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restricting the airflow to produce contoids

[ˈɹɒb.ət ˈspens] (BrE)
[ˈɹɑːb.əɹt ˈspens] (AmE)
Robert Spence

[lə dy.o.di duz bʁymɛːʁ ɑ̃ dø.sɑ̃.tʁɑ̃t.sɛ̃k]
le duodi 10 brumaire an CCXXXV

[ˈtjʉ̟ːz.deɪ̯ ðə ˈθɜːd‿əv‿nəʊˈvɐ̟m.bə ˈtwɐ̟̊nt.iˈtwɐ̟̊nt.iˈsɪks] (BrE)
[ˈtʉ̟ːz.deɪ̯ ðə ˈθɜːɹd‿əv‿noʊˈvɐ̟m.bəɹ ˈtwɐ̟̊n.iˈtwɐ̟̊n.iˈsɪks] (AmE)
(Tuesday 03 November 2026)

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Unit 4

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restricting the airflow to produce contoids

Slides for the session of
Practical English Phonetics /
Phonetics with Listening Practice (British & General)
held on
le duodi 12 brumaire an CCXXXV
(03 November 2026)

Robert Spence
{ English Department | LangSciTech }
Saarland University

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Dedication (1)



Image source: Obituary for John C. (Ian) Catford https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/

John Cunnison (Ian) CATFORD

26.03.1917–06.10.2009

Dedication (2)



Image source: Jacket design by David Rowley, from: Richard Dawkins: The Ancestor's Tale. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 2004. Image flipped L-R for phonetic reasons.

The animal that we (and mice, and elephants, and whales, …) were before that asteroid gave us our big chance. Note that we had a dorsal surface above and a ventral surface below. In describing the tongue, we use the same terms: dorsal and ventral. In this picture, where is "anterodorsal"? and where is "posterodorsal"?

Places of articulation

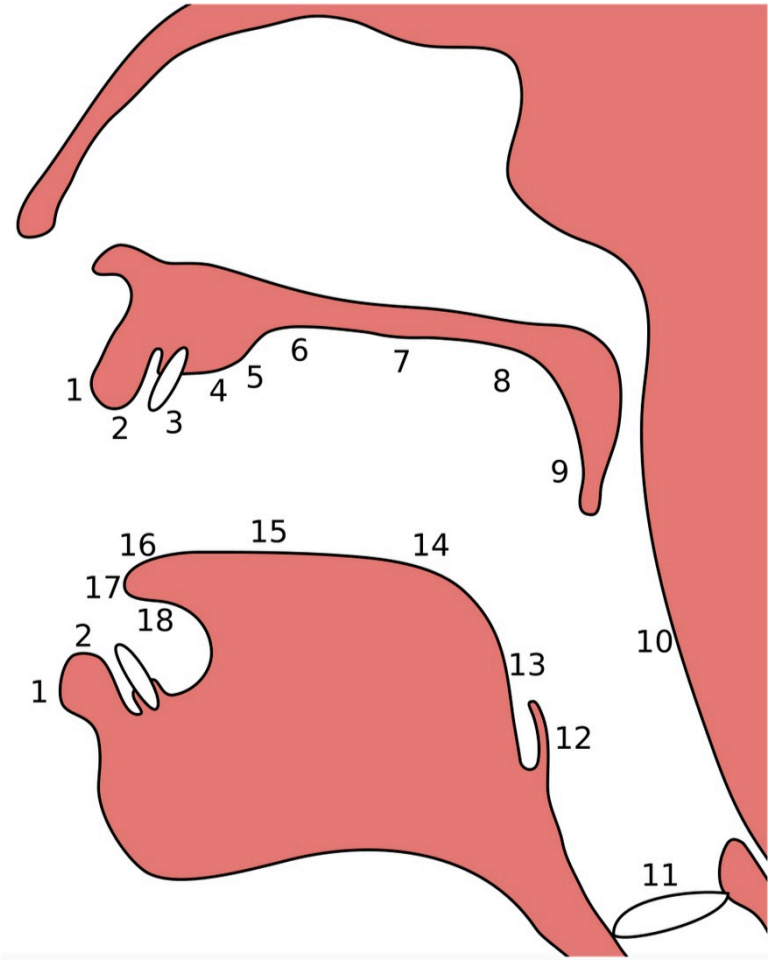


Image: https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Places_of_articulation.svg

Pronounce the adjectives that relate to the places of articulation as indicated.

The syllable in the material world: which model?

