

Points of Articulation

In English, the top part of the mouth tends to provide the sound label, so that we have the following **points of articulation**. You will notice that the labels we have given on the left side match the labels at the top of our diagram on page 6.

bi-labial	both lips pressed together, as in /p/ and /b/
labio-dental	top teeth and bottom lip, as in /f/ and /v/
dental	tongue behind or between the teeth, as in /θ/ and /ð/
alveolar	tip of the tongue touching the gum (alveolar) ridge, as in /t/ and /d/
post-alveolar	tip of the tongue falling just behind the gum ridge before the hard palate (this is referred to as palato-alveolar by some authors – eg Roach), as in /ʃ/ and /ʒ/.
palatal	front of the tongue raised to hard palate, as in /j/
velar	back of the tongue raised to the soft palate, as in /k/ and /g/
glottal	in the glottis, the opening of the vocal cords as in /h/

In addition to these sounds, there are some other important ones to remember:

retroflex sounds which are produced by having the tip of the tongue curled back on to the hard palate (most often heard in the rolled /r/ sound in Scottish accents);

pharyngeal sounds produced with the root of the tongue raised to the pharynx;

the **glottal** stop with air being blocked behind the vocal cords, then released (again, most commonly heard in Cockney accents).

Two other less easily labelled forms of articulation that occur are the:

palato-alveolar	/ʃ/, /ʒ/	<u>sh</u> in, <u>vi</u> sion
	/tʃ/, /dʒ/	<u>ch</u> in, <u>g</u> in
labio-velar	/w/	as in <u>w</u> et

(‘labio’ because in the case of ‘w’ there is lip-rounding).



Sound it out!

Again, if you would like to hear what any of the sounds we refer to in the brackets /.../ actually sound like, follow this link and click on the letter to hear it pronounced.

<http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/try/activities/phonemic-chart>

OK, so we have looked at some of the main points or places of articulation and we have seen how certain sounds are labelled.

This is important because, if we can start to show our students the correct place to start an utterance, we can help them develop a clearer and more accurate sound. We can show them by example, or we can use a chart of the human mouth with the tongue in a variety of positions, and we can certainly use the models given in the Teaching English link above.

Fricative Consonants - why it's relevant – Indian speakers



In Indian languages, the fricative consonants /θ/, /ð/ are replaced by an aspirated dental /t^h/, and the unaspirated /d/ respectively. Therefore you will often hear Indian speakers say **dem** instead of **them**.

Try getting them to use the correct start position with the tongue touching the top set of teeth, rather than it touching the roof of the mouth, to make the correct sound.

Further research on Points of Articulation

If you are interested in researching deeper into this area, there is also a Wikipedia page that covers interference issues from several other mother tongues - http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-native_pronunciations_of_English

(there is also a link to this from the Ted Power website:

<http://www.btinternet.com/~ted.power/phono.html>).

If you want to go even further into the issue you may want to consider investing in a copy of Swan & Smith's "Learner English". [Swan, M. & Smith, B (2001) *Learner English*; 2nd edn CUP]. You can also buy an accompanying CD which will help you hear authentic examples of the problems covered.

Now let's move on to a partner area, which is the **Manner of Articulation**.