

Name (in Romaji):	→
Student Number:	→
Class Day + Period (examples: Monday 2, Friday 3):	→

PRONUNCIATION

There are some common sounds in English that many Japanese speakers have difficulty with. Those sounds are often found in pairs. The pairs we will work with here are:

L vs R

B vs V

F vs V

S vs TH

S vs SH



or



These sounds are often very difficult for Japanese to distinguish. They are also often difficult for Japanese to pronounce. However, after this lesson you will be able to hear the difference between these two sounds and you will understand some ways to help you pronounce them.

You won't find some of this information in textbooks. I have just found that explaining the sounds this way has been very helpful:

L
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If a word begins with an "L" you should "flap" your tongue 2. When you say an "L" it helps if you smile 3. "L" sounds do not require a lot of energy (= weak)
R
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If a word begins with an "R" you should "curve" your tongue 2. When you say an "R" it helps if you round your lips 3. Making "R" sounds requires a lot of energy (= strong)



Get with a partner and practice saying and listening to the following *minimal pairs*:

light / right**link / rink****lot / rot****lane / rain**

Below are several sentences with blanks in them. To the right are the minimal pairs. Listen to your teacher read the sentence with the correct minimal pair word. Circle the missing word. You may be able to answer with the correct words because you already know their meanings, but concentrate on listening to your teacher's pronunciation. Decide which word you heard.

- | | | |
|--|---------|---------|
| 1. I will _____ at five o'clock. | alive | arrive |
| 2. There was a car _____ on Main Street. | clash | crash |
| 3. There are no _____ in the sky. | clouds | crowds |
| 4. The queen has an expensive diamond _____. | clown | crown |
| 5. A car has a brake, gas, and _____ pedal. | clutch | crutch |
| 6. Please tell me the _____ answer. | collect | correct |
| 7. Boys like to _____ trees. | climb | crime |
| 8. That is a very expensive picture _____. | flame | frame |

-
- | | | |
|---|-------|-------|
| 9. I usually eat _____ for breakfast. | flute | fruit |
| 10. I will _____ the eggs and bacon in a pan. | fly | fry |
| 11. Don't step on the broken _____. | glass | grass |
| 12. The more kids sleep, the more they _____. | glow | grow |
| 13. The Indy 500 is a famous car _____. | lace | race |
| 14. I bought a new _____ for the living room. | lamp | ramp |

Compare your answers with a classmate. Do you have the same answers?

Next, find a partner. One student will answer the **odd** numbers only (15, 17, 19, etc.) and the other student will answer the **even** numbers only (16, 18, 20, etc.). Next, by yourself, circle the correct answer for each of your questions. You may use a dictionary or ask your teacher for help. Then, when you have finished, raise your hand and let your teacher check your answers. When both you and your partner have finished, read your sentences to your partner, taking care to pronounce the words correctly. Your partner listens (and watches your mouth) and circles the correct word.



- | | | |
|--|---------|---------|
| 15. He was _____ for the business meeting. | late | rate |
| 16. People in Japan like to eat _____ fish. | law | raw |
| 17. This road _____ to the temple on the hill. | leads | reads |
| 18. The color of my bicycle is _____. | led | red |
| 19. I'll _____ a car on my next trip abroad. | lent | rent |
| 20. I eat _____ with every meal. | lice | rice |
| 21. Turn _____ at the next intersection. | light | right |
| 22. She has bracelets on each _____. | list | wrist |
| 23. I go swimming in the _____ every summer. | liver | river |
| 24. This _____ is always under construction. | load | road |
| 25. I like to listen to _____ music. | lock | rock |
| 26. I think I took a _____ turn somewhere. | long | wrong |
| 27. We just had the kids' _____ painted. | loom | room |
| 28. The children stood in a _____. | low | row |
| 29. He is always _____ video games. | playing | praying |
| 30. I go to the _____ every day after work. | stole | store |



or



For “B” put both of your lips together. For “V” you must *bite* your bottom lip. Pretend that you are angry or that you are thinking deeply.

boat / vote

ban / van

bale / vale

curb / curve





or



The only difference between “F” and “V” is that for the “F” sound, you do not use any voice, just air. Be careful: many people think “F” in English is similar to ふ in Japanese, such as the “F” in “foot” and “ふ” in ふく. This is not true. Just like the “V” sound, for the “F” sound in English, you **MUST** bite your bottom lip!

ferry / very

leaf / leave

fan / van

safe / save



or



The “S” sound is similar to the sound of air being let out of a tire: sssssssssss..... Use only the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth. For the “TH” sound, you must bite your tongue. This means the listener must see your tongue!

sick / thick

mouse / mouth

sink / think

pass / path

Additional: “TH” sounds can be voiced (“that”) or unvoiced (“thought”).



or



For this last minimal pair, “S” should now be easy. “SH” is already found in Japanese: it is the first part of *shi*, or し. Just cut off the “i”. For the “SH” sound, practice by telling someone to be quite: Shhhhhh! Round your lips. Press most of your tongue flat against the roof of your mouth. And remember: practice, practice, practice!

sea / she

sees / she’s

seat / sheet

sip / ship



Common Words

Let's now look at some words, many of which are common and are found on tests such as the TOEIC test. Take care to pronounce them correctly with the correct number of syllables. Find a partner and practice saying these words.

- | | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> interest | ● holiday | <input type="radio"/> architect | ● receptionist | <input type="radio"/> repair |
| ● librarian | <input type="radio"/> clerk | ● machinery | <input type="radio"/> investment | ● client |
| <input type="radio"/> equipment | ● symposium | <input type="radio"/> arrange | ● cancel | <input type="radio"/> reservation |
| ● headquarters | <input type="radio"/> boardroom | ● research | <input type="radio"/> loss | ● receipt |
| <input type="radio"/> platform | ● project | <input type="radio"/> president | ● salary | <input type="radio"/> resolution |
| ● profit | <input type="radio"/> relocate | ● plant | <input type="radio"/> policy | ● renewal |
| <input type="radio"/> responsibility | ● special delivery | <input type="radio"/> wolf | ● excel | |

Common Proper Nouns

Proper nouns (e.g., the names of people and places) should be pronounced properly. Because proper nouns are so common in speech, they should be practiced. Take care to pronounce each proper noun correctly with the correct number of syllables.

- | | | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| ● New Zealand | <input type="radio"/> New York | ● Algeria | <input type="radio"/> Austin |
| ● Seattle | <input type="radio"/> Moscow | ● Ireland | <input type="radio"/> Birmingham |
| ● Zimbabwe | <input type="radio"/> Vietnam | ● Victoria | <input type="radio"/> Los Angeles |
| ● Cambridge | <input type="radio"/> Jamaica | ● Alexandria | <input type="radio"/> Antwerp |
| ● Sydney | <input type="radio"/> Italy | ● Brian | <input type="radio"/> Cecil |
| ● Doug | <input type="radio"/> Anthony | ● Michael | <input type="radio"/> Francis |
| ● Jacquelyn | <input type="radio"/> Lawrence | ● Caine | <input type="radio"/> Irene |
| ● Pearl | <input type="radio"/> Joel | ● Percy | <input type="radio"/> Rachael |
| ● Steven | <input type="radio"/> Eddie | ● Christopher | <input type="radio"/> Kathy |

