

TERMINOLOGY

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Below is a brief guide to the 26 technical terms that you will need to know. You find out more about them by googling them.

- **vowel, consonant.** These are terms that denote the two broadest classes of speech-sound. A vowel is a sound where there is no blockage in the vocal tract, and a consonant is one where there is a blockage or constriction.

- **voicing, place, manner.** These are the three features of any consonant. 'Voicing' refers to the way the larynx (i.e. the vocal chords) is used, 'place' denotes where in the mouth the tongue makes the constriction, and 'manner' refers to the mechanism by which the constriction is made.

- **voiceless, voiced.** Two states of the vocal chords. With 'voiced' sounds the vocal chords vibrate, you can sing the sound, and you can hear a buzz if you put your hands over your ears. With 'voiceless' sounds, none of these three things is true.

- **bilabial, labio-dental, alveolar, retroflex, velar.** These terms refer to the places at which the tongue constricts the vocal chords when forming a consonant.

- **plosive, affricate, fricative, approximant, nasal.** These terms denote the mechanisms used to form constrictions in the vocal tract.

- **close, close-mid, open-mid, open.** These terms denote the four standard 'heights' of vowels - the vertical positioning of the tense part of the tongue.

- **front, central, back.** These terms denote whether the tense part of the tongue is in the front, centre or back of the mouth.

- **rounded, unrounded.** These terms denote whether the lips are rounded or not.

You will need to know how these terms apply to each of the sounds of your chosen language or accent. So you will need to know, for example, that the /i:/ sound in RP 'leek' is a close vowel, the sound /f/ is a fricative, and that the /g/ in 'gag' is a velar sound.