

DAVE VOLEK'S BUSINESS ENGLISH™



**Dave Volek's
Phonetic Alphabet**

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About Dave Volek

Engineer. Businessman. ESL Instructor. Inventor. At the heart of the comprehensive suite of Dave Volek's Business English (DVBE) modules lies my diverse expertise in business, engineering, and finance; my interest in people and education; and my passion for creating innovative solutions that bridge the inherent gaps of traditional business English instruction. My proven, unconventional approach helps business and technical professionals build strong, practical English skills for the dynamic workplace.

Advertising on Dave Volek's Phonetic Alphabet

I will be revamping this document in 2007—and at that time it will include advertising opportunities. Remember, this is a free, practical exercise for business English students to practice their pronunciation. Many students will appreciate and benefit from the unique, practical conventions that I use.

[Dave Volek's Phonetic Alphabet](#) is going places! Don't miss the opportunity to have your advertising presence grow as word spreads about this proven tool. To book your ad space, contact dave@dvbe.bz.

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Terms of Usage

This particular document has been made to promote these three internet businesses:

- Dave Volek's Business English (www.dvbe.bz),
- The Billionaires Online (www.thebillionairesonline.com), and
- OilFinancier (www.oilfinancier.com).

Therefore you can copy and pass this PDF file to anyone you feel could use it. Teachers can give it to their students or fellow teachers. Students can share it with their friends and colleagues. There are no restrictions. I hope this document grows many legs and goes many places in the next several years.

Credits

- Designer & Writer: Dave Volek, B.Sc.
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<http://www.thirdstagealliance.com>

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INTRODUCTION



The pronunciation exercises in THE BILLIONAIRES ONLINE uses my phonetic alphabet for students to visually follow the sounds being made. I have been refining this alphabet for several years and am now quite comfortable with using it in class. Most of my students seem to pick up these new conventions rather quickly.

In essence, this alphabet takes something from each of these four sources:

1. English phonetics taught to English speakers (I think some features of this alphabet are best for relating sounds to correct spelling, as best as we can represent them),
2. International Phonetic Alphabet: (I think this system is great for professional linguists doing their work, but is not a good choice for new learners of English),
3. The Slovak alphabet (this language spells its words phonetically with the Roman symbols), and
4. A few symbols of my own to represent certain sounds.

When you go through this phonetic alphabet, you will find that I take a couple of unique approaches.

First, I contend that the r-sound in “from” is a different sound than the r-sound in “form.” In the first case, the “r” is a clear consonant. For the second case, the “r” reshapes the vowel a little and the vowel reshapes the “r” a little. Rather than insist the “r” in “form” is a distinct consonant, I teach the vowel-to-r combination as a distinct vowel, with its own unique sound that must be taught and mastered.

Second, I have removed the schwa from the phonetic alphabet. In many cases where a schwa is traditionally used, it can be replaced by a more precise vowel that the ESL / EFL student has already mastered or is in the process of mastering.

For example, an ESL student can pronounce “about” as:

- a **bŵt**,
- e **bŵt**, or
- u **bŵt**

Whatever preference the student gravitates towards, he will be understood by English speakers. With more exposure to English, many students will eventually move towards using the schwa (combined vowel) sound in a natural way. But if they don't, it's not a big deal.

Likewise “nation” can be said as:

- **nā šen**,
- **nā šin**, or
- **nā šun**

without the speaker having people misunderstand him or her.

With these two examples, you should note that one-syllable words or stressed syllables usually require a fairly precise vowel for the word to be understood properly. In unstressed syllables, precision is not as important; there can be several good choices to represent the sound with a known vowel.

Associated with removing the schwa from my phonetic alphabet, I contend that English has lots of syllables where there is there is no vowel. *Say the "b" sound; then say the first syllable in "banana." They are the same sound, are they not?* In many unstressed syllables, English speakers often just quickly say the consonant sound with no vowel to go with it. And my phonetic alphabet reflects this reality of how English is spoken.



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THE PHONETIC ALPHABET



Basic Vowels

Name	Representative Letter	Example Words	Combination of Sounds
short a	a	at, cap, dam	
short e	e	net, send, red	
long e	ē	beet, receive, geology,	
short i	i	hit, dim, sill	
short o (ah sound)	á	father, walk, not, sock	
woody o	Ω	wood, woman, put	
short u	u	but, up, cut, media	
long u	ū	use, goose, food, abuse	the letter "u" often represents the "yū" sound

Diphong Vowels

Name	Representative Letter	Example Words	Combination of Sounds
long a	ā	gate, bait, stay, weight	e + ē
long i	ī	kite, fight, fly, height	á + ē
ow	ŵ	how, about	á + ū
oi	ŷ	toy, oil,	ō + ē
long o	ō	note, boat, go	e + Ω This is how lingists say the Ō is made. To me, this is not diphong, but a distinct vowel.

