

the COMPLETE

BRITISH



ENGLISH

PRONUNCIATION

ROADMAP

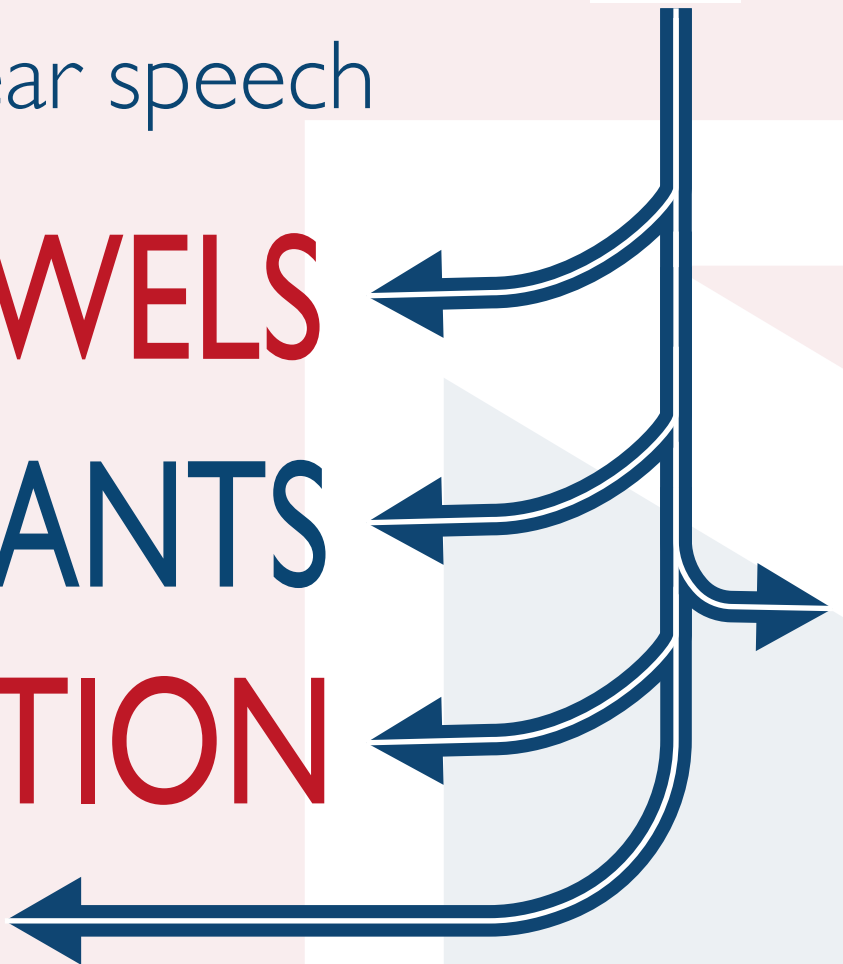
a clear path to clear speech

VOWELS

CONSONANTS

INTONATION

Ashley Howard



Copyright © 2015 Ashley Howard

Ashley Howard has asserted his moral right to be identified as the author of this work.
All right reserved. No part of this publication, including the accompanying audio, may be reproduced in any form of binding or cover or circulated electronically without prior permission of Edwin Publishing and Media Ltd.

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-0-9933602-0-6

Edwin Publishing and Media Ltd

First published in 2015 by Edwin Publishing and Media Ltd
57 London Road, High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire, HP11 1BS
www.edwinpublishing.co.uk

British English Pronunciation Roadmap:
A Clear Path To Clear Speech

written and illustrated by

Ashley Howard

<i>Chapter</i>	<i>Page</i>
Before You Explore...	1
My Pronunciation Roadmap	6
How to Navigate Each Page	8
How to Download the Audio Examples	9
Speech Anatomy	10
Consonant Sounds	12
Vowel Sounds	87
Syllables and Word Stress	173
Relationships Between Words – Connected Speech	194
Intonation - Rhythm and Pitch	206
Cheat Sheet: Creating Meaning – Stressing the Right Word	233
How do I Integrate these New Habits into Live Speech?	237
Bonus Section: Practice Pages	238
Bonus Section: Practice Pages - Answers	295
Additional Resources	313
Bibliography and Recommended Reading	319

> What is an accent?

