**Introduction to phonetics**

## So what is Phonetics?

Phonetics is the study of the actual sounds that make up the words of a language. Every language has its own characteristics and there are sounds in English that you might not use in your Language, and sounds in your language that we might not use in English and one of the more difficult things about English is the spelling and pronunciation. This introduction to phonetics will look at the difference between the written spelling and the actual pronunciation. We only have 26 letters in the alphabet but modern English uses about 44 different sounds. So when you look at word, it can be difficult to know, from the spelling, how to pronounce it because the same letters can be pronoun

ced differently in different words.

## Look at these examples.

* Busy
* Word
* Queue
* Laughter
* Comb
* Chaos

All of these words and many more can be difficult to pronounce because spelling in English is not phonetic and it’s often inconsistent. So in our introduction to phonetics we look at how to get around this by looking at the actual sounds that make up a word and not how it is spelt.

In fact,Phonetics is the branch of linguistics that examines sounds in a language. Phonetics describes these sounds using the symbols of the **International Phonetic Alphabet** (**IPA**).

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The **IPA** uses a single symbol to describe each sound in a language. If a letter in a word is silent, there will be no **IPA** symbol used in the transcription.

The **IPA** can be helpful for studying a language, especially languages that use letters that are silent or have multiple pronunciations. Languages like Arabic and Spanish are consistent in their spelling and pronunciation – each letter represents a single sound which rarely varies. English is different. It has many letters with two or more sounds and many letters that are silent.