

Deck 2: Learn or improve English pronunciation & listening skills (212 notes, 669 cards, 45 minutes of audio in 780 re-playable files)

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It would not have been possible otherwise. — Anita Roy Dobbs*

With this Deck, learners practice the skills of

- pronunciation
- listening comprehension
- and reading

Spoken English is made up of 42 distinct sounds. Written English represents those sounds through letter combinations — *phonograms*.

This Deck is built around 56 phonograms that make nearly all English words. Deck 2 is made of

- all the alphabet content of Deck 1 (now focused on *sounds*, not letter names)
- an additional 30 phonograms (2-, 3-, and 4-letter combinations)
- 29 rules or guidelines explaining pronunciation and spelling
- 200 practice reading sentences
- all made using 900 of the highest-frequency English words of interest to adults

Deck 2 begins by showing three of the most common 2-letter phonograms — **th**, **ch**, and **sh** — making it clear that we're not reviewing the alphabet (letter names).

First up is **th**, a phonogram for two of the hardest sounds for most non-native English speakers to master.



The card "front" asks,

► *What sounds do these letters make?*

The two pictures are cues that **th** makes 2 sounds, not 1, 3, or 4.

The desired response is to say the two sounds that **th** makes: ð and θ (as in **weather** and **birth**day).

The learner says their answer aloud, then clicks a button to see the "back" and find out if their answer is correct.

► **What sound(s) ... ?**



FRONT

In prototype Deck 2, the card front asked,

► *How do you say...?* and displayed: **th** ... **weather** ... **birth**day

Universally, students said the words instead of the sounds.

Revised Deck 2 shows just the phonogram to help keep the focus on the *sounds*.

Each of the 56 phonograms is introduced in the same way – the front of their first card

- shows the phonogram
- displays an image for each distinct sound the phonogram can represent
- and asks the appropriate question:
 - *What sound does this letter make?*
 - *What sound do these letters make?*
 - *What sounds does this letter make?*
 - *What sounds do these letters make?*



▶ **What sound ... ?**



▶ **What sound ... ?**

f - - - -



FI

- - ee



INT



▶ **What sounds ... ?**

s - - - -



FRONT

- - - s



▶ **What sounds ... ?**

- - - - ow



- - ow - -



FRONT

25 phonograms have only one sound:
b, ck, d, dge, ee, er, eu, f, gn, h, igh, ir, j, k, l, m, n, oa, or, p, ph, qu, r, sc{i/e}, sh

For all these, the "back" says the sound, the example word, and a sentence.

Clicking the triangles will replay
 1) the answer (the sound, /i/),
 2) the example word (tree), and
 3) the sentence(s).

Though learners are asked only what sound **ee** makes, they're exposed to vocabulary and grammar. They read and hear English simultaneously.

With regular, repeated exposure, the learner begins to get a sense of what "sounds right" in English cadence, word order, stress, and intonation.



BACK



tree

/ti/

▶ **We need trees. Do you agree?**

Very quickly, "reading practice" cards begin to appear, and learners are asked to try to read the sentences they have probably heard already. The front asks,

► *Can you read this?*

Can you read this?

FRONT



We need trees. Do you agree?

And the back says the sentence(s) which can be replayed any number of times.

BACK



► **We need trees. Do you agree?**

/wi nid ti:z. du ju ə'gi?/

The learner reads the sentence aloud before hitting the button for the answer. At first, they're likely to mispronounce many words, but the correct reading is immediately supplied, so learners can instantly correct themselves. Research indicates that instant feedback is important in correcting mispronunciation.

- 18 phonograms have two sounds: ar, au/aw, augh, c, e, ei, ew, ey, g, ng, oi/oy, oo, ow, s, th, ui, x, ~si~
- 8 phonograms have three sounds: a, ch, ea, ear, ed, i, ie, our
- 5 phonograms have four sounds: gu, o, ou, u, y

For all these, the first "back" says the sounds and the example words.

BACK

weather
/'wɛ.ðə/

birthday
'bɜ:θ.deɪ

- /ð/ /θ/ [the correct answer]
- *weather ... birthday* [example words]

When a card back has more than one audio file, the play button (triangle) with tildes around it is the answer.



If the learner said that audio correctly, they got this card right. All the other audio is for exposure.

For the 31 phonograms that make more than one sound, each sound has its own card. Continuing here with th as our example ...

The "front" says

- ▶ *In this word, what sound do these letters make?*



BACK

- ▶ *In this word, what sound ... ?*



weather
/'we.ðə/

The "back" says

- ▶ /ð/ [the correct answer]
- ▶ **weather** [the example word]
brothers feather father mother [more example words]
- ▶ *My father and mother love me, and they love each other.* [example sentence]



Here you see that the back has additional example words and images.

