



Commonly Mispronounced English Words

(...and words that just plain look weird the first time you see them in print)

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Wait... THAT'S how you say it?!

In voice over or any other occupation that involves accurately reading aloud, your ability to get things right the first time can impress your friends, make you feel like a vocabulary superhero, and most importantly, impress clients and production professionals.

For voice actors recording material at home without direction, there's often plenty of time to reference correct pronunciation. However, for those working from home with remote direction and certainly for those working at a professional studio or agency, the flexibility to dig into an unabridged version of Webster's Dictionary might be unlikely. In some cases, the other professionals in the session may even ask you for a quick cold-read through the copy without any time for pre-reading. It's for times like these that continually familiarizing yourself with commonly mispronounced and otherwise odd-looking words can really come in handy.

There's one other important thing to think about here: *What if you've pronounced something wrong your entire life?*

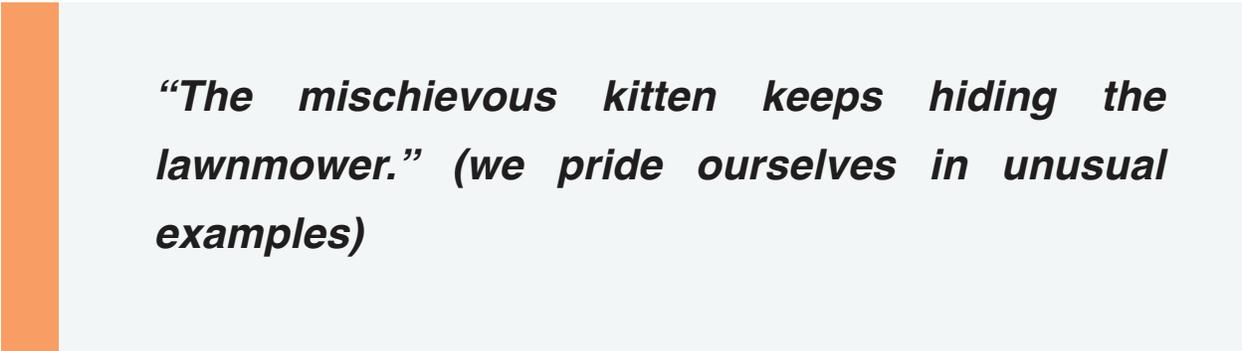
What if you've convinced yourself that your pronunciation is the dead-on, standard-setting, pinnacle example of the word, even if it isn't?

As you move forward in this ebook, don't be surprised if there may be a word or two that you have been mispronouncing for years.

Our overall goal here is to illuminate some common mistakes and offer you a chance to say it better next time!

When it comes to challenging words, we do have a favorite. So let's jump right in!

Whether it's a cat, a dog, or an unruly or sneaky friend who's always up to something, that entity may end up being referred to as (you guessed it) "mischievous." Here's a usage example:



“The mischievous kitten keeps hiding the lawnmower.” (we pride ourselves in unusual examples)

There is little doubt that there have been friend- and family-altering arguments about this word. I actually had a minor one last night, which prompted me to write this ebook first thing this morning. In my disagreement, my wife, speaking about a friend, said something along the lines of, “I think he’s a little bit miss-CHEE-vee-us.”

Unfortunately, this word is not quite as complicated as my wife, along with many many others, choose to make it. The correct pronunciation is “miss-chiv-us.” It’s a three-syllable adjective. Three darn syllables... and that’s it.

Now that we’ve illuminated our personal favorite, we hope you enjoy the rest of this ebook filled with common and not-so-common examples. Have fun and know more!

Across

EXAMPLE:

*We've never quite managed to throw a frisbee all the way **across** the ocean.*

This one is as simple as it looks - resist the urge to add a 'd' to the end. You'll only be making more work for yourself. If you make this mistake too many times, you run the risk of making your producers very a-cross with you!

✗ **Incorrect:** acrossed

✓ **Correct:** across

Affidavit

EXAMPLE:

*I had to provide an **affidavit** to my credit card company after the card was used to buy a hundred 6' tall inflatable ducks. I swear, it wasn't me!*

It's called an affidavit, even if your name is David. We'll put that in writing if you want us to!

✗ **Incorrect:** affidavid

✓ **Correct:** affidavit

Anyway

EXAMPLE:

Anyway, it's been nice to catch up, but I've gotta run if I'm gonna pick up a case of instant ramen before the store closes!

This is another example of a word that people often make more complicated than they need to. Resist the temptation to add an “s” to the end - the word is “anyway,” not “anyways!” This is one word you can't pronounce any way you want to.