- Two possible models of the structure of syllables:

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  - lungs were originally buoyancy tanks
  - only humans can speak
  - only humans can choke on their food
  - so speaking must be worth the risk
  - see the handout: `http://spence.saar.de/phonetics/unit04_20262/B__Handout/01_dawkinsetc_new.pdf`
- Are you afraid of the IPA?
  - Keep your chart handy: `http://www.spence.saar.de/phonetics/unit01_20262/D__IPA_Chart/`
  - Only learn as many symbols as you need.

Words of warning and encouragement (1)

- Phonetics is the only part of language that interfaces with material reality …
- … studying phonetics = ‘getting too close and personal’ …
- … and it forces you to confront unsettling ideas.
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  - You probably already produce way more sounds than you’re aware of.

Words of warning and encouragement (2)

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  - **Non-native beginners** and **speakers with speech defects**: understanding the 'wrong' sounds they're making.

The human vocal tract (after Catford)

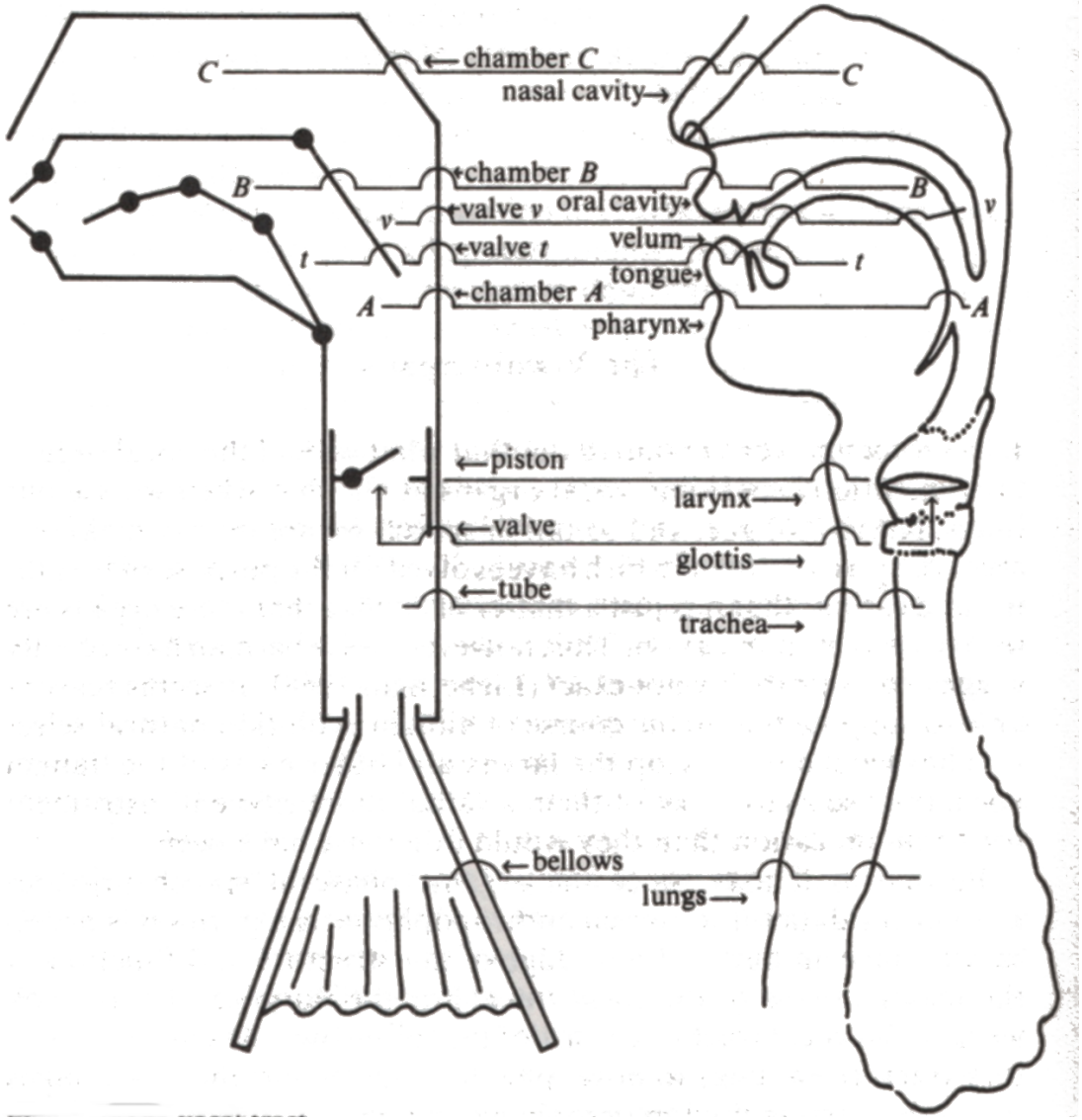


Figure: The vocal tract as a machine

(J.C. Catford, Fundamental Problems of Phonetics, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1977)

