

## How can I improve my accent?

Communicating in a second language takes accommodation on both sides. An American speaker also needs to be able to adapt their ear to understand the globally accepted English pronunciation.

There are two very memorable client engagements that stand out when accent was the only thing holding a leader back from the top job. One was from Italy and a Senior Vice President for a manufacturing company, and the other was from India and a Senior Vice President of Strategy for a real estate investment firm. Both were contenders for the CEO role of their public U.S. companies, and both received the designation! Based upon their success, we now recommend the following for all accent modification coaching programs:

### **1. Identify role models**

Choose people you admire for the way they speak. We often recommend broadcasters. Study them and follow them on social media.

### **2. Make [Merriam Webster](#) your home page.**

Check words and pronunciation throughout the day.

### **3. Practice with a Friend**

Make a list of words you have trouble pronouncing. Ask a friend to add words to that list and practice with them outside of work.

### **4. Ask a colleague to give direct feedback**

This could be a boss, peer, or direct report. Make sure it is someone who sees you many times throughout the week and attends meetings with you.

### **5. Drill - Drill - Drill**

If you are working with a coaching firm, review all their recordings and your coach's custom practice recordings. Listen to accent reduction videos. Find a time to drill every day.

### **6. Commit to more English speaking**

You likely speak your native language outside of work. Commit to responding in English even if others are speaking in another language. Do this for 3 months to help you change your habits.



## 7. Open your mouth

When your mouth is more open, it is easier to make sounds correctly. The American English accent requires a lot of space in the mouth.

## 8. More tongue tip exercises and tongue twisters

The tongue moves differently in English. Work on tongue agility to yield faster results. Practice saying these tongue twisters daily:

- a. Eleven benevolent elephants.
- b. She sees cheese.
- c. Six sticky skeletons.
- d. Truly rural.
- e. Pad kid poured curd pulled cod.
- f. Which witch is which?
- g. Willy's real rear wheel.
- h. Six sleek swans swam swiftly southwards.
- i. Scissors sizzle, thistles sizzle.
- j. A happy hippo hopped and hiccupped.
- k. Cooks cook cupcakes quickly.
- l. Really leery, rarely Larry.
- m. Twelve twins twirled twelve twigs.
- n. A snake sneaks to seek a snack.

## 9. Spend time on consonant clusters and multi-syllabic words

Make detailed lists of words for your coach and others helping you. Lean on Merriam Webster, too. Consonant clusters and multi-syllabic words are the most challenging. Give extra attention to drilling these.

### A. Consonant Clusters:

br - brain, brown, bright, brim, broke, broom  
cr - crab, crumb, crib, cry, crank, crow, crew, crazy, create, credit, creature  
dr - draw, dream, drain, dress, drone, drink, drag, dragon, drop, drawer, dry  
fr - from, freezer, free, freedom, frozen, frighten, friend, fruit, freak  
gr - grade, great, grocery, grueling, grape, grass, grandparent, grapefruit, grease  
pr - practice, prove, pretzel, prevent, private, press, price, pride, promise  
tr - truck, try, trust, tray, tree, trail, train, track, traffic, trade, trash, travel, treat  
sc - school, scribble, scale, score, scrap, scratch, schedule  
sk - skunk, skate, skinny, skeleton, ski, skill, skin, sketch, sky, ask, mask  
sm - small, smart, smear, smash, smell, smitten, smog, smock, schism  
sn - snack, snail, snare, sneak, snore, snake, snob, snow, sneeze, snap  
sp - space, spot, splash, speak, spend, splurge, sport, special, wasp, clasp  
st - stair, step, stop, stare, store, stage, story, steak, stand, star, list, last  
sw - sweet, swan, sworn, swallow, sweat, swing, swim, swamp, sweater, swollen



tw - twinkle, tweet, tweezer, twelve, twice, twenty, twirl, twist, twine

scr - scrape, scrap, scream, screech

spl - splash, spleen, splendid, splint

spr - sprain, spray, sprint

str - strain, strap, strobe, streak

## B. Multi-syllabic Words:

anybody

obedient

celebration

librarian

discovery

roller skating

discovery

impossible

invisible

vegetable

questionable

appreciate

planetarium

personality

refrigerator

alphabetical

mathematical

disorganization

disagreeable

unquestionable

unforgettable

vocabulary

university

congratulations

cooperation

communication

With these accent reduction strategies, you will feel more comfortable communicating and presenting to others in a professional setting. Awareness is the first step, then you must make a conscious effort to make changes on a daily basis. Practice and consistency are essential to make progress and improve your accent. If you know you need a coach to help keep you accountable and to help you develop a strong ear for the nuances in these sounds, contact us at [info@speakbydesign.com](mailto:info@speakbydesign.com).