



English B2
 IM259, *Lingua Inglese Pari a Livello B2*

Lesson 3

English consonants

The following table presents the English consonants.

Table 1

Phonetics (sound units) English consonants (23-26?)

The Consonants of English

	Bilabial	Labio-dental	Dental	Alveolar	Palato-alveolar (Post-alveolar)	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
Unvoiced (-V) Voiced (+V)	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V	-V +V
Stops (Plosives)	p b			t d			k g	ʔ ¹ ←
Fricatives		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ			h ←
Affricates					tʃ dʒ			
Nasals		m			n			ŋ ←
Lateral (approximants)					l			
Approximants		w ²					j	w ²

Observation

English consonants in Table 1 are represented by symbols we probably haven't seen before. They are called **phonetic symbols** and you find them in all modern dictionaries.

Why is this? Because we have more sounds in the oral language than we do in the written language.

Let's give examples of the sounds we have signaled with the red arrow in Table 1:

phonetic symbol	letters	example	meaning
[θ]	th	th igh	<i>coscia</i>
[ð]	th	th ey	<i>loro</i>
[ʔ]	tt	butt on	<i>botone</i>
[h]	h	h am	<i>prosciutto</i>
[r]	r	r ose	<i>rosa</i>
[ŋ]	ng	readi ng	<i>leggendo</i>

Activities and exercises:

Important!

The **sounds** described by the phonetic symbols in Table 1 are significant for the Italian speaker because:

- Italian **does not** have them in its consonantal system
- Failing to produce them correctly may lead to **miscommunication**

Let's start with sounds [θ] and [ð]



Exercise 1

- Practice with the following video the sound [θ]. It appears in words such as **thigh**, **thrust**, **think**, **anthropology**, etc. It's represented in writing as **th**.
- Please, complete all the suggested exercises in the video until you acquire proper mastery when producing and perceiving the sound.

Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qC0l6GQZtM4>



Exercise 2

- Practice with the following video the sound [ð]. It appears in words such as **they**, **them**, **this**, **that**, **those**, **these** represented in writing also as **th**.
- Please, complete all the suggested exercises in the video until you acquire proper mastery when producing and perceiving the sound.

Link:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EZb_EWVCUoE

MORE SOUNDS!!!

The [h] sound is also VERY IMPORTANT for the Italian speaker. Why?

- Italians, in general **TEND TO IGNORE** this crucial sound at the beginning of words.
- **Result:** Production of words very different than those intended by the speaker.

Consider the following list.

with [h] sound	meaning	without [h] sound	meaning
ham	<i>prosciutto</i>	am	<i>(Io) sono</i>
heart	<i>cuore</i>	art	<i>arte</i>
hair	<i>capelli</i>	air	<i>aria</i>
I hate	<i>Io odio</i>	I ate	<i>Io ho mangiato</i>
his	<i>suo (di lui)</i>	is	<i>lui, lei è</i>
hi	<i>ciao</i>	I	<i>Io</i>
heat	<i>caldo</i>	eat	<i>mangiare</i>
home	<i>casa</i>	Om	<i>Om</i>
heater	<i>termosifone</i>	eater	<i>mangione</i>

From the list above we see that we are going to be misunderstood if we want to say:

I hate big dogs (*odio i cani grossi*)

but we fail to pronounce the [h] sound at the beginning of **hate** and we end up saying:

I ate big dogs (*ho mangiato I cani grossi*)

So, in order to say what we want properly, let's practice the [h] sound using the following video.



Exercise 3

- Practice the sound [h] using the following video. [h] appears in words such as **ham, his, her, house, how, here, hug, huge, etc.**
- Please, complete all the suggested exercises in the video.

Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dV6At0g4n78>

r sound in English

The last sound we are going to examine in the phonetic part of this syllabus is **[r]**. We find it at the beginning, middle and end of words. It's a very frequent sound, and even though we do have an [r] sound in Italian, it's very different in English. Let's examine some facts about this sound.

1) Many English accents do not pronounce this sound AT ALL in certain positions of the word. They are called *non rhotic-accents*, which means simply "accents that do not pronounce the "r" ("rho", is the Greek word for "r" hence "rhotic"). Londoner accent is a good example of *non rhotic-accent*.

2) But most accents of English (American, for example) DO pronounce the "r" sound. These accents are called *rhotic accents*: the ones that pronounce the "r" sound.

The good news is that we, as foreign speakers may choose whether to pronounce it or not WITHOUT introducing further problems in our communication. The only consequences being that you are going to sound "more European", or "more American". It's a matter of choice.



Exercise 3

- Practice with the following video the sound [r]. We found this sound In words such as **red, rose, three, dinner, mother, father, etc.**

Repeat until you clearly notice the difference in pronunciation.

Link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hWjcoajXRVg>