✗ **Incorrect:** anyways

✓ **Correct:** anyway

Applicable

EXAMPLE:

*Turns out my department store gift card wasn't **applicable** to my new lawn mower purchase. Still, I got the nicest one I could find!*

This one takes just a little getting used to. Many folks pronounce “applicable” by placing the emphasis on the second syllable; it's technically more correct to emphasize the first syllable. We hope this new information is applicable to your career as a voice over artist!

✗ **Incorrect:** uh-PLICK-uh-ble

✓ **Correct:** APP-lick-uh-ble

Athlete

EXAMPLE:

*Our producer and coach Tom is a very serious foosball player who actually hosts a weekly podcast about it. He's quite an impressive **athlete**.*

Yes, I do run the risk of him putting coffee grounds in my food for the above example, but I couldn't resist. We love you Tom! (:

Anyway, try not to exert too much effort with this one. "Athlete" is a two-syllable word. But sometimes, in what might be an attempt to get in some extra voice workout, some folks add a third middle syllable, turning the word "athlete" into the non-existing word "ath-uh-lete."

We suggest not straining yourself with a made-up syllable, and instead take the easy (and correct) two-syllable version.

✗ Incorrect: ath-uh-lete

✓ Correct: ath-lete

Awry

EXAMPLE:

*I tried to fly my kite during the hurricane and things went a bit **awry**.*

Here we have a word that looks very different than it sounds. And if you haven't seen it in print in a while, it can throw you. The first time I saw the word written out, I thought for a moment that it must be some Australian term perhaps. Then it hit me. I guess I just always imagined a more complex spelling for this word.

✘ **Incorrect:** AHH-ree

✔ **Correct:** uh-RYE

Biopic

EXAMPLE:

*I really enjoyed watching the **biopic** about the person who invented Spam.*

Here's a fun word that many people pronounce in a manner that sounds like a description for a medical condition. The trick here is to look at what the word is actually referring to. A "biopic" is a biographical movie, or in this case, "picture." The name comes from the words "**bi**ographical" and "**pic**ture."

✘ **Incorrect:** by-AH-pick

✔ **Correct:** BIO-pick

Bury

EXAMPLE:

*Maleo birds are pretty unique - they actually dig a small pit in the sand to **bury** their eggs.*

This is one of those words that's mispronounced so frequently you might be asked to say it wrong in the studio sometimes. Still, it never hurts to know the right pronunciation!

A lot of people think the "bur" in the word "bury" rhymes with "bird," but that's not quite right. "Bury" actually rhymes with "carry" and sounds exactly the same as "berry." So, next time you're being merry drinking sherry and eating cherries on the prairie, you can rest assured that you know how to say "bury!"

✗ **Incorrect:** buh-ree

✓ **Correct:** berry

Cardsharp

EXAMPLE:

*Obviously that guy isn't a shark, but he's still a really good card player; I'd say he's **cardsharp**.*

Here's another one that's so frequently mistaken you'll likely be asked to mispronounce it. Turns out, a "card shark" isn't a thing - this whole time, we've all been mispronouncing the word "cardsharp!"

The word "cardsharp" has been said differently on a widespread basis for so long that it's now perfectly acceptable to say "card shark." Still, we thought you'd appreciate knowing where things started!

✗ **Incorrect:** card shark

✓ **Correct:** cardsharp

Cavalry

EXAMPLE:

*After losing in the first half, the Quidditch team decided it was time to call in the **cavalry**.*

The “Ps” and “Qs” aren’t a problem here. In “cavalry,” it’s all about minding your “Ls” and “Vs.” Too bad a bunch of knights on horseback aren’t around to help us pronounce things better.

✘ **Incorrect:** calvary

✔ **Correct:** cavalry

Clothes

EXAMPLE:

*We decided to put on the best **clothes** we could find before heading to the party.*

This one gets a little tricky. A lot of people think the word “clothes” is pronounced just like the word “close.” That pronunciation is alright, but it’s a little better to bring the “th” sound into the word a little bit. Think of it like the word is wearing a mostly see-through “th”-sound vest over its shirt; it might not be completely there, but it’s still noticeable.

✘ **Incorrect:** close

✔ **Correct:** clothes

*This one is a little tricky, so feel free to reference a dictionary like **Merriam Webster** for pronunciation help.*

Conch

EXAMPLE:

*I was told that you could hear the sound of the ocean inside a **conch** shell, but all it did was make my ear wet and sandy.*

Regardless of whether you hear the ocean inside a conch shell, it's important to get the pronunciation right. The "ch" at the end is pronounced like a "k," so the word sounds the same as "conk." Let's hope that getting this one right prevents you from getting conked on the head!

✗ **Incorrect:** contsch

✓ **Correct:** conk

Colonel

EXAMPLE:

*Because this is the army, if you really want to plan a Valentine's Day dance for our troop, you'd be best advised to run that idea by the **Colonel**.*

Ok, this is a word that falls into the category of words that may appear strange-looking when you encounter them. Unfortunately, if the word catches you off guard, you may accidentally pronounce it as "kuh-luhn-nuhl"... and if you do, the Colonel herself may be very unhappy.

