

**NEW  
PROFICIENCY  
IN ENGLISH**

## Cuprins

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## Chapter I

# Spelling and Pronunciation

Pronunciation in English can raise serious problems, especially when there are striking differences between the way the word is spelt and the way it is pronounced. That is why, when learning English, one actually learns two distinct versions of one and the same language ; a spoken and a written one. Difficulties are encountered mainly when :

**A** – the same letter or group of letters is pronounced differently without applying any rule whatsoever.

▲ Examples : **look, noon, poor, floor, blood, brooch ; church, architect, machinery ; thin, then, Thomas ; busy, pun, lure, bury ; bread, mean, fear ; hot, come, nor, go, do, tomb ; at, after, ale, again, ate ; bed, delete, posse, café, etc.**

**B** – when the same sound has different graphic representations.

▲ Examples : **all, fork, bought, four, launch, pawn, stalk ; two, room, true, dew, queue, lute, shoe, do ; green, feat, piece, key, decent ; pay, navy, grey, bait, gate, neigh ; bird, turf, pearl, certain ; party, ask, aunt, spa ; bun, Monday, enough ; bed, tread, bury, said, Thames ; now, found ; bough, go, toe, sew, dough, bow, moan ; my, guy, bye, tie, sigh, five, mind, etc.**

The trickiest situation is represented by the limited number of **homographs** (ex. : *row, wind, lead*), and, particularly, by the large number of **homophones** (ex. : *key – quay, rain – rein – reign, right – rite – write – wright*).

We have chosen a variety of exercises meant to cover part of all these aspects ; they can constitute a comprehensive revision of vocabulary based on the *spelling-pronunciation* relation in English as well.

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## I. Exercises in reading aloud

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A. Read the following sentences choosing the word that makes the context more logical :

1. The carpenter couldn't *batter/better* that door.
2. Look! There's a *band/bend* in the road.
3. He understood those old *matters/martyrs*.
4. *Matches/Marches* are useful for soldiers.
5. Did you find the *ladder/larder* in the house?
6. He thought he heard a *calf/cough* in the yard.
7. He paid a lot for the *cartage/cottage*.
8. Where can she put the *darts/dots*?
9. She never remembers the name of that *star/store*.
10. They put the pictures of the early *dons/dawns* in the hall.
11. She certainly admired the *coral/choral* work at the college.
12. Have you ever heard the sound a *cock/cork* makes?
13. It's a pity the *hod/hood* is broken.
14. He's *putting/potting* the plant in the greenhouse.
15. It would be better if the fishermen *pulled/pooled* their nets.
16. He was a *fullish/foolish*-faced man.
17. There are plenty of *bags/bugs* in that room.
18. I saw that the miner had a *lamp/lump* on his head.
19. She saw some *gnats/nuts* under the tree.
20. They always *barter/butter* bread for tea.
21. I have never seen such a *fuss/farce*.
22. The man's *colour/collar* was a dirty white.
23. The nurse put a cover on the *cut/cot*.
24. The water *welled/whirled* up round the ship.
25. They tried to get rid of the *debt/dirt*.
26. They lost their way among the *fens/ferns*.
27. John Peters is really *stirring/starring* in that film.
28. I'm surprised he hasn't more *buds/burns*.
29. The *girl/gull* paddled on the edge of the sea.
30. The water *burbled/bubbled* as it came out of the earth.
31. He kept *butting/betting* away without any success.
32. The *nuts/nets* seemed old and rotten.

