

Hey everyone, it's Hadar. Thank you so much for joining me. Today we are going to talk about the most common pronunciation challenges Hindi or Urdu speakers face when speaking English. If you are not a Hindi or Urdu speaker, then this video is still for you because a lot of the challenges that I'm going to discuss today are relevant for other speakers too.

We are going to talk about the challenge, how to overcome it with a lot of tips for effective practice. If you don't know me, my name is Hadar. Hi! I'm a non-native speaker of English. And I'm here to help you speak English with clarity, confidence, and freedom. And if you want to get more resources to help you on this English journey, come on over to my website hadarshemesh.com, or come meet me on Instagram at [@hadar.accentsway](https://www.instagram.com/hadar.accentsway). And I promise you are going to have a lot of fun.

Okay. Let's get started with 10 most common pronunciation challenge for Hindi and Urdu speakers. The first one is confusing the W sound as in 'wine' and the V sound as in 'vine'. Here's the thing. The speakers of Hindi and Urdu do know how to pronounce those two sounds: W and V. However, they are perceived as another consonant, which is somewhere in between. It's a 'wv' sound, produced with two lips that come together and create this friction. It's not a V, as the bottom lip doesn't touch the teeth. And it's not a W because the lips come too close together, and it's different from the W sound, where there is no contact between the lips. V - W.

A lot of times, when we talk about the challenges in pronunciation, we don't only talk about what happens in the mouth, the actual pronunciation, but also how it's perceived. Because if we can't hear the differences or if it's categorized as one sound, then we might confuse the sounds and use them interchangeably. Which is usually the case when it comes to Hindi or Urdu speakers.

So, the main thing is to recognize that there are two sounds and they're produced differently. The V, usually represented with a 'v' sound, is produced where the bottom lip touches the top teeth. There must be contact between the lip and the teeth, creating this friction sound. 'very', 'vine', 'every', and 'vicious'.

The W is different because the lips come close together. They don't touch and there is no friction. Technically, the back of the tongue goes up as well. W, W, 'why' - no friction, you can't hear the vibrations. 'wish', 'wedding'. Now let's switch around between the V and the W: W - V, W - V, W - V, W - V.

So, if you want to practice this, you first need to train your lips to do these two sounds on command. And going back and forth between those two sounds is really, really good. Then

you want to practice minimal pairs: words with V and words with W, that are exactly the same, except for that one sound. Like wine and vine, or 'we' and V. And then use it in context.

I have prepared for you a PDF with exercises and audio practice, that you can download for free and practice these challenges, so that you can integrate these new sounds into your speech spontaneously and confidently. You can click the link below to download the American pronunciation guide for Hindi or Urdu speakers.

The next challenge is really, really important to overcome because it immediately affects your clarity. And that is misplacing the primary stress. The primary stress is the most dominant syllable in the word. For example, in the word 'Attitude' the primary stress is on A. In the word 'engineer' the primary stress is on the final syllable 'engiNEER'.

The stress in American English is not predictable, unlike the stress in Hindi or Urdu. And then the speaker can anticipate the stress. A lot of times speakers of these languages may apply the stress patterns of those languages onto English. Or they anticipate the stress based on the patterns of their own language, and as a result, they misplace the stress, causing themselves to sound a little less clear. And then they may say 'ENgineer' instead of 'engiNEER'. Or 'MIstake' instead of 'misTAKE'. Or 'FINancial' instead of 'fiNANcial'.

Recognizing the primary stress and knowing how to stress it is crucial. I actually have a video about identifying and pronouncing the primary stress correctly. And I'm going to link to it in the description below, so you can practice it on your own. Let's move on to the next challenge.

The next challenge is simplifying diphthongs. There are five diphthongs in American English. A diphthong is a vowel that changes within the same syllable. So basically, it's two vowels that merge into one. The 'ai' as in my, 'ei' as in day, 'aw' as in now, 'ow' as in go, and 'oi' as in toy. In Hindi or Urdu, there are no diphthongs. And a lot of times it's really hard for those speakers to transition from one sound to another.

So what happens is that those speakers only pronounce the first part of the diphthong, without shifting into the second part. 'Go'. 'Only'. 'Way' instead of 'wei'. 'Vacation' instead of 'vei-kei-sh'n'. And by the way, this doesn't only happen with speakers of Hindi and Urdu, it happens in many other languages too. So, ask yourself, is this something that you do as well, if you don't speak those languages?