The correct pronunciation here is "kernel." We know this one makes no sense at all! Just imagine how difficult it is for the folks who learn English as a second language...

✗ **Incorrect:** kuh-luhn-nuhl

✓ **Correct:** kernel

Coup de grâce

EXAMPLE:

*After trying to clip my cat's nails for over an hour, they finally delivered the **coup de grâce** in the form of a scratch to my face. After that, I just went to bed.*

French is a pretty crazy language. This often-mispronounced term translates literally to “blow of mercy,” and is usually used to indicate a finishing blow. It’s basically the French version of the straw that broke the camel’s back.

The only problem is, most people don’t pronounce the “ce” at the end of the word “grâce,” instead saying something that sounds sort of like “coup de grah.” Without the hard “s” sound at the end of the phrase, the word “grâce” (which means “mercy”) becomes “gras” (which means “grease” or “fat”). So unless you’re describing hitting something with a stick of butter, make sure you pronounce that “s” sound!

✗ **Incorrect:** coo de grah

✓ **Correct:** coo de grahs

Dog-eat-dog World

EXAMPLE:

*I'm not surprised someone took a bite of your donut when you weren't looking. You know what they say: it's a **dog-eat-dog world** out there.*

This phrase is used in reference to the cutthroat, selfish nature of the world, so make sure you say “dog-eat-dog” and not “doggy dog!”

✗ **Incorrect:** doggy-dog world

✓ **Correct:** dog-eat-dog world

Epitome

EXAMPLE:

*To think that anyone could handle living with 20 cats at once was the **epitome** of folly.*

This word is frequently pronounced as though it rhymes with “foam.” In reality, it rhymes more with “tummy.”

To get this one wrong would be quite the (e)pit(ome)-fall!

✗ **Incorrect:** ee-pit-tome

✓ **Correct:** ee-pit-tum-ee

Escape

EXAMPLE:

*I haven't been able to catch that kitten that keeps stealing my lawnmower. The darn thing manages to **escape** me every time!*

This word has the same common mispronunciation as the word “ask.” Remember, the “s” comes before the “c” - it’s not “eckscape,” it’s “escape!”

✗ **Incorrect:** eck-scape

✓ **Correct:** ess-scape

Especially

EXAMPLE:

*I decided to ask my friend for advice, **especially** after I learned that his grandfather has successfully escaped from jail.*

Another similar mispronunciation! The “c” or “k” sound in “especially” comes AFTER the “s” sound. Imagine if that weren’t the case - you’d be asking your friend for advice instead of asking them. That makes it sound more like you terminated your friend’s employment, or maybe worse.

Much like “nuclear” and many of the other words on this list, you can often clarify pronunciation by taking a moment to look at the word.

✗ **Incorrect:** ek-specially

✓ **Correct:** es-pecially

Espresso

EXAMPLE:

*I normally start the morning off with an **espresso** shot, but today called for vodka instead.*

This one is a little tricky. The word actually comes from the Italian word for “to express,” as espresso is supposed to express the flavors of a coffee bean in a pure and strong way. Still, there’s no hard “ck” sound anywhere.

Don’t worry too much if you get this one wrong sometimes, as the only people who’ll probably know are baristas. Still, it’s always great to know the right way to say things!

✗ **Incorrect:** eck-spresso

✓ **Correct:** ess-spresso

Et Cetera

EXAMPLE:

*I like to name my cats after famous actors: Keanu Reeves, Samuel L. Jackson, Nicole Kidman, Lucy Liu, **et cetera**.*

“Et cetera” is a Latin phrase. It translates to “and” (et) and “the rest” (cetera). Latin might be a dead language, but it’s still pretty common to use this phrase as a placeholder for a bunch of unlisted things at the end of a sentence. While it’s technically two words, it’s becoming more common to write it as one, though you’re even more likely to see it abbreviated as etc.

One thing that’s not changing, though, is the pronunciation. There’s no “ck” sound in the phrase anywhere!

✗ **Incorrect:** eck settra

✓ **Correct:** et settra

February

EXAMPLE:

*I asked what day it was and he told me it was **February** 30th. I don’t think he’s right about that.*

This is another example of a word so commonly mispronounced that you might be asked to say it incorrectly during a job, but it never hurts to know the right way to say things! “February” is pronounced exactly like it’s spelled, with two “r”s and only one “y” at the end.

