

Voiced and Unvoiced Consonants

Voicing is a feature used to describe sounds. It refers to whether a sound is produced with vocal fold vibration (voiced) or no vibration (unvoiced). When we describe consonants, we can say they are voiced or unvoiced.

Remember: Consonants are phonemes that are articulated with complete or partial closure of the vocal tract.

- **Voiced consonants** require the vocal fold to produce the phoneme.
- **Unvoiced consonants** do not require the vocal fold vibration to produce the phoneme.

This chart below highlights consonant pairs that have the same kinesthetic mouth placements (i.e. lips, tongue, teeth), but one is voiced and the other is unvoiced.

Unvoiced (Vibration)		Unvoiced (Vibration)	
Consonant	Example	Consonant	Example
/p/	pat	/b/	bat
/f/	fat	/v/	vat
/t/	tear	/d/	dear
/s/	sip	/z/	zip
/ch/	choke	/j/	joke
/k/	coat	/g/	goat
/th/	thick	/th/	this

Teacher Tip:

A simple way to determine whether a consonant is voiced or not is to place the palm of your hand on your throat. As you articulate the sound, feel for a vibration of your vocal cords. If you feel a vibration, it is a voiced consonant. If you do not feel a vibration, the consonant is unvoiced. Use this method to help children distinguish between voiced and unvoiced sounds.