from a wide list of vocabulary.

It became immediately apparent to me as a singer/songwriter that the [minimal pairs exercises](#) on the EnglishClub website had valid use beyond that of English language students accessing the site. I have always considered myself to be a descriptive grammarian: meaning that as long as the essence of the conversation is understood and communication takes place effectively, then that is all that matters. I love to hear a foreign accent with all of its inherent mistakes within others speech that serves to remind me how beautiful and varied my native tongue is - a global language spoken worldwide in a variety of different evolving forms. Though: many students are aware of the prescriptive grammarian approach; this means the rules are the rules and correct grammar matters at all times.

As a descriptive grammarian I disagree but fully understand that where students are required to sit formal exams, then absolutely, the rules must be followed to the letter. But I also find one other area where I agree with the approach of the strict prescriptive grammarian - and that is in the field of vocal performance: singing!

As a performer and English native speaker now residing in Bulgaria, I find there is one single word that causes Bulgarians much difficulty. It is the word: the. An English article, and undoubtedly, one of the most common English words used in everyday conversation. The reason for this is simple, there is no such sound as ‘th’ in the Bulgarian (Cyrillic) alphabet. My name itself, being Jonathan, causes many problems and is often pronounced simply as: Jon -a- ton. That doesn’t matter to me, but the problem arises when Bulgarian singers perform songs in English most beautifully, and then all of a sudden the word ‘the’ is thrown out at the attentive audience as ‘Dur’ – you notice it immediately. It seriously impacts on what was a great performance of a most popular power ballad up until that point. So, I have taken the contents of the EnglishClub online pages and created this easy to use eBook in the hope that I can act as a mentor to my fellow artists and performers here in Bulgaria. And: as an English teacher, a resource that I can share with my students.

The vocabulary found here is delivered in five levels; elementary, pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate and advanced. However: as pronunciation causes problems for students at all levels of vocabulary I highly recommend that students practice the full word list. The hyperlinks for each minimal pair chapter title will take you directly to the associated audio file at [EnglishClub.com](https://www.englishclub.com).

Minimal Pairs by EnglishClub is an essential aid to all students of the English language.

[Jonathan Taylor](#)

British singer/songwriter and novelist

Notes on Audio

Each minimal pair in this eBook has a link that will take you directly to the relevant EnglishClub page for both word list and audio. The audio can be played directly from the EnglishClub page or, if preferred, downloaded from the page to your device as an MP3.

However, this ebook is also accompanied by two WAV audio files for playback on CD players or other devices that do not support MP3 formats:

- **MinimalPairs_eBook_WAV-disc1.wav**

- **MinimalPairs_eBook_WAV-disc2.wav**

Both discs are easily burnt onto a conventional 1 hr (CDr 70) compact disk for audio playback. They are provided for environments where internet access is restricted, unreliable or not available. This allows for the eBook to be printed and used in conjunction with the supplied audio downloads.

With each Minimal Pair you will find a time reference: this links the word list in the eBook with the appropriate time point of your audio disk download.

The complete package can be downloaded free at:

<https://www.englishclub.com/download/ebooks/minimal-pairs/>

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Vowel Sounds

Minimal Pairs /ɪ/ and /i:/ as in sit and seat

Disc One 00:00

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /ɪ/ and the other the sound /i:/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: As indicated by the /:/ part of its symbol, /i:/ is a longer sound than /ɪ/ and pronouncing it this way can help distinguish between the two in the pairs of words below. You will also notice, however, that /ɪ/ does not have a dot over it, making it a different mouth position from /i:/. The sound /i:/ is said with the mouth much more spread, something like a broad smile. This is why we say "cheese" rather than "chiz" (or "whizz") when we take photos.

Elementary

bin bean

chip cheap

his he's

it eat

sit seat

Pre-Intermediate

did deed

fill feel

fit feet

grin green

hit heat

is ease

mitt meet

slip sleep

still steal

Intermediate

bit beat

bitch beach

itch each

gin gene

grid greed

hid heed

hill he'll

ill eel

kip keep

knit neat

lick leak

lip leap

mill meal

pick peek

piss piece

pitch peach

risen reason

shit sheet

sick seek

sin scene

sin seen

still steel

tin teen

Upper-Intermediate

bid bead

bitch beech

biz bees

chick cheek

chit cheat

dip deep

fist feast

fizz fees

hip heap

kid keyed

pill peel

pip peep

piss peace

sill seal

sim seem

skid skied

skim scheme

till teal

tizz teas

Advanced

blip bleep

britches breeches

crick creek

din dean

finned fiend

flit fleet

gip jeep

grist greased

pit peat

sim seam

sip seep

shin sheen

skit skeet

slick sleek

slit sleet

tick teak

tit teat

tizz tease

Minimal Pairs /e/ and /ɪ/ as in desk and disk

Disc One 06:16

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the vowel sound /e/ and the other the vowel sound /ɪ/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: Both sounds are short, with /ɪ/ being pronounced with a wider mouth, almost in a kind of smile. This makes it much closer to the long sound /i:/ than it is to the short sound /e/.