✗ **Incorrect:** feb-yoo-ary

✓ **Correct:** feb-roo-ary

Federal

EXAMPLE:

*I used to think that “F” in FBI stood for fabulous, but I recently learned that it stands for **federal**.*

Remember how people tend to add extra syllables in words like “athlete” and “across?” Well, “federal” has the opposite problem - people tend to skip the middle. Remember that “federal” is a three-syllable word! That “e” in the middle deserves its time to shine, too.

✗ Incorrect: fed-ral

✓ Correct: fed-er-ral

Flautist

EXAMPLE:

*I never would have known that the **flautist** was also such a good break dancer!*

Many people pronounce “flautist” as though the first syllable, “flau,” rhymes with “plow.” While this pronunciation is very pretty and fits the descriptive of a flute player very well, it’s actually incorrect: the “flau” rhymes more with “paw.”

✗ Incorrect: fl-ow-tist

✓ Correct: flaw-tist

Forte

EXAMPLE:

*I used to think I was good at pronouncing words, but after writing this book I'm realizing it's not my **forte**.*

“Forte” is another French word that wormed its way into the English language. There’s a lot of debate as to how to actually say “forte.” It’s most commonly pronounced as though the “e” on the end produces an “ay” sound. This, however, is wrong; while that would be appropriate in Italian, the correct French pronunciation of the word rhymes with “port.”

Turns out that “e” isn’t the word’s phonetic forte.

✗ **Incorrect:** fort-ay

✓ **Correct:** fort

Founder

EXAMPLE:

*After the ship hit the iceberg, it **foundered** and sank.*

Most of us have heard of ships “floundering” as they take on water and begin to sink. Unfortunately, that’s not really a word - it’s a mispronunciation of the word “founder.” As a ship is unlikely to founder on a flounder, we like to keep the verb separate from the fish.

✗ **Incorrect:** flounder

✓ **Correct:** founder

Gala

EXAMPLE:

*I was going to go to the **gala** the other night, but then I realized I only own tee shirts as clothing.*

You'd think we'd all have this one right, given how many magazine headlines this word makes its way into. Still, a fair amount of people in the US pronounce "gala" like "gah-luh." This is the way it's pronounced in the UK, but in the US, the correct pronunciation is actually more like "gay-luh."

✗ **Incorrect:** gah-luh

✓ **Correct:** gay-luh

Gauge

EXAMPLE:

*Since I was sleeping, it was difficult to **gauge** my enthusiasm.*

Here is another case of a word that can give you reason for pause because of the way it looks in print. In some cases, the appearance of this word actually makes you wonder if you've been oversimplifying its pronunciation for years. The answer is... probably not. It is likely pronounced exactly the way you suspect it is. It just looks strange.

✗ **Incorrect:** Gow-je

✓ **Correct:** Gay-je

Genre

EXAMPLE:

*There's a lot of music I enjoy, but traditional polka is by far my favorite **genre**.
(Not true, by the way.)*

This is a word that is so frequently mispronounced that it is entirely possible that a client or production professional could hear you saying it correctly and actually direct you to say it incorrectly.

✘ **Incorrect:** jen-ruh / jon-ruh

✔ **Correct:** zhon-ruh

Note: the “z” is not pronounced as a hard syllable - it’s the same as the “s” sound in the word “vision.” You can hear the pronunciation here:

<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/pronunciation/english/genre>

Jewelry

EXAMPLE:

*I was hoping to get some new **jewelry** for Valentine’s Day, but then I remembered that my valentine is my pet cat. They’ll be getting wet food, and I’ll be getting scratched.*

Who doesn’t like jewelry? It’s cool-looking and shiny. Still, people often pronounce it wrong, as though it’s a two-syllable word instead of the three-syllable word that it actually is. Remember the middle syllable!

✘ **Incorrect:** jule-ree

✔ **Correct:** jew-el-ree

Lambaste

EXAMPLE:

*My wife **lambasted** me after I tried to put paper towels in the dishwasher to clean them and reuse them.*

The definition of lambaste is “to criticize harshly.” Careful to get the pronunciation correct, or someone might just lambaste you! This one rhymes with “paste,” not “fast.”

✗ **Incorrect:** lam-bast

✓ **Correct:** lam-baste

Liase

EXAMPLE:

*If you really enjoy words with lots of vowels, perhaps you should **liase** with someone who speaks French.*

The thing about this word is that it’s not used frequently, so its appearance may throw you off on first glance. If you’re not familiar with the word, we can begin by explaining it is not a foreign version of the word “lazy.” Instead, it actually means “to communicate or maintain contact with another person or organization.”

✗ **Incorrect:** anything different than below

✓ **Correct:** lee-ayz

Lychee

EXAMPLE:

*I was looking for peaches, but all I could find was a bunch of **lychees**.*

This is yet another word where the British and American pronunciations are different. In the UK, it's common to pronounce the word "lie-tchee," whereas Americans usually say "lee-tchee." There's not really a right or wrong pronunciation per se, but we recommend using the American version when in the US. Either way, we hope you enjoy the delicious flavor of lychee fruit!

