

MASTERING THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET

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Preface

This book, containing lessons with practice and review exercises, offers a systematic presentation of the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) most widely used as a means of representing the pronunciation of General American English.

The book is intended to provide students of English as a second language the means of verifying the standard pronunciation of unfamiliar words encountered as their vocabulary increases. The book may also be used in phonetics, linguistics, and teacher training courses by students who speak English as their native tongue or by advanced students of English as a second language.

The lessons may be adapted to different classroom procedures. Each regular lesson introduces a pair of phonetic symbols together with examples of IPA transcriptions of words containing the sounds represented by these symbols. The instructor first reads over the introductory comments with the sounds, clarifying and expanding any points when necessary. This representation is followed by sets of practice and review exercises, each set containing two types: the "A" Exercises, for learning to read the IPA symbols, and the "B" Exercises, for learning to write the

symbols. The instructor first pronouncing the words aloud and the students repeating them in choral response. Since most of the words are in common use, they will be easily recognized when correctly pronounced. After each word has been repeated, it is then transcribed according to the instructions in the space provided. In the "A" Exercises, the words are written in the conventional manner, in the "B" Exercises, with the symbols of the phonetic alphabet.

The book proceeds step by step and provides ample review. Upon its completion, the student will be familiar with all the International Phonetic Alphabet symbols commonly used in representing the pronunciation of American English.

As an additional aid an appendix shows the relationship of the International Phonetic Alphabet to the Meriam-Webster Pronunciation Key used in Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary and similar reference books with which some students may already be familiar.

To the Student

The International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA) was established in France in 1886 by the International Phonetic Association. It was devised to provide a single alphabet which could be used for writing all languages whether or not they already had traditional writing systems. The basic principle of the IPA is that it assigns one written symbol for each consonant and vowel speech sound and allows no sound more than one representative symbol.

The IPA provides a more accurate method of representing the actual pronunciation of words than does conventional spelling. For this reason, it is widely used in the study of spoken English by students and scholars whose mother tongue is not English as well as by linguists, language teachers, speech therapists, and broadcasters.

In transcribing General American English various minor adaptations and simplifications have been made. Although not absolutely identical in all respects, most of them follow quite closely the set of symbols used by John S. Kenyon and Thomas A. Knott in *A Pronouncing Dictionary of American English*. The present book presents all the principal symbols employed by English. The present book presents all the principal symbols employed by Kenyon and Knott as well as the variants most commonly used by major textbooks and dictionaries.

In Phonetic writing, brackets are used to enclose the IPA symbols:

Conventional Spelling		Phonetic Transcription
soon	_____	sun
loud	_____	laud
load	_____	lod
stood	_____	stud

The following familiar consonant symbols represent the pronunciation usually associated with them in conventional English writing:

[b]	[p]
[d]	[r]
[f]	[s]
[g]	[t]
[h]	[u]
[k]	[v]
[l]	[w]
[m]	[y]
[n]	[z]

Not all phonetic symbols are so easily identifiable as those listed above. The words "of", "sang" and "earth" for example, are transcribed as [ɒv], [sæŋ], and [ɜθ].

The unfamiliar symbols are the ones which are highlighted in the lessons of this book.

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