

Study Section 4 Transcription

Unlike many other languages, the pronunciation of English does not correspond in a regular way to its spelling. It is therefore necessary to use a standard method of describing pronunciation. In this dictionary, we use the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

Here, we practise transcribing English words and phrases, and reading English phonemic transcription. The dictionary contains information panels on the pronunciation of each letter of the alphabet, and also of common combinations, e.g. 'ie' or 'ph', to help you with this exercise.

Suggested activity

Transcribing an unpredictable sound

Transcribe the following words containing the letter 's', and then check your transcription in the dictionary. What are the possible pronunciations of this letter? Look at the panel 'Pronouncing the letter S' (at the beginning of S) to help you.

kissing	phrase	choose	loose	sugar
usual	tension	debris	insure	pleasure

Suggested activity

Errors in transcription

It is very important not to get transcription mixed up with alphabetic spelling. Look at the following words and see if you can spot the transcription error, before looking the word up in the dictionary.

1 strength	/strengθ/	6 hijacking	/'haɪjækɪŋ/
2 crime	/craɪm/	7 yellow	/'jelləʊ/
3 wishing	/wɪʃɪŋ/	8 chipping	/'tʃɪppɪŋ/
4 wives	/waɪvz/	9 sixty	/'sɪxtɪ/
5 these	/θi:z/	10 thesis	/'ði:ʒɪs/

Adding an affix to a word – particularly a SUFFIX – can mean that the syllable you need to stress changes. For instance, in the word 'photograph', the stress is on the first syllable, but in the word 'photographer', it is on the second syllable. Transcription can show you how to pronounce these words correctly.