

SAN ANTONIO TALK

The English language has phonetic holes in it. Even San Antonio English does. Take, for example, our nasals. Got that? Nasals. You know, the M, N, and NG sounds.

We have all three nasal sounds at the end of words, as is in *sum*, *sun*, *sung*. We have all three nasal sounds in the middle of words, as in *simmer*, *sinner*, *singer*. Then the hole appears. We only have M and N at the beginning of words. The NG leaves a hole. We have *meat* and *neat*, but no *ngeat*. We have *mitt* and *nit* (or *knit*), but no *ngitt* or *ngit*. You can find *met* and *net*, but no *nget*. English has *mat* and *nat*, but no *ngat*; *mutt* and *nut*, but no *ngut*; *moat* and *note*, but no *ngoat* or *ngote*.

As I said, even San Antonio talk has that NG hole. We have *mow* and *know* (or *no*), but no *gno*. Oops!

Hold on! I am in error. We do have a *Gno* here in San Antonio. I just checked my phone book. I find listed ten *Moe* families; one *No* family, eight *Noes*--and four *Ngo* families.

Hey, this is neat. Give me a second, so I can browse some more. San Antonio has all kinds of family names that begin with NG. We have, in fact, eighteen families that are nothing but *Ng*. We have a *Ngeang* family. We have a *Ngan* family and a *Ngambee*; a *Ngin* and a *Ngiraingas*. We have a *Ngu*, a *Nguien*, a *Nguyn*, four *Nguys*--and almost a hundred (wow!) *Nguyens*.

With that many *Ngo*, *Ng*, *Ngeang*, *Ngan*, *Ngambee*, *Ngin*, *Ngirainga*, *Ngu*, *Nguien*, *Nguyn*, *Nguy*, and *Nguyen* families in San Antonio, there must be a NG in your life. Probably a close friend. And you with

a hole in your pronunciation.

That may sound like no big deal, but believe me it is. That hole in your pronunciation means that you have a hole in your language. And I know that you know that your language is in your head. So? Aren't you worried about another hole in your head?

Well, not to worry. With a little effort you can learn to fill that NG hole. Stop to think about it! All those Asians and Africans have learned to say NG. Even we English folk say NG in the middle and at the end of words. So why can't we English speakers learn to say NG at the beginning of words?

We can. I assure you. Let's start with an easy one: the word *Ngo*. Ready? OK, Repeat after me: *I sing; Oh, I sing*. Come on! Say it. *I sing; Oh, I sing*.

Good. Now, let's shorten that: *I sing; Oh!* Got it? Now try *Sing, oh!* Simple! Now four times, fast: *Sing, oh! Sing, oh! Singoh! Singo!*

Ready to fill the hole, now? Repeat the four fast *Singohs* and immediately repeat them again without the SI-: *Sing, oh! Sing, oh! Singoh! Singo!* (Breathe) *Ng, oh! Ng, oh! Ngoh! Ngo!*

There, you did it. And the four *Ngo* families in San Antonio should be proud of you!

One more step and that NG hole in your head will be filled forever. This time repeat *Ngo! Ngo! Ngo! Ngo!* four times and then do it without the -o: *Ng! Ng! Ng! Ng!*

Congratulations on having one less hole in your head!

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