Elementary

dead did

desk disk

Pre-Intermediate

belt built

fell fill

head hid

left lift

mess miss

Intermediate

bed bid

beg big

bell bill

bet bit

check chick

gem gym

hell hill

hem him

let lit

pet pit

Upper-Intermediate

bend binned

bent bint

cheque chick

deck dick

fen fin

get git

jest gist

leapt lipped

led lid

lest list

kecks kicks

kept kipped

meddle middle

messed mist

peg pig

set sit

Advanced

bless bliss

Celt kilt

clef cliff

clench clinch

crept crypt

dell dill

den din

dent dint

fetter fitter

fez fizz

fleck flick

fretter fritter
gelding gilding
heck hick
hem hymn
hep hip
hex hicks
ken kin
ketch kitsch
Med mid
phlegm flim
quell quill

Minimal Pairs /e/ and /eɪ/ as in wet and wait

Disc One 10:52

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the vowel sound /e/ and the other the vowel sound /eɪ/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /e/ is a short single sound that is pronounced without your mouth moving, whereas /eɪ/ is a diphthong (a merging of two sounds) and your mouth gets smaller as you are making the sound.

Elementary

wet wait

Pre-Intermediate

bed bade

bread braid

fell fail

get gate

L ale

let late

M aim

pen pain

rest raced

S ace

sell sale

tech take

test taste

well whale

west waist

Intermediate

best based

chess chase

debt date

edge age

etch H

gel jail

led laid

lens lanes

men main

met mate

pent paint

pled played

set sate

sex sakes

special spatial

tell tale

trend trained

when wane

wren rain

X aches

Upper-Intermediate

beck bake

bell bail

bet bait

bled blade

breast braced

fed fade

fret freight

hell hail

red raid

sent saint

shed shade

shell shale

sped spade

tent taint

tread trade

wed wade

wedge wage

wreck rake

Advanced

betted bated

dell dale

den deign

fen feign

fend feigned

fez phase

fleck flake

fled flayed

heck hake

hex hakes

ken cane
less lace
lest laced
mess mace
pest paste
phlegm flame
rend rained
stead stayed
vend veined
wend waned

Minimal Pairs /æ/ and /ʌ/ as in bat and but

Disc One 15:39

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /æ/ and the other the sound /ʌ/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /æ/ and /ʌ/ are the two closest vowel sounds in English and so it is very difficult to hear and pronounce the difference. In fact, in some American accents there is no distinction between the two. It is still worth language learners working on the difference between them, however, as there are many words that vary only by this sound.

Elementary

bat but
batter butter
cap cup
cat cut
match much

Pre-Intermediate

bad bud
began begun
drank drunk
fan fun

hat hut

ran run

sang sung

swam swum

Intermediate

ankle uncle

back buck

badge budge

bag bug

ban bun

bank bunk

banker bunker

brash brush

cam come

crash crush

dabble double

dad dud

ham hum

hang hung

mad mud

massed must

pan pun

rang rung

rash rush

sack suck

sax sucks

stand stunned

track truck

Upper-Intermediate

bang bung

cab cub

cram crumb

dam dumb

damp dump

dram drum

fanned fund

flash flush

gnat nut

hag hug

paddle puddle

pack puck

pat putt

rag rug

sand sunned

sank sunk

scam scum

slam slum

slang slung

stack stuck

stank stunk

tang tongue

tag tug

tramps trumps

wan won

Advanced

blabber blubber

champ chump

dab dub

dank dunk

flank flunk

flax flux

gash gush

glam glum

grab grub

hanker hunker

hash hush

hatch hutch

jag jug

lag lug

mat mutt

pap pup

patter putter

rabble rubble

ram rum

sally sully

sap sup

sapper supper

scram scrum

shacks shucks

slag slug

slash slush

slat slut

stab stub

tab tub

tack tuck

tat tut

thrash thrush

Minimal Pairs /əʊ/ and /ɔ:/ as in so and saw

Disc One 20:45

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /əʊ/ and the other the sound /ɔ:/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: The sound of /əʊ/ (as in "O", "oh" and "owe") is a diphthong, meaning two vowel sounds blended into one. You should be able to see the mouth moving from one position to the other while making the sound, with the mouth becoming smaller and rounder. You can emphasize and control this by holding your hand in front of your mouth and bringing the fingers in towards each other as you move from the first part of the sound to the last part.

The sound of /ɔ:/ (as in "or" and "awe") is a single long sound. The mouth doesn't move while making this sound, and you can pronounce it as long as you have breath.