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33. It's important that the *docks/decks* are kept clean.
34. The artist painted a dramatic picture of *hell/hill*-fires.
35. He bent down to pick up the *letter/litter* he had dropped.
36. The chemist didn't *test/taste* the new drug.
37. I can't tell you about the *age/edge* of the sword.
38. We were told about the peculiar *scent/saint* in the church.
39. I'm afraid that the *road/rod* is not good for my bike.
40. I saw him sitting by the *holy/holly* tree.
41. The farmer spoke about new *hops/hopes*.
42. Did you notice the man's *burst/boast* !
43. There was a picture of the winning *goal/girl* in the paper.
44. He *owed/erred* a lot in his business dealings.
45. His face seemed *stone/stern* and he never smiled.
46. The doctor took no notice of the *bone/burn*.
47. He didn't want any *prize/praise* for what he had done.
48. If you want to succeed I would change the *pliers/players*.
49. *Wives/Waves* are difficult to control.
50. The newspaper complained of the *lightness/lateness* of the ship.
51. I thought the *rice/race* was not as good as usual.
52. He was certain the *flowers/flyers* came from that clump of trees.
53. They wrote about the *trial/trowel* in the newspaper.
54. Can you tell him how to get to the *boundary/bindery* ?
55. It seemed that there were hundreds of *fowls/files* on the shelves.
56. We all noticed the *howl/hole* as we came through the yard.
57. They saw many *fowls/foals* in the field.
58. It needs great strength to make that *bow/bough* bend.
59. A mother who *dotes/doubts* is not a good mother.
60. There were at least six *bees/beers* on the table.
61. I don't think *beads/beards* look good on some people.
62. The man said that the *peas/piers* would cost a lot of money.
63. He saw the man in the other car *staring/steering* at him.
64. The farmer *sheared/shared* the sheep with his sons.
65. I don't like the look of that *pier/pear*.
66. The teacher *shed/shared* the responsibility for that class.
67. She had to take care as the cloth in her frock was *terrible/tearable*.
68. He never expected to find a *ferry/fairy* described in that book.
69. I didn't like when they *hit/hid* me in the chest.
70. He *tipped/dipped* the plates into the water.
71. They couldn't break the *log/lock*.

72. He saw a *stag/stack* in the field.
73. There was a *cap/gap* between the two desks.
74. He went into that little room because he wanted a *map/nap*.
75. Is he the *same/sane* one?
76. Have you seen the white *phone/foam* on his table?
77. He doesn't want to *sin/sink*.
78. I had a *few/view* of them.
79. I have *veiled/failed* her.
80. His firm makes *vans/fans*.
81. The *vines/fines* get bigger every year.
82. He *thought/fought* very hard.
83. The wood was full of *thorns/fawns*.
84. The model was in the shape of a *reef/wreath*.
85. They caused many unnecessary *debts/deaths*.
86. You hate *mats/math*s, don't you?
87. A *sudden/southern* wind surprised us.
88. He *loads/loathes* his old cart.
89. He'll get a good *prize/price* if he's lucky.
90. King Solomon's *seal/zeal* is famous.
91. The *fourth/force* defeated them at last.
92. There was no *moth/moss* on the tree.
93. The *worse/worth* of the two paintings amazed him.
94. It's a *thought/sort* I haven't had before.
95. I have *shown/sown* all the seed.
96. There is no *ass/ash* in the stable.
97. He decided to *sell/shell* the peas.
98. The company didn't *suit/soot* me.
99. They put the *seats/sheets* in the garden.
100. He's always *choking/joking*, isn't he?

**B. Read the following sentences as quickly as you can :**

1. Stand back or I'll stab you with my dagger.
2. Half the class answered the master.
3. We argued about the plans for a match in the park.
4. The farmer heard the newborn calf cough in the barn.
5. He thought he saw a hawk on the lawn.
6. They started building that part of the port in the war.
7. The cock sang in the cottage courtyard.
8. Do look at the footprint in the sand...

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9. He dropped the stone and bruised his foot.
10. He cut the bread and the crumbs fell onto the rug.
11. Father got stuck in the bathroom.
12. His watchstrap rubbed the cuff of his coat.
13. She'll sell her pearls to settle her debts.
14. They shut the thrushes up in a birdcage.
15. The singer stood in the centre of the stage.
16. The old envelopes and letters made a lot of litter.
17. It's a shame to waste such pleasant scent.
18. He fell over because he caught his toe in a hole in the road.
19. Stop at this spot because the road is closed.
20. The cricketer paused before bowling the ball.
21. The reptiles were frightened by the fire.
22. He straightened the wire with my pliers.
23. The owl sat on a bough near the tower.
24. They fought hard to row against the tide.
25. In old times royal families were often joined by marriages.
26. The men killed the deer with their spears.
27. He steered the canoe through the reeds near the pier.
28. Her hair was a funny colour and everybody stared at it.
29. They hadn't any spare parts to repair the broken car with.
30. He dared not touch the lion in case it wasn't dead.
31. The supplies of pure water got fewer and fewer.
32. Pat posted this parcel at the Post Office opposite the pet shop.
33. Tell me the titles of Tolstoy's short stories.
34. The bank can't cash this cheque because it's been cancelled.
35. The birds balanced on the branches and the bees buzzed in the bushes.
36. The poor puppies barked and barked in the empty stable.
37. Daddy was definitely determined to ask for a hundred pounds.
38. Ted walked down the road and out of the old town.
39. Good green garden grass only grows now and again.
40. I couldn't give the beggar a coin as I'd forgotten my money.
41. A warm summer morning makes me merry.
42. Naughty boys are fond of nasty noises.
43. Many men may know his name is Manfred; many more may not know.
44. The youngest boy, who was angry and hungry, banged the table.
45. The song means nothing, but the singer means everything.
46. Fill the little kettle and put it on the electric plate.
47. One fine afternoon in February Philip left the office at four.

