

Minimal Pairs Pronunciation Activity

The following activity uses minimal pairs to help students learn to distinguish between seemingly alike sounds or sounds that are usually difficult to pronounce for non-native speakers of English.

Activity Steps:

Part ONE: Purpose: Becoming familiar with vocabulary

1. Teacher reads the sentences and students circle the one word from the pair they hear. *Note:* It is important that the students do not read the sentences prior to the activity or they may use the context to figure out which words are correct.
2. Teacher writes the words the students chose on the board to check accuracy.
3. Teacher reads the words and students repeat.
4. Students exchange the words by reading them to each other. They aren't allowed to translate, spell, or say the words in sentences. The task is to ask/read, pronounce the words to one's best ability.
5. Students compare what they wrote.
6. Teacher writes minimal pairs on the board, reads.
7. Students repeat, confirm the meaning of the words and create sentences with practiced words.

Circle the words you hear:

1. Your grandmother would like you to **SING / THING** for her.
2. If you **PASS / PATH** a supermarket, could you get me some milk?
3. Don't worry about a **SING / THING** - it's all under control.
4. Don't worry! It's just a **MOUSE / MOUTH**.
5. They followed the **PASS / PATH** until they came to a gate.
6. I **SINK / THINK** it is important to learn English.
7. Julie was **SICK / THICK** yesterday.
8. This rain could **SINK / THINK** our plans for the barbecue.
9. You shouldn't put so much food in your **MOUSE / MOUTH** at once.
10. The sauce was now a sticky **MASS / MATH** at the bottom of the pan.
11. The walls are two metres **SICK / THICK**.
12. **MASS / MATH** is my favourite subject.

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12. **MASS / MATH** is my favourite subject.

Student A:

1. SING	2.	3. MATH
4.	5. SICK	6.
7. PATH	8.	9. THINK
10.	11. MOUSE	12.

Student B:

1.	2. SINK	3.
4. THICK	5.	6. MASS
7.	8. THING	9.
10. PASS	11.	12. MOUTH

Circle the words you hear:

1. I wouldn't **DARE / THERE** have a party in my flat in case the neighbours complained.
2. I've known the Browns for a long time. **THEY / DAY** are very nice people.
3. They're coming next week, **DOUGH / THOUGH** I don't know which day.
4. The rest of the class positively **SEED / SEETHE** with jealousy when Julia won the award.
5. She kneaded the **DOUGH / THOUGH** and left it to rise.
6. **DARE / THERE** is that book you were looking for.
7. The farmers grow these crops for **SEED / SEETHE**.
8. His main income comes from **BREEDING / BREATHING** cattle.
9. The kids are watching TV in the **DEN / THEN**.
10. The instructor told us to **BREED / BREATHE** in deeply and then **BREED / BREATHE** out slowly.
11. We leave the **THEY / DAY** after tomorrow.
12. Give it to me next week - I won't have time to read it until **DEN / THEN**.

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12. Give it to me next week - I won't have time to read it until **DEN / THEN**.

Student A:

1. THEY	2.	3. DOUGH
4.	5. BREATHE	6.
7. SEED	8.	9. DARE
10.	11. THEN	12.

Student B:

1.	2. BREED	3.
4. THERE	5.	6. DEN
7.	8. SEETHE	9.
10. THOUGH	11.	12. DAY

Circle the words you hear:

1. I don't have any cash - can I put this on my credit **CARD / GUARD**?
2. She poured some milk into a **CLASS / GLASS**.
3. I won the first **CAME / GAME**, and then lost the next two.
4. You said we **COULD / GOOD** watch TV when we finished our homework.
5. She gave the whole **CLASS / GLASS** extra homework for a week.
6. There are **CARDS / GUARDS** posted at every entrance.
7. Did you have a **COULD / GOOD** time at the party?
8. She **CAME / GAME** on time.
9. Do you **CRATE / GREAT** her at night?
10. It's freezing **COLD / GOLD** today.
11. It's **CRATE / GREAT** to hear from you!
12. He's running so well - surely he'll take the **COLD / GOLD**.

