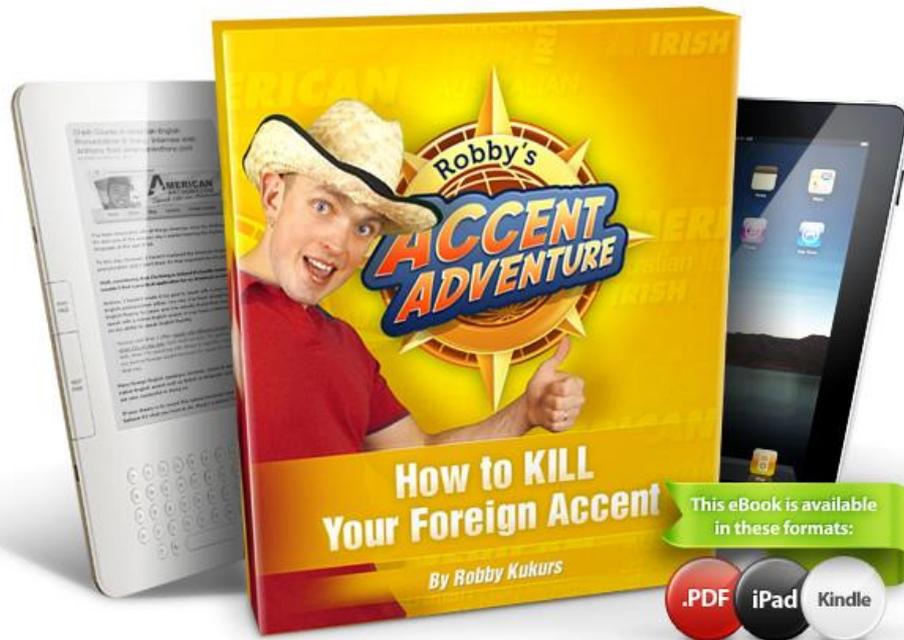


Accent Adventure presents...

HOW TO KILL YOUR FOREIGN ACCENT



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Don't Confuse English Accent with Slang!

A lot of people mistakenly assume that speaking with a certain accent irrevocably entails using specific slang expressions.

In reality nothing could be further from the truth because if you speak with an American accent, for example, and don't use any slang you'll still sound like an American which can't be said if you just use American slang and speak with a hard foreign accent!

Native Speakers Will Still Sound Like Natives Even if They Don't Use Slang – Why Would Foreigners Be Any Different?

You wouldn't use slang in formal situations.

You wouldn't speak using slang phrases and expressions when dealing with international clients, for example.

And you most definitely wouldn't use very local slang to communicate with foreign English speakers while holidaying abroad – you'd try to make your speech as simple and easy-to-understand as possible!

You would, however, retain your specific accent in all those situations marking you as an American, British or Irish English speaker, so it begs a question:

Is it not the ACCENT AND PRONUNCIATION in particular that makes an English speaker unmistakably distinct?

I think you don't have to look for further proof in order to answer to that question. Of course it's the accent first and foremost that makes an English speaker unique!

Just line up a New Yorker, a Brit, a Texan, an Irishman and an Aussie and make them say just one line introducing themselves. It certainly won't be slang (because they'll only say something general like "Hi, my name is Mark, and I come from London!"), but they're definitely going to speak with their respective accents because that can't be helped – simple as that!

Learning Both – Accent AND Slang – Requires Extra Effort!

Yes, native English speakers will respond positively if you learn local slang – there's no doubt about that! I have a first-hand experience in this because I live in Ireland and whenever I use a new phrase or expression I've picked up from my work colleagues, my fellow co-workers say things like "That's a typical Irish way of saying it, fair play to you!"

It's nice, but that's all there is to it.

Just using those phrases and expressions will never make me SOUND like an Irishman.

Slang is Often Overrated!

One might think that there are dozens upon dozens of slang expressions and words one has to learn in order to sound like an American, a Brit or an Irishman.

I personally don't think so!

You only need a handful of expressions for starters to sound like a typical Irish person, for example.

"It's grand!" is the way Irish people say "It's fine!"

To explain that you've just done something, you can use a unique Irish grammar construct "I'm after (doing something)"; for example:

"I'm after making the same mistake again!" simply means you just made another mistake.

And you can stick the word 'sure' in pretty much every sentence to make it sound more Irish:

"How are you, are you doing all right?"

"Ah sure, can't complain!"

These things can be acquired in no time, and you can make them your second nature within a matter of a couple of days!

