



LESSON 3

Articulation and Pronunciation

LESSON OBJECTIVES

- ◆ Define articulation and pronunciation.
- ◆ Understand the function and importance of articulation and pronunciation.
- ◆ Participate in drills, exercises, and activities that develop and improve an actor's articulation and pronunciation.

Warm Up



Before reading aloud one of the passages assigned by your teacher, stretch your facial muscles by smiling and frowning three times.

articulation

the shaping and molding of sounds into syllables.

Articulation

Articulation is the shaping and molding of sounds into syllables. We use all of our articulators (lips, tongue, teeth, hard and soft palates, jaw, muscles, and nasal passageways) in articulation. The process of learning vowels and consonants begins early in childhood. It is then that many bad speaking habits are formed. Some common bad habits are slurring sounds and words, not completing the endings of sounds and words, and generally not speaking distinctly (clearly).

To develop good vocal habits for the stage, you need to practice your articulation daily. One of the best ways to do this is to recite tongue twisters. Articulation drills will not only improve your articulation for the stage but will also train your ear to hear the way you speak in everyday life.

ACTION

- 1. Tongue Twisters.** Practice your articulation with the following tongue twisters. Practice each one three times. If you have difficulty with any tongue twister, spend more time practicing it until you have mastered all twenty-six tongue twisters.
 - a. Ruby red rubber baby buggy bumpers.
 - b. Eight great gray geese grazing gaily into Greece.
 - c. Tie twine to three tree twigs.
 - d. The old cold scold sold the school coal scuttle.
 - e. What noise annoys a noisy oyster most? A noisy noise annoys a noisy oyster most.
 - f. Did you see Peter Piper's puppy peeping playfully?
 - g. She sells seashells at the seashore's seashell store.
 - h. Let Letty linger longer at the luncheon.

- i. He is a nice man, not an ice man.
- j. Sinful Caesar sipped his sniffer, seized his knee and sneezed.
- k. She says such shabbily sewed seams show seriously.
- l. Strange strategic statistics.
- m. Round and round the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran.
- n. Thissian Thistle, the successful thistle sifter, sifts sieves full of three thousand thistles through the thick of this thumb.
- o. Double bubble gum bubbles double.
- p. Six slick slim slippery slimy sleek slender sickly saplings.
- q. Can a stammerer flatter a flatterer?
- r. The sun shines on shop signs.
- s. Truly rural rustic trees.
- t. Shy Sarah saw Swiss wristwatches.
- u. The sixth sheik's sixth sheep's sick.
- v. Are you copper-bottoming them, my man? No, I'm aluminuming 'em, mum.
- w. From "A Fly and a Flea in a Flue" by an anonymous poet.

A fly and a flea in a flue
 Were imprisoned, so what could they do?
 Said the fly, "Let us flee!"
 "Let us fly!" said the flea,
 And they flew through a flaw in the flue.

- x. From "Grace at Kirkudbright" by Robert Burns.

Some have meat and cannot eat,
 Some cannot eat that want it:
 But we have meat and we can eat,
 Sae let the Lord be thankit.

- y. From "Weather" by an anonymous poet.

Whether the weather be fine
 Or whether the weather be not,
 Whether the weather be cold,
 Or whether the weather be hot,
 We'll weather the weather
 Whatever the weather,
 Whether we like it or not.

- z. From "A Publisher Who Published Papers" by an anonymous poet.

A publisher who published papers
 Plenty of pens and pictures wished,
 To pile up his pages with capers
 Of prestigious professors who fished.

2. Clear Articulation Check. Ask your teacher or a classmate to listen

to you read the following sentences. Ask a partner to circle the sounds of the words (on a separate sheet of paper) that are not spoken clearly.

- a. The healthier, the better.
- b. Feel free to leave.
- c. It sounds correct to me.
- d. I like fried french fries.
- e. This will soon pass.
- f. The women climbed the mountain.
- g. The men ran the race.
- h. The hot chocolate burned my tongue.
- i. Please go away.
- j. Stay another hour.

3. Rhyme Time.

Practice your articulation with these nursery rhymes.

