

What is Phonetic Transcription?

Worksheet

Phonetic transcription is writing down the actual sounds of spoken language using symbols like those in the IPA, showing exactly how words are pronounced.

Questions

1. What does phonetic transcription record?
 - A) letter spelling
 - B) actual speech sounds
 - C) word meaning
 - D) grammar rules
2. Forward slashes /ə/ indicate...
 - A) narrow transcription
 - B) broad transcription
 - C) letter sounds
 - D) stress marks
3. Which symbol /ŋ/ represents the sound in...
 - A) cat
 - B) sing
 - C) five
 - D) dog
4. IPA stands for...
 - A) Important Phonetic Alphabet
 - B) International Phonetic Alphabet
 - C) Integrated Phone Analysis
 - D) Inter-language Phoneme Array
5. Transcribe the word 'cat' using IPA.
6. How would you transcribe 'think'?
7. Transcribe 'measure' narrowly.
8. Define: What is phonetic transcription?
9. Define: Why use [brackets] vs /slashes/?
10. Define: What is the IPA?

Answer Key

1. B) actual speech sounds — IPA captures how words actually sound, not how they're spelled.
2. B) broad transcription — /.../ is broad (phonemic); [...] is narrow (phonetic).
3. B) sing — The 'ng' sound at the end of 'sing' is /ŋ/.
4. B) International Phonetic Alphabet — IPA is the standardized system used worldwide.
5. Break into phonemes: /k/ /æ/ /t/ Broad transcription: /kæt/ Narrow (with aspiration): [kʰæt]
6. Phonemes: /θ/ /ɪ/ /ŋ/ /k/ IPA: /θɪŋk/
7. Broad: /meɜə/ Narrow: ['meɜʁ] (with stress and rhotic r)
8. Writing speech sounds using symbols like IPA brackets—/pɪn/ for 'pin'.
9. [brackets] = narrow (detailed), /slashes/ = broad (general phonemes).
10. International Phonetic Alphabet—a system of symbols for all human speech sounds.

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