Of course I'm not saying that's all there is to Irish slang and phraseology, but the point I'm trying to make here is the following:

Just a few starter slang phrases and expressions will create an impression about you as a speaker of the particular English dialect

whereas the same can't be said if you only master to pronounce a few words in your target accent with the proper pronunciation!

Pronunciation – not slang! – is the decisive factor that's going to determine your success in mastering particular English accent (American, British, Irish or Australian), so that's what you should focus most of your efforts upon!

What Really is Accent Reduction?

You don't have to FOCUS on your foreign accent reduction in order to reduce your foreign accent!

While at first it may seem like a total non-sense, it is actually true, and here's why...

If we, foreigners, aspire to speak like Americans, Brits or Australians, we can't adopt the all-or-nothing approach:

I want to sound like an American.

I have to sound just like an American!

Practice... practice... practice... It's hard – I'll never sound exactly like an American...

If I can't achieve 100% mastery, it's not worth trying to learn to speak with an American accent!

This kind of approach is counter-productive, it creates a false impression that you can't achieve things, and it perpetuates the opinion that only those foreigners having moved to English speaking countries at a very young age can achieve accent mastery.

Instead, it's much more effective to **set a realistic goal in terms of achieving your desired English pronunciation and then giving it your best shot!**

Personally I believe it's simply NOT POSSIBLE **NOT TO LEARN** to speak English with a certain degree of native-like proficiency if you try hard enough and follow the right advice. Yes, you still might speak with a bigger or smaller foreign accent, but you just have to ignore it – and also ignore all discouraging remarks about your accent.

Focus on What You CAN Do Instead of What You CAN'T!

Focus on pronouncing English words in a certain way instead of constantly thinking about what you're saying wrong.

If you're constantly having this nagging thought at the back of your head – "I have to reduce my accent, I have to reduce my accent... I sound terrible, I have to reduce my accent!" – you'll find it nearly impossible to see through to your goal.

You'll get discouraged by the fact that your foreign accent is still present by listening to your own voice recordings, and of course there's always someone who won't hesitate to make a comment like – "You sound nothing like an American, I can still hear your Russian/Arabic/Japanese accent!"

Basically I think that **by going down the accent reduction road you're bound to get frustrated, unhappy with your progress** and you're also running the risk of having self-esteem issues.

If you **focus on practicing** your American/British/Australian English and getting feedback from the right people, you'll be happier, self-confident, and so much more likely to achieve a certain degree of accent mastery which will help you to fit into the local society, achieve your career goals or accomplish whatever objectives motivated you to learn to speak English with a native accent.

Your Foreign Accent Can Sometimes Even Be Your Friend!

There's a widespread belief that one of the most important characteristics of a **fluent English speaker** is the ability to speak with native or near-native English pronunciation – be it British or American.

This premise is logically flawed though. It is based on an assumption that proper English pronunciation is such an integral part of the English language that one's fluency levels are directly linked to one's ability to eliminate one's native accent.

I can refute this argument in a few moments my friends, [just playback this video](#) and you'll see that a foreign English speaker can be completely fluent and still speak in heavily accented English.

Dr. Constantin Gurdgiev is a very reputable and highly regarded economist living in Ireland, he's super-active in teaching and researching economy, and to be honest with you – I think he's the most eloquent economist in Ireland. I've heard him quite often giving his opinions and interpretations of processes happening in Ireland and also globally during the financial crisis on TV and radio, and he's always using the most fitting economy related vocabulary.

[Just watch this video](#), and I think you simply have to admit his English fluency level is that of a native English speaker – if not above that!

According to the supporters of fluent English = flawless pronunciation theory, however, Mr. Gurdgiev doesn't fall under the category of fluent English speakers just because you can guess his Russian origins by his accent.

Personally I think it's nonsense. **You can't paint all foreign English speakers with the same brush.** Just because many foreigners will speak with you in broken English with a heavily accented pronunciation, doesn't necessarily mean that this statement can be reversed. Heavily accented speech isn't a sure sign of bad English, and it's VERY IMPORTANT for you to sever the psychological connection between the two in your mind, if it exists!

Is It Possible to Pick up Accent Just by Living Among Native Speakers?

We've all heard the following notion – you've just got to be dropped into a native English speaking environment, and you'll quite naturally absorb the local slang, accent and pronunciation peculiarities!

There are also those who believe in the critical second language acquisition theory, and those folks will hold to a belief that an adolescent foreigner is simply incapable of learning a native-like English accent.