So, the idea is to recognize that there is a change that needs to happen within those diphthongs. 'ow'. 'gow' and not 'go'. 'wown't' and not 'won't'. Right? Because then it's going to sound like a different word. 'wown't'. I always love imagining adding a little W at the end

for the O as in go. Or a little 'y' sound for the 'ei' as in day. Like 'la(y)te' or 'pa(y)tience', and not 'patience', 'pa(y)tience'. Or 'fo(w)cus', with a W sound. Right? So, you really want to think as if you're adding another sound, and sometimes deliberately adding those consonants can really, really help.

Drill words, practice the words separately, say them again and again, and again. Record yourself, make sure that you hear the transition, and then use those words in context. First, plan it, and then try to use it intentionally when speaking freely. And if you want more tips, than make sure to download the American pronunciation guide for Hindi and Urdu speakers. The next one, and this is really interesting too, is applying the intonation patterns of Hindi-Urdu onto English. Here's the thing. In Hindi-Urdu stress is expressed by higher pitch. So, every time a word is stressed, the pitch goes up. Now, in Hindi-Urdu, there are many words that are stressed. Almost all content words are stressed in a sentence, maybe except for the last one, as well as almost all words with one syllable. That creates a pattern with a lot of stresses. A lot of pitch lifts.

In American English, the pitch goes up only for the operative words: the one word that sticks out the most. There are variations, but not too many stresses within one sentence. When Hindi-Urdu speakers apply those stress patterns into English, it causes many different words to be stressed, even words that are not supposed to be stressed. Like function words: like on, in, at, could, would, should; and even words that are less important for you to deliver the message.

In American English, only content words are stressed. And not all content words - only the content words that help you deliver the message. And when many words are stressed, it's hard to figure out what you're trying to say. What exactly your point is, what is the main message? And it takes a little longer for the person to process what it is that you're saying. Or it also might create confusion or a misinterpretation. Because they might interpret it the way they see it and not how you meant it to be and sound. Because again, we think that we're doing something, but we're using the patterns of our native language. And then it might be perceived as different by listeners who don't speak the same language as we do. In this case - native English speakers.

So, it's really important to, first, understand that not all words are stressed in English. Actually, we want to tone it down and only think of one or two keywords in a sentence, where the pitch goes up significantly. And then all the rest kinda have the same pitch with mild variations between, you know, more important words and reduced words, like function words. I have a video about intonation, and actually, I have several videos about intonation and

stress that I'm going to link in the description, and in the pronunciation guide.

The next one is breaking consonant clusters. A consonant cluster is a sequence of several consonants, that appear within the same syllable, or within the same word. Like 'texts' and 'street' and 'ribs'. Right? These are clusters. Now, Hindi and Urdu don't allow a lot of consonant clusters in words. And this is why when speakers try to say words with clusters, and they don't think about it, automatically the mouth kind of wants to break those clusters cause they don't exist in their native language, they're not allowed.

And then you may see situations where the word 'sleep' might be pronounced as a 'suh-leep' - with a schwa in the middle, or 'uh-sleep'. Or even dropping consonants, and then the word 'cost' may sound like 'cos'. Right? Dropping the T at the end. So, recognizing this is really important, understanding what your mouth needs to be doing for every single consonant. Because pronouncing the consonant itself is not a challenge - the challenge is putting those consonants together.

So, just transitioning from one consonant to another slowly, again and again and again - knowing exactly what you need to do to produce the sound - is key. And then you do it again and again, and again, and again, paying close attention to word endings, or beginning of words that have a lot of consonants in them. Again, I do think that awareness is the secret here. And again, you'll get lists of words with the audio in the guide.

The next one is the pronunciation of the R sound. In Hindi-Urdu there is no R sound as in English. The R in Hindi-Urdu - actually, there are several - is either trill; a flap, when it's between certain sounds. There's also the retroflex R, where the tip of the tongue goes up and the bottom of the tongue touches the upper palate. And there is the aspirated retroflex R, where the bottom part of the tongue touches the upper palate; air pressure is building up and everything is released with a puff, that I'm not even going to try and pronounce it because it feels impossible to me. But still I'm going to try and pronounce it.

Anyway. I need to take some Hindi lessons. Any volunteers? Let me know when the comments.