Everyone has an accent – even if it is considered neutral or region-less. And there are too many to count, partly because accents constantly evolve. An accent is heard primarily in the way we pronounce our words, how we stress them, and the intonation we use to convey emotion, attitude and intention. It reveals something about us and we all make associations, rightly or wrongly. More importantly, everybody modifies his or her accent – it's true. Even in our mother tongue and native language we make slight adjustments depending on whom we're with and what we're talking about. For example, talking to friends and family makes most people talk in a more relaxed and casual way whilst when talking to certain colleagues or addressing people in authority, most people talk in a slower, more articulate way – this is, in a way, modifying one's accent.

> Why change an accent?

Accents are wonderful! They are as unique as the lives we live. They are part of our identity and represent our cultural diversity and heritage. But some people, for practical, personal or professional reasons, want to change or modify their accent. As one client said, "my accent speaks louder than my words...". During our lives we reinvent ourselves all the time, by dressing differently, changing our hairstyle, moving house or country, learning a new skill, changing behaviours, profession or lifestyle, and so changing one's accent is within our transformational capacity. Learning another accent doesn't have to be so much about eliminating your current accent – unless that's what you want – but simply having choice, which takes time and practice, but it means that you are more sophisticated about adapting your speech to suit your circumstances.

> Is it even possible?

Yes! I have worked with countless clients over many years and they have all achieved great success, but it's true that some people find it really easy and straightforward and some find it challenging. Whilst accent is very much part of who we are and how we interact with the world around us, it is also just a physical habit – you don't think about how to speak, you just think about what you want to say – it's part of your muscle memory. Think of this roadmap process in two stages. Firstly, it involves getting the new sounds into your muscle memory. This includes various aspects of learning a conscious mindset to build on your habits in comparison to the new habits that you're learning; imitation; daily repetitive practice; and understanding patterns. The second stage is integrating these new habits in live speech. This aspect is the real moment of transformation, which takes courage, commitment and a willingness to change.

> How long is it going to take?

It's a necessary and relevant question, but an impossible one to answer. Learning or softening an accent as I said is about acquiring a new habit and building muscle memory. This takes as long as it takes. Learning to drive is as much to do with comprehension and exposure, as it is to do with muscle memory. Some people can pass their driving test within an intensive week of fifteen lessons, and some people take a year with thirty sessions, or more. You can control your level of commitment and practice – and this can make a huge difference. And also, successfully changing just one word is success and progress! So it's a bit like a jigsaw – celebrate every new piece that fits together, take your time and enjoy the process.

> Who is this book for?

This book is designed to help anyone, for whatever reason, who wants to learn a ‘standard’ British English accent – also known as RP (see below). You might speak English as a second language and simply want to be clearer and better understood. You might teach English as a second language or be a fellow voice coach seeking a resource for how to help your students with their pronunciation and intonation. You might be a native English speaker with a regional accent who wants it softened. You might even be an actor who needs to learn a standard British accent for an audition or part.

> What is an RP accent?

RP stands for Received Pronunciation. Today, it refers to a standard British English accent associated with the south of England. The word ‘received’ used to mean something being accepted or approved, and so this accent was considered the most well-received or the most ‘standard’ pronunciation of British English. It was therefore set apart from regional accents.

Every language has their own version of RP – their own standard accent – as well as their regional accents. All accents have their positive and negative stereotypes and associations. Amongst native English speakers, RP is most typically associated with privilege, wealth, power and intellect – in the early twentieth century some described it as ‘Public School Pronunciation’ (Daniel Jones *English Pronouncing Dictionary* CUP 1917). It is an accent often associated with the current monarchy, those in certain professions and positions of authority and some British actors.