So who's right?

Is accent being 'absorbed' by you at a subconscious level?

Or is it only possible to speak like natives if you immigrated to an English speaking country in your early teens at latest – ideally you'd have to have been a child between the ages of 4 – 8?

My personal experience tells me nothing is clear-cut in real life.

A youngster may retain his foreign accent for the rest of his life, yet some other person might develop his or her pronunciation to a fairly high native-like standard in their late teens or early twenties!

I believe that in order to answer this question we need to look beyond a person's age and the fact that they've migrated to an English speaking country. There are other factors contributing into what is going to determine a foreigner's success in terms of accent acquisition.

Factor #1: Total Amount of Time Spent on Speaking

Pronunciation is first and foremost going to be developed by **active spoken practice**. You may listen all you want, but unless you actually open your mouth and try to replicate what you hear, you won't develop your English pronunciation by a bit.

It's also very important not to confuse this factor with the total amount of time spent in an English speaking country!

One may spend long years living in a close-knit foreigner community in England or the States, but is it going to develop that person's ability to speak with a native-like English accent? The sad truth is that if the foreigner in question is communicating mostly with their extended family members and friends from the same national background, the chances are that not only their accent but also their ability to speak in English fluently in general is going to be severely affected!

Basically it all boils down to how much a foreign English speaker gets to speak in his or her daily life. The more one speaks, the higher the chances of developing a native-like English pronunciation.

Factor #2: Conscious Effort to Sound Native-like

Over the years I've met plenty of other foreign English speakers who simply haven't cared about their English pronunciation. Not that I would be a proponent of trying to achieve perfection in terms of one's accent and pronunciation by all means possible, in fact nothing could be further from the truth!

It's just that I've realized **so many people don't make ANY EFFORT WHATSOEVER** in order to resemble native English speakers even to an extent where their pronunciation would match that of a native speaker only in general terms.

Here's a good example.

I was waiting in a line in a fast food restaurant, and I noticed that one of the counter staff was a Latvian girl; her name tag gave it away. Anyway, I started paying attention to what she was saying, and it turned out that she was speaking with a very hard Latvian accent. Instead of a 'burger' [bɜrgər] she would say [bʊrger] which is the way we Latvians pronounce that word.

Well, as I said – I'm not saying foreigners should try to perfect their pronunciation, and I totally understand not everyone is willing to learn how to produce certain English sounds not characteristic to their native language.

The point I'm trying to make here is the following – ANY Latvian is capable of pronouncing the word 'burger' quite similar to how it's pronounced by native English speakers, and it doesn't even require learning any new sounds. All those sounds are already present in the Latvian language, and if a Latvian would read out the following word in one syllable – 'būage' – it would actually resemble the English original to a much greater extent than [bʊrger] which is a far cry from the actual word it's supposed to represent...

Well, the number one issue why it's happening is because Latvian is a phonetic language and many Latvians would have the phonetic reading ingrained in them.

The second reason – there are a lot of English loan words in Latvian which are traditionally pronounced the Latvian way, so when they're encountered in English context, many Latvians would have a tendency to pronounce them the same way.

Lastly – and most importantly! – there's the unwillingness to make any effort to mimic native English speakers, and I'm guessing that **it's deeply rooted in foreigners' fear of trying out new things and sounding stupid!**

Regardless of the reason, the simple fact remains – unless you're making conscious effort to MIMIC NATIVE SPEAKERS, you will retain your foreign accent.

Just because you hear English spoken around you, doesn't mean that native-like pronunciation gets somehow transferred into your brain.

Human brain isn't a CPU, after all!

Time + Effort = Native-like English Pronunciation!

The more time you spend on speaking in English while TRYING to mimic native English speakers, the better your pronunciation is going to get!

Sure enough, for best results you need to know which sounds you have to pay particular attention to, and you also need to be motivated enough to stick with the way you change and adjust your English pronunciation over time.

By and large, however, it all boils down to those 2 main factors: **spoken English practice and making effort to replicate native English speakers.**

You can't pick up a native-like American, British or any other English accent just because you're exposed to it, or just because you speak a lot with other English speakers. Exposure alone isn't going to alter your pronunciation by a bit, and speaking without CONSCIOUS effort isn't going to do the job for you either!

Accent Reduction Step #1: Spoken English self-practice

If you aspire to learn either American or British – or any other accent for that matter! – you simply have to **SPEAK AN AWFUL LOT!**

Accent Acquisition & Pronunciation Development Doesn't Just Happen!

