

Glottal stop

A **glottal stop**, symbolized **ʔ**, is a PLOSIVE made at the glottis (= made by the vocal folds). In English it is sometimes used as a kind of **t**-sound, and sometimes has other functions.

1. In certain positions **ʔ** may be used as an allophone of the phoneme **t**, as when **pointless** **'pɔɪnt ləs** is pronounced **'pɔɪnʔ ləs**. This is known as **glottalling** or **glottal replacement** of **t**. It is condemned by some people; nevertheless, it is increasingly heard, esp. in BrE. Sometimes the glottal articulation accompanies a simultaneous alveolar articulation.

2 **ʔ** is found as an allophone of **t** only

- at the **end** of a syllable, and
- if the preceding sound is a vowel or SONORANT

Provided these conditions are satisfied, it is widely used in both BrE and AmE where the following sound is an obstruent

football **'fʊt bɔ:l** → **'fʊʔ bɔ:l**

outside **ˌaʊt 'saɪd** → **ˌaʊʔ 'saɪd**

that faint buzz **ˌðæt ˌfeɪnt 'bʌz** → **ˌðæʔ ˌfeɪnʔ 'bʌz**

—or a nasal

atmospheric **ˌæt məs 'fer ɪk** → **ˌæʔ məs 'fer ɪk**

button **'bʌt n** → **'bʌʔ n**

that name **ˌðæt 'neɪm** → **ˌðæʔ 'neɪm**

—or a semivowel or non-syllabic l

Gatwick **'gæt wɪk** → **'gæʔ wɪk**.

quite well **ˌkwɪt 'wel** → **ˌkwɪtʔ 'wel**

brightly **'braɪt li** → **'braɪʔ li**

Some speakers of BrE also use it at the end of a word under other circumstances as well:

not only this **ˌnɒʔ əʊn li 'ðɪs**

but also that **bəʔ ˌɔ:l səʊ 'ðæʔ**.

Compare AmE **ˌnɔ:tʃ əʊn li 'ðɪs**, **bətʃ ˌɔ:l sou 'ðæt**; in this position **t** is also heard in casual BrE.

3 **ʔ** is also optionally used as a way of adding emphasis to a syllable that begins with a vowel sound (see HARD ATTACK). It can be used to separate adjacent vowel sounds in successive syllables (= to avoid **hiatus**). In BrE this can be a way of avoiding **r** (see R LIAISON), as in one pronunciation of **underexpose** **ˌʌnd ə ɪk 'spəʊz** (→ **ʔɪk**).

4 **ʔ** also forms an essential part of certain interjections, e.g. AmE **uh uh** **ˌʔʌʔ 'ʌʔ**.

5 A glottal stop is sometimes used, esp. in BrE, to strengthen **tʃ** or **tr** at the end of a syllable, and also **p**, **t**, **k** if followed by a consonant or at the end of a word. This is known as **glottal reinforcement**.

teaching **'ti:tʃ ɪŋ** → **'ti:ʔtʃ ɪŋ**

April **'eɪp rəl** → **'eɪʔp rəl**.

right! **raɪt** → **raɪʔt**

Learners of English should be careful not to apply glottal reinforcement (as opposed to glottal replacement) in words such as **pretty** **'prɪt i**, **jumping** **'dʒʌmp ɪŋ**.