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## WHAT IS AN ACCENT AND TIPS HOW TO SPEAK ENGLISH WITHOUT AN ACCENT

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### Abstract

An accent is a distinctive way of pronouncing a language, especially one associated with a particular country, area, or social class. So, your accent is the way you sound when you speak. Accents are an important part of our identity. An accent gives clues about who we are, and the community we belong to or wish to belong to. They're also important for those getting to grips with a new language. There are two different types of accents. One is a 'foreign' accent; this occurs when a person speaks one language using some of the rules or sounds of another one. For example, if a person has difficulties in pronunciation some of the sounds of a target language they're learning, they may substitute similar sounds that occur in their first language. This sounds wrong, or 'foreign', to native speakers of the language.

The other type of accent is simply the way a group of people speak their native language. This is determined by where they live and what social groups they belong to. People who live in close contact grow to share a way of speaking, or accent, which will differ from the way other groups in other places speak.

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### Introduction:

An accent is a way of pronouncing a language. Considering that all of us speak in distinctive ways, it is reasonable to assume that there are endless types of accents in the world, or even inside a country or region. Whether someone needs to **work on their accent in English** really depends on the degree to which people can understand them and whether they are happy with their own pronunciation.

**How important is your accent when you speak English?**

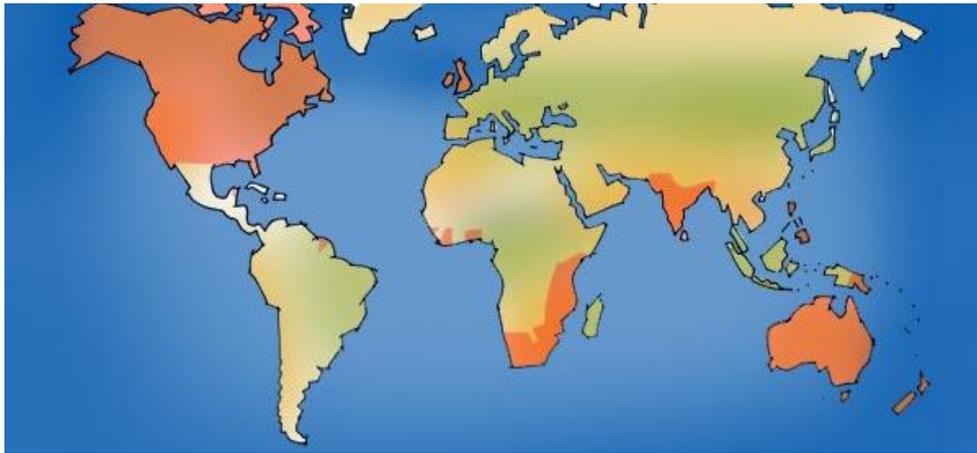


A person's accent is the product of where they are from and, in some cases, their social and educational background.

For example, someone from Australia will most probably speak with an Australian accent, but in Australia there are also different accents because of differences in social background and education.

This is generally the case for everybody, in any part of the world. Even within a country or region, accents can be different.

For example, the different local accents that are found in London. One identifiable accent there is called Estuary English, as it's mostly spoken in the areas near the River Thames and its estuary. This accent has some features of various different London accents, including the cockney accent typical in the East End of London.



*Map of English-speaking countries*

### Main part:

Accents are a result of how, where, and when we learned the language we are speaking. Native English speakers have different accents depending on where they're from. You need to choose the type of accent that you want to learn and stick to it. Otherwise, you run the risk of mixing up two or more English accents and sounding *even more* confusing.

The three most common accents that you'll come across in ESL material are **American (AmE)**, **British (UK)** and **Australian (AUS)** accents. Click the links below to see an example of each accent.

- American English.
- British English.
- Australian English.

As you can see, all three accents are different from each other, which is why you want to stick with mastering only one accent at a time.

First, it is essential to establish that there are two types of accents: a foreign accent, which occurs when we speak one language using some of the rules or sounds of another one, and our native language accent, which can be determined by our region, ethnicity, or social group. In both cases, the accent comes from our living (and learning) circumstances. When speaking a foreign language, our accent is influenced by the structure and sounds of your native language, which is why it is usually more noticeable. For example, if you are a German trying to learn English, you are likely to have trouble with the sounds found at the beginning of the words *wish* and *this*, because they don't exist in German.

If *you* want to learn how to speak English without an accent, here are some resources to help you get started.