Some people believe proper accent and pronunciation can be simply picked up while living in an English speaking environment.

You're moving to England? (feel free to replace it with Canada, US, Australia or any other English speaking country). Well, I probably won't recognize you when you come back home the next time – you'll be speaking like an Englishman in no time!

While there IS a certain degree of truth in it, in reality it's actually your OWN EFFORT AND TIME INVESTED INTO PRONUNCIATION PRACTICE that determines your success in terms of accent acquisition and pronunciation improvement.

Speak In the Morning, Speak During the Day, Speak In the Evening Too!

I've been getting up at 5:40 AM to record videos for my Accent Adventure blog where I'm training my American pronunciation.

I've been working on my accent while driving in my car to work. I spend about an hour every day on commuting, so I may as well use that time wisely and work on my English improvement!

I've been recording more videos and practicing my American and British pronunciation when coming home in the evening and the compound effect of all that spoken English practice clearly shows in the way I speak English today.

Would my English pronunciation have changed if I hadn't been speaking (AND trying to sound like a native English speaker) so much over the last year or so?

Not a chance in hell!

I'd remain where I was before in terms of my pronunciation if not for my constant spoken English practice (not that I would have any problems speaking with a hard foreign accent!), and let me tell you something my friend – **SPEAKING WITH YOURSELF** is one of the best things you can ever do to your spoken English development!

SELF-PRACTICE Is What's Going to Make Your Pronunciation Perfect!

I'm a fan of spoken English self-practice (you can call it speaking with myself – and you may think it's weird, strange and sick – I don't care!) and I STRONGLY believe (the heck, I don't just believe in it; facts are speaking for themselves!) that it's the single most important activity having contributed into my oral fluency development.

Sure enough, if you're speaking with other English speakers 24/7/365, it's also going to develop your oral fluency.

When it comes to English pronunciation improvement however, spoken self-practice is of an even bigger importance for the simple reason that **you need to be almost 100% focused on your OWN speech** (at least during the early stages of your accent practice) in order to change your pronunciation and intonation, and it is quite difficult to maintain the focus upon your own speech when you speak with another human being.

Shifting your focus AWAY from your own speech is the best way to develop your fluency and ability to speak without much thinking and advance planning.

Focusing UPON **your speech** (and it's very difficult to achieve that state of mind when speaking with others, especially considering the embarrassment factor!) is **the best way to develop your pronunciation.**

One Way Or Another – You Just HAVE to Speak A LOT!

You may hate the idea of speaking with yourself, so the only thing you might decide to do in order to develop your accent is to repeat sentences after a native English speaker.

Fair enough – it's a perfectly valid way of developing your pronunciation (there will come a moment in time though, when you just have to develop your ability to speak with your target accent on your own!), and I've been doing this exercise a lot myself.

There's one thing you can't refute though – and it's the fact that you have to do it regularly and for lengthy periods of time!

If you just do it every now and then, you might become good at resembling an American English speaker by saying certain phrases and sentences YET you won't be able to maintain a conversation in your target accent.

No matter what you do, lengthy spoken English practice sessions (with yourself and mimicking others; **ideally you should actually COMBINE both** for best results!) can't be avoided if you're anything serious about your English accent and pronunciation development, I'm pretty sure about that my friends!

Accent Reduction Step #2: Focus on the KEY sounds (American)

The basic characteristics of the American pronunciation is deep, resonating sound which is created right inside of your mouth, and to achieve that, your cheeks need to be slightly 'inflated'.

The problem is, many of my fellow foreign English speakers trying to learn the American accent find it difficult to position their mouth properly, and it might take them a lot of time till they figure it out going the trial and error way.

Exaggeration Is the Perfect Starting Point!

I personally find that it's very easy to get the general idea of an accent if you exaggerate certain facial features characteristic to the people speaking with that particular accent.

It may sound stupid or even idiotic to you, and it will look very stereotypical to a native speaker of the accent you're trying to mimic, but the truth is that it's much easier to have a blueprint imprinted into your mind of how you have to move the jaws, lips, cheeks and tongue **if you exaggerate that particular accent.**

If you're struggling to get your American accent going, all you have to do is pull the corners of your lips back in a mock smile, and it will force you to create American-like sounds even if you speak English with your own native accent.

And of course, I don't advise such an approach for lengthy American English practicing sessions; it's just to get the general feel of the accent!

Now It's Your Turn to Practice!

Here's a practical application of this method, and you may want to do the same when practicing your American English.

