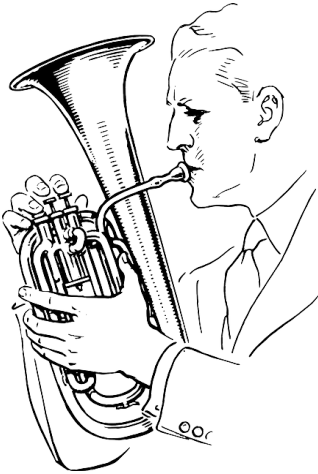


Do you want to improve your American English pronunciation?



1. **Begin with thinking about how our body is an instrument.** Our body is a trumpet. A violin. A guitar. A flute. A tuba. We make sound when we blow air and it passes through and over things. Those things vibrate and make sound. To change our sound, we need to change our air, our wind, our breath. We need to change what holds and pushes out and vibrates, our belly, our chest, our throat, our cheeks, our tongue, our lips. Changing how we move our bodies can feel weird. It can feel embarrassing. It can feel hard to do. It can feel scary. It can feel shameful. But if we want to change our sound, we can only do this if we change how we use our bodies. We don't change our sound, our accent with our mind. We change it with our bodies. If you feel private about this, try making the change alone where you have privacy. Then try it little by little with a friend or teacher. Then try it in public. Soon, you will have success. This success feeling feels good – happy, light, energetic, fun. Remember this feeling when you feel tired, afraid, or frustrated. Good feeling is possible!

2. **Watch and practice with free pronunciation lessons on Youtube.** I recommend [Pronunciation Doctor](#), [Rebecca Linquist](#) and [Rachel's English](#). There are many pronunciation lessons on Youtube. They are free and you can use them anytime you have five minutes. You can find many helpful ESL pronunciation videos on the [San Mateo Adult School youtube channel](#). [Check out the ESL pronunciation video playlist](#).
3. **Search on Youtube for “American Accent for _____ Speaker.”** Put in the your native language – example, Spanish, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, etc.
4. **Practice face muscle exercises.** Both the Pronunciation Doctor and Rebecca Linquist provide them. You can also do a search on Youtube for “face exercises for American accent.” Here is a link to some face exercises: https://youtu.be/hu1mj15s_z8. American English uses the muscles between the top lip and the nose and the muscles deep in the side cheeks. The dimple muscles. Can you twist your lips – both top and bottom lip together – side to side in side kisses? If you cannot, you do not have American accent muscles. Practice until you can kiss side to side, keeping top and bottom lips together.

5. **Practice breathing exercises.** You can find these on Youtube also. Search for “Breathing exercises for American accent.” American English uses a lot of breath. Every language, every accent uses breath. Some languages hold the breath inside the mouth. Some languages hold the breath inside the throat. American accent fills the belly and chest and then pushes it out of the mouth to fill the air. We must use the muscles between our ribs to take the breath in and push the break out, like an accordion. American accent pushes the breath into the public space. To make American accent, you must fill your belly and then push it up through your body and out of your mouth. Do not keep the air inside your mouth. If you keep it inside, Americans have a hard time understanding you. Fill your belly and chest. Put your hands on your ribs. Feel your ribs expand. Then push the air up through your body and out of your mouth.



6. **Practice connecting words.** Americans connect the end and beginnings of many words. I’m mad. It’s sad. He’s sad. She’s sort of mad. He’s sort of sad. Listen for the connections when native speakers speak. Record native speakers or record part of a tv show or podcast. Listen to it many times. Copy it many times. Record yourself and compare.
7. **Practice stretchy vowel sounds.** American and California accent stretches many words. Cat is not just “cat.” It is ca-at. Hold a rubber band with both your hands. Pull it apart. It is like that. We stretch many vowel sounds like rubber band. Ba-and. Ca-at. Do-og. Listen to native American speakers. Listen for the stretchy rubber band sound of their vowels. Especially when Americans and Californians are emotional, they stretch their vowels. “Mo-om! The do-og is ou-ut! What should I do-oo?!”
8. **Tune into the music of American English.** Listen to native speakers talk. Focus on the high sounds and the low sounds – the pitch. Forget the words and just listen to the music. What



do you hear? When does the music go up in pitch? When does it go down? Try to copy American accent in a sound like “ta.” For example, listen to a native speakers say, “**Look!** There’s a big tiger in the front yard!” Copy the pitch - the high sound, the low sound - and rhythm of what you hear but instead of the real words, use “ta.” Like

this: “**Ta!** Taa ta ta tata ta ta taa taa!” Some languages keep same pitch – everything even. Some languages go up high and down low in pitch. Some stress every word the same. Some don’t. Every language is different. American accent goes up and down and stresses some syllables a lot and some very little.

9. **Use the voice recorder on your phone to help you improve your American English pronunciation.** Ask a native speaker to record words and phrases. Listen closely to their recorded speech. Copy the style of the speaker. Repeat, repeat! Record your own voice. Compare. Rachel's English Youtube channel shows how to use a special technique – [the Benjamin Franklin technique](#) – which you can use with your voice recorder.
10. **When you get tired or discouraged, come back to your breath.** Breathe in slowly, two, three, four. Hold, two, three, four. Let it out, two, three, four. Repeat. Then open your mouth very wide, as big as you can. Stick out your tongue. Like lion face in yoga. Then close your mouth very tight. Make a tiny, tiny, tiny kiss. Push it out far. Shake your hands. Pull your shoulders back. Try to make your elbows touch behind your back. Make a sound like a cat, dog, lamb, crow, rooster. Relax! Take a break. And then begin again.

