

# It's not what you say, it's the way that you say it

## Webinar handout

by Kris Kirby

### Read it!

Use the phonemic chart!

[https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/TEphonemic\\_GreyBlue2.png](https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/TEphonemic_GreyBlue2.png)

English spelling often doesn't make sense. Knight and night...knife and Loughborough... The phonemic script is necessary to make sense of it all. But it can be overwhelming. Make a start by setting up a code-cracking game. Get students to work out some famous people's names like the following...

/wɪli:əm feɪksbɪə/ (clue: he's a very famous writer....)

/dʒɒn lenən/ (clue: he's a very famous musician...)

/mɪki: maʊs/ (clue: he's a very famous cartoon character...)

Also, don't limit it to single words. Use the phonemic script to raise awareness of connected speech. Can you work out this phrase?

/wɒtʃədu:ɪnætəʊwi:kend/ (clue: it's a wh-question...)

### Hear it!

Exposure is essential. Encourage your students to listen to as much English as possible – whether in films, music or computer games. But don't forget – you're a great model. Use English as much as possible in class. Hearing a language always helps us speak it!

### Say it!

Chanting words and phrases can feel boring – but saying them is important. Not only does it help with pronunciation (obviously!) – but it also aids retention. It's easier to remember a word if you've read it, heard it AND spoken it.

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Try varying the 'listen-and-repeat' pattern. Say it LOUDLY. Say it quietly. Even say it without making a sound. Break the word down into syllables.

Remember...

*ness*

*shuss*

*con*

consciousness

## See it!

Use diagrams. It helps if we know what's actually happening when we make certain sounds. If it's difficult to demonstrate it, show it in a picture. You can find these online or you can draw them yourself.

## Feel it!

Voiced and unvoiced sounds are important for meaning and therefore it's important learners are aware of them. To help them understand it let them feel their throat as they make sounds like sss and zzz. I use pictures of snakes and bees to illustrate the difference – even with adult students!

## Choose it...?

But which accent are we aiming for? My answer is – we're aiming for being understandable. English is a global language with so many varieties. While it's fine for our learners to model themselves on a particular type of accent, it doesn't matter which type that is, as long as it does its job on getting their point across.

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A recording of Kris's webinar can be watched here: <https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/news-and-events/webinars/webinars-teachers/pronunciation-our-classrooms-mini-event>