

DON'T

GET

ME

WRONG

VOLUME 2

Commonly Mispronounced Places

A SERVICE TO YOU (AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC) BY
voicecoaches

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, make a good impression with 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 a pronunciation investigation 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?

Our first eBook on this topic, “Don’t Get Me Wrong: Commonly Mispronounced Words,” was our initial attempt to address this issue and provide a resource for voice actors—and, really, anyone in the general public—looking to nail down their pronunciation of the trickiest words. And while that book has been a resounding success, we realized pretty quickly after we published it that it’s only a part of the solution. We quickly decided that we needed to make a guide for commonly mispronounced places as well!

As with our first volume of commonly mispronounced words, we know this isn’t a comprehensive list. There are so many different places and words in the world that it would be impossible to include all of the tricky ones in any one place!

If you live in or know of a place with a tough-to-pronounce name that didn’t make this list, our apologies... hopefully we can include that place in our next edition! That said, we hope that you enjoy and learn something from the following pages. Happy reading!

Boise, ID

EXAMPLE:

*Did you know that **Boise** is nicknamed the City of Trees?*

When you're not calling it the City of Trees, it's important to get that pronunciation right!

✗ Incorrect: boys

✓ Correct: BOY-zee

Brisbane, Australia

EXAMPLE:

It's winter here in the US, so I'm taking a beach vacation down in Brisbane to get away from the cold weather.

In addition to being known for some of the most beautiful beaches in the world, Brisbane has a notoriously tricky-to-pronounce name.

✗ Incorrect: BRIS-bane

✓ Correct: BRIS-bin

Buena Vista, GA

EXAMPLE:

I hear that the Buena Vista in Georgia is beautiful this time of year.

There are a lot of towns called Buena Vista throughout the world—after all, it is Spanish for “good view.” Still, the Buena Vista in Georgia does things a little differently from the rest pronunciation-wise.

✗ **Incorrect:** BWAYN-a VEES-ta
(though this is correct in other places with the same name!)

✓ **Correct:** BYOON-ah VIS-ta

Cannes, France

EXAMPLE:

One day, I hope to go to the Cannes film festival.

Cannes, France is famous for good reason. It has some of the world’s greatest weather, most beautiful beaches, and greatest views. It’s the French riviera, after all. Still, “Cannes” gives a lot of English speakers trouble when it comes to pronunciation.

✗ **Incorrect:** CANS, CAN-nes, CAN-nay

✓ **Correct:** CAN

Des Moines, IA

EXAMPLE:

Des Moines is Iowa's capital city!

Des Moines is an easy city name to pronounce, as long as you remember not to make any "S" sounds!

✗ **Incorrect:** des MOYN-es, duh MOYNS ✓ **Correct:** duh MOYN

La Jolla, CA

EXAMPLE:

I'm hoping to retire in La Jolla one day. I hear it's a beautiful California beach town.

Beautiful weather year round? Check. Gorgeous beaches everywhere you look? Check. Proximity to great cities like Los Angeles and San Diego? Check. Easily pronounceable name? ...well, maybe not.

✗ **Incorrect:** la-joll-uh, la-hole-uh ✓ **Correct:** la-hoy-uh

Lafayette, LA

EXAMPLE:

*I drove through Lafayette last year when I was headed to New Orleans for Mardi Gras.
It was a beautiful town!*

Like some of the other names on this list, there are a lot of cities and towns across the world called “Lafayette,” but the one in Louisiana isn’t pronounced like any of the others.

✗ **Incorrect:** lah-fay-YET, lah-fie-YET

✓ **Correct:** lah-fee-YET

Leicester, England

EXAMPLE:

Leicester is home to one of the best rugby teams in the world.

In addition to having excellent rugby players, Leicester has a name that looks very difficult to pronounce when it is, in fact, quite easy to say. Just ignore the “ice” in the middle.

✗ **Incorrect:** anything other than the correct way

✓ **Correct:** LEH-str

Louisville, KY

EXAMPLE:

I'm going to take my donkey to Louisville and see if they'll let her into the Kentucky Derby.

Louisville, KY is a pretty interesting place. Having spent some time there, I can tell you that the locals and people in the know are very particular about how their city is pronounced. So let's make sure to get it right!

✗ **Incorrect:** loo-iss-ville

✓ **Correct:** LOO-uh-vuhl

**The above pronunciation applies specifically to the Louisville in Kentucky. Louisville in Colorado, for example, is pronounced "loo iss ville."*

Kiev, Ukraine

EXAMPLE:

It's not that well known, but I hear the beer made in Kiev is delicious!

You'd think a city with a 4-letter name wouldn't be that tough to pronounce. Still, us English-speakers tend to make it a little more complicated than it should be.

✗ **Incorrect:** key-ev

✓ **Correct:** keev

Kissimmee, FL

EXAMPLE:

I'm bringing my boyfriend to Kissimmee, FL... I hope he kisses me there!

We've no doubt that Kissimmee is a very beautiful and romantic town, but it's important to remember that the name isn't KISS-ih-mee.