Thankfully, every accent evolves and adapts to the changing socio-cultural-political landscape, which is influenced by many factors. So the accent that you can learn through this book is more of a typical modern RP – it is a neutral, region-less, standard southern British accent.

> Fearless, playful imitation is essential

We learn our first language, our mother tongue, through imitation. We listen to and watch those around us and mimic their sounds, exploring with fearless playfulness the ways in which our *tongue*, *lips* and *soft palate* move in order to accurately reproduce their sounds. In contrast, learning a second language is primarily through spelling. Some written languages are more phonetic, so what’s written is more reliable in terms of pronunciation. British English is not one of these languages, so the first way to engage with this process of reducing your accent towards RP is to develop a reliance on your ears by listening to the audio in each section, imitating the sounds with fearlessness and playfulness, and paying attention to the sensation of the way each sound feels in your mouth.

> Deprogramming the spelling

When exploring a new vowel sound, a client once said, “my eyes are controlling my mouth”, which is to say that the spelling is trying to dictate the way to say the word. This is part of the challenge with the British English language. What you see is not necessarily what you should say. For examples, you’re probably quite aware that in the English language there are five LETTERS that we call vowels: ‘a’, ‘e’, ‘i’, ‘o’ and ‘u’. However, in an RP accent there are actually nineteen vowel SOUNDS (excluding the schwa and five triphthongs), which are represented by various combinations of the vowel letters. This can be confusing, for example ‘poor’, ‘pour’, ‘paw’ and ‘pore’ are spelt differently but in RP they are actually pronounced with the same vowel sound – THOUGHT. Equally the same spelling can be pronounced with different vowel sound. For example the ‘ear’ in words like ‘wear’, ‘earth’, ‘hear’ and

'heart' are pronounced with different vowels. The same is true for some consonants, for example, the 'ph' in 'physical' should sound exactly the same as the 'f' in 'fizz', and the 'l' in 'silk' is pronounced, whereas the 'l' in 'calm' is silent. So, exploring vowel and consonant sounds is a lot to do with deprogramming the spelling and focusing on the sounds instead of the letters.

> Using phonetic symbols to check the pronunciation

Some people are familiar with phonetics, which is a symbol system for writing sounds. If you've ever been confused by the strange symbols next to a word in a dictionary, they're phonetic symbols. So every sound has a single symbol. There is a symbol for the SH sound in 'shoe' and the THOUGHT vowel sound in 'shore'. Each vowel and consonant page has the relevant phonetic symbol and you can also use the *Phonetic Symbols* (p.313) as a reference. This makes it possible for you to consult a reliable dictionary and actually see how to pronounce the word. There are also specialised pronunciation dictionaries. In fact, the online Oxford Dictionary not only has phonetic transcriptions but also audio examples of words – so you can see and hear how to pronounce them in RP. They also have an app called *The Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary*, which offers the phonetic transcription and audio examples without needing to connect to the internet – which might be useful for on-the-go, 'location-less' reference.

> Do I need to know the phonetic symbols to use this book?

Thankfully you do not need to know phonetics in order to successfully use this book. As I said, I have given the relevant phonetic symbols in the top right hand corner of each of the vowel and consonant sound page, so that you are able to cross-reference and clarify the pronunciation of other words with the words and examples given for each vowel sound. However, in this book, I have focused on comprehension, listening and imitation: there are detailed descriptions of each sound and pattern, with audio examples of every word and phrase. With imitation and daily practice, you will be able to understand, develop your ear and experience the sensation of what it's like to pronounce words differently.

> 20 minute coaching sessions

I have attempted to make this book feel as if I am there with you, coaching you through every section. So it is very thorough, albeit a bit wordy at times. One suggestion is that you treat each new vowel sound, each new consonant sound, and each part of the section on intonation like a twenty minute coaching session. Set aside this time to explore the pages that focus on the new sound, discover your habits and follow the guidance on each page. This means that it can fit in with your life style and commitments and you can pick it up and put it down accordingly.

