

## FRENCH PRONUNCIATION

Consonants:

the letter *p* is softer in French.

*b* is as in English except in certain words, as the *b* in the verb *to observe*, *observer*, when you want to say the *b* more like the English *p*.

*c* when followed by *e*, *i*, or *y* is pronounced like the *s* in English. Otherwise it is pronounced like a *k*, unless it specifically has the *accent cédille* beneath it, in which case it is pronounced like an *s*. The word *français* provides an example.

*ch* is as in the English word *show*.

*g* is similar to *c*, in that when followed by *e*, *i*, or *y* it is pronounced like the *s* in *leisure*.

*g* is similar to *c*, in that when followed by *e*, *i*, or *y* it is pronounced like the *s* in *leisure*. The word *garage* provides an example of both pronunciations, with the first *g* hard and the second soft.

*j* is also pronounced like the *s* in *leisure*.

*h* is always silent in French.

*qu* is pronounced like the English *k*.

*w* is pronounced like the English *v*.

*r* is located behind the *hard g* sound in English. Find that spot in the upper back part of the mouth by saying the word *agh* and then softly transfer the *agh* sound into a softer *r* sound by saying the word *rat* softly. Note that the true French *r* is located completely opposite the American *r* – instead of being low and in front of the mouth, it is high and in the back of the mouth. This letter requires extensive work for most Americans. An option is to say the word with an English *h* sound, which is close to the French *r*.

## Vowels:

*a, à, â* – as in *father*

*e* – as in the oo sound in book. Often mispronounced. The word “je” is pronounced with a soft j sound and then with the sound of the oo in book. Same rule applies to the word “le”, etc. However, when there are accents over the e’s, things change as follows.

*é* – as in *pay*

*è* – as in *egg*

*i* – as in *machine*

*ô* – as in *note*

*u* – make the mouth round and say the letters *eeee*

## Vowel Combinations:

*ai, ez, er, et* – as in *date*

*au, eau* – as in *note*

*ei* – as in *hen*

*eu* – as in *book*

*oi* – as in *water*

*ou* – as in *food*

*ille* – as in *eeee*

*euil* – as in *toy*

*ui* – as in *we*

Nasals:

*an, en* – mouth is very open – pronounced like the English word *on* but the sound is completely nasalized.

*in* – mouth is less open and in a slight smile – pronounced like the English word *hen* but the sound is completely nasalized with no *h*.

*on* – mouth is almost closed, sides of mouth are down a little – pronounced like the English letter *o* but the sound is completely nasalized.

*un* – mouth is as it is when relaxed and not speaking – pronounced like in the English word *grunt* but the sound is completely nasalized.