Elementary

bowl ball

O or

so saw

Pre-Intermediate

boat bought

drone drawn

folk fork

know nor

mow more

note nought

poke pork

show sure

Intermediate

chose chores

close claws

doe door

dome dorm

doze doors

foal fall

foe four

go gore

know nor

low law

moaning morning

owe or

shown shorn

snow snore

stow store

toe tore

tone torn

Upper-Intermediate

coast coursed

code cord

cone corn

doze doors

drone drawn

foam form

go gore

goal gall

hone horn

load lord

moan mourn

moaning morning

motor mortar

mow more

oat ought

poach porch

quote quart

sew saw

show shore

snow snore

tote taught

Advanced

bode bored

bow bore

choke chalk

close claws

coke cork

cofes corpse

crow craw

doe door

goad gored

goal gall

hose whores

implode implored

joe jaw

low law

mole maul

node gnawed

ode awed

owed awed

scone scorn

stoke stork

stow store

tote tort

Minimal Pairs /ɒ/ and /əʊ/ as in not and note

Disc One 25:21

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the vowel sound /ɒ/ and the other the vowel sound /əʊ/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /ɒ/ is a short single sound made without the mouth moving. /əʊ/ is a diphthong -- a longer sound made of two sounds -- meaning that the mouth moves during production of the sound.

Elementary

not note

want won't

Pre-Intermediate

got goat

hop hope

on own

Intermediate

cost coast

non known

odd owed

rod road

rot wrote

sop soap

stock stoke

tossed toast

wok woke

Upper-Intermediate

block bloke

bond boned

bossed boast

clock cloak

cock coke

cod code

col coal

cop cope

god goad

jock joke

mod mode

pop pope

rob robe

rod rode

ROM roam

shod showed

smock smoke

sock soak

sod sewed

Advanced

blot bloat

bod bode

bonze bones

chock choke

cocks coax

con cone

crock croak

doss dose

dot dote

foggy fogey

glob globe

hod hoed

lob lobe

lop lope

mod mowed

mop mope

mot mote

nod node

odd ode

rot rote

slop slope

sod sowed

tock toke

tod toad

tot tote

Minimal Pairs /æ/ and /e/ as in bad and bed

Disc One 29:14

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the vowel sound /æ/ and the other the vowel sound /e/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: If these two sounds are the same in your language, it may be difficult for you to pronounce them differently because:

native speakers pronounce /æ/ in several different ways

/æ/ is quite similar to /e/

The clearest difference is that /e/ is spoken with a wider, more stretched mouth. You can make this clear by seeing how your mouth gets wider and wider as you go from /æ/ to /e/ to /i:/.

Elementary

bad bed

man men

Pre-Intermediate

and end

axe X

bag beg

had head

ham hem

jam gem

pan pen

pat pet

sad said

sat set

Intermediate

band bend

bat bet

dad dead

flash flesh

gas guess

gnat net

land lend

shall shell

spanned spend

Upper-Intermediate

axe ex

fad fed

gassed guest

manned mend

marry merry

mat met

sacks sex

tack tech

track trek

Advanced

bland blend

cattle kettle

dab deb

flax flecks

frat fret

rabble rebel

tamp temp

tamper temper

trad tread

vat vet

Minimal Pairs /ɑ:/ and /ɜ:/ as in fast and first

Disc One 32:19

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the vowel sound /ɑ:/ and the other the vowel sound /ɜ:/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: Both sounds are long single sounds but the mouth position is different, with /ɑ:/ having a much wider open mouth position. This is why your doctor asks you to say this sound to show him or her inside your mouth. /ɜ:/ is much more like the sound people make when they are disgusted.

Elementary

fast first

Pre-Intermediate

bath berth

far fir

ha her

hard heard

heart hurt

pass purse

Intermediate

bath birth

bard bird

car cur

card curd

far fur

farm firm

guard gird

hard herd

Pa per

Upper-Intermediate

bar burr

barn burn

card Kurd

cart curt

carve curve

dart dirt

par purr

park perk

part pert

sharper Sherpa

star stir

Advanced

arc irk

barbs burbs

blah blur

carbs curbs

harpies herpes

parched perched

parp perp

quark quirk

sarge surge

shark shirk

tarps turps

Consonant Sounds

Minimal Pairs /b/ and /v/ as in berry and very

Disc One 35:39

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /b/ and the other the sound /v/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /b/ has the same mouth position as /p/, but using your voice. Try saying /p/ and then holding your neck to make sure that your voice is being used when you say /b/. There should be a sudden release of air as you say the sound, meaning that it is impossible to extend it.

/v/ has the same mouth shape as /f/, but using your voice. Put your top teeth on your bottom lip. It is possible to extend this sound for as long as you like.

If you are practising on your own, try saying both words and making sure your pronunciation of each is different, for example by looking at your mouth shape in the mirror.

Elementary

B V

berry very

Pre-Intermediate

ban van

bat vat

beer veer

boat vote

bowl vole

serb serve

Intermediate

bars vase

best vest

bet vet

bowels vowels

gibbon given

Upper-Intermediate

bale veil

bent vent

bury very

bow vow

Advanced

bane vein

bat vat

beer veer

bid vid

bile vile

biz viz

bolt volt

bowels vowels

bowl vole

broom vroom

curb curve

dribble drivel

dub dove

fibre fiver

jibe jive

lobes loaves

rebel revel

verb verve

[Minimal Pairs /b/ and /p/ as in buy and pie](#)

Disc One 38:37

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /b/ and the other the sound /p/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: The main difference between /b/ and /p/ is that /b/ is a voiced sound, whereas /p/ is just produced by the puff of air. Also, /b/ is pronounced with less air released than /p/, and this can sometimes be a more useful distinction as it is difficult to feel the vocal cords vibrating when making the /b/ sound.