When you're starting your spoken practice you may want to stretch your mouth and your facial muscles to get ready to speak with an American accent – to achieve that, adopt the exaggerated mouth position (just like the one I'm showing in the video below!)



Click [HERE](#) to learn the 'water in mouth' technique!

Speak with your mouth wide open, lip corners drawn back, and then slowly do away with the funny face and eventually adopt a normal facial expression WHILE at the same time retaining just a little bit of that crazy face.

I personally find that if you keep the corners of your mouth a little bit drawn back, it helps you with not slipping back into your normal foreign English accent.

Try to imagine you've taken a little bit of water in your mouth, just a tiny bit, and you don't want to spill it out when speaking. So that half a mouthful of water is sitting at the bottom of your mouth right below your tongue, so you're forced to speak without letting your tongue to touch the floor of your mouth.

That's exactly how Americans speak, and it's the easiest way for a foreign English speaker to develop the American accent.

Basically you **SPEAK WITH YOUR CHEEKS** more than with your jaws when speaking with the General American Accent!

Let your cheeks resonate the words; you can even put on a mock smile to draw your lip corners back and get your cheeks into the right position.

Anchor Sounds of American English – 'R' and 'L'

Personally I find that pronouncing the 'R and 'L' sounds the American way helps with the overall fluency of my speech.

Americans pronounce the 'R' sound thoroughly, distinctly, and I guess the easiest way to replicate that sound is to imagine that you've taken water in your mouth and you're trying to gurgle it while at the same time you're trying to press the sides of your tongue against your upper teeth. Well, it's not that throaty, and you have to 'move' the sound from deep inside your throat further up your mouth so that eventually the sound emanates from somewhere between your throat and your lips.

The most important fact to bear in mind, however, is that Americans pronounce ALL letters 'R' unlike British English, for instance, where 'R's are very vague. American 'mother' ['mʌðər] is ['mʌðə] in England; you kind of don't even pronounce the 'R' letter when speaking in British English.

So when you speak American, you pronounce all 'R's and I believe **it works as an anchor helping you to form sentences** and take time to gather thoughts.

Same goes with the 'L' sound; in fact – there are two different 'L' sounds in American English: **light 'L'** and **dark 'L'** and it's actually the dark 'L' that adds that American sound to your voice.

While light 'L' is formed by pressing the tip of your tongue against the roof of your mouth right behind your teeth, dark 'L' is pronounced deeper in your throat; basically you have to use the same technique of imagining your gurgling water in your throat while having the tip of your tongue pressed against the roof of your mouth right behind your teeth.

As a rule of thumb, the light 'L' occurs when you have the letter 'L' in the beginning of words & syllables whereas the dark 'L' occurs when the letter 'L' is positioned towards the word & syllable endings.

Watch the video below to see how each of those 'L' sounds is pronounced, and then you can go ahead with practicing words and sentences!



**Click [HERE](#) to learn
light & dark 'L'!**

Stretching the First Syllable of Words

Of course, you don't stretch the first syllable of EVERY word when you put on the General American Accent; if you did that, you'd sound more like a Southerner.

Yet even the General American Accent has a lot of stretched first word syllables, and here are a couple of examples so that you can get the general idea of what I'm talking about here.

The word 'bottom' becomes ['baaahrɒm] (notice how the double 't' sound changes to 'r')

'Water' becomes ['waaahrer].

'Probably' is more like ['praaahbəbli] than ['prɒbəbli] which is the standard phonetic transcription you'd find in dictionaries.

And similarly, when you say 'possible', you stretch the first syllable resulting in ['paaahsəbl] rather than the standard ['pɒsəbl].

So to recap, in order to sound like an American speaking with the General American Accent, you may want to do these three things – **pronounce 'R's and 'L's distinctly, take some water into your mouth, and stretch the words a bit longer** than the dictionaries will tell you!

Of course, it's not going to guarantee you'll sound like an American right away, but it's a good start, and if you're really serious about your American pronunciation improvement, you may want to check out my [Accent Genie American Pronunciation Video Program](#) which is a great product for ANY foreigner who aspires to speak like an American!

Accent Reduction Step #3: Focus on the KEY sounds (British)

Have you ever paid attention to how Brits pronounce the letter 'R'?

I think it's fair to say that more often than not, **British English speakers don't actually pronounce the letter 'R' at all!**

Let's take the following words, for example:

'Master'

'Proper'

'Consider'

In the Received Pronunciation (which is just a fancy word for British English), you just drop the 'R's and pronounce those words as follows:

'Masta'

'Propa'

'Consida'

Simple as that!

