

Pronunciation Tips

As with any teaching, the best pronunciation lessons take cues from the learner to assist them with their unique needs and interests. For some learners speaking English may come relatively naturally, while others express having great challenges communicating in their daily lives. Keep in mind that for most adult learners native-like pronunciation is an unrealistic goal, but much progress can be made in helping learners to be understood.

Pronunciation exercises can be incorporated for beginning, intermediate and advanced level learners. They can focus on specific consonant and vowel sounds as well as teaching the patterns of rhythm, stress and intonation of the English language. You may introduce pronunciation during a lesson as you teach vocabulary or as a pronunciation concept on its own. There are many benefits to teaching pronunciation as it can help boost a learner's confidence and at the same time improve written English since spelling is strongly interconnected with pronunciation.

It's up to you how you will incorporate pronunciation into a lesson, but as a general rule you don't want to focus an entire lesson on pronunciation, but rather spend perhaps 10-15 minutes at a time. Relax and encourage the learner to have fun with it.

Here are some ideas to consider when teaching pronunciation:

1. Introduce, describe and demonstrate the target sound

- The tutor can model how to make the sound
- Listen to a recording on a cd, phone, computer or other audio device
- Use diagrams of how the lip, tongue and other parts of the mouth work to create the target sound
- Use a mirror to help the learner see how to form the sound

2. Allow for opportunities for the learner to listen to and identify the target sound before having to produce it. Hearing the sound is the first step to being able to pronounce it. Can the learner hear the sound?

- Minimal pair listening activities use similar sounds to draw the learner's attention to the contrast so they can begin to hear the difference. Only one sound is different between two words, for example bat/vat or pin/bin. We have resources for this type of activity available at our office.

3. Once the learner can hear the sound, offer opportunities for the learner to practice producing the sound with support from you in an activity like a drill, dialogue, jazz chant or tongue twister that focuses on the target sound.

4. When working with adults relevance to their lives is crucial. Provide opportunities for meaningful practice the target sound within vocabulary and contexts that are important for the learner in their daily life. For example, one of our learners works in retail and was having difficulty producing 15 and 50 in a way that customers could understand - guided practice really helped with this specific issue.

5. Repetition and review is a crucial part of the process. Do not expect a learner to produce a difficult target sound after one or two sessions.

6. Encourage learners to practice speaking as much as possible at home and in their daily lives - practice, practice, practice!

Remember - you are not alone. There are many great pronunciation resources out there that can target the specific pronunciation goals of the learner that you work with. Resources are available through the Whatcom County Library System and also through our Whatcom Literacy Council library.

Resource Recommendations:

- Pronunciation Pairs: An Introduction to the Sounds of English by Ann Baker (Whatcom County Library System to check out & WLC Library reference copy)
- Clear Speech by Judy Gilbert (Whatcom County Library System & WLC Library)
- Jazz Chants, by Carolyn Graham; book includes a collection of chants and poems which set everyday spoken English to jazz rhythms. (Whatcom County Library System to check out & WLC Library reference copy)

Jazz Chants are a great way to practice pronunciation, rhythm, stress and intonation. Click on the following link for a clip of Carolyn Graham explaining how to make a Jazz Chant.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=AkKLMlNI2hs&feature=youtu.be



Or check out <http://www.onestopenglish.com/skills/listening/jazz-chants/> for more about Jazz Chants!