Elementary

B P

bar Pa

be P

big pig

buy pie

by pie

bye pie

Pre-Intermediate

bay pay

bear pair

bet pet

bill pill

bin pin

bore poor

bought port

cub cup

Intermediate

band panned

base pace

bat pat

bear pear

beer pier

belt pelt

berry perry

bit pit

blade played

bland planned

blank plank

blaze plays

bored pawed

braise prays

bride pride

bull pull

but putt

butter putter

lib lip

pub pup

robe rope

tab tap

Upper-Intermediate

banned panned

bare pare

beak peak

beat peat

bee pee

bitch pitch

bleed plead

blot plot

board pawed

bore pour

braise praise

breast pressed

burr per

cab cap

rib rip

Advanced

bah par

batty patty

bead peed

beak peek

beep peep

beet peat

bi pi

bier peer

blade plaid

blaster plaster

bleat pleat

bloom plume

blunder plunder

blush plush

boar paw

boar pour

boo poo

braise preys

brat prat

brawn prawn

breech preach

brick prick

brig prig

brim prim

burr purr

butt putt

tribe tripe

Minimal Pairs /n/ and /ŋ/ as in thin and thing

Disc One 44:40

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /n/ and the other having the sound /ŋ/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: Both /n/ and /ŋ/ are pronounced with air coming through your nose, with you blocking the air in your mouth with the front of your tongue for /n/ and the back of your tongue for /ŋ/.

Elementary

thin thing

Pre-Intermediate

band banged

hand hanged

sin sing

sun sung

win wing

wind winged

Intermediate

done dung

fan fang

gone gong

kin king

ran rang

ton tongue

Upper-Intermediate

ban bang

banned banged

pan pang

pin ping

tin ting

Advanced

bonze bongz

bun bung

chin ching

clan clang

din ding

don dong

dun dung

hun hung

pond ponged

stun stung

tan tang

Minimal Pairs /l/ and /r/ as in alive and arrive

Disc One 47:21

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /r/ and the other the sound /l/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /l/ is pronounced with a large flap of the tongue. The best way to make it clear that you aren't pronouncing /r/ is to bend your tongue as far back as you can in your mouth, and flick it forward as you say /l/. (You can help control your tongue by holding one hand next to your mouth with your fingers in the same position as your tongue, and flick your fingers at the same time as your tongue.)

/r/ is pronounced many different ways in various English-speaking countries and regions, so it is not particularly useful to ask students to base their pronunciation on what native speakers do with their mouths. As making a distinction is the most important thing, it is often better to exaggerate the differences between the two sounds. These descriptions are therefore meant to be useful for students rather than explanations of usual pronunciations.

/r/ is totally unlike /l/ for English speakers. In fact, some people pronounce it much more like /w/. The best way of making the distinction is try to move your tongue as little as possible when making the sound. (You can use your hand to help in the same way as suggested with /l/, but this time keeping your hand still. It can also help to start with your top teeth just touching the back of your bottom lip.)

Elementary

alive arrive

fly fry

light right

long wrong

Pre-Intermediate

collect correct

glamour grammar

glass grass

lace race

lane rain

law raw

lead read

leader reader

led red

lighter writer

load road

lock rock

locker rocker

lot rot

play pray

Intermediate

belly berry

blew brew

blue brew

blush brush

clash crash

clown crown

flee free

glow grow

lack rack

lamb ram

lamp ramp

lane rain

late rate

laze raise

lead read

lice rice

lied ride

lies rise

lip rip

list wrist

locket rocket

loom room

lows rose

luck ruck

lush rush

pilot pirate

Upper Intermediate

belly berry

blight bright

blues bruise

blush brush

fleas freeze

flee free

flees freeze

laid raid

lair rare

lake rake

lamp ramp

lap wrap

late rate

lather rather

lay ray

lead red

leech reach

leer rear

lentil rental

lid rid

lob rob

loot root

lot rot

loyal royal

play pray

Advanced

blacken bracken

blight bright

blew brew

clash crash

flea free

fleas freeze

gland grand

glow grow

jelly jerry

lace race

lack rack

lag rag

lagging ragging

lair rare

lake rake

lamb ram

lank rank

lash rash

law raw

laze raze

lead reed

leek reek

leap reap

leech reach

leer rear

lib rib

lick rick

light rite

limb rim

lime rhyme

link rink

lit writ

loam roam

loaves roves

lob rob

lobe robe

look rook

loom room

lute route

lope rope

lout rout

lubber rubber

luck ruck

lug rug

lump rump

lung rung

lush rush

lust rust

splat sprat

splint sprint

Minimal Pairs /tʃ/ and /t/ as in catch and cat

Disc One 56:56

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /tʃ/ and the other the sound /t/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /t/ is pronounced by putting the tip of your tongue against the top of your mouth just behind your top teeth and pulling it down, making the "tut tut" sound you make when you disapprove of something. The tongue and mouth positions are the same as when you pronounce /d/, but with /t/ the voice is not used and you release more air.