Of course, you don't always drop the 'R' sound and there are plenty of words where the 'R' sound can't be just dropped:

'Primary'

'Problem'

'Script'

In the aforementioned words, you can't drop the 'R's because it just won't sound natural. If you try to drop 'R' in the word 'problem', the resulting 'poblem' just doesn't sound right; it rather sounds like some newly coined word or indicates of some speech impediment of the person who's trying to say 'problem' but can't manage to pronounce the 'R' sound.

When to Pronounce British 'R' and When to Drop It?

I could start telling you about the rule of omitting the letter 'R' after vowels (in the word 'interferes', for example, you drop all 'R's so you actually have to pronounce it the following way – 'intefeez').

I could start going into in-depth analysis addressing all possible aspects of when 'R's preceding vowels have to be pronounced (like in the word 'premium') and when they have to be dropped (in 'sphere' you have to drop the letter 'R' even though it's preceding the last letter of the word which is a vowel).

I'm not going to do that, however, because of the following reason:

Too Much Analysis is Going to Hamper Your Ability to SPEAK Fluently!

When you speak, you can't really be doing two things at the same time – thinking on the subject PLUS thinking about HOW to say it, what means of expression to use, what grammar rules apply in the sentence you're uttering at the moment and so on.

So if you're learning a set of rules on the letter 'R' pronunciation in the British accent and then you're trying to apply them as you speak, you may find that your speech is very hesitant and a far cry from being fluent. You will try to spell out words in your head to make sure you spot the respective vowels and then you'd pick this or that particular rule resulting in the 'R' sound being pronounced or omitted.

That's a lot for your brain to process, and also it's a completely unnatural way of speaking.

The best way to develop the 'gut feeling' for dropping 'R's is **watching various films, TV programs and documentaries featuring British actors, entertainers and narrators**, and over time you'll develop a 'gut-feeling' for when 'R' is to be dropped and when it's not.

The British 'O' sound and its importance in the Received Pronunciation.

The 'O' sound along with the 'R' sound are the most important sounds you should focus upon if you want to sound like a native British English speaker!

If you get the two sounds – 'R' and 'O' right, you've mastered about 80% of proper Received Pronunciation, and the rest is just a matter of practice.

Of course, it's easier said than done because you've got to invest plenty of time and effort into your accent practice before it becomes your second nature, but it doesn't change the fact that if you get the 'O' sound right along with the 'R', you've done most of the hard work.

You've Got to Purse Your Lips to Get the British 'O' Right!

First of all, the typical British 'O' sound is very distinct, and you can get it right if you purse your lips as if you're about to blow off candles on a birthday cake. You don't get a sound like this in the American English, so it might present some difficulties for you in the very beginning, but I'm sure that with enough practice anyone can get it right!

What I did find a bit tricky though, was incorporating words containing this rounded 'O' sound into sentences. It required quite some time for me to get used to the sharp change that takes place when you pronounce the rounded 'O' sound and the next sound you have to pronounce is a different vowel.

Saying things like 'blow off' makes you quite naturally want to start the next word (in this case 'off') which is also beginning with the letter 'O' with the same pursed lips. 'Off', however, is pronounced in a different way; it's a very short 'O' which requires you to adopt a different mouth position (it's actually called the open back rounded vowel – [ɔ]).

The best way to get used to the transition of vowels during a live speech is by training yourself during frequent practice sessions to repeat those words containing the specific rounded 'O' sound like 'home', 'road', 'moment', and incorporate them into longer sentences.

That way you'll be able to speak fluently and you'll instinctively know when to purse your lips and when you have to go back to a fuller mouth position.

But if you think this is all you need to know about the British 'O' sound, you'll be in a nice surprise!

The tricky thing is that **you simply have to learn which English words are pronounced with the much shorter 'O' sound** or the so called open back rounded vowel [ɒ] in the Received Pronunciation/British accent.

Let's take, for example, the word 'dog'. In American English it's pronounced as 'dahg', and so are many similar simple words – 'on' (ahn), 'off' (ahf) – and also longer words containing the letter 'O' – 'honest' (ahnist), 'probably' (prahpubli), 'problem' (prahblim). Basically there's no 'O' sound in them, and if you've been going by the American Pronunciation all along, then it's your second nature to pronounce the letter 'O' in all those words with the 'ah' sound.

In the Received Pronunciation the letter 'O' in all these instances is pronounced as the open back rounded vowel; in other words, it's actually a short 'O' sound!

