

Crisp, Polished Speech Patterns

Objectives:

Many media personalities have achieved speech mastery through coaching or courses in phonetics (the study of sounds) and extensive practice in precise articulation. The following exercise will help polish your speech through the better use of plosives. Plosives are a group of eight sounds in English. As the name suggests, these sounds are made by a mini explosion of air in the mouth. The contact between the articulators (tongue, palate, lips, and so forth) builds up air pressure and then releases it. But enough technical stuff. All you really need to know are the eight sounds and how to use them.

Instructions:

To sound like a professional speaker, you want to explode (say with a release of air) these sounds just enough to create a brief stop in the flow of speech. Indeed, another name for the plosives is *stops*. Say each of the words below so that there is a small burst of air at the end. Feel the air by putting your hand in front of your mouth. Be careful not to exaggerate the effect, though.

b	cab
p	tip
d	lead
t	light
k	back
g	big
ch	church
j	judge

Most of us have no trouble using plosives correctly when they occur at the beginning of words. The most important times to explode them, however, are when they occur at the end of a phrase or thought, as in:

"Did you get that?"
"I know I'm right."
"It does work!"

Say these plosive practice sentences four times, twice with crisp endings and twice without, until you feel and hear the difference.

"This project will bring new business to the market."
"I like the way I sound when I articulate."