

Making the English [f] and [v] sounds

(Symbols in brackets refer to sounds and are written in the international phonetic alphabet.)

The only difference between these sounds is that the [f] is unvoiced and the [v] is voiced.

Sound description:

When you say [v] and [f], the bottom lip touches the top teeth lightly, and air flows out continuously.

Teaching hints:

Have the student make an [h] sound continuously and then move his lips and teeth into the position for [f]. To make the [v], just add voicing.

Use a mirror. I carry a hand mirror and have the student hold it. Then I model the sound while the student makes it and uses the mirror to assess her tongue position. I will hold the pose for quite a while to allow the student to practice. This sound takes a lot of practice.

If a student will not look at your mouth, position yourself so that they are behind you and to the side; then make the sound while looking into a mirror and have them look at your mouth in the mirror.

Make the [f] sound very loudly while practicing, as it can be difficult for students to hear unless it is exaggerated.

Watch the student's lips. Many students will want to round their lips or pull the corners of the mouth back. Lips should be relaxed. If you hear a [s] or hissing sound, the tongue needs to move away from the roof of the mouth.

Show the student how to put her hand on her neck to feel the difference between voiced and unvoiced sounds. In voiced sounds, the vocal folds are vibrating and a vibration can be felt in the throat. When making the [v] sound, the vibration can also be felt in the bottom lip. Telling a student to look for the vibration in the lip really helps.