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Student A:

1. CLASS	2.	3. GAME
4.	5. GUARD	6.
7. COLD	8.	9. GOOD
10.	11. CRATE	12.

Student B:

1.	2. GREAT	3.
4. GOLD	5.	6. COULD
7.	8. GLASS	9.
10. CAME	11.	12. CARD

Circle the words you hear:

1. Bring as much food as you can - the **MALL / MORE**, the better.
2. If this country goes to **WALL / WAR** we will have to face the fact that many people will die.
3. He's six feet **TALL / TORE**.
4. Athletes have to learn how to **FALL / FOUR** without hurting themselves.
5. Don't throw your apple **CALL / CORE** on the floor!
6. We had to climb over a ten-foot **WALL / WAR** to get into the garden.
7. I **TALL / TORE** my skirt on the chair as I stood up.
8. There are plans to build a new **MALL / MORE** in the middle of town.
9. She has four children, **ALL / OR** under the age of five.
10. Do you think we should **CALL / CORE** the police?
11. Most animals have **FALL / FOUR** legs.
12. Is it Tuesday **ALL / OR** Wednesday today?

Circle the words you hear:

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12. Is it Tuesday **ALL / OR** Wednesday today?

Student A:

1. WALL	2.	3. TALL
4.	5. MORE	6.
7. CALL	8.	9. OR
10.	11. FOUR	12.

Student B:

1.	2. MALL	3.
4. ALL	5.	6. FALL
7.	8. WAR	9.
10. TORE	11.	12. CORE

Circle the words you hear:

1. Do you want this or shall I throw it in the **bin / bean**?
2. Children who stay away from school do **it / eat** for different reasons.
3. Chairs, sofas and benches are different types of **sit / seat**.
4. Before painting, **fill / feel** in all the cracks in the plaster.
5. She **hit / heat** her thumb with the hammer.
6. Coffee **bins / beans** are the bean-like seeds of the coffee tree.
7. We're trying to train our dog to **sit / seat**.
8. Careful you don't **slip / sleep** - there's water on the floor.
9. I never **fill / feel** safe when Richard is driving.
10. How do you manage to work in this **hit / heat** without air conditioning?
11. We usually **it / eat** at about seven o'clock.
12. I must get some **slip / sleep** - I'm exhausted.

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Student A:

1. SLEEP	2.	3. FILL
4.	5. EAT	6.
7. HEAT	8.	9. BIN
10.	11. SIT	12.

Student B:

1.	2. SEAT	3.
4. HIT	5.	6. BEAN
7.	8. FEEL	9.
10. IT	11.	12. SLIP

Circle the words you hear:

1. Put this hat on to keep your **HAD / HEAD** warm.
2. I've been sitting with my legs crossed for so long, my right leg has gone **DAD / DEAD**.
3. Tidy up your room. **AND / END** don't forget to make your bed!
4. Don't eat that whole **BAG / BEG** of sweets at once.
5. She **SAD / SAID** goodbye to all her friends and left.
6. Get to the **AND / END** of the queue and wait your turn like everyone else.
7. When I was a child I **HAD / HEAD** a dog.
8. Don't write in **PAN / PEN**, or you won't be able to rub out any mistakes you make.
9. It was great to see your mum and **DAD / DEAD** at the concert last night.
10. **SAD / SAID** to say, the ring was never found.
11. They have trained their dog to sit up and **BAG / BEG**.
12. Heat the milk in a small **PAN / PEN**.

