

# English

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## 1. Language description

English is an Indo-European language which, due to its close relationship with languages like Frisian, (Low) German, and Dutch, is counted among the West Germanic languages. The language originated in England in the time of the Anglo-Saxons and is now the lingua franca (a language used as a common means of communication between people with different native languages) in large parts of the world. Today, English is widely used as a second or official language and is the working language of many international organisations. Approximately 365 million people speak English as their native language, which makes it the world's third biggest language, after Mandarin and Spanish.

English has many dialects. The current word list is based on American English. However, there are also many variants within American English. This word list is based on the variant known as General American English (GAE) (Bosma Smit, 2007).

**Table 1**

*Consonant system of American English, (Bosma-Smit, 2007)*

	Coronal					Dorsal				
	Bilabial	Labiodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
plosives	p b			t d			k g			
nasals	m			n			ŋ			
tap flap										
fricatives		f v	θ ð	s z	ʃ ʒ					h
affricate					tʃ dʒ					
liquids				l						
semi-vowels	w			r*		j				

*Black: consonants occur in both languages. Green: only in English*

Americans have lenition (weakening) of the t between vowels and/or an l or r. In other words: a t in the middle of a word is pronounced as a d. *Better* sounds like *bedder*, *brittle* like *briddl*, *falter* like *falder*, and *turtle* like *turdl*.

British, and in particular Received Pronunciation, also called 'the Queens English', neglects the r if it is not followed by a vowel, although it does leave a clear mark on the preceding vowel. This consonant was still being pronounced until quite recently. In American English, the /r/ did remain in that position. There is a lot of variation in pronunciation in American as well, especially when the /r/ is positioned at the end of a word. This is now transcribed as schwa with the /r/ as a diacritical mark. This method was taken from American articulation tests (Williams-Hodson, 1986, Goldman Fristoe 2, 2000). In this form, the final /r/ is no longer counted among the consonants. However, there are also tests (Fluharty 1978) which do count the final /r/ among the consonants and transcribe it as such.

Clusters of up to 3 consonants are permitted in English. Clusters occur in initial and final positions.

## 2. Phonological Development

This overview is based on the acquisition order of consonants according to Prather, Hedrick, and Kern (1975). This study makes no distinction between the syllable-initial and syllable final position of the consonants. A consonant is considered acquired if 75% of the tested children correctly pronounced a certain consonant in both initial and final positions, whether spontaneously or repeated. The 147 children tested were between 2 and 4 years old.

**Table 2**

*Acquisition ages of American English according to Prather, Hedrick, and Kern (1975)*

Age	Consonant
2;0	m n ŋ h p
2;4	d j f k
2;8	w b t
3;0	g s
3;4	l r
3;8	ʃ tʃ
4;0	ð ʒ
> 4	dʒ v z θ clusters

Pollock (2002) studies the percentage of consonants correct (PCC) in separate words and came to the following percentages per age group. Of course, this study used different words than the Speakaboo word list.

**Table 3**

*Percentage of consonants correct according to Pollock (2002)*

Age	PCC
1.6-1.11	53%
2;0-2;5	70%
2;6-2;11	81%
3;0-3;5	92%
3;6-3;11	93%
4;0-5.5	93%
4;6-4;11	94%
5;0-5;5	93%
5;6-5;11	96%
6;0-6;5	97%
6;6-6;11	93%

### 3. Common phonological processes

**Table 4**

*Error patterns according to Dodd et al. (2006)*

Process	Example	Age groups				
		2;6 – 2;11	3;0 – 3;5	3;6 – 3;11	4;0 – 4;5	4;6 – 4;11
Del. fin. cons.	dʌk → dʌ	*****				
Assimilation	bʌɛd → bɛb	*****				
Reduplication	taɪgə → taitai	*****				
Stopping	zɪbrə → dɪbrə	*****	*****			
Deletion weak syllable	ɛlɛfənt → ɛfənt	*****	*****	*****		
Fronting	ʃɪp → sɪp	*****	*****	*****		
CC reduction	bɾɛd → bɛd	*****	*****	*****	-----	-----
(De)affrication	wɒtʃ → wɒʃ	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****
Gliding	ræbɪt → wæbɪt	*****	*****	*****	*****	*****

*Note: (\*\*\*\*\* occurs in at least 10% of the children in this group, ----- clusters of 3 consonants)*

### 4. Lexical variation

No data.

### 5. Results of normally developing English toddlers

No data.

### 6. Sources

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