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48. I don't believe that Valerie could be very evil.
49. Thorns had torn the thin cloth, and moths had eaten its thin threads.
50. Folk often fall to their death off the south cliff.
51. Three towers stand near the mouth of the Thames.
52. That leather is smoother than this one.
53. Then they thanked both of them for the thirtieth time.
54. Neither David's mother nor his father was dead then.
55. None of them knew whether to remove the feathers or to leave them there.
56. The novels were covered either in leather or in cloth.
57. Tourists like to see small states like Switzerland.
58. The size of those tomatoes is most surprising.
59. Beth's health was worse three months ago.
60. The ocean is shallow near the shore.
61. There is not sufficient information in this dictionary.
62. It wasn't the patient's intention to mention the injection.
63. The sun shone softly on the seashore as she listened to the seashells.
64. He had permission to see the precious treasure on that occasion.
65. I'm trying to remember the strange dream I dreamed on Friday.
66. Gold and brass are both rather yellow in colour.
67. Perhaps he has hung his hat on the hook in the hall.
68. The rich Dutchman had a cheerful nature.
69. I want to change the Chinese picture for the Japanese one.
70. A rich Irishman was chosen for the mission.
71. We won't have any wood till Wednesday.
72. What will Vera wear if the Queen invites her to the wedding?
73. He's a tutor, not a student, at the Institute of Education.
74. They tried to discover the truth about the truce.
75. We had peaches and trifle for lunch.
76. He divided the field in fifths not in sixths.
77. He picked the comb with his thumb and forefinger.
78. During the ascent and descent of the mountain the scenery was wild.
79. The foreign kings who were reigning at the time signed a treaty.
80. Their heir often thinks of their honesty and honour.

C. *There are some pronunciation traps in the following sentences ; use dictionaries to make sure you pronounce these words correctly.*

1. The teacher's desk was in front of us, on a *dais*.
2. Like all *ephemera*, this is also going to drown in forgetfulness, I'm sure.
3. Many trams are in the *depot* at night.

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4. I tried repeatedly, *albeit* unsuccessfully, to contact him.
5. His approach to the problem was *haphazard*.
6. Her parents will never *acquiesce* in such an unsuitable marriage.
7. Most of the British kings and queens are *entombed* in Westminster Abbey.
8. One can move a *canoe* with only one paddle.
9. *Hyperbole* is part of a writer's imagery.
10. You can catch *rabies* if you are bitten by a sick animal.
11. How many people entered for the *yacht* race?
12. How many grams are there in an *ounce*?
13. We need a *scythe* to cut our way through this long grass.
14. The curriculum covers the *syllabi* for all the subjects.
15. I find the scent of *hyacinths* too strong.
16. *Guinea* pigs are used in different experiments.
17. The princess was wearing a gown of *gossamer* silk.
18. A substantial *seizure* of cocaine was made last night.
19. Terrorists usually operate by *stealth*.
20. Modern *lathes* can perform a lot of operations.

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## II. Mind the homophones!

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A. Identify the pairs of homophones in the sentences below.

1. I could never understand what sort of people he sought for.
2. The house I stayed in was owned by a staid old gentleman.
3. Despite this financial sleight of hand, their chances of success are slight.
4. They fought hard to defend the fort.
5. Which of the two fairies is actually a bad witch?
6. He wrote in his book of pedagogy that he was against rote learning.
7. If we only knew whether the weather is going to be fine on Sunday!
8. The horseman rode along the dusty road for hours on end.
9. How can you bawl him out just because he lost that ball?
10. Where can one wear such a gown?
11. Let's talk about the effect the torque of the engine has on the load it can pull.
12. She was in mourning when I saw her yesterday morning.
13. He could not loosen the knot however hard he tried.
14. The boy ventured to swim beyond the buoy.