The first 7 phonogram notes for Revised Deck 2 were made with extra example words:

th ch sh a b c d

Their content is shown on the next pages.

Then I adopted a simpler approach, exactly like the **ee** example (on page 2). I felt that the time spent in expanding the number of example words would be better spent expanding the number of practice reading sentences, instead.



- ▶ **My father and mother love me, and they love each other.**



birthday
/'bɜːθ.deɪ

three things



think



teeth
mouth

► I think healthy teeth make a happy mouth.



sandwich
/'sænd.wɪtʃ/



chicken



kitchen



children

sandwich

► Children like to have sandwiches for lunch.



schedule
/'skɛ.dʒʊl/



headache

stomach
ache

backache



school



mechanic

► Today's schools need today's technology.



machine
/'mæʃɪn/



chef



washing
machine

► Every chef needs a good washing machine.



she /ʃ/



push



shoes



wash



► We **should** always **wash** our hands before we eat.



table /'teɪ.bəl/



paper



name



plate



cake

► She ate her cake from a paper plate.



glasses /'glæs.əz/



happy-sad



dance



family

► She wears glasses to read.



water /'wɑ.tə/



father



talk

call

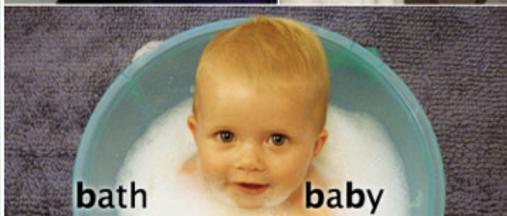


watch TV

► Their daughter is watching TV.



baby
/ˈbeɪ.bi/



bath **baby**

► The **baby** is taking a **bath**.



car
/kɑː/



► He drives a red **car**.



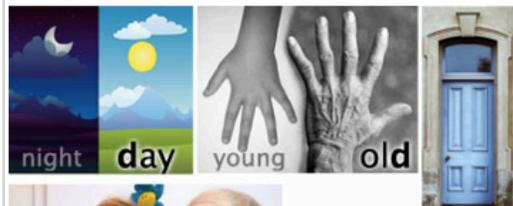
city
/ˈsɪ.ti/



► She's writing with a **pencil**.



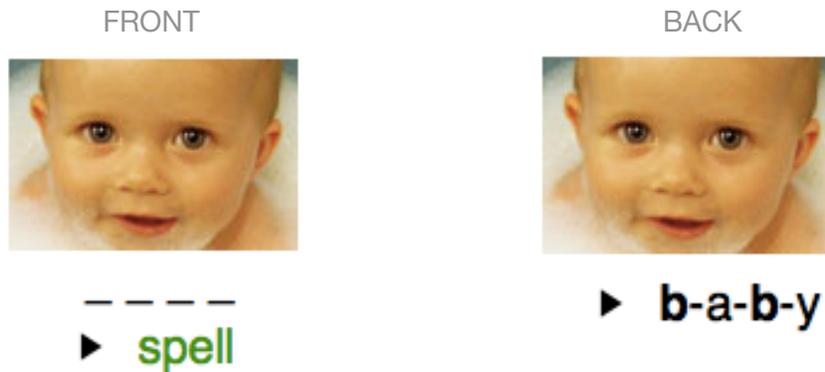
day
/daɪ/



► Grandma loves to read to her **granddaughter**.

For each phonogram's sound(s) and example word(s), there's a spelling card. The "front" shows the example word's image and says to spell the word, for example,

▶ *Spell baby.*



The "back" shows the letters, with the phonogram in bold, and spells and repeats the example word, for example,

▶ *b-a-b-y, baby*

Note that the learner is not asked to remember that this is a picture of a baby; the question is not, "What is this?" or "What is the word for ... ?" Instead, when the learner hears the word *baby*, the point is to remember that the phonogram **b** is in that word.

Building vocabulary is incidental to learning the sounds and the phonograms that represent them.

Some phonograms have "rule cards" that explain pronunciation or give exceptions to the phonogram's usual sound(s); for example,

▶ *What sound does **b** make in ~mb or ~bt?*



First, the answer is given.

Here, the answer is ... nothing (silence).

Then the rule or guideline is stated, and several example words are given.

