

Making the English [l] sound

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

Sound description:

In the [l] sound, the tip of the tongue touches the alveolar ridge, right behind the top front teeth. Voiced air moves around the sides of the tongue.

Teaching hints:

Point out that the only the tip of the tongue touches the roof of the mouth, with gentle pressure. Start by making a [d] sound and move to the [l] sound; the tongue placement is the same.

Notes:

Some languages do not differentiate between the [l] sound and the r [ɹ] sound. For these students, it is helpful to begin with listening activities. Make both sounds, pointing at the letter while you make the sound. Do this over and over. Then make two sounds and have your student tell you if it is the same sound (you made two [l] sounds or two [ɹ] sounds) or different sounds (you made an [l] sound and an [ɹ] sound). This will help the student train his ear to hear the difference in the sounds and will aid him in being able to make the sounds himself.

When choosing “l” words to practice with, choose words with sounds that are easy for the student to make so he has only one difficult sound to deal with.