R-shaped Vowels

Name	Representative Letter	Example Words	Combination of Sounds
"er" vowel	ir	bird, word, tractor, swimmer, learn, were, burn	
"are" vowel	ár	are, far, market	
"air" vowel	er	air, hair, fare, bear, there, where	
"or" vowel	ōr	or, for, ward, boar, your	
"ear" vowel	ēr	ear, hear, mere, beer, career	
"ire" vowel	īr	fire, wire, flyer, buyer	ī + ir
"our" vowel	ŵr	hour, flour, flower, our, power	ŵ + ir
"ure" vowel	ūr	tour, fewer, manure	ū + ir

Consonants

Name	Representative Letter	Example Words	Combination of Sounds
b	b	boy, public,	
"ch"	č	child, church	t + š
d	d	danger, find	
f	f	find, tough, phone	
hard g	g	goat, frog	
h	h	happy, house	
j	j	junk, judge, college,	d + ž
k	k	kill, cat, chlorine	
l	l	lion, bell	When "l" follows a long vowel, a diphong, or an R-shaped vowel, there's a minisyllable created that sounds like "ul" or "el." For example, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • pail = pā + ul • steel = stē + ul • girl = g^{ir} + ul • foul = fŵ + ul
m	m	milk, dam	

Name	Representative Letter	Example Words	Combination of Sounds
n	n	net, lawn	occasionally pronounced "n + y"
ng	ŋ	singing	
p	p	put, happy	
q	kw	queen	
r	r	rabbit, brace, street	(See R-shaped Vowels)
s	s	send, cinder	
"sh"	š	shirt, machine, nation	
t	t	tell, sent	
hard "th"	ð	that, this	
soft "th"	θ	thin, thing, bath	
v	v	victory, save	
w	w	win, word (See Ŵ)	
x	ks, gz	mix, exhaust	k + s or g + z
y	y	yet, yellow (See Ŷ and Ū)	
z	z	zebra	
"zh"	ž	measure, vision	

Examples from "Food for Thought"

The following words come from an article in the July 29, 2004 issue of *The Economist* magazine. The article is called "Food as a Development Tool," subtitled "Food for Thought." You can find this article at <http://www.economist.com>, by typing the titles in the search engine. The numbers beside the word indicate the paragraph where the word is located.

primary (1)	prī m^{er} rē
blossomed (1)	blá sumd
exceptional (2)	ek sep šu nul
infertile (2)	in f^{ir} tīl
blights (2)	blīts
nutrition (2)	nū tri šun
enriched (3)	en ričt

converted (3)	kun v^{ir} ted
nutritious (3)	nū tri šus
introduced (4)	in trō dūst
porridge (4)	p^{ōr} rij
previously (4)	prē vē us lē
calculation (4)	kal kyū lā šun
poorest (6)	p^{ōr} rest
standards (6)	stan d ^{ir} dz
accompanied (6)	u kum pa nēd
dramatically (7)	dra ma ti kal lē
improved (7)	im prūvd
undernourished (8)	un d ^{ir} n^{ūr} rišt
crucially (9)	krū šul lē
micronutrients (9)	mī krō nū trē ents
severely (9)	se v^{ēr} lē
nonetheless (9)	nun ō les
pronounced (9)	prō n ^{wn} st
industrial (10)	in dus trē ul
revolution (10)	re vō lū šun
chronic (10)	krá nik
universal (10)	yū ni v^{ir} sul
etiquette (11)	e ti kit
generation (11)	je n ^{ir} rā šun
economic (11)	e ká ná mik
proportion (12)	prō p^{ōr} šun
projected (12)	prō jek ted

millenium (13)	mil len nē um
thrown (13)	θrōn
confusion (13)	kun fyū žun
experienced (14)	ek sp^{er} rē enst
contributor (14)	kun tri byū t ^{ir}
aggravate (14)	ag gru vāt
absorption (14)	ab s^{or}p šun
bloodstream (14)	blΩd strēm
inadequate (15)	in a d kwit
underweight (15)	un d ^{ir} wāt
succumb (15)	su kum
diarrhoea (15)	dī ^{ár} rē u
malaria (15)	mu l ^{er} rē u
pneumonia (15)	ne mō nyu ne mō nē u
annual (15)	a nyū ul
attributable (15)	a tri byū t bul
deficiency (16)	d fi šen sē
carbohydrates (16)	k^{ár} bō hī drāts
proteins (16)	prō tēns
deficient (16)	de fi šent
consequence (16)	kán se kwens
iodine (16)	ī ō dīn
vitamin (16)	vī t min
thyroid (17)	θī rýd
goitre (17)	gý t ^{ir}
physical (17)	fi zi kul

molecules (18)	má le kyūlz
lethargy (18)	le θ ^{ár} jē
productivity (18)	prá duk ti vi tē
anaemia (18)	a nē mē u
cognitive (19)	kág n tiv
equivalent (19)	ē kwi v lent
compromise (20)	kám prō mīz
immune (20)	i myūn
deficits (20)	de f sits
initiative (20)	i ni šē i tiv i ni ši tiv
insufficient (20)	in su fi šent
disaggregate (21)	dis a gre gāt
exhausted (22)	eg zás ted
execute (25)	ek se kyūt
drought (26)	drŵt
shortages (27)	š ^{ōr} ti jiz
fortifying (29)	f^{ōr} ti fī iŋ
irreversible (30)	ēr rē v^{ir} si bul
tremendously (32)	tr men dus lē
conservatism (34)	kun s^{ir} v ti zim
accountable (35)	u kŵn t bul