

SPEECH



What is speech?

Speech is different from **language**.

Speech is the sounds we make with our mouth when we are talking. We use speech sounds to make words. For example, the word *cat* is built up from three speech sounds *c*, *a* and *t*.

As air is pushed from the lungs it passes up through the windpipe (trachea). Then it passes through the voice box (larynx). This might make the vocal cords vibrate. The air then continues upwards. It is shaped into sounds by changes in the position of the tongue, soft palate and muscles of the face. The air finally passes out through the mouth or nose.

Types of speech sound

There are two types of speech sounds:

1. Vowels

These are sounds like 'ay' as in the word *pay*, 'ee' as in the word *bee*, and 'oo' as in the word *boo*. They are made without any interference to the flow of air from the lungs as it passes up through the windpipe, through the voice box and out of the mouth. One the speaker has positioned the tongue, jaws and lips there is nothing to obstruct the airflow.

2. Consonants

These are all the other sounds, like 'p' in the word *pin*, 'b' in *bin*, and 't' in *tin*. They are made by interfering with the airflow. This time, there is some type of obstruction to the airflow from the lungs. This is because parts of the mouth come into contact with each other. This closes off the free flow of air.

Here is a list of all the consonants used in English.

p	b	t	d	k	g	m	n	ng	f	v	th
<i>pin</i>	<i>bin</i>	<i>tin</i>	<i>dog</i>	<i>key</i>	<i>gun</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>no</i>	<i>wing</i>	<i>fin</i>	<i>van</i>	<i>thin</i>

th	s	z	sh	ge	ch	j	w	r	l	y	h
<i>the</i>	<i>sun</i>	<i>zoo</i>	<i>shoe</i>	<i>beige</i>	<i>chop</i>	<i>jaw</i>	<i>win</i>	<i>run</i>	<i>lip</i>	<i>you</i>	<i>how</i>

Is speech called anything else?

- **phonetics** – actually this is a sub-category of speech. Phonetics is the study of the physical properties of speech sounds, how they are produced, and how people understand them.
- **phonology** – again, this is really a sub-category of speech. Phonology is the study of the rules that control how speech sounds can be used to produce proper words. The rules tell us which sounds can be used in which positions in words (the front, middle or end).

Using speech successfully

The brain and muscles of the face, tongue, jaw, neck and breathing must all work together to produce speech.

To sound clear to others we must articulate all the speech sounds in the language we speak (e.g. English, Spanish, Hindi). We must move our tongue, jaw, soft palate and vocal cords rapidly and accurately. This must all be coordinated with our breathing.

So, we must be able to make the individual vowels and consonants. Also, we must be able to string these together into words. Finally, we must be able to string the words together to form longer sentences.