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15. You are not allowed to speak aloud in this ward.
16. Have you ever seen a more impressive scene?
17. I'm getting bored with all these board meetings I have to attend.
18. It doesn't make a whit of difference whether he has a quick wit or not.
19. She has felt quite weak this week.
20. I know the winner of the first race, but who won the second one?
21. Everybody used to laud the old lord for his generosity.
22. The maid has just made a delicious apple pie.
23. He threw all those old newspapers into the yard through the window.
24. How long has it lain in the middle of the lane?
25. A plane flew over the plain we were driving across.
26. He keeps all his cash in a cache only he knows about.
27. Her husband sent her a bottle of musky scent from Paris.
28. Father swam a bit farther than all the others.
29. Look! There's an animal with grey fur behind that fir tree.
30. There's no hole in the whole yard.
31. In winter, when the trees are bare, the bear sleeps in his den.
32. She likes to sit and read near the reed by the river.
33. Write an essay on this rite of passage right now.
34. During the military rule the marshal declared martial law.
35. You have a wonderful sight of the valley from that site.
36. An armour-clad knight arrived at the castle at night.
37. They have added an aural comprehension test to the oral examination.
38. I saw she was still sore about not having been invited to the ceremony.
39. She finally breathed in the sweet smell of success in her luxury suite.
40. None of us could speak Spanish except that old nun.
41. The wind blew so hard that I turned blue with cold.
42. I don't know when the cut in my heel is going to heal.
43. He went straight back as he knew he was in great strait and needed help.
44. They caught the deserter and court-martialled him.
45. He lost the key while running along the quay.
46. This seam does not seem to be machine sewn.
47. Storks do not feed on such stalks.
48. What's the fare to the place where the Sunday fair is held?
49. How could he go away when he knew in his soul he was his father's sole support?
50. He had his skull fractured with a scull.

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**B. Underline the right choice. Try to make up sentences of your own using the other word(s).**

1. She took a quick *peak/peek/pique* behind the curtain.
2. How could I translate the sentence "He's as mad as a March *hair/hare*"?
3. I wonder what could *ail/ale* her that much.
4. I know he'll do it by fair means or *foul/fowl*.
5. He who *lead/led* the people to this state of anarchy will be severely punished.
6. You have to knead the *do/doe/dough* well.
7. They grow a sort of *floury/flowery* potatoes in this field.
8. She always *rings/wrings* her hands in distress when reminded of the tragedy.
9. The *hail/hale* stones damaged the whole crop.
10. He had a thick leather belt round the *waist/waste*.
11. Eagles are strong birds of *pray/prey*.
12. They *sew/so/sow* the fields when springtime comes.
13. His words certainly touched a *chord/cord* with her.
14. Is that speed boat on *sail/sale*?
15. I like the autumn *hew/hue* of this painting.
16. He drew several *arcs/arks* with the compasses.
17. The sudden *flair/flare* of a torch in the dark startled us.
18. There's no *gait/gate* on this part of the fence.
19. *Dew/Due* drops glitter on the grass leaves at dawn.
20. The father took the bride along the *aisle/isle* of the church.
21. There must be much at *stake/steak* if they can't stop gambling.
22. The window *pain/pane* was broken and that explained for the terrible draught.
23. You should have pressed the *brake/break* harder to avoid that pole.
24. Finding your way through the *maize/maze* of regulations is quite tiresome.
25. You have to *peal/peel* the orange first.
26. I'm not too hungry, I shall skip the second *coarse/course*.
27. He had the chance to be in *pole/poll* position again.
28. The *Holy/Wholly* Books are fundamental documents of humanity.
29. Suddenly, I heard a terrifying *groan/grown* in the dark.
30. Men shave with high-quality *steal/steel* blades.
31. She is *dyeing/dying* her hair to look younger.
32. I got a sharp *rap/wrap* on the elbow which hurt badly.
33. I enjoy watching the seagulls *soar/sore* high above the cliffs.
34. He is one of the President's closest *aids/aides*.
35. How can a court *meat/meet/mete* out such severe penalties?