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Student A:

1. AND	2.	3. HEAD
4.	5. SAD	6.
7. BAG	8.	9. DEAD
10.	11. PEN	12.

Student B:

1.	2. SAID	3.
4. DAD	5.	6. END
7.	8. PAN	9.
10. HAD	11.	12. BEG

Circle the words you hear:

1. Do you want this or shall I throw it in the **BIN / PIN**?
2. Eventually she had saved enough money to **BUY / PIE** a small car.
3. I **BET / PET** that he won't come.
4. She saw a big black **BEAR / PAIR** in the woods.
5. How much did you **BAY / PAY** for the tickets?
6. Would you like some more apple **BUY / PIE**?
7. They sent us a **BILL / PILL** for the work they had done.
8. My mother takes three or four **BILLS / PILLS** a day.
9. Doctors inserted a metal **BIN / PIN** in his leg to hold the bones together.
10. The other children hated her because she was the teacher's **BET / PET**.
11. We sailed into a beautiful, secluded **BAY / PAY**.
12. They seem a very happy **BEAR / PAIR**.

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Student A:

1. BUY	2.	3. PAIR
4.	5. BIN	6.
7. PET	8.	9. BILL
10.	11. PAY	12.

Student B:

1.	2. PILL	3.
4. PIE	5.	6. BAY
7.	8. BET	9.
10. PIN	11.	12. BEAR

Circle the words you hear:

1. Relations between the two countries have never been **better / batter / butter**.
2. Pancake **better / batter / butter** is actually easy to make.
3. We were served scones with **better / batter / butter** and jam.
4. She showed me how to hold the **bat / bet / but**.
5. She **bat / bet / but** \$500,000 on the horse that came in second.
6. Call me old-fashioned, **bat / bet / but** I like handwritten letters.
7. Would you like another slice of **ham / hum / hem**?
8. I usually **ham / hum / hem** when I take a shower.
9. I took the **ham / hum / hem** down.
10. He's a real **gem / jam / gum**! You'd be a fool to break up with him.
11. She won the first prize for her raspberry **gem / jam / gum**.
12. Please don't chew the **gem / jam / gum** in the classroom.

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Student A:

1. better	2.	3. bat
4.	5. hum	6.
7. ham	8.	9. butter
10.	11. gum	12.

Student B:

1.	2. bet	3.
4. gem	5.	6. jam
7.	8. batter	9.
10. but	11.	12. hem

Student A:

1.	2. chop	3.
4. shop	5.	6. chin
7.	8. shin	9.
10. ditch	11.	12. dish

Student B:

1. choose	2.	3. shoes
4.	5. cherry	6.
7. sherry	8.	9. much
10.	11. mush	12.

Student A:

1. BUS	2.	3. BUZZ
4.	5. LACY	6.
7. LAZY	8.	9. FACE
10.	11. FAZE	12.

Student B:

1.	2. LOOSE	3.
4. LOSE	5.	6. FUSS
7.	8. FUZZ	9.
10. RACE	11.	12. RAZE

Student A:

1. TREE	2.	3. BAT
4.	5. THIN	6.
7. TRUE	8.	9. BATH
10.	11. SICK	12.

Student B:

1.	2. TIN	3.
4. THREE	5.	6. FAITH
7.	8. THICK	9.
10. THROUGH	11.	12. FACE

Student A:

1. DARE	2.	3. BREEZE
4.	5. THESE	6.
7. DAY	8.	9. SO
10.	11. CLOTHING	12.

Student B:

1.	2. TEASE	3.
4. THERE	5.	6. BREATHE
7.	8. CLOSING	9.
10. THEY	11.	12. THOUGH

Student A:

1	2 RAT	3
4 ROLE	5	6 HAIR
7	8 HOLE	9
10 HOSE	11	12 ROSE

Student B:

1 HOME	2	3 HABIT
4	5 ROME	6
7 HAT	8	9 RARE
10	11 RABBIT	12

Student A:

1. PEN	2.	3. MAN
4.	5. SAT	6.
7. BEG	8.	9. SAD
10.	11. SET	12.

Student B:

1.	2. BAT	3.
4. SAID	5.	6. BAG
7.	8. PAN	9.
10. MEN	11.	12. BET

Student A:

1. PEPPER	2.	3. TAIL
4.	5. TELL	6.
7. LATE	8.	9. TASTE
10.	11. WET	12.

Student B:

1.	2. WAIT	3.
4. PEN	5.	6. LET
7.	8. PAPER	9.
10. TEST	11.	12. PAIN

Student A:

1. bat	2.	3. ran
4.	5. Ben	6.
7. man	8.	9. pet
10.	11. ban	12.