So when you're learning to speak like a Brit, you've got to make sure you pronounce all such and similar words with a short 'O' sound instead of the 'ah' sound!

Personally I found it a bit tricky because pronouncing words like 'problem' and 'John' with the 'ah' sound was one of the first things I learnt when learning to speak in English a long time ago.

Now, when learning the British accent, I actually realized that I have to unlearn that!

But now it's going to get even more interesting...

The thing is that some words with the letter 'O' are pronounced with the open-mid back unrounded vowel [ʌ], (it resembles a very short 'a' sound) and there really isn't a foolproof way of telling which words are pronounced that way!

For example, the word 'wonder' is pronounced with the unrounded vowel which is how Americans would pronounce the first syllable of this word – [wʌndə].

'Along', on the other hand, is pronounced with the rounded vowel which resembles the short 'O' sound – [ə'lɒŋ].

As you can imagine, you have to learn all these exceptions individually, there are no work-around solutions, I'm afraid.

Personally I use [this online British pronunciation dictionary](http://www.british-accent.com/) to look up pronunciation of certain words I'm not sure of, and I warmly suggest you do the same! It's quite important to establish proper pronunciation patterns in the early

stages of the accent learning process so please make sure to check words regularly when you're doing some British accent self-practice and you're not sure of how this or that particular word might be pronounced!

And here's another typical example of how you can't be sure if the letter 'O' is pronounced as the unrounded 'A' or the rounded 'O'.

The word 'some' is pronounced with the unrounded vowel – [sʌm].

'Got' is pronounced, however, with the rounded vowel – [gɒt] which puts it into the category of the 'O' sound because it does resemble a short 'O' sound.

The thing is – both 'some' and 'got' are short, one syllable words containing the letter 'O', but in the Received Pronunciation 'O' is pronounced differently in each word. In 'got' it is actually the short 'O' sound, in 'some' it's pronounced with a short 'A'.

You can't know it unless you simply learn it, so make sure to keep practicing your British accent regularly enough to achieve good results!

Another distinct feature of the British accent is that you literally have to **SPIT OUT the last couple of syllables of every longer word you pronounce.**

Let's take the following words, for example:

IMPLEMENT

LITERALLY

PARTICULAR

Now, the way you should aim to pronounce these words is the following:

IMPLMNT

LITRLY

PTICLA

What I'm saying now might sound like a gross exaggeration, but that's exactly how native British English speakers would pronounce those words!

Accent Reduction Step #4: Finding the Right Sources For Your Pronunciation Practice

First let me tell you a few critical things you should bear in mind when working on your English pronunciation.

1. It's not about listening, it's all about speaking!

You may listen all you want, but at the end of the day it's all about YOU using your MOUTH and training it to pronounce English words in a certain way. Sure enough, listening is an integral part of the whole process, but it ALWAYS has to be followed by spoken practice!

2. You don't necessarily have to choose a particular English accent to resemble!

I'm taking on different English accents – such as American or British – in my Accent Learning Missions in order to prove that anyone is capable of learning to speak with a native-like English accent. In my daily life, however, I don't speak with a particular accent, and my 'standard pronunciation' is a mix of different accents. You may as well embrace the same approach when improving your own English pronunciation!

3. Embrace ignorance!

Ignore your embarrassment, shame or whatever emotions you might experience when working on your pronunciation. I'm pretty sure that we all have the capability to get English sounds right, it's just that we are too shy to try out new things because we think we'll sound stupid!

Also, ignore other people's opinion if they're too judgemental of the way you speak. Have an open mind, and be 100% focused on mimicking native English speakers instead of thinking of how silly you may sound when trying to pronounce this or that particular word.

And now, let's look at ways you can work on your pronunciation. And by the way, this is exactly how I work on my spoken English when learning to speak with specific English accents.

1. Speaking With Other English Speakers as Much as You Can!

Speaking with other English speakers is the most effective way of picking up proper English pronunciation. Bear in mind, however, that proper pronunciation is not just going to be somehow magically 'transferred' to you just because you're immersed in the environment.

You have to make **CONSCIOUS effort to mimic people around you!**

It is actually possible to spend years in an English speaking environment and not improve your accent by a bit if you're totally oblivious to how other people pronounce words when speaking in English.

It's all about LISTENING and trying to RESEMBLE what you hear.

The concept is simple enough, however, a lot of my fellow foreigners don't make any conscious effort whatsoever in order to adjust their pronunciation. And I'm not talking about trying to sound just like native English speakers – for most of us it's mission impossible anyway!

