

## 7 English Pronunciation Pitfalls for Chinese Speakers

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# 7 Common Pronunciation Errors for Chinese Students

## Pronunciation Error #1: **d, t, s, k**

This is a common mistake unique to Chinese people. Chinese students tend to stress the last sound of a word and produce an extra syllable.

For example, “and” becomes “an-deu.”

**Solution:** Drop the end syllable.

### Example words:

- don't
- yes
- Mcdonald's
- Scotland
- bread

## Pronunciation Error #2: *th*

This is arguably the most difficult sound for Chinese students to pronounce. The **th** sound, which involves the biting of the tongue, doesn't exist in Chinese, so a lot of Chinese people simply replace it with an **s** sound.

As a fundamental sound that's common to a large number of words in English, it's essential you get this right. It's a sound that if not pronounced correctly, can get in the way of making yourself understood.

**Solution:** Place your tongue between your upper and lower teeth and blow air out the gap between your tongue and your upper teeth.

### Example words:

- **the**                      \* mouth
- **those**                   \* south
- **throne**                 \* broth

### Exceptions:

- posthumous (pronounced like a POS-tu-mus)
- thyme (pronounced like **time**)

## Pronunciation Error #3: *on/un*

Chinese students tend to add an extra **g** at the end. So Monday becomes “Mongday,” London becomes “Longdon,” and wonder becomes “wongder.”

This is especially prevalent among Northerners.

**Solution:** The **on** sound is NOT a nasal sound. In other words, the sound does NOT come from the throat, but from the tip of your tongue when it touches the back part of your upper teeth.

**Example words:**

- Monday
- London
- wonder
- under
- thunder

## Pronunciation Error #4: *i*

Many Chinese students tend to take the short **i** sound and turn it into an **ee** sound. For example, fish becomes “feesh,” and bin becomes “been.”

**Solution:** It’s a very short **i** sound. It should only last a second or less.

**Example words:**

- in
- bin
- sin
- delicious
- crispy
- lisp
- chip
- cripple
- Milford

## Pronunciation Error #5: *rl*

This is another one of these difficult combinations. When you stick an **r** with an **l**, how do you pronounce it? Chinese students tend to pronounce it by getting rid of one of them. World becomes “weuld,” and whirl becomes “weul.”

**Solution:** Split up the world into two parts, separating them between **r** and **l**. For instance, “world” becomes “were” + “ld.” When you transition from an **r** to an **l**, your tongue **jumps**. It goes from touching the soft palate (the upper back part of your mouth), to the back of your upper teeth, and finally pronounces the **d** at the end.

**Example words:**

- earl
- pearl
- world
- whirl
- curl

## Pronunciation Error #6: *o*

**O** is another problematic one. Some Chinese students like to turn the short **o** into a long **o**. For instance, offer becomes “o-fer” and honour becomes “o-ner.”

**Solution:** The short **o** sound is like **au** in English, as in “Australia.”

**Example words:**

- offer
- honour
- honda
- bottle
- sock
- block

## Pronunciation Error #7: **ed**

There are two different ways to pronounce **ed** in English (when it's the ending of a verb). It's easy to be confused as to which way to pronounce it.

**Solution:** The first way to pronounce it sounds like a **d** or **t**, and the second way sounds like its natural form, **ed**. To determine which one to use, look at the word endings before the **ed** is added.

For it to sound like a **d** or **t**, it has to end in one of the following: c/k, f, gh, ph, j, dge, p, s, z, sh, ch, b, g, l, m, n, r, w, v, y, a, e, i, o, or u.

For it to sound like an **ed**, it has to end in one of these endings: d, t.

So the easy way to remember is: if it DOESN'T end in d or t, it's the silent, quick **d or t** sound.

**Examples:**

**d or t** sound:

- webbed
- bagged
- fanned
- graphed
- staffed
- cramped
- passed
- swished
- calmed

**ed** sound:

- padded
- batted
- wedded
- fretted
- credited
- meditated
- levitated
- graded
- sedated