/tʃ/ is pronounced without your tongue moving and with more air released than with /t/. It is similar to the sound of a sneeze, and the air released should be able to move a piece of paper or be felt on your hand five centimetres in front of your mouth. It is most similar to the sound /dʒ/, but again without the voice and with more air released.

Elementary

catch cat

ouch out

watch what

Pre-Intermediate

beach beat

cheese tease

chest test

chew two

child tiled

chip tip

choose twos

chose toes

coach coat

each eat

hatch hat

match mat

starch start

torch taught

Intermediate

bench bent

chair tear

chew too

chill till

chime time

chin tin

chop top

chore tour

churn turn

itch it

much mutt

notch not

peach peat

rich writ

roach wrote

teach teat

touch tut

which wit

Upper-Intermediate

arch art

batch bat

belch belt

bitch bit
chap tap
chart tart
chat tat
cheat teat
cheek teak
cheer tear
chick tick
chore tore
hitch hit
hunch hunt
march mart
patch pat
parch part
pitch pit
porch port
punch punt
Scotch Scot
witch wit
wrench rent

Advanced

beech beet
bitchy bitty
bleach bleat
blotch blot
botch bot
catchy catty
char tar
chide tide

chirps turps
chit tit
choke toke
chubby tubby
chuffed tuft
chug tug
flinch flint
hooch hoot
hutch hut
kitsch kit
lynch lint
mooch moot
perch pert
pouch pout
roach rote
torch tort
twitch twit

Minimal Pairs /s/ and /ʃ/ as in sea and she

Disc Two 00:00

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /s/ and the other the sound /ʃ/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /ʃ/ is produced with a much more rounded mouth than /s/, and is the sound we make when we want people to be quiet. If you use your voice with that mouth position, you get the middle sound in "pleasure" and "television".

/s/ is said with the lips pulled back more, with the same mouth position as /z/ but without using your voice.

Elementary

C she

sea she

seat sheet

see she

sock shock

Pre-Intermediate

boss bosh

save shave

seal she'll

so show

sofa chauffeur

sore sure

sort short

Intermediate

cost coshed

fist fished

gas gash

plus plush

puss push

rust rushed

saw shore

seed she'd

seek chic

seen sheen

sell shell

sew show

sign shine

single shingle

sit shit

son shun

sun shun

Upper-Intermediate

ass ash

crass crash

crust crushed

mass mash

mess mesh

sack shack

said shed

sake shake

sale shale

same shame

sank shank

scene sheen

seep sheep

seize she's

sigh shy

sin shin

sip ship

sop shop

sue shoe

Advanced

bass bash

doss dosh

gust gushed

moss mosh

sag shag

sail shale

sass sash

sawn shorn

seer sheer

sift shift

sill shill

sine shine

sod shod

sot shot

sucks shucks

Minimal Pairs /f/ and /v/ as in fan and van

Disc Two 05:12

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /f/ and the other having /v/ in its place. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /f/ and /v/ are pronounced with the same mouth position of the top teeth biting the bottom lip, but with /f/ pronounced with more air and no use of the voicebox.

Elementary and Pre-Intermediate

fan van

ferry very

leaf leave

off of

Intermediate

fast vast

fat vat

fee V

fine vine

foul vowel

gif give

half halve

life live

proof prove

safe save

Upper-Intermediate

belief believe

fail veil

fear veer

feel veal

fender vendor

grief grieve

staff starve

surf serve

Advanced

calf carve

chaff chav

duff dove

fault vault

feign vain

feign vein

fie vie

file vile

foist voiced

foal vole

fox vox

guff guv

reef reeve

serf serve

skiff skiv

strife strive

waif waive

[Minimal Pairs /f/ and /h/ as in fat and hat](#)

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /h/ and the other having the sound /f/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /h/ is pronounced with a puff of air from a wide open mouth so that, for example, "ha" can be said without changing your mouth position. It is similar to blowing steam onto your glasses so you can clean them and a bit like a sigh.

/f/ is pronounced with a much smaller mouth than /h/, with the teeth near or touching the bottom lip. This means that, unlike "ha", you have to open your mouth wider to say the second part of the word "far". Using the same mouth position as /f/, your voice produces the sound /v/.

Elementary

fat hat

feel he'll

Pre-Intermediate

fair hair

fall hall

far ha

fed head

feel heel

fee he

feet heat

fir her

fit hit

fizz his

funny honey

Intermediate

fail hail

farm harm

fart heart

fate hate

fear hear

fees he's

fight height

fill hill

five hive

force horse

found hound

four whore

fun Hun

phone hone

Upper-Intermediate

faced haste

fad had

fare hare

feed he'd

fell hell

fence hence

few hew

foal whole

foam home

fog hog

Advanced

fag hag

fang hang

fawn horn

fey hay

fob hob

foe hoe

foes hose

fop hop

fore haw
fowl howl
funky hunky
furl hurl
phase haze

Minimal Pairs /f/ and /θ/ as in free and three

Disc Two 13:19

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the consonant sound /f/ and the other having the consonant sound /θ/ in its place. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: Both sounds are unvoiced, meaning that you can make the sound just by blowing out air without needing to use your voice. /f/ has the same mouth position as the voiced sound /v/, with the top teeth on the bottom lip and the tongue inside the mouth. /θ/ has the mouth more open with the tongue between the teeth or even poking out of the mouth. You can practise /θ/ by making sure your tongue touches a finger placed on your lips when you say the words below.