## **Proficiency in English**

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### KEY TO EXERCISES

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## Chapter I

### Spelling and Pronunciation

#### II. Homophones

##### B

- |            |            |            |            |           |
|------------|------------|------------|------------|-----------|
| 1. peek    | 2. hare    | 3. ail     | 4. foul    | 5. led    |
| 6. dough   | 7. floury  | 8. wrings  | 9. hail    | 10. waist |
| 11. prey   | 12. sow    | 13. chord  | 14. sale   | 15. hue   |
| 16. arcs   | 17. flare  | 18. gate   | 19. Dew    | 20. aisle |
| 21. stake  | 22. pane   | 23. brake  | 24. maze   | 25. peel  |
| 26. course | 27. pole   | 28. Holy   | 29. groan  | 30. steel |
| 31. dyeing | 32. rap    | 33. soar   | 34. aides  | 35. mete  |
| 36. tons   | 37. wail   | 38. mettle | 39. teamed | 40. rime  |
| 41. pare   | 42. pail   | 43. pier   | 44. flu    | 45. stile |
| 46. vain   | 47. ascent | 48. wrest  | 49. bowl   | 50. ore   |

##### C

- |                             |                    |                          |
|-----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. mayor – mare             | 2. in – inn        | 3. brood – brewed        |
| 4. minor – miner            | 5. be – bee        | 6. lightning – lightning |
| 7. their – there            | 8. root – route    | 9. guilt – gilt          |
| 10. night – knight          | 11. horde – hoard  | 12. seize – sees/seas    |
| 13. bury – berry            | 14. soul – sole    | 15. all – awl            |
| 16. find – fined            | 17. source – sauce | 18. arms – alms          |
| 19. stationery – stationary | 20. stare – stair  | 21. mantel – mantle      |
| 22. heart – hart            | 23. beat – beet    | 24. through – threw      |
| 25. pore – pour             | 26. knew – new     | 27. dear – deer          |
| 28. so – sew/sow            | 29. not – knot     | 30. high – hi            |

- |                     |                 |                  |
|---------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 31. know – no       | 32. loot – lute | 33. bloc – block |
| 34. lessen – lesson | 35. beer – bier | 36. base – bass  |
| 37. paced – paste   | 38. leak – leek | 39. flee – flea  |
| 40. slay – sleigh   |                 |                  |

**D**

- |                |             |            |               |
|----------------|-------------|------------|---------------|
| 1. urn         | 2. roe      | 3. bale    | 4. berth      |
| 5. knit        | 6. idol     | 7. rood    | 8. whine      |
| 9. taught/taut | 10. tee     | 11. tier   | 12. serf      |
| 13. mite       | 14. pawn    | 15. haul   | 16. vale      |
| 17. purl       | 18. tic     | 19. boar   | 20. loan      |
| 21. tern       | 22. ruff    | 23. carat  | 24. gnaw      |
| 25. sight/site | 26. draught | 27. speck  | 28. mane      |
| 29. plait      | 30. chute   | 31. bow    | 32. cheep     |
| 33. tow        | 34. censor  | 35. prise  | 36. shoo      |
| 37. canon      | 38. queue   | 39. cereal | 40. neigh     |
| 41. wear/where | 42. tyre    | 43. grate  | 44. heir      |
| 45. mote       | 46. waive   | 47. thyme  | 48. principle |
| 49. male       | 50. maw     | 51. ewe    | 52. buy/bye   |
| 53. sow        | 54. fore    | 55. mussel | 56. hymn      |
| 57. feat       | 58. dissent | 59. lain   | 60. guest     |

Chapter II**Reading Comprehension****A**

1. 1d; 2b; 3c; 4a; 5b.
2. 1a; 2b; 3d; 4d; 5d.
3. 1c; 2d; 3a; 4b; 5b.
4. 1b; 2c; 3c; 4a; 5d.
5. 1a; 2c; 3a; 4c; 5c.
6. 1a; 2c; 3a; 4c; 5c.
7. 1b; 2c; 3d; 4a; 5a.
8. 1d; 2d; 3a; 4b; 5a.
9. 1c; 2b; 3d; 4a; 5c.
10. 1a; 2c; 3b; 4b; 5c.
11. 1c; 2c; 3d; 4c; 5b.
12. 1a; 2c; 3b; 4c; 5d.
13. 1d; 2c; 3a; 4d; 5c.
14. 1d; 2c; 3a; 4a; 5b.
15. 1c; 2b; 3b; 4a; 5b.
16. 1b; 2b; 3d; 4a; 5c.
17. 1a; 2b; 3d; 4b; 5c.
18. 1c; 2b; 3c; 4c; 5a.
19. 1b; 2a; 3d; 4b; 5c.
20. 1b; 2d; 3b; 4b; 5a.

**B**

1. 1 – F; 2 – B; 3 – H; 4 – D; 5 – A; 6 – G; 7 – E.
2. 1 – B; 2 – G; 3 – E; 4 – A; 5 – H; 6 – D; 7 – C.
3. 1 – E; 2 – G; 3 – B; 4 – F; 5 – H; 6 – A; 7 – C.