✘ **Incorrect:** lie-tchee

✔ **Correct:** lee-tchee

Mayonnaise

EXAMPLE:

*I prefer **mayonnaise** over applesauce when it comes to putting condiments on a sandwich.*

Ever wonder why the shortened version of "mayonnaise" is "mayo?" Well, it's because the word is "mayonnaise," and not "mannaise." Pronunciation aside, I think we can all agree that mayo makes for a delicious sandwich condiment and a great french fry dipping sauce!

✘ **Incorrect:** man-naise

✔ **Correct:** may-yo-naise

Miniature

EXAMPLE:

*I like to cook little **miniature** meals to give to my pet hamster.*

We can all agree that miniature things are cute. Think about all the cutest things in the world: puppies, babies, and kittens are all miniature! The word describes such cute things that we think it's only fair to give it all the syllables it deserves. Remember that this word is 4 syllables long, not 3!

✗ **Incorrect:** min-ah-ture

✓ **Correct:** min-nee-ah-ture

Niche

EXAMPLE:

*Say what you want, but I think that applesauce fills a **niche** in the world of sandwich condiments.*

How you eat your sandwiches is up to you, but how you pronounce the word “niche” is less personal. It’s common to pronounce this word as though it rhymes with “sheesh,” and while that’s a correct pronunciation in the UK, American English specifies that “nitch” rhymes with “ditch.”

Getting this one right might carve out a niche in the VO market for you!

✗ **Incorrect:** neesh

✓ **Correct:** nitch

Nuclear

EXAMPLE:

*The chicken wings had a certain **nuclear** quality to them, so I'm heading to urgent care.*

Let's be "clear." This word literally has a "clear" ending. The three syllables in this word are "NU-klee-ar," not to be confused with "NU-kyu-lar."

Getting this one wrong could lead to you really bombing as a voice actor!

✗ **Incorrect:** NU-kyu-lar

✓ **Correct:** NU-klee-ar

Nuptial

EXAMPLE:

*I found the **nuptials** to be a little extravagant, but I really only came for free food, so I can't complain too much.*

This word is as commonly misspelled as it is mispronounced. If you look closely, you'll notice that there's only a single "u" in the word. While it's commonly pronounced "nup-chyoo-ahl," it's actually more correct to say "nup-chal."

Yeah, it seems weird. We didn't know until we wrote this book either!

✗ **Incorrect:** nup-chyoo-ahl

✓ **Correct:** nup-chal

Often

EXAMPLE:

*I don't **often** drink beer... but when I do, I feel like the most interesting man in the world.*

There's a little bit of controversy here, as the word is so commonly mispronounced that it's becoming more normal to say it incorrectly than it is to say it correctly.

We won't blame you for saying it either way, but if you really want to be a stickler, it should rhyme with "soften." The "t" doesn't really make a sound here.

✗ Incorrect: off-ten

✓ Correct: off-en

Ophthalmologist

EXAMPLE:

*If Johnny Nash's clear vision is dependent on the rain being gone, I think he should see an **ophthalmologist**.*

This is another word where taking a minute to look at the spelling can inform the correct pronunciation. See that "L" in the middle of the word? Well, the "thalm" actually rhymes with "palm."

If you're having trouble seeing the correct pronunciation of this one, you might want to go to the eye doctor...

✗ Incorrect: op-tom-ologist / oph-thom-ologist

✓ Correct: oph-thalm-ologist

Peremptory

EXAMPLE:

*No one says the word **peremptory** enough to actually know how to use it in a sentence.*

It's a little strange, but the first three letters in this word spell out "p-e-r," not "p-r-e." If you ever end up reading a script with the word "peremptory" in it, make sure you pronounce it with that in mind!

✗ **Incorrect:** pre-emp-tor-ee

✓ **Correct:** per-emp-tor-ee

Pernickety

EXAMPLE:

*After the fifth time I measured the margins of my cover letter with a ruler, my husband said I was being a little **pernickety**.*

This word is so commonly mispronounced that it's actually become totally acceptable to say it either way, but we thought you might want to know the original. The original word was spelled "pernickety" and comes from Scotland, but Americans began adding an extra "s" about a century ago and it just stuck.

✗ **Incorrect:** purse-nickety

✓ **Correct:** per-nickety

Perspire

EXAMPLE:

*When I realized I wasn't sure how to pronounce the word, I began to **perspire**.*

As with “peremptory,” note the order of the “e” and the “r” in the beginning here: it’s perspire, not prespire!

Still, we hope you don’t sweat it too much if you get this one wrong every once in a while.