Student B:

1.	2. pan	3.
4. run	5.	6. pen
7.	8. bet	9.
10. pat	11.	12. men

Student A:

1.	2. lake	3.
4. rake	5.	6. fly
7.	8. fry	9.
10. ram	11.	12. row

Student B:

1. lice	2.	3. rice
4.	5. lane	6.
7. rain	8.	9. lamb
10.	11. low	12.

Student A:

1.	2. ball	3.
4. Paul	5.	6. bet
7.	8. pet	9.
10. tab	11.	12. tap

Student B:

1. bat	2.	3. pat
4.	5. ban	6.
7. pan	8.	9. Ben
10.	11. pen	12.

Student A:

1. HAT	2.	3. HURL
4.	5. HOLD	6.
7. EAT	8.	9. HEDGE
10.	11. ART	12.

Student B:

1.	2. AT	3.
4. HEAT	5.	6. EARL
7.	8. OLD	9.
10. HEART	11.	12. EDGE

Student A:

1. LOOK	2.	3. FULL
4.	5. FOOL	6.
7. POOL	8.	9. LUCK
10.	11. BOOT	12.

Student B:

1.	2. PULL	3.
4. FOOT	5.	6. LAW
7.	8. LOW	9.
10. LUKE	11.	12. LOCK

Student A:

1. SHEEP	2.	3. CHEEKS
4.	5. HILL	6.
7. LIVE	8.	9. SHIP
10.	11. CHICKS	12.

Student B:

1.	2. LEAVE	3.
4. FEEL	5.	6. FILL
7.	8. SIT	9.
10. HEEL	11.	12. SEAT

Student A:

1. BACK	2.	3. GLASS
4.	5. CLASS	6.
7. CURL	8.	9. SAIL
10.	11. BAG	12.

Student B:

1.	2. GIRL	3.
4. SELL	5.	6. BUZZ
7.	8. PRIZE	9.
10. BUS	11.	12. PRICE

Student A:

1. BUY	2.	3. DONE
4.	5. BOW	6.
7. DON'T	8.	9. LUCK
10.	11. OWL	12.

Student B:

1.	2. AISLE	3.
4. OIL	5.	6. LOW
7.	8. BOY	9.
10. LAW	11.	12. DUNE

Student A:

1. HEEL	2.	3. FALL
4.	5. LIGHT	6.
7. PILOT	8.	9. LONG
10.	11. GLASS	12.

Student B:

1.	2. HEAR	3.
4. FOUR	5.	6. RIGHT
7.	8. PIRATE	9.
10. WRONG	11.	12. GRASS

Student A:

1. Bowl	2.	3. Coal
4.	5. Law	6.
7. Choke	8.	9. Caught
10.	11. Saw	12.

Student B:

1.	2. Coat	3.
4. Sew	5.	6. Chalk
7.	8. Call	9.
10. Ball	11.	12. Low

Student A:

1. VERY	2.	3. BOAT
4.	5. BASE	6.
7. BET	8.	9. VERY
10.	11. BEST	12.

Student B:

1.	2. BET	3.
4. VEST	5.	6. BERRY
7.	8. VAN	9.
10. VOTE	11.	12. BAN

Student A:

1. whip	2.	3. bid
4.	5. fit	6.
7. bit	8.	9. feast
10.	11. hit	12.

Student B:

1.	2. beet	3.
4. heat	5.	6. fist
7.	8. weep	9.
10. feet	11.	12. bead

Student A:

1. rock	2.	3. cast
4.	5. fought	6.
7. lack	8.	9. sought
10.	11. sack	12.

