

# Injecting Pronunciation into Oral Skills Classes

## Pronunciation Activities Grouped by Learning Style

Key:



Visual



Logical



Intrapersonal



Kinesthetic



Interpersonal



Musical

<b>Visual</b>	
Read My Lips	Have pairs of students complete minimal pair activities by lipreading. Helps increase awareness of visual cues. This works especially well when students are working on sounds that require an unfamiliar position, as in <i>th</i> sounds or /æ/.
Vowel Dominoes	Make a set of color-coded dominoes out of index cards. Have students play in small groups. Works well for learning IPA, spelling, and general vowel awareness.
Stress Dominoes	Like vowel dominoes, but with a combination of words and daDAda stress patterns. A match, for example, would be "computer" and "daDAda"
Color Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use color-coded feedback (i.e. green for segmental errors, red for suprasegmental errors, blue for phrasing, etc.)</li> <li>• Have students color code a dialogue or transcript.</li> <li>• Use a colored vowel chart as a basis for a variety of activities.</li> </ul>
Mirror, Mirror	This old standby is great for visual learners. If you lack small mirrors for class, make them out of metallic paper. (Silver Contac paper works great.) Also, assign mirror work as a daily practice activity.
Paper Clips/ Rods	Use paper clips in different sizes to illustrate word stress, syllables, or linking. Rods can also be used. This can also be used as a game...i.e. read out a word or phrase and have students race to put together paper clips in the correct formation, or have students come to the front of the class, fish out a short chain of paper clips, and shout out a word with that stress pattern. Keep a bunch on hand for game markers, too.

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## Kinesthetic

<p>Sound Swat</p>	<p>Separate the class into two teams. Have a student from each team come to the front. Give them each a flyswatter. Project a bingo-type grid (5x5 or 6x6) of words on a screen or whiteboard. Call out words. The first student to swat the correct word gets a point. The whole class monitors.</p> <p>Suggested topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vowel sounds and spelling</li> <li>• Word stress</li> <li>• Other minimal pairs</li> <li>• Thought groups</li> </ul> 
<p>Stress Steps</p> 	<p>Bring a stepstool to class or go outside and use a flight of steps on campus. Have small groups of students make stress patterns. One student stands on the step to represent stress (or raised intonation).</p> <p>Alternatives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use a flight of steps to show intonation patterns as well (use multiple steps to show high-mid-low)</li> <li>• On a particularly wide flight of steps, groups can compete to make a pattern the fastest</li> </ul>
<p>Syllable Steps</p>	<p>Have four or five students stand in a line on one side of the classroom. Call out a word. The students should repeat the word, taking a step for each syllable. Keep going until at least one student makes it across the room. Students who make a mistake must return to the beginning.</p>
<p>Rubber-band Activities</p> 	<p>Give each student a rubber band. Have them stretch it to highlight word stress or vowel lengthening. Rubber bands can also be used to lengthen final -s.</p>
<p>Ball toss</p> 	<p>Have students say a word or phrase as they toss a ball to a classmate across the room. They should match the falling arch of the ball with the falling intonation pattern and lengthened vowel. Example: compuuuuuuuuuuter / She's using the compuuuuuuuuter. Throw the ball as you begin the word. Hold the stressed vowel until the other student catches the ball. Also good for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Holding fricatives</li> <li>• Lengthening vowels before voiced consonants</li> </ul>




## Kinesthetic

<p>Knee bending/ Body language/ Clapping</p>	<p>Have students bend their knees to show intonation, clap for word or sentence stress, or march across the classroom. Match any body movement with a suprasegmental feature.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intonation lines—Groups of students make intonation and/or stress patterns, kneeling for falling intonation, raising on toes for rising intonation</li> <li>• Linking lines—Give students word or sound cards and have them link arms to represent linked or blended sounds as they create sentences</li> </ul>
<p>Balloon squealing</p>	<p>It may seem simple, but for students who have trouble understanding the concepts of voiced and voiceless sounds, showing them the difference with a balloon is surprisingly helpful. Just blow up the balloon and let the air out slowly, so that it squeals.</p>
<p>Feather/tissue puffing </p>	<p>Use feathers or tissues to show aspirated sounds. The students can see the puff of air (or lack of it) until they learn to hear it.</p>
<p>Lollipop Liquids</p>	<p>Many students find that holding a lollipop in their mouth helps them make the /l/ distinction. If they hold the lollipop on top of their tongue, they can't make an /l/, only an /r/.</p>
<p>Intonation Tracing </p>	<p>Make a handout with sentences with large intonation patterns. Have students trace the rising and falling intonation with their finger or pen as they read the sentences.</p>
<p>Continuant/ Vowel Tracing </p>	<p>Like Intonation Tracing, above, but use lines for sounds that should be held for a long time.</p>
<p>Helping Hands </p>	<p>Use hand cues for certain pronunciation sounds.</p>
<p>Hands Up</p>	<p>For a quick survey of how the class is doing, read out words from a list of minimal pairs and have the students raise their left hand if they heard one word (a cluster with /l/, for example) and their right hand if they heard a different word (like a cluster with /r/). Have them close their eyes so they're not influenced by their classmates' responses.</p>