So, in each one of those R's, the tip of the tongue touches the upper palate. And in American English, the tongue doesn't touch the upper palate - it's pulled back. And this is the main thing I want you to practice or focus on, where there is no contact and you can stretch the sound and hold it out forever, for as long as you have breath. rrrred. When you trill it, you can't really hold it, it just keeps rolling. But, "red" versus 'rrred' or 'rred'. Okay? So, pay attention to those differences. I do think awareness is key.

Now, I have to say that there are many different dialects in those languages, and we need to

take that into consideration. And some sounds do exist, and some of the challenges that I'm talking about are not going to be relevant for everyone. I'm just generalizing here. Because really, like when it comes to languages, it's so individual and dialect specific that you can't address everything in one video about the 10 pronunciation challenges. Okay? So, just a little caveat here for all of you who are about to comment and say that this is not relevant to you. I know.

The next one is mispronouncing stop sounds. In Hindi-Urdu there are several different stop sounds. Let's start with a P and B. There, the aspirated P as in 'pay', that exists in English as well. Or a regular P as in a 'spy'. B versus P. Same thing happens with B. So, there is the regular B as in 'bay', and in Hindi-Urdu there is also an aspirated voiced stop sound, like 'b(h)'.

So, sometimes those speakers kind of confuse those four different consonants when it comes to the consonants of English. Here's the thing. When it comes to the P sound, when the sound is at the beginning of a word, or at the beginning of a strong syllable, then the P should be aspirated. But because there is this confusion around sounds, because the rules are not the same in English and Hindi, then what happens is that sometimes they will underpronounce the P: 'bay' instead of 'pay' – even though the P exists in Hindi-Urdu.

And then when it's unaspirated, it might sound like a B: so 'pay' might be received as 'bay'. And then they sometimes might aspirate the B sound, and that sound doesn't exist in English: like 'b(h)ay', 'p(h)ay'. Again, it's probably not the exact pronunciation, but if you speak those languages, I hope you know what I'm talking about. Okay? And let me know in the comments, how close I was to those pronunciations.

Another challenge is the T and the D – the pronunciation of those two sounds. In American English, the T and the D are produced with a tip of the tongue that touches right behind the teeth. 't' and 'd'. The T is usually aspirated: that means that there is a lot of air that comes out with a T. 't', time.

In Hindi and Urdu, the T is pronounced slightly differently, as the bottom part of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth: t, t, t, and it's not always aspirated. So then the word 't(h)ime' might sound like 'time', 'time'. Same thing with the D: 'd(h)ay' – 'day'. The quality is a little different, the word is usually very clear.

But when it comes to underpronouncing the aspirated sounds, like 'time' instead of 't(h)ime', the T might actually be perceived as a D. And I do think that shifting the placement a little bit might help the sounds sound a bit more crisp in English. So make sure that the tip of the tongue – this part – touches right above the front teeth on that little bump, it's called the

alveolar ridge. tuh, tuh, tuh. I like to think of these sounds as, you know, hearing raindrops on the window, it's really crisp and clear. t-t-t - d-d-d.

And in general, we want to pay attention to these aspirated sounds, like time, pay, cake. Even though they exist in Hindi-Urdu, most speakers don't actually apply these aspirated sounds when they're supposed to be used in English. So remember that you want to use these aspirated sounds, when the P, T, and K appear at the beginning of words, and at the beginning of strong syllables. And of course, I'm going to link to more videos about this in the description below.

The next one is mispronunciation of the /θ/ and /ð/, as in 'they' and 'think'. Here's the thing. In Hindi and Urdu, there are two consonants that are very similar, that are produced with the tip of the tongue and the teeth. And these are the aspirated dental T and D. They sound something like this: 'tah' and 'dah'. So, the air is blocked, it doesn't flow out freely like we expect from the TH sound: /θ/ versus 'tah'. Yet, they're often confused, especially because, the tongue is already on the teeth. So it feels right, and the air makes it seem like a TH, but it's not the same sound. It may still be perceived as a T or a D.

And then the word 'tahnks' might be perceived as "tanks" - with a T, versus "thanks" - with a TH. The secret here is to relax the tongue, to allow the air to pass. Again, you should be able to stretch it forever. And it's not this abrupt sound that is released all at once.

