Representation of Speech Sounds

\[ \not= \mathbb{A} \] No language has a one-to-one correspondence between the sounds of the language and the alphabet that represents those sounds.

In English we use:

- Different symbols for same sounds (\textit{won}~\textit{one})
- Same symbols for different sounds (\textit{shoe}~\textit{foe})
- Symbols for no sounds (\textit{knight}, \textit{one})
- No symbols for some sounds (?\textit{one}, c?\textit{ute})
When the English tongue we speak,  
why is break not rhymed with freak?  
Will you tell me why it’s true,  
we sew but likewise few?  
And the maker of a verse  
cannot rhyme his horse with worse.  
Beard sounds not the same as heard.  
Cord sounds different from word.  
Cow is cow, but low is low.  
Shoe is never rhymed with foe.  
Think of comb, and tomb, and bomb;  
doll and roll; and home and some.  
And since pay is rhymed with say,  
why not paid with said, I pray?  
We have blood and food and good.  
Mould is not pronounced like could.  
Wherefore done but gone and lone?  
Is there any reason known?  
And in short it seems to me,  
sounds and letters disagree.
Having chosen English as the preferred language in the EEC (now officially the European Union, or EU), the European Parliament has commissioned a feasibility study in ways of improving efficiency in communications between Government departments.

European officials have often pointed out that English spelling is unnecessarily difficult; for example: cough, plough, rough, thorough and throuh. What is clearly needed is a phased programme of changes to iron out these anomalies. The programme would, of course, be administered by a committee staff at top level by participating nations.

In the first year, for example, the committee would suggest using ‘s’ instead of the soft ‘c’. Certainly, civil servants in all cities would receive this news with joy. Then the hard ‘c’ could be replaced by ‘k’ since both letters are pronounced alike. Not only would this clear up confusion in the minds of clerical workers, but typewriters could be made with one less letter.

There would be growing enthusiasm when in the second year, it was announced that the troublesome ‘ph’ would henceforth be written ‘f’. This would make words like ‘fotograf’ twenty percent shorter in print.

In the third year, public acceptance of the new spelling can be expected to reach the stage where more complicated changes are possible. Governments would encourage the removal of double letters which have always been a deterrent to accurate spelling.

We would all agree that the horrible mess of silent ‘e’s in the language is disgraceful. Therefore we could drop these and continue to read and write as though nothing had happened. By this time it would be four years since the scheme began and people would be receptive to steps such as replacing ‘th’ by ‘z’. Perhaps even the function of ‘w’ could be taken on by ‘v’, which, after all, is half a ‘w’. Shortly after this, ‘o’ could be dropped from words containing ‘ou’. Similar arguments would hold for other combinations of letters.

Continuing this process year after year, we would eventually have a reliably sensible writing style. After twenty years we could be no more troubled, difficult and error-prone. In fact we would understand each other. Most of the government would finally have come true.
International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA)

ԍ = ɐǞ A consistent set of symbols that represents the range of speech sounds in language:

• One symbol for one sound
• No silent letters
• All sounds are written
• A sound is written the same all the time
Some Terms

- **Phoneme**: a basic sound that has the linguistic function of distinguishing words.

- **Minimal contrasts**: pairs of words that have identical pronunciations except for a single phoneme and whose meanings differ:
  
  pat~tat~cat~bat~sat~fat~vat~that~hat
Don’t Trip!

Phonemes are **different** from letters:

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Some More Terms

**Allophone**: phonetic variation of a single sound that does not signal a change in meaning.

⇒ key~coo
⇒ pop
⇒ tenth
Types of Transcription

Phonemic (broad) transcription: transcribe only the phonemes, /t/.

Phonetic (narrow) transcription: transcribe the allophones, [t].

“tick” ⇒ broad/phonemic = /trak/
 ⇒ narrow/phonetic = [tʰɪk]
Dialect Differences

Why is it important to know about dialects when we use phonetic transcription?

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<th>Word</th>
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