## Logical/Mathematical

<p>Inductive Language Analysis </p>	<p>Ask students to analyze a language sample to figure out the rules. Also, higher-level students can be asked to predict possible transfer errors based on L1.</p> <p>Examples:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Figure out the sounds of English based on place and manner of</li> </ul>
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	<p>articulation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Determine sentence stress rules</li> <li>• Puzzle out how word endings affect word stress</li> <li>• Analyze sound- or language-based jokes to see what makes them funny to native speakers</li> </ul>
<p>Categorization activities</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Give the students cards with single-syllable words on them. Have them put the cards in groups based on the vowel sound. Can be done singly or in small groups.</li> <li>• Give students cards with polysyllabic words and have them categorize them according to stress pattern. (Works well as an icebreaker/grouping activity. Students must walk around the class until they find all of the members of their stress group.)</li> <li>• Have students match intonation patterns with sentences.</li> <li>• Have students match stress patterns with words. Draw different stress patterns (i.e. xxXx) on one set of cards and give one each to half of the class. Give cards with the corresponding words (i.e. <i>information</i>) to the other half of the class. Have all of the students start sounding out their words or stress patterns and walk around until they find their partner.</li> </ul>
<p>Use of analogies</p>	<p>Sometimes, all it takes is the right analogy. Here are three:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>Forming thought groups is like eating a bowl of rice:</i> when eating rice, we don't put the whole bowl in our mouth, and neither do we eat the rice grain by grain; rather, we eat it in bite-size amounts. In spoken language, we divide our message into thought groups—to make each thought "easier to swallow."</li> <li>• <i>Intonation is like a street sign.</i> Street signs tell us when to stop, when to keep going, when to yield, and when something dangerous is around the bend. Intonation is similar—it conveys the speaker's mood and intent to the listener.</li> <li>• <i>Michael Jordan's layup is like practicing pronunciation.</i> Michael Jordan never stopped practicing his layup, even after he had "learned" what makes a great layup. Similarly, "learning" what is in one's pronunciation book is only the beginning. Practice... makes...</li> </ul>
<p>Pronunciation Word Mazes</p>	<p>Design a word maze. Students navigate through the maze by a particular target: vowel sound, stress pattern, etc.</p>

 <h2>Musical</h2>	
<p>Clapping or drumming</p> 	<p>Ask student to clap out syllables, word stress, or sentence stress, with fast claps for unstressed words or syllables and slow, measured claps for stressed words or syllables.</p> <p>Variations:</p>

 <b>Musical</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have one half of the class clap the rhythm while the other chants out a limerick</li> <li>• Put a student in each corner of the room and give them a rhythm to clap. Then, give cards with different sentences to the rest of the students. Students should go into the correct corner.</li> </ul>
Use musical notation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use quarter notes and eight notes to get across the concept of word stress and reductions</li> <li>• Use notation to show pitch/intonation change in sentences or play a pattern on a child's xylophone ("My Fair Lady" has a humorous example of this that the students love.)</li> </ul>
Humming/kazoos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do a sentence/intonation pattern matching activity in pairs. Have one student hum the intonation pattern, and the other picks out the sentence that matches. (Sentences should have an equal number of syllables. The only difference should be intonation.)</li> <li>• Have students have humming "conversations." See how much meaning they can convey to each other using only intonation. They'll be surprised! Or, give one student a list of questions to ask, and the other can hum the answers. A: Do you want to go to the movies? B: (humming) indicate answer (i.e. assent, decline, maybe, astonishment, not understanding, etc.)</li> </ul> 
Jazz Chants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to Carolyn Graham's Jazz Chants (there are several editions!) or create your own. Either way, the focus is on the repetition of useful phrases (example: I can do it vs. I can't do it!).</li> </ul>

 <b>Intrapersonal</b>	
Setting Targets	Have students bring in a list of problem words from their field of study or daily life. Use these in daily practice, tutorials, etc., and keep track of progress.
Daily Practice Log	Give students a log with a variety of activities to practice daily. These should be short, such as mirror practice, reading aloud, or repeating a key phrase.
Self-monitoring	Have students take responsibility for their own learning and improvement by keeping a pronunciation portfolio, responding to tapes or videos of their speech, and keeping detailed records and goal-setting contracts.
Reaction & Reflection	Combined with the self-monitoring, reaction & reflection make the backbone of a successful pronunciation portfolio, which the students can develop over the course of the semester.