✘ **Incorrect:** pre-spire

✔ **Correct:** per-spire

Prescription

EXAMPLE:

*My friend told me that she thinks space aliens are possibly running the world, so I politely suggested that she see a doctor to get a **prescription** for reality.*

This word has the exact opposite problem as the last couple entries in this ebook. In theory, it looks easy enough. Many people, however, inadvertently change the “pre” (which is correct) into a “per” (which is not).

✘ **Incorrect:** per-scription

✔ **Correct:** pre-scription

Prerogative

EXAMPLE:

*They told me how to say the word correctly, but I told them it was my **prerogative** to get it wrong if I wanted to.*

This one is a bit of a tongue twister. It's become pretty common to pronounce this word completely leaving out the first "r," as though it's just "perogative." While that's certainly easier to say, we're actually supposed to pronounce that first "r." It takes a little practice to get it right, but there are plenty of examples online to help you out!

✗ **Incorrect:** pear-ogative / per-ogative ✓ **Correct:** prer-ogative

Probably

EXAMPLE:

*The pilots **probably** know what they're doing, right?*

This is another word that people often try to simplify - remember, it's 3 syllables, not 2! You probably don't need to worry too much if you get it wrong, though. You can always re-record!

✗ **Incorrect:** proolly / prob-lee ✓ **Correct:** prob-ahb-lee

Pronunciation

EXAMPLE:

*What a coincidence to find this word in a book about **pronunciation!***

Pretty meta, right? Luckily, this one is easy - people tend to make it harder than it is. Make sure the second syllable uses the vowel sound of a “u” and not an “ou.”

✗ **Incorrect:** pro-nounce-iation

✓ **Correct:** pro-nunce-iation

Queue

EXAMPLE:

*I guess it's my lucky day. Cleaning the cat litter box is next in my household tasks **queue**.*

We included this one because it just simply looks odd. It's also not the most friendly word to spell, as my computer reminded me while I was typing this.

This one can trip you up if you haven't seen it written out in a while. Though the word looks complex or like a mistake was made by someone accidentally repeating letters, the pronunciation is easy.

✗ **Incorrect:** kwu

✓ **Correct:** cue

Realtor

EXAMPLE:

*I asked the **realtor** to find me a house with no kitchen, since I prefer to eat out.*

Literally 5 minutes ago, Laura on our team walked into my office to recommend a real estate attorney to my wife and I to help us refinance our home. She threw in that the attorney's wife is a "ree-lah-torr," to which I replied, "Thanks, you just gave me another word example for this ebook."

Here is yet another example where knowing how the word is spelled will give you all the information you need to determine how it's pronounced. Remember, it's R-E-A-L, not R-E-L-A!

✘ **Incorrect:** ree-lah-torr

✔ **Correct:** ree-uhl-torr

Thanks, Laura!

Recur

EXAMPLE:

*It's a **recurring** theme in this book that the example word usages are pretty silly.*

Here's one that's easier than most people make it out to be! If you take a minute to look at the spelling, its pronunciation should be pretty obvious: "ree-cur." It might be tempting to pronounce it like "re-oc-cur," but that's more work than you need to do!

✘ **Incorrect:** ree-oc-cur

✔ **Correct:** ree-cur

Regime

EXAMPLE:

*The zoo is really run by the polar bears. They've got quite the **regime** going.*

A word so short, yet so easy to mispronounce. It's got two tricky little bits in it.

First, take a look at the first two letters: "R-E." The vowel sound here is the hard "A" sound you hear in words like "pay" and "same," not the soft "i" sound you hear in words like "it" and "pin."

Second, that "g" is pronounced the same way the "g" in "genre" is. Think of it as sounding like the "s" in the word "vision" - almost like a "zh" sound.

✗ **Incorrect:** rih-jeem / ray-jeem / rih-zheem ✓ **Correct:** ray-zheem

Remuneration

EXAMPLE:

*The kitten that kept stealing my lawnmower has begun mowing my lawn, and now she wants **remuneration**.*

This word is longer than most, but luckily it's not that hard to pronounce correctly. The only tricky part is the "u:" it makes a "yoo" sound, not an "oo" sound.

✗ **Incorrect:** re-moo-neration ✓ **Correct:** re-myoo-neration

Salmon

EXAMPLE:

*The lawn-mowing kitten wants me to pay her in freshly caught **salmon**.*

Most people get this word right, but we put it on this list anyway because we still think it's a little weird. The "L" is totally silent!

Don't go fishing for reasons to make this one harder to pronounce than it naturally is.

✗ **Incorrect:** sal-mon

✓ **Correct:** sam-mon

Segue

EXAMPLE:

*I'm not entirely sure how to **segue** from an example about a kitten mowing lawns into an example usage of the word "segue."*

Like "awry," this is a word that just looks wrong. The pronunciation is simple (it's really just "segway"), and we all use it enough to know of the word, but we don't write it down enough for the spelling to really make sense.