Elementary

free three

Pre-Intermediate

deaf death

fought thought

four thaw

Intermediate

fin thin

first thirst

for thaw

fresh thresh

freeze threes

fro throw

froze throws

Upper-Intermediate

fief thief

firm Therm

fort thought

frill thrill

furred third

Advanced

duff doth

fang thang

fawn thorn

fore thaw

fret threat

frieze threes

fug thug

oaf oath

trough troth

Minimal Pairs /s/ and /θ/ as in sing and thing

Disc Two 15:31

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /s/ and the other the sound /θ/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: At least while you are making a conscious effort to do so, it is fairly easy to pronounce these two sounds differently. /θ/ is pronounced with your tongue between your teeth or even sticking out of your mouth, and you can make sure you pronounce it clearly by putting your finger vertically in front of your lips and checking that it gets wet when you make this sound. /s/ is pronounced with the tongue well inside your mouth and the mouth much more widely stretched.

Elementary

mouse mouth

sing thing

Pre-Intermediate

face faith

force fourth

sick thick

sink think

sort thought

tense tenth

Intermediate

mass math

miss myth

pass path

saw thaw

seem theme

some thumb

song thong

use youth

worse worth

Upper-Intermediate

gross growth

kiss kith

Norse North

race wraith

seam theme

sigh thigh

sin thin

sore thaw

sought thought

sum thumb

truce truth

Advanced

moss moth

piss pith
purse Perth
sank thank
sawn thorn
suds thuds
sump thump
symbol thimble

Minimal Pairs /ð/ and /z/ as in with and whizz

Disc Two 18:44

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /ð/ and the other the sound /z/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /ð/ is similar to the sound /θ/ in "thing" and so is also pronounced with your tongue touching or between your teeth. It can be useful to practise by sticking your tongue right out of your mouth. You can check if you are doing so with a mirror or by putting a finger in front of your lips that should get moist each time. /ð/ in "that" uses your voice, which is why it is sometimes confused with the voiced sound /z/.

/z/ is pronounced with the mouth in the same position as with /s/, but using the vocal cords. The tongue is well inside the mouth, and it can also help to spread the lips thin and wide to make the sound unlike /ð/.

Elementary

with whizz

Pre-Intermediate

then Zen

Intermediate

clothe close

clothing closing

sheathe she's

teethe Ts

teethe teas

teething teasing

Upper-Intermediate

bathe bays

breathe breeze

lithe lies

loathe lows

scythe size

seethe Cs

seethe seas

Advanced

bathe baize

lathe laze

scythe sighs

soothe sues

tithe ties

Minimal Pairs /dʒ/ and /z/ as in page and pays

Disc Two 20:49

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /dʒ/ and the other having the sound /z/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /dʒ/ is an explosive sound that is like a voiced version of /tʃ/ and therefore almost like a sneeze and so it is impossible to extend the sound for very long. /z/ is a smooth sound that is a voiced version of /s/ and so can be extended as long as you like.

Elementary

page pays

Pre-Intermediate

cage Ks

siege sees

stage stays

wage ways

wodge was

Intermediate

barge bars

change chains

charge chars

forge fours

fridge frizz

gip zip

Jew zoo

siege Cs

Upper-Intermediate

binge bins

marge Mars

rage raise

rage rays

siege seize

strange strains

tinge tins

Advanced

budge buzz

fudge fuzz

gauge gaze

gorge gauze

grange grains

gauge gays

gunge guns

jag zag

jest zest

jig zig

purge purrs

sarge SARS

singe sins

Minimal Pairs /d/ and /dʒ/ as in bad and badge

Disc Two 24:01

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the sound /d/ and the other having the sound /dʒ/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /dʒ/ is an explosive sound that is like a voiced version of /tʃ/ and therefore quite a lot of air is expelled from a rounded mouth. /d/ is a voiced version of /t/ and so the sound is made with your tongue behind your top teeth.

Elementary

bad badge

day J

Pre-Intermediate

dam jam

deep jeep

dim gym

dog jog

do Jew

door jaw

head hedge

paid page

Intermediate

dear jeer

debt jet

dive jive

dob job

dot jot

Ds geez

dug jug

dump jump

dust just

weighed wage

Upper-Intermediate

CAD cadge

charred charge

dale jail

damn jam

day jay

deans jeans

dig jig

din gin

dunk junk

led ledge

mid midge

raid rage

seed siege

sled sledge

wed wedge

Advanced

barred barge

bud budge

dab jab

dangle jangle

dell gel

dink jink

dinks jinx

disseed gist

dock jock

dosh josh

doss joss

doused joust

dread dredge

ford forge

gored gorge

pled pledge

purred purge

rid ridge

Initial Consonant Sounds

Minimal Pairs initial /f/ and /p/ as in fast and past

Disc Two 28:40

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the initial sound /f/ and the other the initial sound /p/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: Both of these sounds are produced with just air and no voice, but the way they are pronounced is very different.

