

8

jump, next, glimpsed

Consonant clusters at the end of words

A

A26 There are many more combinations of consonant sounds possible at the end of English words than at the beginning (see Unit 7). There can be up to four consonant sounds in a final consonant cluster:

Words with...	2 final consonants	3 final consonants	4 final consonants
	honest /st/ jump /mp/ wrapped /pt/	helped /lpt/ next /kst/ crisps /sps/	prompts /mpts/ glimpsed /mpst/ texts /ksts/

B

A27 Some final clusters with three or four consonants can be difficult to pronounce even for native English speakers, so in some words these are commonly simplified. For example, the middle consonant of the clusters /kts/, /mps/, /mpt/, /nts/, /ndz/ and /skt/ is hardly heard or sometimes even left out (see also Unit 29A):

products → productɪs /prɒdʌkts/
 camped → cæmpəd /kæmpt/
 hands → hænds /hænz/

jumps → jumps /dʒʌmpʰs/
 clients → kliənts /klaɪəntɪs/
 asked → askəd /ɑːst/

Notice also:

twelfth → twelfθ /twelθ/

fifths → fiftθs /fɪθs/ or fiftɪs /fɪfs/

C

Leaving *final* consonants out of consonant clusters at the end of words can cause misunderstanding, and you should avoid this. For example, say:

product (not: productɪ) jump (not: jumps) hand (not: hænd)

In particular, avoid leaving out /z/ or /s/ in plurals and third person singular verb forms, and /t/ or /d/ in *-ed* verbs and adjectives:

jobs (not: jobz) sleeps (not: sleepz)
 laughed (not: laughɛd) curved (not: curvɛd)

D

Don't be tempted to add vowels to consonant clusters in order to make them easier to say, as this can also cause misunderstanding. You should –

- avoid adding an extra vowel (usually /i/ or /ə/) between consonants:
 watched (not: watchⁱd) health (not: heal^əth) dogs (not: dog^əs)
- avoid adding an extra vowel (usually /ə/ or /u:/) at the end of the word:
 last (not: last^ə) announce (not: announce^ə) attempts (not: attempt^{u:}s)
- avoid adding an extra vowel at the end of an adjective, as this can sound like a comparative form:
 fast (not: fast^ə because it sounds like 'faster')
 damp (not: damp^ə because it sounds like 'damper')

You can find more practice of consonant clusters at the end of words in Section E2.

Exercises

- 8.1** How many final consonant *sounds* – 1, 2, 3 or 4 – do the words in the box have when they are spoken slowly and carefully? (Note that the number of consonant *sounds* may be different from the number of consonant *letters*.) Write the words in the appropriate row.

accents against aspects **attempts** axe catch contexts diamonds ears
earth grasped laughed ledge next risked sculpts stamps tempts touched

1 final consonant sound	
2 final consonant sounds	
3 final consonant sounds	<i>accents /nts/</i>
4 final consonant sounds	<i>attempts /mpts/</i>

A28

Now check your answers, listen and say the words.

- 8.2** Listen to some of the words from exercise 8.1 (in **bold**) used in conversation. Some final clusters are simplified. Underline the words which are simplified and show which sound is left out or reduced.

A29

EXAMPLES It was a long jump, but he **risked** it. ✗ (the /k/ sound is left out)
He helped us a lot. (no simplification)

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 It's my turn next . | 5 The question has a number of aspects . |
| 2 It's a recording of regional accents . | 6 She loved diamonds . |
| 3 Don't forget to buy some stamps . | 7 It was taken out of context . |
| 4 I've always been against it. | 8 They grasped it easily. |

- 8.3** Listen and underline the word you hear.

A30

EXAMPLE I *accept* / *accepted* the award gratefully.

- I couldn't go on without more *paint* / *pain*.
- The company has some innovative *designers* / *designs*.
- I couldn't go *faster* / *fast* in my old car.
- The factory makes *trays* / *trains*.
- We wore heavy boots with thick, *ridged* / *rigid* soles.
- They're one of Brazil's main *exports* / *exporters*.

- 8.4** Anna failed her test to become a newsreader for her local English language radio station. Look at the transcript of the news item that she read. Then listen to the news being read clearly and correct the words that Anna pronounced wrongly.

A31

The police ~~thin~~^{think} the rose on the south coat will be pack when the seven Felton Pop Festival beginners neck weekend. Lass year more than 10,000 pop fan pack into the feel where the festival was hell. There is simpler accommodation on a nearby farm, but most people will camper in small tense.



Now check your answers in the Key. Then read aloud the (correct) news item.

Follow up: What is the maximum number of final consonant sounds that can occur in your first language?