

*This Phonetic Labyrinth*

Dearest creature in creation,  
 Studying English pronunciation,  
 I will teach you in my verse  
 Sounds like corpse, corps, horse and worse.  
 I will keep you, Susy, busy,  
 Make your head with heat grow dizzy;  
 Tear in eye, your dress you'll tear.  
 So shall I! Oh, hear my prayer —  
 Pray console your loving poet,  
 Make my coat look new, dear, sew it!  
 Just compare heart, beard and heard,  
 Dies, diet, lord and word,  
 Sword and sward, retain and Britain  
 (Mind the latter, how it's written).  
 Made has not the sound of bade;  
 Say — said; pay — paid; laid, but plaid.  
 Now I surely will not plague you  
 With such words as vague and ague,  
 But be careful how you speak,  
 Say break and steak, but bleak and streak;  
 Previous, precious, fuchsia, via,  
 Pipe, snipe, recipe, choir.  
 Cloven, oven; how and low;  
 Script, receipt, shoe, poem, toe.  
 Hear me say, devoid of trickery,  
 Daughter, laughter and Terpsichore,  
 Typhoid, measles, topsails, aisles,  
 Exile, similes, reviles;  
 Wholly, holly, signal, signing;  
 Thames, examining, combining;  
 Scholar, vicar and cigar,  
 Solar, mica, war and far.

From desire, desirable: admirable from  
admire.

Lumber, plumber: bier but brier;  
Gertrude, German; wind and mind;  
Scene, Melpomene, mankind:  
Tortoise, turquoise, chamois-leather,  
Reading, reading, heathen, heather;  
This phonetic labyrinth  
Gives moss, gross, brook, broach, ninth and  
plinth.

Billet does not sound like ballet;  
Bouquet, wallet, mallet, chalet;  
Blood and flood are not like food,  
Nor is mould like should and would.

Banquet gives no clue to parquet,  
Which is said to rhyme with darkly.

Viscous, viscount; load and broad;  
Toward, to forward, to reward.

Your pronunciation's okay

When you say, correctly, croquet;  
Rounded, wounded; live and grieve;  
Friend and fiend; alive and sleeve;  
Liberty, library, heave and heaven;  
Rachel, ache, moustache; eleven.

We say hallowed but allowed;  
People, leopard; towed, but vowed.

Mark the difference, moreover,  
Twixt mover, plover, and then Dover.

Leeches, breaches; wise, precise;  
Chalice, but police and lice;

Camel, constable, unstable;

Principle, disciple; label;

Petal, penal, and canal;

Wait, surprise, plait, promise, pal;

Suit, suite, ruin; circuit, conduit,

Rhyme with 'shirk it' and 'beyond it',

But it's very hard to tell

Why it's pall, mall, but Pall Mall,

Muscle, muscular; goal; iron;

Timber, climber: bullion, lion;

Worm and storm; chaise, chaos, chair;  
 Senator, spectator, mayor;  
 Ivy, privy; famous; clamour  
 And enamour rhyme with hammer.  
 Pussy, hussy, and possess,  
 Desert, dessert, and address.  
 Golf, wolf; countenance, lieutenants;  
 Hoist, in lieu of flags, left pennants.  
 River, rival; tomb, bomb, comb;  
 Doll and roll and some and home.  
 Stranger does not sound like anger,  
 Neither does devour like clangour.  
 Soul but foul, and gaunt but aunt;  
 Font, front, wont: want, grand and grant;  
 Shoes, goes, does. Now first say finger,  
 Then say singer, ginger, linger.  
 Real and zeal; mauve, gauze and gauge;  
 Marriage, foliage, mirage, age.  
 Query does not rhyme with very,  
 Nor does fury sound like bury.  
 Dost, lost, post; doth, cloth and loth;  
 Job, job; blossom, bosom; oath.  
 Though the difference seems little,  
 We say actual but victual;  
 Seat and sweat; chaste, paste and caste;  
 Leigh and eight and freight and height;  
 Put, nut; granite and unite.  
 Feoffer does not rhyme with heifer,  
 Nor does reefer rhyme with zephyr.  
 Dull, bull; Geoffrey, George, ate, late;  
 Hint, pint; senate and sedate.  
 Scenic, phrenic, and pacific;  
 Science, conscience; scientific;  
 Tour, but our; and succour, four;  
 Core provides a rhyme for door.  
 Gas, alas, and pass, and was —  
 Dickens started off as 'Boz'.  
 Sea, idea, guinea, area;  
 Psalm and charm; Maria, malaria;  
 Youth, south, southern; cleanse and clean;

Doctrine, turpentine, marine.  
 Look up alien and Italian;  
 Dandelion and battalion.  
 Sallied, allied; Yea and ye —  
 Eye, I, ay, aye, whey, key, quay!  
 Say aver, but ever, fever;  
 Neither, leisure, skein, deceiver.  
 Never guess — it is not safe;  
 We say calves, valves, half, but Ralph.  
 Heron, granary, canary,  
 Crevice, and device, and eyrie;  
 Face, but preface and eface;  
 Phlegm, phlegmatic; ass, glass, bass;  
 Large, but target, gin, give, verging,  
 Ought, out, joust and scour; and urging.  
 Ear, but earn; and wear and tear  
 Do not rhyme with here but there.  
 Seven is right and so is even,  
 Hyphen, roughen, nephew, Stephen,  
 Monkey, donkey, clerk and jerk;  
 Asp, grasp, wasp; and cork and work.  
 Tunnel, surely, rhymes with funnel?  
 Yes it does — and so does gunwale.  
 Islington and Isle of Wight,  
 Housewife, verdict and indict.  
 Aren't you mixed up, reader, rather,  
 Saying lather, bather, father?  
 Finally, what rhymes with tough —  
 Though, through, plough or cough? Enough!  
 Hiccough has the sound of 'cup' —  
 My advice is — give it up!

*[Reprinted with the kind permission of the Executive Committee of the South African Bowling Association.]*