✗ **Incorrect:** seg-yoo

✓ **Correct:** seg-way

Sherbet

EXAMPLE:

*I couldn't find any fresh salmon, so I got the kitten **sherbet** instead.*

Yet another example of a word we constantly make more complicated than necessary. If you look closely, you'll notice that the word only contains a single "r," and that it is before the "b," not the "t." As you might expect from that spelling, it's pronounced "sherbet," not "sherbert."

✗ **Incorrect:** sher-bert

✓ **Correct:** sher-bet

Silicon

EXAMPLE:

***Silicon** is an element on the periodic table.*

The confusion around silicon comes from the fact that there's also a common substance used for implants and kitchen tools called silicone. Silicon is the stuff they use in computer chips. They're different words used to describe different substances, but they're pretty easy to confuse!

✗ **Incorrect:** sili-CONE

✓ **Correct:** sili-CON

Sneaked

EXAMPLE:

*This kitten is really growing on me. I **sneaked** out to get her some more sherbet yesterday.*

You might be wondering why a word as simple as “sneaked” made it onto a list of difficult-to-pronounce words. Well, we grant that it’s easy to pronounce; the tricky part about this one is remembering to use it.

The thing is, “snuck” is technically not a word! People use it enough to understand it, but “sneaked” is the proper past-tense term.

✗ **Incorrect:** snuck

✓ **Correct:** sneaked

So

EXAMPLE:

*My mom gave me permission, **so** I can go to the sleepover after all.*

Here’s another one you’re probably wondering about. “So” doesn’t seem very hard to pronounce, after all. And you’re right, but still, it’s pretty common to make this one a little more complicated by adding a soft “s” sound to the end, making it rhyme with “hose.” Remember that it’s just as simple as it looks!

✗ **Incorrect:** sose

✓ **Correct:** so

Solder

EXAMPLE:

*Now the kitten is stealing my plumbing tools and **soldering** all my pipes together.*

This word has a spelling that just plain makes no sense. The “L” is silent and the first syllable rhymes with “paw.” Why oh why must it be spelled this way?

✗ **Incorrect:** sol-der

✓ **Correct:** saw-der

Status

EXAMPLE:

*How long is this book of words, and when will it end? **Status** report?*

Here, we find another word with different English and American pronunciations. It’s common in the US to say sta-tus (such that the “sta” uses the “a” vowel sound from “apple”), whereas in the UK it’s more common to say “stay-tus.” The UK version is formally more correct, but you’re probably good to say either.

✗ **Incorrect:** stah-tus

✓ **Correct:** stay-tus

Subtle

EXAMPLE:

*I thought I was being **subtle** about all of the sherbet I've been buying for my new kitten friend, but my wife just asked me about it.*

Like “awry” and “segue,” “subtle” is a word we use and say all the time, but we rarely write down. Unfortunately, that lack of practice makes it feel so wrong... why is there a “b” in the spelling of this word? We don’t know, but we do know that “b” is silent!

✗ **Incorrect:** sub-tle / sub-dle

✓ **Correct:** suh-dle

Supposedly

EXAMPLE:

***Supposedly**, my wife isn't interested in adopting this kitten. But I know she's just lying.*

Here’s another example of a word we can look at and deduce pronunciation. It’s fairly common for people to say “supposably,” but if you look closely, you’ll notice that it’s spelled with a “d,” not a “b.”

Supposedly, getting the pronunciation of this word correct will do great things for your life!

✗ **Incorrect:** suppose-ab-lee

✓ **Correct:** suppose-ed-lee

Sword

EXAMPLE:

He **sword** he would be there on time.

JUST KIDDING. REAL EXAMPLE:

*“Just because you have the biggest **sword** does not mean people will always be impressed.”*

Forget about it. And in this case, the “it” we want you to forget about is the “w” in the word sword. It is not pronounced. That’s right, it’s a silent “w.”

Do you remember learning about silent “w” usage in third grade? Me neither! Nonetheless, it’s a real thing, at least in this case, and getting it wrong can cut like a knife.

✗ Incorrect: sword

✓ Correct: sord

Take for granted

EXAMPLE:

*This little kitten is so cute and helpful, mowing my lawn and doing my plumbing. I don’t want to **take her for granted**, so I try to let her know it’s appreciated.*

Note here that the final word of the phrase is “granted” (as a wish might be) and not “granite” (like the stone). We’ll grant you forgiveness if you weren’t aware, though!

