Have you ever tried saying a tongue twister? They’re difficult to say, but they can also help with your pronunciation. One of the most famous tongue twisters is Peter Piper. See if you can say it:

Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers.  
A peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked;  
If Peter Piper picked a peck of pickled peppers,  
Where’s the peck of pickled peppers Peter Piper picked?

Interestingly, Peter Piper was a real person. Peter (original name Pierre Poivre) was a French horticulturalist who was born in 1719. At the time, spices (also known as “peppers”) were extremely valuable. The Dutch dominated the trade, bringing cloves and nutmeg to Europe. Peter wanted to grow his own supply, but it was difficult as the Dutch often pickled the spices by rubbing the seeds with lime. This was to stop people from cultivating them (the lime prevented the plants from germinating). And this in turn allowed them to keep the supply low... and prices high.

Another really famous tongue twister goes like this: She sells seashells on the seashore.  
The shells she sells are seashells, I’m sure.  
So if she sells seashells on the seashore,  
Then, I’m sure she sells seashell shells.

This tongue twister is also based on the life of another real person: Englishwoman Mary Anning (1799-1847). As a child, Mary and her father dug up shells and small fossils from the cliffs near her hometown. One day, Mary (who was 12 at the time) discovered the skeleton of an animal. At first, she thought it was a crocodile, but it turned out to be a dinosaur. She went on to make many other important finds, and eventually became known as the founder of modern palaeontology. In 2010, the Royal Society included Mary Anning in a list of the 10 British women who have most influenced the history of science.

Some other famous tongue twisters include these. See if you can say them:

- Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry.
- Red lorry, yellow lorry, red lorry, yellow lorry.
- Seth at Sainsbury’s sells thick socks.
- If Stu chews shoes, should Stu choose the shoes he chews?
- I scream, you scream, we all scream for ice cream!
- He threw three balls.
- Fresh fried fish, fish fresh fried, fish fresh fried.

And finally, what is (according to the Guinness Book of World Records) the most difficult tongue twister in the English language: “The sixth sick sheikh’s sixth sheep’s sick.”

Now, try saying that three times fast!

**GLOSSARY**

- a horticulturalist: a person whose job is to grow flowers, fruit, and vegetables
- a spice: a part of a plant which you put in food to give it flavour. Cinnamon, ginger, and paprika are spices.
- the Dutch: people from the Netherlands / Holland
- a clove: a small dried flower bud which is used as a spice.
- nutmeg: a spice that is used to flavour sweet food to pickle: if you “pickle” food, you put it in vinegar or saltwater so that it doesn’t go bad.
- a seed: the small, hard part of a plant from which a new plant grows.
- lime: a green fruit that tastes like a lemon to germinate: if a seed “germinates”, it starts to grow to dig up: if you “dig up” something, you take it from the ground.
- a shell: the “shells” on the beach are the empty shells (the hard covering) of sea creatures.
- a fossil: the hard remains of a prehistoric animal or plant that are found inside a rock.
- a cliff: a high area of land next to the sea to turn out: if a “turns out to be” B, you find out that A is B in the end, but you weren’t sure at first.
- palaeontology: the study of fossils and the history of life on earth.
- the Royal Society: a society for science in London that was founded in 1660.