

Describing (English) Phonemes

Consonants

Voicing

Voiced	Voiceless
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Place of Articulation

Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Velar
(Retroflex)	(Palatal)	(Uvular)	(Pharyngeal)		

Manner of Articulation

Plosive	Fricative	Affricate	Nasal	Lateral	Continuant	(Tap)	(Trill)
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Types of continuant:

- Semivowel
- Approximant

Vowels

Openness

Close	Near-close	Close-mid	Mid	Open-mid	Near-open	Open
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Frontness

Front	(Near-front)	Central	(Near-back)	Back
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Liprounding (specify only when rounded or in contrast)

Unrounded	Rounded
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Multiphthongization (specify only if multiphthong or in contrast)

Monophthong	Diphthong (centring/closing)	Triphthong
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Exercises

In combination with the readings for week 2, these exercises are intended to help you become familiar with the description of speech sounds. Exercises 1–4 also provide good training for the exam; exercise 5 illustrates crucial practice for further language study, but you will not be asked to transcribe speech samples on the exam.

1. What Present-Day English (PDE) consonants are described below? Provide the phonemic transcription.

Voiceless alveolar plosive		Voiceless postalveolar fricative	
Voiced velar plosive		Voiced alveolar fricative	
Bilabial nasal		Lateral	
Voiced postalveolar affricate		Bilabial semivowel	
Voiceless dental fricative		Voiced dental fricative	
Voiceless glottal fricative		Voiced labiodental fricative	

2. How would you describe the following PDE consonants?

/g/		/f/	
/s/		/r/	
/d/		/tʃ/	

3. How would you describe the following PDE monophthong vowels?

/ɛ/	
/ɑ:/	
/u:/	
/ɒ/	
/ə/	

4. Using minimal pairs, prove that the following sets are distinct phonemes of PDE:

/t/ and /p/		/g/ and /k/		/n/ and /m/	
/ɛ/ and /æ/		/i/ and /i:/		/s/ and /z/	

5. Can you phonemically transcribe the following speech samples to an RP standard?

fish	
certainly	
salt and pepper	