What I'm talking about is just a little bit of CONSCIOUS effort to resemble people around you, and the compound effect will result in a much better pronunciation a few years down the line!

2. Shadowing TV Programs and Shows

This technique is super-effective because your emotional engagement will help you stay motivated and also the mechanical nature of this exercise will allow you to be engaged into it for lengthy periods of time.

To put it simply, you don't have to think when you shadow, all you've got to do is watch TV and repeat whatever people are saying.

But if you're worried that you won't be able to enjoy the program because of your active involvement, you can rest assured that it's not going to happen for as long as you keep your voice down and don't speak louder than the TV set!

Basically you can shadow actors or program hosts in a slight whisper for most of the time; you might speak up and speak in a normal pitch of voice every now and then throughout the program.

Here are a couple of things to bear in mind when shadowing English speaking people when watching TV:

- turn subtitles on – it will make it easier for you to repeat what's being said;
- you don't have to do it for the full duration of the program or film! If it becomes a drag, your motivation will go out the window!

3. Watching YouTube Videos & Mimicking People In Them

I don't think I have to explain to you what YouTube is.

It's the largest video website on the Web, and you can find loads of celebrity interviews, newscasts and individual vloggers to watch! You can also subscribe to their channels, and it will provide a constant flow of new video content you can watch on a regular basis, mimic those English speakers and improve your own pronunciation in the process.

You can also search for YouTube Channels relevant to your personal interests and hobbies; in fact it's crucial to watch videos you're interested in to keep you motivated and make sure you keep working on your English pronunciation!

4. Reading Aloud

Just like taking advantage of your favourite TV programs, you can incorporate speaking and working on your English pronunciation in your reading routine!

Whatever it is that you read – English fiction, online news or your hobby magazines, reading aloud will definitely help you improve your pronunciation – even if it’s a couple of articles in each chapter!

So, make sure you do some reading aloud when you read in English, and by the way – it doesn’t necessarily have to be some printed or electronic media.

You can take opportunities to practice your English pronunciation when seeing any road signs, billboards or thousands of other written English content we’re being exposed to on a daily basis!

5. Engaging is Spoken English Self-practice

Are you complaining about your bad English pronunciation?

Well, you’ve got to understand that others can only help you with advice. In order to see real results, you have to do a lot of spoken English practice while paying attention to how you pronounce specific English sounds and words.

Speaking with others, shadowing and reading aloud are all perfect methods, but if you also add some spoken English self-practice to your weaponry, your English pronunciation is definitely going to experience a massive improvement!

Here are advantages to developing your English pronunciation while speaking with yourself:

- you can develop your ability to verbalize your thoughts in English while paying attention to your pronunciation with no stress involved whatsoever – after all, no-one is listening to you!
- you can practice different ways of pronouncing this or that particular English sound and find the best way for yourself (‘TH’ sound, for example).

6. Recording Yourself on a Camera

Personally I record regular videos for both of my YouTube channels:

- [English Harmony YouTube Channel](#)
- [Accent Adventure YouTube Channel](#)

Now, when I go back to my early videos, I can hear a big difference in my pronunciation which just goes to show how one’s pronunciation changes over time provided that a lot of hard work is being done!

One of the biggest advantages that such recording offers is your ability to listen to yourself and spot any imperfections of your speech.

You see, the funny thing is that you don’t always notice these things when you speak; and even if you were to pay all your attention to the way you pronounce words when speaking, you’d run the risk of messing up your speech. It’s not that easy to focus on WHAT to say and HOW to say it at the same time!

That’s when video recording steps in.

You can record your speech, then watch the video and **figure out which words and sounds you should revisit**. After that you can do some self-practice whereby you repeat the problem-words a good few times by trying to get the sound just right, and then you can do another video recording to check your improvement.

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Thanks my dear fellow foreign English speaker for downloading and reading this eBook!

I hope I piqued your interest about sounding like a native English speaker and reducing your foreign accent, and you're more than welcome to visit my blog at <http://accentadventure.com/> for regular American and British accent learning related advice!

I'll keep the blog going for the years to come, so I hope that eventually you'll sound JUST like a native English speaker – provided you invest long hours and hard work in your speech development, of course. But guess what? It doesn't have to be boring. You can improve your English pronunciation and reduce your foreign accent much faster than you think it's possible by following the tips and tricks I'm sharing on my blog, so see you around!

Best Regards,

Robby Kukurs

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