



# ENGLISH

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Lecture :04

*Pronunciation of TH*

## ***Pronunciation of TH***

*The letter combination **th** is pronounced in mysterious ways by learners sometimes. The high frequency of this combination makes the issue all the more pertinent. These letters may come out as [t], [d], [s], [z], or even [v] or [f]. The word **forth** may then sound like **fort**, **they** may sound like **day**, **with** may sound like 'wis', whizz, 'wiv', or 'wif'. These pronunciations are potentially confusing in communication. In English, some words are distinguished by pronouncing th in two different ways: the verb **mouth** and the noun **with** the same spelling are an example of this, and so are the words in the word pairs **thy/thigh** and **either/ether** (for some speakers). Fortunately, such word pairs are relatively infrequent.*

*To determine whether a "th" sound should be voiced or voiceless, consider its position within the word and the surrounding sounds.*

**There are Two 'th' sounds in English:**

***1- 'Voiceless' / 'soft' Sound. /θ/***

*Our first sound will be 'soft th' which is /θ/ the sound θ does not exist in most languages. Because it may be difficult for you to recognize, you probably substitute more familiar sounds.*

***How to pronounce /θ/:***

*It's Just an air flow through your mouth, when you pronounce /θ/ Concentrate on placing your tongue between your teeth and keep the airstream.*



*To make sure that you pronounce the sound correctly:*

- *Place your fingertip lightly on your throat.*
- *Pronounce the "th" Sound.*

- *If you don't feel a vibration, it's a voiceless 'th'.*

*The following are the cases in which the th sound should be voiceless” sound θ “:*

*1. Beginning: Voiceless /θ/ sounds happen at the beginning of content words (Content words are words that carry meaning). In other words, if a ‘th’ is at the beginning of a content word, then you pronounce the ‘th’ as a voiceless /θ/ sound. a. noun, verb, adjective, and adverbs. For example: think, thank, thought, thick, thumbs.*

*2. Middle: If the ‘th’ comes before a consonant or in the middle of compound words then the ‘th’ is voiceless. For example: throw, bathtub, truthful, toothpick.*

*3. End: If the ‘th’ is at the end of a word then it is always voiceless. This rule applies to all words except the words “with” and “smooth”. You will hear native English speakers pronounce “with” with both a voiced /TH/ and a voiceless /θ/ sound. It’s just a matter of preference. For example: mouth, myth, length, month, worth, birth, death, breath*

## *2- 'Voiced' / 'hard' sound. /ð/*

*The second “th” sound is voiced (vocal cords vibrate) as in the words “though,” “then” and “they.”*

*The /ð/ is an other unfamiliar sound, it may be difficult for you to recognize and produce, you propably substitute the more familiar sound /d/.*

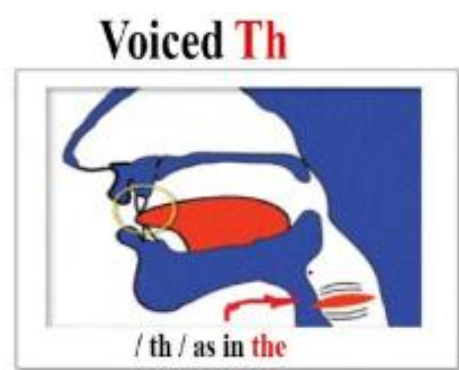
## *How to pronounce / ð /:*

*There will be a vibration in our vocal cords.*

*To pronounce /ð/ place your tongue between your teeth and keep the airstream from your mouth continuous and make sure if you face a mirror you can see the tip of your tongue.*

*To make sure that you pronounce the sound correctly:*

- *Place your fingertip lightly on your throat.*
- *Pronounce the "th" Sound.*
- *If you feel a vibration, it's a voiced "th".*



**1- Beginning:** Voiced /TH/ sounds happens at the beginning of function words.

Function words are words that don't mean any specific thing or action. For example: **this**, **that**, **these**, **those**, **then**, **than**, **they**, **them**, **their**, **there**, **therefore**, etc.

**2. Middle:** If the 'th' is between 2 vowels then the 'th' is pronounced voiced. This specifically applies when there is a TH + /er/ sound, or /er/ + TH. For example: **mother**, and **worthy**. Notice that the /er/ sound is a vocalic R.

a. Another example includes when the word is a verb + 'e'. For example: **bathe**, and **loathe**.

b. Another example is with 'th' + 'ing'. For example: **tithing**, **bathing**.

**3. End:** If the 'th' is at the end of a word then it is not voiced, it is voiceless (refer to rule #3 from the voiceless rules). The only time it is pronounced voiced is with the word "**with**"—which some native English speakers pronounce voiceless.

## Exceptions To The Rules List

Exceptions: use Voiced /TH/ in these words			
brethren	rhythm	smoothly	rhythms
loathful	rhythmic	smoothness	smooth
loathsome			
Exceptions: use Voiceless /th/ in these words			
Athens	Kathy	rethink	authentic
author	lethal	Ruthie	authorize
Bethel	Luther	something	authorized
Ethan	methane	southeast	authorship
Ethel	method	toothache	cathedral
ether	methyl	within	coauthor
ethics	mothy	without	Dorothy
ethos	Nathan	aesthetic	empathy
ethyl	nothing	Agatha	ethical
frothy	pithy	anything	everything
Gothic	python	apathy	Hathaway
Hawthorne	methodic	atheist	Jonathan
mythical	Methodist	Athena	marathon

Dale, P., & Poms, L. (2005). English pronunciation made simple. *(No Title)*.

Martin Harris, *θ and ð (TH)* pronunciation, 2011.

Smakman, D. (2019). *Clear English pronunciation: a practical guide*. Routledge.

<https://cdn.pronunciationpro.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/10214809/V-VL-TH-differences.pdf>