To improve your pronunciation you need to start by improving your spoken English. Even if your pronunciation is good, it may be that **some people will have a problem understanding you because of your accent**. That could just be because they're just not expecting you to have an accent and it confuses them or it could be that your native accent is overpowering how articulately you can speak in English.

### 1. Listen to Your Target Accent

Mastering a native English accent requires you to listen to native speakers and practice speaking with their intonation and pronunciation.

For best results, make sure to actually practice using the accent while listening to podcasts and watching television shows. The best way to do this is to pause and repeat what speakers are saying over and over again. You can also record yourself and listen to how you speak, then compare it to the accents you're listening to.

#### Podcasts

If you don't have any English speakers you can speak with, try listening to podcasts for practice.

#### TV Shows

Another great way to improve your accent is by watching television shows.

- **British and American TV Shows for Learning English (AmE and UK):** Both American and British TV is popular worldwide, so you won't have any problems finding television shows from these two countries. In this post, you can find some of the best shows to learn English, as well as places to watch them online.
- **“The Katering Show” (AUS):** For a good Australian TV show, take a look at this one. It's a comedy about two food lovers with very different personalities who find themselves in a number of unusual situations. Episodes can be watched online by visiting the website and scrolling halfway down the page.

### 2. Practice Pronunciation with YouTube

Good pronunciation is important for talking like a native speaker. Unfortunately, many students skip past textbook pronunciation exercises for other activities, like grammar and vocabulary.

The good news is that practicing pronunciation doesn't have to be as boring as listen-and-repeat exercises found in textbooks. Here are four YouTube channels that make English pronunciation fun and engaging:

- **FluentU English:** With real-life examples taken from Hollywood hits, British TV series and many other authentic sources, you can practice your chosen English accent in an entertaining way. **Don't forget to subscribe** so you can keep up with all the latest, hippest English words.

### 3. Become Aware of Intonation

Everyone knows that good pronunciation is important for learning how to speak English like a native, but many students make the mistake of focusing only on their pronunciation and ignoring intonation completely.

**Intonation is the tone you speak in and the stress you put on different parts of a word.** English speakers have different intonations depending on where they're from. For example, when saying “garage,” an American English speaker will say “ga-RAGE,” whereas a South African English speaker says “GAR-age.”

Using the wrong intonation doesn't only confuse native English speakers, it can also change the meaning of your sentence completely. Also, people will know you're not a first-language English speaker from incorrect intonation much easier than they will if you mispronounce a word or two.

Take a look at this video to see an example of what it sounds like to have good pronunciation and incorrect intonation. While the gentleman in the video clip thinks he doesn't have an accent, his intonation immediately gives him away as an English language learner. Granted, he speaks just fine and is understood just as easily as a native speaker, but *he does have an accent*.

#### 4. Practice to Improve Intonation

You can practice your intonation in the same way you improve your pronunciation: by listening to native speakers and repeating what they say while trying to sound like them.

Except with intonation, you're not focusing on how they're saying vowels and consonants, but rather *how they're saying entire words*—whether they're being louder at the beginning or the end of the word or if their voice sounds higher or lower at the end of a sentence.

#### Conclusion:

Everybody has an accent, although, if you think that a person doesn't have an accent, this could be because they have the same accent as you. A person's accent is part of their history and their identity. Different accents reflect the richness of civilisation and culture. So, when is someone's accent an issue?

These days English is taught increasingly as an international language. To use English as an international language, the only real issues are those that affect intelligibility. The important thing is to be able to communicate with others, be they native or non-native speakers.

Accents are not fixed, which means that they can be changed and improved. For many people, it can come naturally (by moving to a different country, for instance), but, for others, it requires a lot of commitment and hard work.

There are many ways for you to improve your accent. One of the best and easiest ways to do so is by listening. Movies (ideally with subtitles), songs, Ted talks, podcasts... any of these resources can be very helpful. By listening, your ear understands the musicality of a language and what it should sound like, making it easier for you to grasp the small details.

Then, it is all about practice. Talk with native speakers, read out loud, and repeat words and sentences from movies and podcasts. With dedication, you will start feeling more familiar with the desired accent and capable of replicating it.

#### Internet resources:

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3. <https://www.linguisticsociety.org/content/why-do-some-people-have-accent>
4. <https://global-exam.com/blog/en/business-english-tips-for-speaking-english-without-accent/>
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