/p/ is produced by building up the air and pressure behind lips that are squeezed together and then releasing it, similar to making a popping sound. This means that your mouth moves during the production of the sound and that it is impossible to extend the sound after your mouth is open and the air has been released.

/f/ is pronounced with your top teeth touching your bottom lip, and the sound can be extended for as long as you like without moving your mouth just by continuing to blow through the gap between those two parts of your mouth.

Elementary

fast past

foot put

fork pork

Pre-Intermediate

face pace

fan pan

fax packs

fee P

feel peel

feet peat

fig pig

fine pine

fleas please

fool pool

fought port

found pound

from prom

full pull

fun pun

Intermediate

fail pale

fair pair

far Pa

fat pat

felt pelt

fen pen

fence pence

few pew

file pile

fill pill

find pined

firm perm

first pursed

fix picks

flight plight

fly ply

fop pop

free pre

fresher pressure

fries prize

fry pry

paid fade

phase pays

Upper-Intermediate

fad pad

faint paint

fart part

fashion passion

fate pate

fear pier

ferry perry

fin pin

fit pit

flan plan

fold polled

folk poke

fond pond

four pour

fours pause

fray pray

fro pro

froze prose

fund punned

funk punk

fur per

phrase praise

Advanced

faced paste

fang pang

feed peed

fend penned

finch pinch

flack plaque

flank plank
fled pled
flee plea
fleet pleat
flop plop
flume plume
flunk plunk
flush plush
flux plucks
foal poll
foes pose
ford poured
fox pox
frank prank
frig prig
fug pug
furl pearl
fuss pus

[Minimal Pairs initial /k/ and /g/ as in came and game](#)

Disc Two 36:23

Below is a list of words that vary only by one beginning with the sound /k/ and the other beginning with the sound /g/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: /k/ and /g/ are pronounced with identical mouth positions, but /k/ is pronounced without using the vocal chords and with more air released.

Elementary

came game
card guard
class glass
cold gold

could good

Pre-Intermediate

cave gave

clean glean

cot got

crate great

crease Greece

Intermediate

cap gap

cash gash

Co. go

coast ghost

coat goat

come gum

con gone

course gorse

crab grab

cram gram

creek Greek

crepe grape

crew grew

croup group

crow grow

curly girly

cut gut

K gay

key ghee

kill gill

Upper-Intermediate

cane gain

clad glad

clamour glamour

clue glue

cod god

crane grain

crease grease

creed greed

crime grime

krill grill

Advanced

cab gab

caf gaff

cape gape

clam glam

cob gob

coo goo

cord gored

core gore

cork gawk

corp gawp

cosh gosh

coup goo

coy goy

cramps gramps

crate grate

craven graven

craze graze

cripes gripes

crowned ground
crumble grumble
cuff guff
cull gull
cunning gunning
curd gird
cussed gust
kale gale
kilt gilt
kit git

Minimal Pairs initial /t/ and /d/ as in two and do

Disc Two 41:58

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the beginning sound /t/ and the other the beginning sound /d/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: Initial /t/ and /d/ are much easier to recognise than final /t/ and /d/. The mouth and tongue positions are very similar, but for /t/ we don't use the vocal cords but instead release much more air, at times making it almost like spitting. You should be able to feel that air on a hand held just in front of your mouth.

Elementary

town down
two do

Pre-Intermediate

tie die
ton done
too do
touch Dutch
train drain
try dry

Intermediate

tear dare

tear dear

ten den

tide dyed

tip dip

tongue dung

torn dawn

Upper-Intermediate

tame dame

tart dart

teal deal

team deem

tech deck

teen dean

tent dent

tide died

tin din

tire dire

toast dosed

toe doe

toes doze

tomb doom

tough duff

tout doubt

tower dour

tuck duck

tug dug

tux ducks

tyre dire

Advanced

tab dab

tail dale

tale dale

tamp damp

tank dank

teed deed

tell dell

tick dick

tier deer

till dill

tine dine

tint dint

titch ditch

tock dock

tosh dosh

toss doss

tote dote

tresses dresses

tub dub

tummy dummy

tusk dusk

tyke dike

Final Consonant Sounds

Minimal Pairs final /k/ and /g/ as in back and bag

Disc Two 46:48

Below is a list of words that vary only by one ending with the sound /k/ and the other ending with the sound /g/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

English club tip: The difference between /k/ and /g/ is often described as the latter being voiced while the former just uses a release of air (with the mouth position the same). But particularly at the end of words it can be more useful to concentrate on releasing more air with /k/.