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## Interpersonal

Info Gap activities	These can be as simple as short pair activities or as complex as requiring students to interact with the outside world to get information such as movie times, opening hours, etc.
Card Games	<p>Make a pack of picture cards that features minimal pairs. Make four cards (blue, green, yellow, and red) for each word.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Go Fish--play it like the traditional game. Students must both hear and say words accurately. (Do you have any bears?) The level of difficulty can be raised by requiring students to collect cards one at a time by color. (Do you have the red bear?)</li><li>• Uno--students take turns put down cards that have a common sound</li><li>• Contrasts--Put students in small groups and choose one in each group to be the dealer. The dealer places one card face up in front of a player. The player must say, with correct focus stress, what the card is. Use regular stress rules for new information and focus stress to show contrasts. If the player gets it right, they keep the card. Keep going counterclockwise until all cards are gone. At the end, count the cards. The student with the most is the dealer for the next round.</li></ul> <p>Example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• This is a red bear. (new information--no relation to previous card)</li><li>• This is a BLUE bear. (color contrast only)</li><li>• This is a blue PEAR. (object contrast only)</li></ul> <p>(Note: If you're running short on prep time, this can be played with a reduced deck of Uno, Rook, or even regular playing cards.)</p>
Hot Seat Peer Review	Have the class get in a circle and pair off. Label students "A" and "B," alternating. Give each of the "B" students a different pronunciation feature to listen for. Have the "A" students give a prepared mini-presentation (30 seconds-1 minute) to the "B" students. At the end of the minute, all of the "A" students stand and move clockwise to the next "B" and start again. Repeat 2 times. At the end of the exercise, the "A" students will have feedback from three separate peers.
Plays/Skits /Commercials	<p>Have pairs of students perform single scenes or dialogues; have groups perform single acts or even a whole play. Students can mark the scripts for sentence stress, intonation, etc. before practicing. Alternately, students can write their own plays. Videotape for self- and peer-review activities.</p> <p>Alternately, bring in a video of a short scene and have students try to mirror the actors in intonation, stress, and body language.</p>



## Interpersonal

Other Games	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sound scavenger hunts-- Put students in small groups. Tell them to brainstorm items with a specific pronunciation focus:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Animals that have 1, 2, and 3 syllables</li> <li>▪ Classroom objects with certain stress patterns</li> <li>▪ Foods that have the sound /f/</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Tic Tac Toe—Play it on the board with two teams. Label the boxes with the target minimal pairs for that week's lesson (i.e. front vowels, l/r). Students must correctly pronounce the word to put their X or O in the box.</li> <li>• Pronunciation Pyramids—Students race to come up with words with 1, 2, 3, or more syllables within a certain category. Can be done singly or in pairs.</li> <li>• Pronunciation Memory—make a memory game with minimal pairs</li> <li>• I'm going on a trip to _____--In small groups, have students take turns playing this classic list/memory game. Student A begins, "I'm going on a trip to Africa, and I'm going to take an apple." Student B says, "I'm going to a trip to Africa, and I'm going to take an apple and a (something beginning with B). Go around the group, adding an item each time. By the time the students reach Z, they'll have list intonation down perfectly.</li> <li>• What's My Line?—Give students cards with unusual occupations. Have students roam around asking wh-questions to try to figure out everyone's occupation.</li> <li>• Mini Mysteries—Write a short mystery or riddle on the board and have students ask yes/no questions until they figure it out.</li> <li>• Pronunciation Battleship</li> <li>• Telephone—have students sit in a circle whisper a "secret" message full of tricky words.</li> </ul>
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## Naturalistic

Nature Categories	Have students brainstorm nature words that fit into certain categories—starting sound, number of syllables, stress pattern, etc.
Scavenger Hunts	Ask nature-loving students to find and share something from nature that helps them remember pronunciation patterns—i.e. the curve of a leaf, a grouping of large and small stones, birdsong, etc.
I Spy	Take the class outside and have them play this game in pairs. Student A says, "I spy something starting with the sound ____." They can also say, "I spy something with the stress pattern daDAda."