TIPS TO HELP YOU WITH PHONEMIC TRANSCRIPTIONS

If you read, understand and follow these tips, you should never have problems with any type of transcription in the future!

1. PLURALS (also GENITIVES and 3rd PERSON SINGULARS)

/s/ after voiceless consonants (not sibilants) /strıːts/
/z/ after voiced consonants (not sibilants) /raʊdz/
/z/ after vowels and diphthongs /njuːz/ /aɪz/
/ɪz/ after sibilant sounds /bʌksɪz/

the letter s between vowels can be transcribed either with a voiceless /s/ or with a voiced /z/. This very often depends on the length of the preceding vowel or diphthong. Compare the length of the vowels/diphthongs in the following words:

shorter:    cease /sɛz/     longer:    sees /sɛz/
            loose /luːz/     lose /luːz/
            chase /tʃeɪs/     phase /feɪz/

words containing ss are transcribed with a voiceless /s/, apart from scissors /ˈsɪzərs/, dessert /dɪˈzɜːt/, dissolve /dɪˈzɔlv/ and possess (the first ss) /ˈpəʊzəs/.

the letter c between vowels is always transcribed with a voiceless /s/, as in face /feɪs/ or receive /rɪˈsiːv/.

2. -ed FORMS

/d/ after vowels and diphthongs /krɛd/
/d/ after voiced consonants /bɛnd/
/ɪ/ after voiceless consonants /mɪkst/
/id/ when the infinitive ends in /ɪ/ or /d/ /ˈwɒntɪd/

be careful to distinguish between verbs /blest/ (verb) and adjectives: /ˈblesid/ (adj)

3. -ing FORMS

add /ɪŋ/ to the verb base /ˈstædɪŋ/ /ˈkraʊŋ/

4. LINKING ‘r’

When a normally unpronounced r is followed by a vowel (in the same phrase):
never again /ˈnevrəˈgen/ here it is /ˈhɪər ɪz/ whether or not /ˈweðər ˈnɔt/ do NOT transcribe the ‘r’ in -ered endings: /ɡædəd/
5. **COMMON ENDINGS (SUFFIXES)**
- ous /əʊs/
- less /ləs/
- ness /nəs/
- ment /mənt/

6. **PREPOSITIONS**
on and off have no weak forms; they are always transcribed like this: /ɒn/ /əf/

7. **SCHWA**
the schwa /ə/ cannot appear in a stressed syllable: /twɔnti/ *

8. **DOUBLE CONSONANTS**
double consonants tend to make the preceding vowel sound short:

compare:  
  *latter* /lætə/  with  *later* /leɪtə/  
  *hopping* /hɑʊpɪŋ/  with  *hoping* /həʊpɪŋ/

9. **STRONG FORMS OF TO and THE**
remember to use the strong forms of *to* and *the* before vowels:

  *to a party* /tu ə ˈpærti/  *the apples* /θi ˈæplz/

10. **VELAR /ŋ/**
use velar /ŋ/ before *g* or *k*, unless the pronunciation of the word is /dʒ/:  

    *sing* /sɪŋ/  *sink* /sɪŋk/  but  *singe* /sɪŋdʒ/  

11. **STRONG FORMS**
strong forms are only necessary in the following cases:

  to give emphasis:  
  *I HAVE finished* /ai ˈhæv ˈfɪnɪʃt/  
  at the end of a phrase:  
  *Where is it from?* /ˈweərɪz øt ˈfɔrm/  

12. **HAVE**
remember that *have* can be an auxiliary /hæv/ or a lexical verb /hæv/

    however, there is no weak form for  
    *having* /hævɪŋ/ or  *haven’t* /hævnt/  
    (this applies to all auxiliaries and modals)
13. **THIS and THAT**
do not confuse *this* /ðɪs/ with *these* /ðiːz/

the relative pronoun *that* is transcribed /ðæt/
the demonstrative *that* is transcribed /ðeɪt/

14. /j/ and /dʒ/
do not confuse /j/ with /dʒ/

words beginning with the letter *j* will be transcribed /dʒ/
words beginning with the letter *y* will be transcribed /j/

judge /dʒʌdʒ/  
juice /dʒuːs/  
year /jɪə/  
young /jʌŋ/

15. **WHERE and WERE**
do not confuse *where* /wɛə/ with *were* /wɔ/ or /wɜː/

16. **COMMON EVERYDAY WORDS**
these should be transcribed automatically. For example:

also /ˈɔːlso/  
towards /ˈtɔːrəʊzdʒ/  
although /ˈɔːlθəʊ/  
look /lʊk/  
among /əˈmʌŋ/  
work /wɜːk/  
front /frend/  
water /ˈwɔtər/  
through /θruː/  
with /wɪð/

17. **SPELLINGS ee AND ea**
these are nearly always /iː/, as in *feet* or in *weak*

however, beware of words like *head* /hɛd/ or *death* /deθ/  

18. **CORRECT PRONUNCIATION**
do not transcribe words according to your own pronunciation:

*heart* is /hɑːt/ and not /hæt/ * or /hɑt/ *
*cupboard* is /ˈkʌbɔːd/ and not /ˈkærəbɔːrd/ *

19. **TRANSCRIBE CLEARLY**
make sure all your symbols are clear. For example, distinguish between the two closing diphthongs /ɔʊ/ and /au/.
20. **SILENT CONSONANTS**
beware of words which contain silent consonants; do NOT transcribe them:

half /haːf/   castle /'kæsl/
walk /wɔːk/   climb /klaɪm/
dumb /dʌm/   damn /dæm/

21. **STRESSED WORDS**
always accentuate words as you are transcribing; NEVER leave all the accents to
the end. This applies especially to dialogues and texts.

**Stressed words are:**

full verbs         /ˈteɪk/
nouns             /ˈhɛd/
adjectives        /ˈgud/
adverbs           /ˈkwɔt/ 
grammatical words of more than one syllable /əˈkrɒs/

occasionally, some purely grammatical words (pronouns, prepositions, articles etc.)
can be stressed:

*It's my pen, not hers* /ɪts maɪ pen ˈnɜːz/

22. **TRANSCRIBING DICTATED WORDS**
make sure that you pay attention to the pronunciation of the words that are
dictated. Do NOT invent words. For example, if you hear the word *curl* /kɔːl/, do
not automatically presume that it must be coal /kɔːl/, as this is a word you are
familiar with.

23. **TRANSCRIBING DIALOGUES IN CONNECTED SPEECH**
remember to include things like:

linking **after all** /ˈɑːflɔːl/
assimilation **ten boys** /ˈten bɔɪz/ becomes /ˈtem bɔɪz/
elision  **next day** /ˈnekst dɛɪ/ becomes /ˈneks dɛɪ/
weak forms  **she has gone to the city** /ʃi əz (dʒi) ˈgɒn tə də ˈsɪti/