A great tip here would be to put your palm in front of your face and to feel the air coming out continuously. /θ/ - /ð/, /θ/ - /ð/. Do it again and again, until you feel that the tongue starts to relax a bit and to allow the air to flow out. In terms of the position of the tongue, that's going to be easy for you. For some speakers, it's so hard to even bring the tip of the tongue out. For you, it's easy peasy. You're already doing it. It's just about the tension and understanding that the sound is continuous, rather than a stop sound. Okay? And again, you'll find all the drills, and the words, and everything in the pronunciation guide.

The next one is a merging vowel pairs. In American English, there are similar vowel pairs, like 'sheep' and 'ship', 'pool' and 'pull', 'bed' and 'bad'. In those languages, those vowels are perceived as one vowel somewhere in the middle. So, both vowels might be pronounced the same: sheep-sheep, pool-pool, bed-bed. Instead of those nuances that you've just heard.

So, the way to understand those sounds - and I have videos about each one of those pairs, and we're going to link to it below - I don't want to overwhelm you with the explanation, you can check out the videos afterwards. But remember that there is a distinction between those two sounds. And first, you really need to hear it. sheep-ship, least-list: long-tense, relaxed-short. feet-fit. Same thing with a 'pool-pull'. Tense 'u': "pool" - longer, the tongue is higher;

“pull” – shorter, the tongue is lower. food – foot. bed – bad. The difference here is the jaw drop. Okay?

So, you want to recognize those nuances. There are more vowels in American English than in those languages. And if there are less vowels, you are likely to merge similar vowel sounds, and that might affect your clarity cause you might be saying one word and it might be perceived as another one. Usually, it doesn't happen because of context. Like if you say, you know, “I need to sheep it”, and the context is that you need to send it to someone, then no one would think that you're talking about turning it into a sheep, right?

But still, if it takes a split second for people to understand and to analyze what you're saying, it might affect how your message is perceived. And this is why it's important to become aware of it. And to be more in control of your sounds. Or at least to create more freedom for yourself in terms of the sounds that you're able to make. And then, it's your choice, and you can do whatever you want and use it whenever you need. Especially, when you recognize that people don't understand you.

Remember – mastering new sounds and understanding the pronunciation of English is a tool for you to get what you want. And to be clear, and to come across in a clear way – in a way that people want to listen to you and people will want to respond to what you have to say. So, ultimately, it's all about you and the power that you have when you communicate in English.

And as a side note, it doesn't mean that it needs to be perfect. It doesn't mean that it needs to be accentless, because there is no such thing. It doesn't mean that you need to sound like a native. It just means that these are tools that are going to help you feel more confident, and also deliver a clear message.

The last one is the pronunciation of the /ʒ/ sound as in ‘vision’. The /ʒ/ sound doesn't exist in Hindi-Urdu, and therefore a lot of speakers might substitute it with a sound that does exist, or that is easier to pronounce. For example, the Z sound or the /dʒ/ sound, that is the same, except that there's a D the beginning: /dʒ/ versus /ʒ/. And then the mispronunciation can create a confusion.

For example, in the word ‘version’, adding a ‘d’ sound would make it sound like ‘virgin’, which is a little different. So here's the thing. The /ʒ/ sound is the voiced pair of ‘sh’. To pronounce the ‘sh’ sound, the tongue goes up; it doesn't block the air, but comes up and almost touches the roof of the mouth; and the lips round a bit. And you need to release air. ‘shh’, ‘shh’. And all you need to do is activate your vocal chords, without changing anything here.

Another way to get to the sound is to pronounce the G sound, that might be easier. And then

to pause and continue from where you stopped. Without that block that we add by adding the D sound before. 'g' - /ʒ/. You're already making the sound. You just need to recognize what the tongue is doing when you hear the /ʒ/ sound, when you disassociate it from the D at the beginning. 'virgin' - 'version'.

Okay, that's it. I hope this was insightful and helpful. Remember, first you need to perceive what is causing these challenges to be challenges. And then you want to work on your pronunciation, and then you want to practice it. So you can make it your own and you want to develop the muscle memory. And then you want to use it intentionally when speaking. This is how you build pronunciation confidence. And don't forget to download the pronunciation guide for Hindi speakers.

Thank you so so much for being here. If you enjoyed this video, please click 'like' and share it with your friends. And you can also subscribe, if you haven't yet, so you can get a fun video about pronunciation or English fluency every single week. And if you want to connect even more, come and follow me on Instagram at @hadar.accentway.

Okay, that's it. Thank you so much for being here. And remember, mistakes is the only way to learn. Have a beautiful day, and I'll see you next week in the next video. Bye.