✗ **Incorrect:** KISS-ih-mee

✓ **Correct:** kuh-SIM-mee

Marseille, France

EXAMPLE:

The beaches in Marseille are said to be some of the most beautiful in the world.

Yet another city with a French name that us English speakers can have a tough time pronouncing! Remember, the second syllable of this city's name sounds like "say."

✗ **Incorrect:** anything other than the correct way

✓ **Correct:** mar-SAY

Olathe, KA

EXAMPLE:

Olathe is just southwest of Kansas City.

This one can be a little tricky. It might not be very long, but it's actually pronounced with three syllables! That "e" on the end will get you if you don't know about it.

✗ **Incorrect:** oh-LAITH

✓ **Correct:** oh-LAITH-uh

Patchogue, NY

EXAMPLE:

Did you know that Billy Idol lived in Patchogue for a while in the 50s and 60s?

Patchogue is a beautiful seaside town on Long Island in southern New York. It's also a town with a pretty tricky name!

✗ **Incorrect:** anything other than the correct way

✓ **Correct:** PATCH-hog

Poughkeepsie, NY

EXAMPLE:

I was driving around the Hudson Valley when I came across the town of Poughkeepsie. It was really nice!

If you think people from New York City have a distinct accent, wait until you get into how the upstate towns are pronounced. This one can be pretty tricky!

✗ **Incorrect:** anything other than the correct way ✓ **Correct:** puh-KIP-see

Raleigh, NC

EXAMPLE:

My friend just got a job in the North Carolina Research Triangle. She's moving to Raleigh next month.

Raleigh looks pretty easy to pronounce, but that “eigh” at the end might throw you off. Remember, this city’s name rhymes with “Dolly”!

✗ **Incorrect:** RAH-lay, rah-LAY ✓ **Correct:** RAH-lee

Sault Ste. Marie, MI

EXAMPLE:

I hear Sault Ste. Marie is really cold during the wintertime. That makes sense, since it's in northern Michigan.

“Sault Ste. Marie” comes from an old French phrase that meant “Saint Marie’s Falls.” The original French pronunciation stuck with the name through all this time, making it a little tricky in English!

✗ **Incorrect:** SALT saint mar-EE

✓ **Correct:** SOO saint mar-EE

Schenectady, NY

EXAMPLE:

Did you know that Voice Coaches' headquarters is in the Capital Region of New York? When I visited to get my demo done, I stayed in a casino hotel in Schenectady.

Fun fact: the word “Schenectady” comes from an old Mohawk word meaning “beyond the pines”... in fact, Schenectady was featured in a 2012 crime flick called “The Place Beyond the Pines”!

✗ **Incorrect:** anything other than the correct way ✓ **Correct:** skuh-NECK-tuh-DEE

Spokane, WA

EXAMPLE:

Did you know that the forests around Spokane are home to a quarter of the world's white pine tree population?

Spokane is a city in northeast Washington state known for beautiful views, nice people, and proximity to some of the craziest forested terrain on the planet. It's also known for having a really strange pronunciation!

✗ **Incorrect:** spoh-KANE

✓ **Correct:** spoh-CAN

Toronto, CA

EXAMPLE:

Many people don't know that Toronto is actually the fourth largest city in North America, after NYC, Los Angeles, and Mexico City.

Despite being spelled with two "t"s, the locals in the Toronto area know only to pronounce the first one. Luckily, they're Canadians, so they won't be too hard on you if you get things wrong.

✗ **Incorrect:** tor-RON-toe

✓ **Correct:** tor-RON-oh

Tucson, AZ

EXAMPLE:

I just learned that Savannah Guthrie, host of the Today Show, is from Tucson!

The name “Tucson” has a very interesting history, dating back to a Tohono O’odham name for a local mountain. The mountain had a base made of dark stone and a mountaintop made of a lighter shade of earth, so the Native Americans called it “Tu-uk-so-on,” which translates roughly to “black base.” When Europeans first settled there, they took on the same name, which has morphed through the years into what we know today.

✗ Incorrect: anything other than the correct way **✓ Correct:** TOO-sahn

Versailles, France

EXAMPLE:

One day, I'd like to see the palace in Versailles.

Versailles is home to one of the most extravagantly luxurious buildings ever built by humans. It also has a name that can be a little weird to pronounce if you aren't familiar with French phonetics.

✗ Incorrect: anything other than the correct way **✓ Correct:** ver-SIGH

Wilkes-Barre, PA

EXAMPLE:

Just to the north of Wilkes-Barre, there's a small town called Forty Fort.

Wilkes-Barre is named after a couple of politicians from England and Ireland, but the name has evolved in pronunciation over the years. It's no longer pronounced like the names of the original politicians were!

✗ **Incorrect:** anything other than the correct way ✓ **Correct:** WILKS-berry

Worcester, MA

EXAMPLE:

My biology teacher used to call something's center of mass its "Worcester." He really liked dad jokes.

Along with being near the center of the state of Massachusetts, Worcester is also a city (and a sauce) with a notoriously difficult-to-pronounce name.

✗ **Incorrect:** anything other than the correct way ✓ **Correct:** WUH-stir