

## Pronunciation Practice

### 10 Rules for Linking and Reduction

Here are some rules to keep handy when teaching linking and reduction.

1. Connect consonants to the vowels that follow.

We **made up**. (mei-dup)

We **made it up**. (mei-di-dup)

2. Connect vowels to the consonants that follow. Go directly from one word to the next without pausing or breaking off air flow.

**Go for it!**

3. If one word ends with a consonant sound and the next word begins with the same consonant sound, it is only necessary to voice the sound once. These sounds usually “feel” more connected to the second word than the first.

What's **s Sam** making?

4. When one word ends with a “t” sound and the next word begins with a “y,” the two combine to create a “ch” sound.

Did he **hit you**?

5. When one word ends with a “d” sound and the next word begins with a “y,” the two combine to create a hard “j” sound.

**Did you** hit him?

6. When “he,” “him,” “his,” or “her” come after a word that ends with a consonant sound, we usually don't pronounce the “h.” The exception to this rule is when the pronouns are emphasized.

He **hit his** thumb. (no “h” sound on “his”)

Your thumb? No, he hit *his* thumb. (pronounce the “h” sound)

7. When “of” is followed by a word beginning with a vowel sound, we pronounce the “f” like a “v,” but when it is followed by a word beginning with a consonant sound, we don't pronounce the “f” at all.

All **of the** people (no “f” sound on “of”)

All **of us** (pronounce “f” like a “v,” and connect it to the following vowel)

8. Do not connect across punctuation (commas, periods, exclamation points, question marks, semi-colons, colons).

The lens, not the **film, makes** a photo great. (Do not connect the two “m” sounds. Instead, pause for the comma.)

Have you seen **her? I** can't find her anywhere! (Do not connect the consonant to the vowel that follows? Instead, pause between sentences.)

9. In most American accents, the “g” on continuous (“-ing”) verbs is omitted entirely, especially when followed by a vowel sound.

I've been **calling him** all day. (Omit the “g” sound so that the last sound in “calling” is the “n.” Drop the “h” in “him” according to rule 6. Connect the consonant sound to the vowel sound.)

10. When “the” is followed by a word beginning with a vowel sound, it has a long e (/i/) sound. When it's followed by a word beginning with a consonant sound, it has a schwa sound.

Here are a few sentences you can use to give students a chance to practice these rules. Have them draw connecting lines where possible, cross out sounds they should not pronounce, and write in new sounds where applicable.

1. This is why she hates sewing. (Use rules 1, 2, 3, and 9.)
2. I never eat meat. I don't like it. (Use rules 1, 2, and 8.)
3. We're always happy when we get together, which is almost never. (Use rules 1, 2, 3, and 8.)
4. The monster in the attic ate my favorite teddy bear. (Use rules 1, 2, 3, and 10.)
5. Don't you think it's smart to floss? (Use rules 1, 2, 3, and 4.)
6. He made you cut his hair like that. (Use rules 1, 2, 5, and 6.)
7. All of the birds in the trees sing of omens and almonds and love. (Use rules 1, 2, 3, 7, and 10.)

For more practice, give students a paragraph from anything you're reading in class. Let them work alone or with a group to mark the connections and reductions. Then have them practice reading aloud, incorporating what they've learned.