



Letters and sounds of English

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What this unit is about

This unit is about classroom activities to learn and practise English sounds, letters and words.

We know that an important step in learning to read in English is to know what sounds the letters of the English alphabet make. Of course, this is not all that is involved in learning to read – teaching reading must be done with a focus on meaning. The activities in this unit are designed to help you keep this focus on meaning as you and your students practise English sounds and letters.

What you can learn in this unit

- To practise English letters and sounds at your level.
- To practise English letters and sounds in the classroom with students.
- To plan English sound, letter and word activities.

1 English pronunciation

In the first activity, you will work through an English pronunciation guide, at your level.

Activity 1: English letters and sounds

The names of English letters can be very different from the sounds they make in words.

Say the name of this English letter 'b'. It will sound something like 'bee'. What are some English words that start with this letter? You might think of 'bag', 'bus' or 'bell'. Say these words aloud.

When you say these words aloud, you will hear the sound of the letter is something like 'bh'. Try to say just the sound of 'b', and hear the sound in words such as 'bag' and 'boy'. Hear the difference between the name of the letter and the sound of the letter.

Try this again and say the name the English letter 'r'. What are some words that start with 'r'? Say these words aloud.

What is the sound that 'r' makes in these words? Hear how the letter name 'r' sounds something like 'are', but the sound is something like 'rrr'.

With the vowels of English ('a', 'e', 'i', 'o', 'u'), the sounds change depending on the word they are in.

Go to Resource 1 and work through the letters and sounds for yourself. How would you evaluate your confidence and pronunciation?

A good way to improve your pronunciation in English is to hear the sounds of English as much as possible. Try to listen to English on the radio. Even if you cannot understand everything that is spoken or sung, listen and try to say the sounds of English.

In the two case studies that follow, you can see how teachers introduce English letters and sounds to students.

Case Study 1: Parveen teaches the sound of 'b'

Parveen is a Class I teacher.

I had some small objects like a bag, a balloon and a brush, and some pictures of things that start with 'b', like boat, bicycle and buffalo. I also had piece of cloth that was blue.

I started the lesson by saying, 'Today we will focus on the letter "b" and the sound of "b". Let's all learn some words in English that start with the sound "b".'

Sometimes students came up with words in Hindi that start with the 'b' sound. When they did this, I confirmed that the sound in our language is similar to the English 'b'. I also liked to point out the students in the class who have names that start with the 'b' sound, like Baldev and Bala.

Once we had a list of words that start with 'b', I created a very simple story from the list: Bala went to the market to buy a cricket bag, a new bag for her school books, a brush for her hair and a basket to keep the brush in. But in the end, she saw a blue balloon and she bought that instead.

!Warning! ApexSansBookT not supported Then I had the students draw pictures of the words that start with the sound 'b' and tell their own story to these pictures.