▶ **climb comb thumb debt doubt**

/klaɪm/ /kɒm/ /θʌm/ /dɛt/ /daʊt/

The rule cards do not use imagery. Learners can get the gist of the rule by looking at the letters and listening to the audio, especially the example words. But learners may also use Deck 2's translatable web pages to translate this (and all the other) content.

There are 150 reading practice notes — some of my favorites are shown here. Most of these notes have one, two, or three cards with blanks, as shown below, making a total of 387 reading practice cards.

Blanks were selected to draw learners' attention to articles, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and other key functioning words, simply to build awareness. Much less often, blanks are for recalling useful vocabulary (e.g., left, right, straight).

These reading practice sentences are intended

- to create a familiarity with English grammar in action
- to draw attention to little words that easily go unnoticed in spoken English
- to give many model sentences that could be adopted for use right away
- to give learners considerable practice in decoding written English and comprehending spoken English



Sorry, what did you say?
I couldn't **hear** you.

Sorry, what did you ____?
I couldn't **hear** you.

Sorry, what did you say?
I couldn't ____ you.

Sorry, ____ did you say?
I couldn't **hear** you.



"How was your job interview?"
"I start my **new** job in a **few** days."
"I **knew** it! That's great **news**!"

"How was ____ job interview?"
"I start my **new** job in a **few** days."
"I **knew** it! That's great **news**!"

"____ was your job interview?"
"I start my **new** job in a **few** days."
"I **knew** it! That's great **news**!"
"How was your job interview?"
"I start my **new** job ____ a **few** days."
"I **knew** it! That's great **news**!"

The cards are sequenced so that the full sentence is practiced a number of times before the cards with blanks are given. The next examples omit the full sentence card.



What?! ___ baby can't drive!
 We should call his father.
 What?! A baby ___ drive!
 We should call his father.



I'm ___ Earth. Where are you ___?
 I'm from Earth. ___ are you from?
 I'm from Earth. Where ___ you from?



Would you like something to ___?
 - No, thank you. I'm not **hungry**.
 Would you like something to **eat**?
 - No, thank you. I'm not _____.
 ___ you like something to **eat**?
 - No, thank you. I'm not **hungry**.



What? What ___ you want?
What? What do you ___?
 ___? ___ do you want?



Excuse me. I ___ a question.
 ___ me. I have a question.
 Excuse me. I have a ____.



How's **the weather**?
 - ___ raining. **Everything** is wet!
 ___ **the weather**?
 - It's raining. **Everything** is wet!
 How's **the weather**?
 - It's _____. **Everything** is wet!

The Revised Deck 2, completed this summer, has not yet had a trial run, but I will confidently make some sweeping claims.

With attentive, frequent, short practice, on completing this Deck, the learner will

- be very familiar with the sounds of American English, having improved their pronunciation and listening comprehension
- recognize and use a starting vocabulary of 500 to 900 highest-frequency words
- recognize and use 50 to 150 basic statements and questions
- begin to have a sense of what "sounds right" in American English cadence, word order, stress, and intonation (in sentences as well as words)
- and will feel able to read English with some confidence because they're able to recognize words in writing that they know from speaking, and they're able to better sound out unknown words

The total practice time needed to complete the Deck will vary from learner to learner, particularly depending on the learner's native language. The U.S. Foreign Service Institute ranks languages by their approximate difficulty for native English speakers to acquire, and, for instance, Japanese is four times harder to learn than French or Spanish. Therefore, a native Japanese speaker will likely need four times as much practice to make the same gain as a native French or Spanish speaker.

But whatever the differences among individual learners, the biggest difference *may* come from the learner's commitment to attentive, consistent, frequent practice.

The Anki spaced repetition system is designed for short daily practice.

Adult learners can benefit from practicing 5 or even 4 times a week for about 20 minutes each time. Without *frequent* use, though, this tool will not be effective.

The most effective *and* efficient use of this Deck would be daily practice of 15 to 20 minutes. And although 4 sessions a week for about 20 minutes each would work, that approach would be less effective *and* less efficient, so more total practice time (over a longer period) would be needed for the same gain.

7 times a week for 15 to 20 minutes a session for 12 weeks is about 24 hours total.
(7 times x 17 minutes x 12 weeks = 1428 minutes)

To get 24 hours total practice time at 4 times a week would take 18 weeks.
(1428 total minutes / (4 times x 20 minutes)

But to get the same *gain* would require more than the same total practice time, because the spaced repetition would not be optimally spaced.

If you have questions or feedback about Deck 2 or this project, please contact me at ardobbs@12qwaszx.com. Many thanks! —Anita Roy Dobbs

Resources for Deck 2 are at
12qwaszx.com/srs