- a. Mary had a little lamb. Its fleece was white as snow.
And everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go.
- b. Jack be nimble. Jack be quick. Jack jump over the candle stick.
- c. There was an old lady who lived in a shoe.
She had so many children she didn't know what to do.
- d. Jack and Jill went up the hill
To fetch a pail of water.
Jack fell down and broke his crown
And Jill came tumbling after.
- e. Row, row, row your boat
Gently down the stream,
Merrily, merrily, merrily, merrily,
Life is but a dream.
- f. Three blind mice,
Three blind mice,
See how they run!
See how they run!
They all ran after the farmer's wife,
Who cut off their tails with the carving knife,
Did you ever hear such a thing in your life,
As three blind mice?
- g. Oh where, oh where has my little dog gone?
Oh where, oh where can he be?
With his ears cut short and his tail cut long,
Oh where, oh where can he be?
- h. Jack Sprat could eat no fat.
His wife could eat no lean.
Betwixt the two of them they licked the platter clean.

4. Father to Son.

Read the following lines from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Use all your articulators with energy and vitality.

- "You are old," said the youth, "and your jaws are too weak
For anything tougher than suet;
Yet you finished the goose, with the bones and the beak—
Pray, how did you manage to do it?"
- "In my youth," said his father, "I took to the law,
And argued each case with my wife;
And the muscular strength which it gave to my jaw,
Has lasted the rest of my life."

pronunciation

the way sounds or syllables that represent a word are said and stressed according to the proper notation found in the dictionary.

Pronunciation

Pronunciation refers to the way words are said. Proper pronunciation means that words are spoken according to dictionary notations.

Warm Up



Pronounce the following words:

mischievous *advertisement*
indict *get*
theatre *acquittal*

If you are unsure of the correct pronunciation, which of the following would be the best source?

- your smartest friend*
- the glossary of a language arts book*
- a dictionary*

diction

a person's pronunciation of words, choice of words, and manner in which the person expresses himself or herself.

dialect

a pronunciation of words from different languages blended together to form a distinct language for a group of people.

accent

the manner in which people speak and the way words are pronounced in different parts of the world.

Pronunciation helps us distinguish the correct sounding out of a word, dictating which letters of a word are to be articulated. Proper pronunciation, like articulation, results from people being aware of how our language differentiates the sound of one word from another. You may remember being corrected when you mispronounced a word as a child. If so, you can count yourself as one of the lucky ones. Someone cared enough to correct your pronunciation. Proper pronunciation is seen as the mark of an educated person. It often will result in that person getting a good job.

Who decides the correct pronunciation of a word? Your dictionary is probably your most dependable source. A dictionary is not the only authority for a pronunciation, but people who write dictionaries are experts who have done a great deal of research to determine the accepted pronunciation of a word.

Before rehearsing the lines of a play, use a dictionary (or other accepted source) for difficult pronunciations and unfamiliar meanings. Certain words may not be in the dictionary you are using. You may have to research those words, perhaps getting help from more educated people or people from other cultures. Other sources that may help you with pronunciations are your language arts teacher, your parents, the librarian, and foreign language teachers.

During your theatre experiences, you will probably encounter three other terms related to pronunciation: diction, dialect, and accent.

Diction is a person's pronunciation of words, choice of words, and manner in which the person expresses himself or herself. Developing good diction is a valuable tool for life and essential for the stage.

Dialect is a pronunciation of words from different languages blended together to form a distinct language for a group of people. Diction and dialects enhance characterization. A character onstage takes on a whole new dimension when you use, for example, a Jamaican dialect. This type of character development requires time, research, and practice. **Accent** is the manner in which people speak; it is the way words are pronounced in different parts of the world. The use of stress and emphasis contribute to a word's accent.

ACTION



1. Pronunciation Check. Check your pronunciation of the following words, which are often mispronounced.

pin	cent	picture	entire	infamous
pen	thin	pitcher	horizon	medicinal
any	can't	town	idea	mischievous
get	catch	debate	ideal	preference
just	measure	disclose	incomparable	

2. It's All in the Endings. Pronounce the following words, whose endings are often left off when spoken.

madder	battle	city	tests	toward
ladder	water	rests	tasks	
paddle	wetter	wasps	desks	
saddle	butter	discs	mists	

3. Dictionary Scavenger Hunt. Look up in the dictionary any of the following words for which you are unsure of the pronunciation or meaning. Be prepared to read the list aloud and explain any definition.

abdomen	data	hospitable	oscilloscope	travail
address	detour	illustrate	pianist	vaudeville
automobile	dictionary	interesting	preferable	vice versa
aviation	exquisite	laboratory	presentation	
bouquet	forehead	magazine	route	
clique	grimace	medicinal	status	
coupe	harass	military	suet	
coupon	harassment	ordeal	suite	