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  - MANNER of articulation (the "vertical") dimension
    - plosive, nasal, trill, tap or flap, fricative, lateral fricative, approximant, lateral approximant (make sure you understand what each of these terms means; note Eckert and Barry's way of classifying these into "obstruents" and "sonorants" [E&B: 36–39]; and don't forget to add affricate = plosive+fricative)

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- Check out: Glossika Phonics
  `https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCFu0FZ0wFoHK2deKFldaLGA`
  (for the diagrams; some of the pronunciations are strange…)

Which English consonants do *you* find difficult?

p			t				k	
b			d				g	
					tʃ			
					dʒ			
	f	θ		s		ʃ		h
	v	ð		z		ʒ		
m			n				ŋ	
			l			r		
w							j	

pit			to				cod	
bit			do				god	
					chin			
					gin			
	fin	thin		sin		shin		hit
	van	the		zoo		vision		
man			not				sing	
			lay			ray		
wet							yet	

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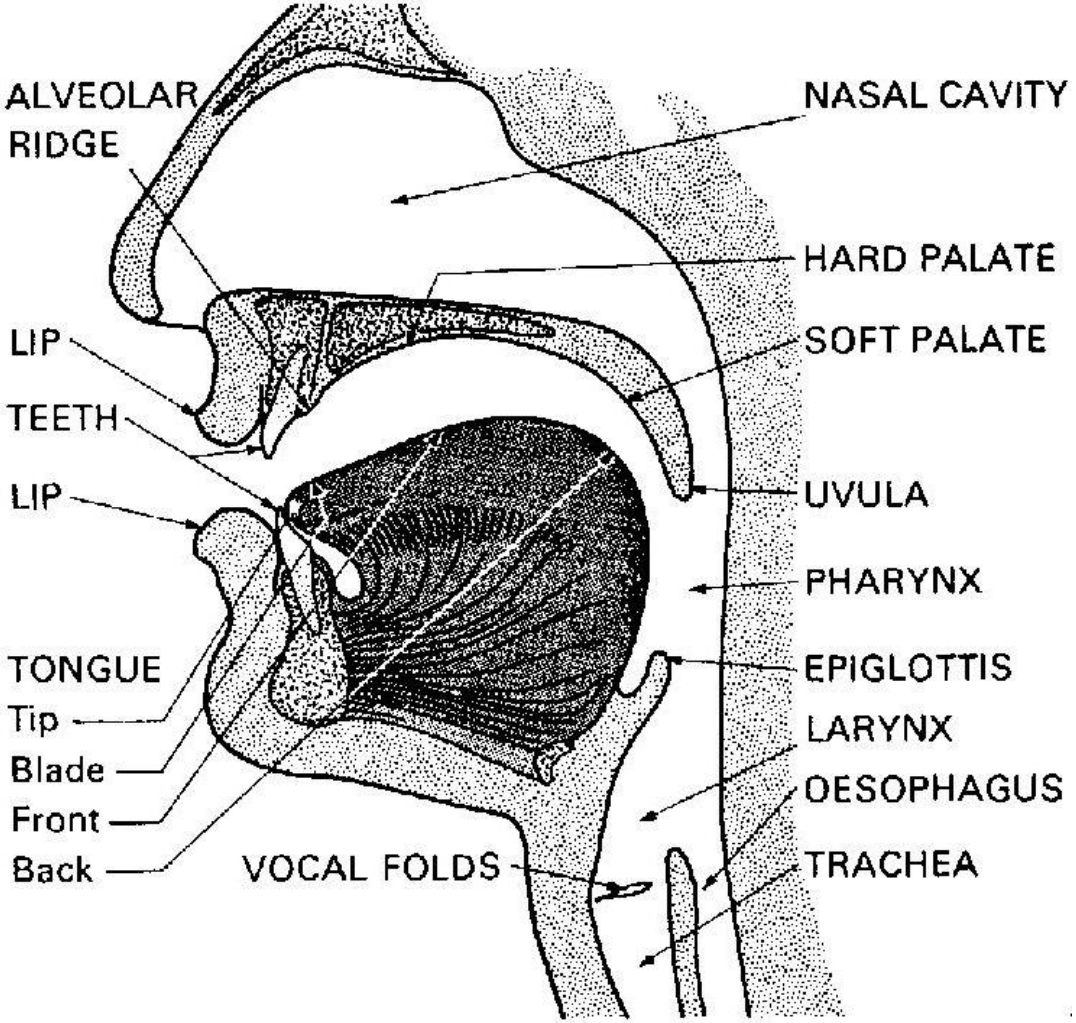
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The most important thing to practise:

obstruents	voiceless plosives	p t k	
	voiced plosives	b d g	
	voiceless affricates	tʃ	
	voiced affricates	dʒ	
	voiceless fricatives	f θ s ʃ h	
	voiced fricatives	v ð z ʒ	← turbulent airflow
sonorants	voiced approximants	w l ɹ j	← smooth airflow
	voiced nasals	m n ŋ	

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THE INTERNATIONAL PHONETIC ALPHABET (revised to 2005)

CONSONANTS (PULMONIC) © 2005 IPA

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b			t d		ʈ ɖ	c ɟ	k g	q ɢ		ʔ
Nasal	m	ɱ		n		ɳ	ɲ	ŋ	ɴ		
Trill	B			r					R		
Tap or Flap		ⱱ		ɾ		ɽ					
Fricative	ɸ β	f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ	ʂ ʐ	ç ʝ	x ɣ	χ ʁ	ħ ʕ	h ɦ
Lateral fricative				ɬ ɮ							
Approximant		ʋ		ɹ		ɻ	j	ɰ			
Lateral approximant				l		ɭ	ʎ	ʟ			

Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a voiced consonant. Shaded areas denote articulations judged impossible.

- Keep your copy of the **IPA chart** handy.
- You have received the **description** of a **consonant** sound to produce (**voicing**, and **place** and **manner** of articulation).
- **Read out** the description aloud.
- **Pronounce** the sound.
- Hint: If the sound seems difficult, move **up and down the column** and **back and forth along the row**, until you have situated it in relation to other possible consonants.

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- Use **voicing** as well as **place** and **manner** of articulation to describe the consonant sounds indicated by the framed graphemes or by the framed IPA symbols:

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  - ⟨ th is na ti on has enou gh f i sh to feed itself ⟩

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  - 〈 th is na ti on has enou gh f i sh to feed itself 〉
  - [ɪn m emə.ɹi ə v ɔːl wɪmɪn ɹeɪ p t ɪn ɔːl w ɔːz]

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  `http://spence.saar.de/phonetics/unit04_20262/B__Handout/`

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- We could experiment with a dialect-neutral representation; cf `https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Help:IPA/English`

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Plosives in English and Ancient Greek

- Pronounce the following, in either British or American English:

  par spar harp
  tar star art
  car scar arc

  The three
  sounds in each line are ALLOPHONES of a single phoneme in English.

- Check out Marcel Linnenkohl's excellent pronunciation of unaspirated (/p t k/) versus aspirated (/ph th kh/) voiceless plosive phonemes in Ancient Greek:
  https://www.instagram.com/p/DXml6WtEbjG/
  or
  https://www.tiktok.com/@dersprachgeschichtler/video/7633119076876930326
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What are the *other* parts of the tongue doing?

- I was (almost) today years old when I learnt / learned that:

What are the *other* parts of the tongue doing?

- I was (almost) today years old when I learnt / learned that:
  - The reason why the Chinese don't mind whether you pronounce 北京 〈Beijing〉 as /beɪ.dʒɪŋ/ or /beɪ.ʒɪŋ/ is that both are wrong. Leaving aside the voiced/voiceless, unaspirated/unaspirated problem,

What are the *other* parts of the tongue doing?

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    - If I had used the older, English-specific Wade-Giles transliteration system 〈Hsi Chin-P'ing〉, I would have got the initial consonant of the articulation of the family name 习 exactly right.

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  - English [ɻ] is produced with the blade of the tongue placed close to the roof of the mouth just behind the alveolar ridge; but the ***sides*** of the tongue are ***raised***, and are in contact with the oral surface of the ***upper back teeth*** at the gum line.

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What is this baby hominid doing?



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- One of the first things a mammal does …
- … after trying out its lungs …

We are mammals and have mammalian reflexes

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We are mammals and have mammalian reflexes

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