

***DESCRIBING SPOKEN ENGLISH.***

***An introduction***

**Charles W. Kreidler**

ROUTLEDGE  


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# Describing Spoken English

“This excellent book offers unmatched coverage of all aspects of English pronunciation, including stress and intonation.”

Larry Trask, *University of Sussex*

*Describing Spoken English* provides a practical and descriptive introduction to the pronunciation of contemporary English. It requires no prior knowledge of phonetics or phonology.

Charles W. Kreidler examines the main varieties of English in the world today. He focuses on the elements common to all native-speaker varieties of English and presents the differences as minor variations on a theme.

The book is divided into twelve chapters which cover the following subjects:

- speech production
- principles of phonological analysis
- consonants
- the vowel systems of different varieties of the language
- syllable structure
- strong and weak syllables
- phonological processes in connected speech
- stress in simple words and compounds
- tone units and utterances
- the role of accent in discourse
- intonation and rhythm
- the interrelations of morphology and phonology

Each topic is presented in an accessible, jargon-free style. Chapters are clearly structured, with summaries, bibliographies, and exercises to encourage active participation.

This textbook will be essential reading for undergraduate and post-graduate students of English language and linguistics.

**Charles W. Kreidler** is Emeritus Professor of Linguistics at Georgetown University. His publications include *The Dynamics of Language* (1971) and *The Pronunciation of English* (1989).





LONDON AND NEW YORK

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**An introduction**

**Charles W.Kreidler**

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*For Carol*



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## Preface

This is a description of present-day English pronunciation. It aims to describe the principal native-speaker varieties of English, showing the phonological elements shared by all varieties of the language and setting out specific differences against a framework of commonality. The book is intended to be a text for undergraduate and postgraduate students whose field of study includes linguistics and/or English language, and for those who are preparing to teach English as a second or foreign language. It should be useful to both native speakers and those who have acquired the language through formal instruction.

I assume no previous knowledge of phonetic description or phonological principles, which are introduced in the second and third chapters, respectively. I have tried to make the book a useful tool for learning by providing an abundance of data words, phrases, sentences—and exercises that call on students to participate continually in the development of topics, mainly by leading them to examine their own pronunciation.

I am grateful to anonymous readers of the manuscript for valuable suggestions and to the staff of Routledge for their expert care in turning the manuscript into a book. Responsibility for the contents rests with me, of course.

C.W.K.

Preface



# Symbols and typographic conventions

Every academic discipline has its own technical terminology, and a book like this one also requires special symbols to indicate features of the spoken language. The terms and symbols used in this text are explained as they are introduced, but an overall account of them here may be useful.

All technical terms appear in **bold type** when they first occur or are discussed in detail, and all are listed in the Index.

To describe pronunciation we need examples of **utterances**, relatively short, meaningful stretches of speech that have been produced or might be produced by some speaker of English and understood by other speakers of the language. Such utterances appear frequently in this text and are always within double quotation marks (“...”). In addition, we often cite words, phrases, and sentences that illustrate some particular point. These are in italics when they are part of the running text—part of a paragraph—but are in ordinary type when they appear in columns apart from the running text.

Chapter 2, introducing the elements of phonetics, uses the symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet for speech sounds, each symbol enclosed in square brackets. In Chapter 3, dealing with the sound system of English, the IPA symbols, somewhat modified, appear within slant lines to indicate the phonemes of English.

Chapter 5 introduces twenty-four key words, each of which has a different vowel and stands for all the words that might contain that vowel. These are in small capitals (CHICK, STEP, BAT, etc.).

## SYMBOLS AND TYPOGRAPHIC CONVENTIONS

In Chapter 5 we also introduce the use of acute (´) and grave (`) accent marks over vowel letters to indicate different degrees of syllable prominence. Beginning with Chapter 8 arrows, ↑ and ↓, are used to show rising and falling intonation, respectively. Chapter 11 introduces more diacritics for intonation: ↗ for a short rise, ↘ for a short fall, circumflex (^) for rise-fall, caron (ˇ) for fall-rise, and a small raised circle (°) for high onset.