✗ Incorrect: take for granite

✓ Correct: take for granted

Tenet

EXAMPLE:

*It's a **tenet** of my way of life that cute kittens get sherbet.*

Remember that a tenet is a doctrine, dogma, or foundational belief. A tenant is a renter of real estate or property. A tenant might have a tenet, but a tenet will never have a tenant. Make sure you remember the difference!

✗ **Incorrect:** ten-ant

✓ **Correct:** ten-et

Tenterhooks

EXAMPLE:

*The suspense of learning how all these words are properly pronounced is keeping me on **tenterhooks**!*

Tenterhooks are hooks on a frame used to dry clothes without allowing the clothes to shrink. Hanging on them might leave you tender in spots, but it won't change the pronunciation of the word. There are no "Ds" in "tenterhooks" to be found.

✗ **Incorrect:** ten-der-hooks

✓ **Correct:** ten-ter-hooks

Triathlon

EXAMPLE:

*My wife said I could keep the lawn-mowing kitten if I run a **triathlon** with her. I've been training for weeks now.*

Here's another word people try to make more complicated. Like "athlete," there's no syllable between the "th" sound and the "L" sound, no matter what people think.

✗ **Incorrect:** tri-ath-uh-lon

✓ **Correct:** tri-ath-lon

Turmeric

EXAMPLE:

*When I put applesauce on sandwiches, I like it to be spiced with **turmeric**.*

Pay careful attention to that first "r" in "turmeric." It deserves to be heard!

✗ **Incorrect:** too-mer-ick

✓ **Correct:** tur-mer-ick

Utmost

EXAMPLE:

*My wife had the **utmost** respect for me after actually training for that triathlon, so we ended up adopting the kitten after all. I named her Tenterhooks.*

As much as it feels like it should be said “upmost,” there are no “Ps” in this word. Pay the utmost attention to the spelling, and you’ll nail the pronunciation!

✗ **Incorrect:** up-most

✓ **Correct:** ut-most

Valet

EXAMPLE:

*In celebration of our new kitten, my wife and I went out to a fancy dinner at a hotel. We used the **valet** to park the car.*

We didn’t put this one on the list to point out a wrong pronunciation as much as to point out all the correct pronunciations. You can say VA-lay, va-LAY, or even VA-let, and they’re all totally fine! Although people might correct you if you use the latter, there really is no wrong way to say the word “valet.”

✗ **Incorrect:** there really isn’t one

✓ **Correct:** va-LAY / VA-lay / VA-let

Voluptuous

EXAMPLE:

*I sank into my bed's **voluptuous** warmth after dinner and quickly fell asleep with a kitten on my chest.*

Here's another word where a quick look at the spelling will tell you all you need to know about its pronunciation. There are no "Ms" to be found in the word "voluptuous!"

✗ **Incorrect:** vol-ump-tuous

✓ **Correct:** vol-up-tuous

Wheelbarrow

EXAMPLE:

*After adopting Tenterhooks, the kitten has begun doing **wheelbarrow** chores as well! I love this little kitty cat.*

Remember, wheelbarrow, not wheelbarrel. It's a pretty easy mistake to make! Luckily, a simple pronunciation mistake won't send you barreling towards a bitter end in the voice over field.

✗ **Incorrect:** wheel-barrel

✓ **Correct:** wheel-barrow

Way

EXAMPLE:

*Tenterhooks has been a wonderful feline addition to our family, but we've got a **way** to go as far as training her to use the litter box is concerned.*

As weird as it sounds, “ways” is technically an informal word in every case. If you're trying to be a stickler, stick with the singular: “way.”

Don't worry, we're almost through the alphabet! You don't have a way to go before being done with this book.

✘ **Incorrect:** ways

✔ **Correct:** way

Zenith

EXAMPLE:

*The sun was at its **zenith** and Tenterhooks the kitten was mowing the lawn once more.*

It's common to pronounce this one as “zeh-nith,” but the first syllable should really rhyme with “see.” Luckily, it's not a very common word, so you shouldn't have to worry about it very much!

✘ **Incorrect:** zeh-nith

✔ **Correct:** zee-nith

WHEW! THAT'S A LOT OF COMMONLY MISPRONOUNCED WORDS!

Congratulations! You've made it all the way through our first list of commonly mispronounced words. We hope you learned a little along the way and enjoyed reading some of our silly examples. I know we sure learned a bit about different pronunciations in the research we did to put this book together.

If you're looking for more mispronounced words to learn about, check out *Don't Get Me Wrong Vol. 2: Cities and Places*. In that book, we'll explore the world and find a whole lot of really interesting places with tricky or hard-to-pronounce names. And don't be afraid to check out the other books on the Voice Coaches website! There's a lot of great content here, especially for anyone interested in venturing into the voice over industry. **You can find an entire selection of complimentary resources at www.voicecoaches.com.**

Thanks for reading, and we hope you find your newfound pronunciation knowledge helpful!