Student B:

1.	2. fat	3.
4. sat	5.	6. sock
7.	8. rack	9.
10. cost	11.	12. lock

Student A:

1. wine	2.	3. vest
4.	5. whale	6.
7. few	8.	9. fun
10.	11. wiper	12.

Student B:

1.	2. view	3.
4. won	5.	6. vine
7.	8. viper	9.
10. west	11.	12. veil

Student A:

1	2 rat	3
4 fight	5	6 sat
7	8 bite	9
10 mat	11	12 height

Student B:

1 bat	2	3 might
4	5 hat	6
7 right	8	9 site
10	11 fat	12

Student A:

1. place	2.	3. eyes
4.	5. knees	6.
7. sip	8.	9. zoo
10.	11. loose	12.

Student B:

1.	2. ice	3.
4. Sue	5.	6. niece
7.	8. plays	9.
10. lose	11.	12. zip

Student A:

1. ball	2.	3. oil
4.	5. soy	6.
7. jaw	8.	9. call
10.	11. foil	12.

Student B:

1.	2. joy	3.
4. boil	5.	6. fall
7.	8. coil	9.
10. all	11.	12. soil

Student A:

1. cup	2.	3. cut
4.	5. hat	6.
7. bug	8.	9. cab
10.	11. track	12.

Student B:

1.	2. cub	3.
4. truck	5.	6. cap
7.	8. bag	9.
10. cat	11.	12. hut

Student A:

1. heart	2.	3. herd
4.	5. far	6.
7. burn	8.	9. stir
10.	11. farm	12.

Student B:

1.	2. firm	3.
4. barn	5.	6. hurt
7.	8. hard	9.
10. star	11.	12. fur

Student A:

1. reef	2.	3. read
4.	5. rain	6.
7. line	8.	9. load
10.	11. lock	12.

Student B:

1.	2. leaf	3.
4. lane	5.	6. rhyme
7.	8. lead	9.
10. rock	11.	12. road

Student A:

1. bite	2.	3. cat
4.	5. bike	6.
7. man	8.	9. tap
10.	11. lime	12.

Student B:

1.	2. lamb	3.
4. kite	5.	6. mine
7.	8. type	9.
10. back	11.	12. bat

Student A:

1. fat	2.	3. hate
4.	5. at	6.
7. mane	8.	9. tap
10.	11. mate	12.

Student B:

1.	2. man	3.
4. mat	5.	6. fate
7.	8. ate	9.
10. hat	11.	12. tape

Student A:

1. JAM	2.	3. YACHT
4.	5. YELLOW	6.
7. YAK	8.	9. GEL
10.	11. JOKE	12.

Student B:

1.	2. JACK	3.
4. JELLO	5.	6. YAM
7.	8. YOLK	9.
10. YELL	11.	12. JOT

Student A:

1. FOOT	2.	3. RUDE
4.	5. BAD	6.
7. ROPE	8.	9. MOB
10.	11. HAT	12.

Student B:

1.	2. HAD	3.
4. MOP	5.	6. ROBE
7.	8. ROOT	9.
10. BAT	11.	12. FOOD

Student A:

1. SEE	2.	3. BAY
4.	5. GEE	6.
7. K	8.	9. MAY
10.	11. PEA	12.

Student B:

1.	2. ME	3.
4. PAY	5.	6. KEY
7.	8. SAY	9.
10. BEE	11.	12. JAY

Student A:

1. PLAYS	2.	3. ZOO
4.	5. LOOSE	6.
7. SIP	8.	9. EYES
10.	11. KNEES	12.

Student B:

1.	2. ICE	3.
4. ZIP	5.	6. LOSE
7.	8. PLACE	9.
10. SUE	11.	12. NIECE

Student A:

1. fat	2.	3. hate
4.	5. bike	6.
7. snake	8.	9. tap
10.	11. mate	12.

Student B:

1.	2. snack	3.
4. mat	5.	6. fate
7.	8. back	9.
10. hat	11.	12. tape