



# Improve English Pronunciation



## 1 Simple Trick

The first step to improve your pronunciation is to break the word down into BEATS. Everything else comes after.

Pronouncing the words clearly and slowly is your foundation, your base. Improving your pronunciation is an important step in improving your listening and understanding skills. Most people overlook this practice. Let's use it now.

## Syllable – Definition

A *syllable* is a unit of sound. Words are divided into these sound units. A syllable is made of a **vowel** sound and usually one or more **consonants**.

**Vowels** are the letter – A, E, I, O, U, and sometimes Y.

**Consonants** are the rest of the letters in the alphabet – b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, and z.

## How It Works



Syllables are like drum *beats*.

If you think of it like music, **one syllable** is **one beat**.

- The word **Dave** has 1 beat. – **one syllable**
  - DAVE
- The word **English** has 2 beats. – **two syllables**
  - ENG·LISH
- The word **Syllables** has 3 beats. – **three syllables**
  - SYLL·A·BLES

Thinking about pronunciation this way has been very helpful for my students.


*“Dave taught me how to improve my English pronunciation using **syllables**.” (SYLL·A·BLES)*


Music is more fun than grammar study for me.

## Syllables as *BEATS* – Practice

**Syl/la/bles as *BEATS***

1 2 3 4 5

PRO-NUN-CI-A-TION 



How many beats (syllables) does the word “pronunciation” have?

**PRO – NUN – CI – A – TION**

One, two, three, four, five.

At first, you want to read this very slowly. It will sound unnatural, but that’s okay. After reading the word slowly just two or three times you will feel comfortable slowly speeding up. It will feel quite natural. Give it a try.

\*NOTE: Speed up little by little. When talking with and being understood by native speakers, *slower is always better than too fast*. Don’t rush. We crawl before we can walk, we walk before we can run.

Let’s try the word that my student was having trouble pronouncing.  
**Artificial.**

How many syllables?

**AR – TI – FI – CIAL**

This word has 4 beats.

\*NOTE – In English, the letters “CIAL” sound like “SHALL.” **SHALL** is the last *BEAT* in our word.

## **A Second Benefit**

Long words can intimidate language learners. (Long Japanese words intimidate me.)

Reading the words slowly, BEAT by BEAT makes long words easy to say. This improves your confidence. Improved confidence improves

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communication. This confidence is very useful when we do other kinds of pronunciation practice.

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## Counting Syllables for New Words

If you read a new word that you want to listen to so you can hear the correct pronunciation, I suggest the **Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary** web page.



[OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](http://OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com)

You can get the meaning of new words and listen to how they sound. I use it often with my private students. This site also has simple English definitions for new words.

*When I learn a new Japanese word, I find it's better to understand the meaning using other simple Japanese words or images.*

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Just doing a direct translation into your native language doesn't help you remember the meaning later on when you want to use it again.

## Pronunciation Plus Complete Sentences



This next tip is one that I use with my students and myself for my own second language training. Whenever you learn new grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, or any new language you should always do this one thing. **LEARN COMPLETE SENTENCES.**

Don't memorize lists, and don't focus only on learning grammar rules. If English communication is your goal then you want to learn complete sentences. Complete sentences are like language patterns and you are learning all points of grammar without realizing it.

Full sentences contain articles, different verb tenses, prepositions, adverbs and adjectives, plus more.

After using the *syllables as beats* method to correctly pronounce a new English word, find that word used in a natural sentence. This is another great chance to use the dictionary resource – Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary. More ideas for how to find (and HOW NOT TO FIND) great example sentences can be found here >>

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Now practice that whole sentence. While you're practicing pronunciation you're also remembering correct sentence grammar. Using natural full sentences will **improve your confidence**, and this **improves communication**.

### Practice Time - Your Turn

1. Choose a long English word that you have a hard time pronouncing.
2. Type your word into [OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com](http://OxfordLearnersDictionaries.com) and listen to the audio.
3. Count the syllables and divide the words into *BEATS*.
4. Read the word slowly, *BEAT* by *BEAT*. Start to read the word a little faster. Listen to the audio again. Is it the same?
5. Make a full sentence and practice reading the whole sentence.

Try using this simple technique the next time you are having difficulty pronouncing a long English word.



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