Elementary

back bag

Pre-Intermediate

pick pig

Intermediate

clock clog

dock dog

duck dug

frock frog

muck mug

Upper-Intermediate

black blag

block blog

brick brig

broke brogue

buck bug

crack crag

dick dig

jock jog

lack lag

leak league

lock log

luck lug

pluck plug

rack rag

ruck rug

sack sag

smock smog

snack snag

tack tag

Advanced

beck beg

berk berg

chuck chug

cock cog

flock flog

hack hag

hock hog

jack jag

knack nag

prick prig

puck pug

shack shag

slack slag

snuck snug

stack stag

tuck tug

whack wag

wick wig

Minimal Pairs final /m/ and /n/ as in am and an

Disc Two 50:56

Below is a list of words that vary only by one ending with the sound /m/ and the other ending with the sound /n/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: Both sounds are produced with the air coming through your nose. With /m/ that is achieved by closing your lips, whereas with /n/ the lips are open and your tongue touching the top of your mouth behind your teeth blocks the air. Even students who do not find these sounds difficult to recognise and produce at the beginning of syllables can have problems when they are at the end of words.

Elementary

am an

Pre-Intermediate

cam can

comb cone

foam phone

home hone

mam man

meme mean

sum son

term turn

time tine

Intermediate

beam been

came cane

dime dine

game gain

gnome known

gum gun

seam scene

seem seen

spam span

sum sun

team teen

trams trans-

Upper-Intermediate

boom boon

clam clan

dorm dawn

fame feign

gram gran

same sane

scam scan

skim skin

term tern

tome tone

Advanced

beam bean

blame blain

deem dean

dim din

dumb dun

gleam glean

grim grin

sim sin

sperm spurn

teem teen

tomb 'toon

thyme tine

Minimal Pairs final /t/ and /d/ as in hat and had

Disc Two 54:32

Below is a list of words that vary only by one having the final sound /t/ and the other the final sound /d/. You can use this list to practise the sounds, or as a list of words to be careful in pronouncing.

EnglishClub tip: Partly because the pronunciation of final /t/ and initial /t/ are very different, even students who don't have general problems with /d/ and /t/ can have problems recognising and pronouncing these two sounds at the end of words.

Elementary

bat bad

got god

hat had

write ride

Pre-Intermediate

ant and

at add

bet bed

bought bored

cart card

eight aid

feet feed

heart hard

hit hid

hurt heard

mat mad

meant mend

neat need

not nod

plate played

sat sad

sent send

set said

sheet she'd

sight side

spent spend

state stayed

taught toured

wait weighed

Intermediate

beat bead

bent bend

bright bride

but bud

cat cad

cute queued

debt dead

fat fad

heat heed

height hide

hot hod

kit kid

meet mead

oat owed

pat pad

port poured

pot pod

quit quid

route rude

short shored

slight slide

sought sawed

tent tend

tight tied

Upper-Intermediate

bleat bleed

cot cod

fate fade

float flowed

font fond

gloat glowed

haunt horned

it id

moat mode

mount mound

plot plod

site sighed

slit slid

spite spied

stunt stunned

tint tinned

Advanced

blurt blurred

clot clod

faint feigned

goat goad

grit grid

nought gnawed

pant panned

peat peed

pert purred

plaint planed

pleat plead

punt punned

scant scanned

shunt shunned

skint skinned

skit skid

spurt spurred

stoat stowed

tart tarred

teat teed

trot trod

Appendix

Phonemic Chart

VOWELS	monophthongs				diphthongs			Phonemic Chart voiced unvoiced
	i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ		
	sheep	ship	good	shoot	here	wait		
	e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
bed	teacher	bird	door	tourist	boy	show		
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ		
cat	up	far	on	hair	my	cow		
CONSONANTS	p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
	pea	post	tea	dog	cheese	June	car	go
	f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
fly	video	think	this	see	zoo	shall	television	
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j	
man	now	ring	hat	love	red	wet	yes	

The 14 consonant phonemes of English are listed in the top left-hand corner.

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Interactive Phonemic Chart—Listen to the sounds of English at:
<https://www.englishclub.com/pronunciation/phonemic-chart-ia.htm>

The Laughing English Teacher

LYRICS

*I've got an English teacher, he always takes our class
A fat old jolly red-faced man, he gives us all a pass
He's too kind for a teacher, he never has a rule
And everybody says he is the happiest man in school.
Ahhh ha ha ha ha
He laughs when giving homework, he laughs and doesn't teach
He laughs at everybody when they struggle with their speech
He never can stop laughing, he says he's never tried
But once he did expel a guy, and laughed until he cried
Ahhh ha ha ha ha
His jolly face it wrinkled and then he shut his eyes
He opened his great mouth, it was a wondrous size
He said "I must expel you", but he didn't know what for
And then he started laughing until he hurt his jaw
Ahhh ha ha ha ha
So if you chance to meet him, when walking round the school
Just shake him by his fat old hand and tell him he's so cool
His eyes will beam and sparkle, he'll gurgle with delight
And then you'll start his laughing with all his blessed might.
Ahhh ha ha ha ha*

The Alphabet Song For Rockers

LYRICS

A B C D E F G

H I J K L M N O P

Q R S

T U V

W X Y

And it's Zed NOT Zee

A B C D E F G

H I J K L M N O P

Q R S

T U V

W X Y

Zed NOT Zee

Now you know your ABC

Try again and sing with me

one, two, three

Here we go...

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