> 'I'll put a thought on it'

Whilst discussing the process of integrating new pronunciations into live speech, another client I was coaching said to me, 'I'll put a thought on it', referring to a new sound he had learnt for a particular word. He explained that when speaking, he would be actively 'thinking' about what he might say, in order to catch the word with the new sound in it, hoping to change it in the moment. Of course, at the beginning, it tends to be that you catch the word after it is spoken, but the more he caught it, the more able he felt to catch it before speaking.

> **Creating a word bank**

Another client created a folder of notes on their phone, so that throughout the day they could identify what the sort of language and common phrases they used frequently. They would then check these words in a pronunciation dictionary, notice whether or not any of these words contained vowels or consonant sounds that they had been working on with me, and then changed them where necessary. This enabled them to make the integration of their new habits immediately into live speech, without having to play the guessing game of when the new habits would be needed.

Whilst I have offered you many everyday words and phrases and many practice sentences to help you get started, creating a word bank of words that you tend to use is invaluable. Moreover, these words could be grouped into words that contain the same vowel sounds, or into what are known as lexical sets – which is to say that if the vowel in the primary stressed syllable of a word rhymes with another word, they belong in the same group. For example, ‘saw’, ‘bored’ and ‘enormous’ would be in the same lexical group because the main vowel sound rhymes. You can do the same for consonants: find words that have the same initial consonants (‘do’, ‘does’, ‘don’t’), the same medial consonant (‘ladder’, ‘bolder’, ‘hiding’) and the same final consonants (‘side’, ‘called’, ‘had’) and group them together. This way, you can focus your practice on words that feature whatever new sound you are learning.

> **Make your intentions known**

It can feel easier to reinvent yourself in front of new people, but when in front of your friends, family or colleagues, it might feel more challenging. Many people that I have coached express an anxiety about what people will think of them if they change their pronunciation. We all tend to pigeonhole each another based on the clothes that we wear, the music that we like, where we live, where we were educated, what profession we are in etc... When we change anything about ourselves, there is a very natural fear about acceptance. Making those around you aware of your intention to work on your speech and accent may dissolve some of this anxiety and help to create a conversation about why and how you intend to do it, which makes them part of your process rather than obstacles to your progress.

> **Proprioception**

In the sections of vowels and consonants, you will be asked to notice what your lips, tongue, jaw and soft palate are doing. Arguably, you may never have considered the position and movement of your tongue or lips unless you have accidentally bitten them, or your jaw, unless it aches or is painful - and you may never have even heard of your soft palate, let alone considered what it’s doing in speech. You will slowly become more and more conscious of what these parts of your speaking anatomy are doing, but there is still a heavy reliance on what it called proprioception: your body’s ability to sense, feel and notice what it is doing. This is where recording yourself and using a mirror become almost vital to practicing and exploring effectively. Your body’s internal sense of these parts will strengthen but may take time, so be patient.

> **‘...it’s percolating’**

I had a client once whose response to the question ‘how has it been going this week?’ (which I tend to ask at the beginning of most coaching sessions), was ‘it’s percolating’. He seemed quite happy with this idea: that just like coffee, his new skills and habits were slowly permeating into his everyday speech. Some aspects of the learning might be really immediate and transformative, and some may take time to percolate. Set goals, but be generous to yourself.

> **Your pronunciation ‘roadmap’**

Once you know your habits and how to change them, you no longer need to look at each section. It’s a bit like navigating around a new place. Once you’ve discovered where each new road or path or corridor leads to, the more you travel along them, the more familiar they become until you can navigate without thinking. So think of the process of exploring this book, like exploring the roadmap of pronunciation. You are where it all starts, and the destination is clearer and more confident British English pronunciation. Go to the *My Pronunciation Roadmap (p.6)* and tick the relevant sections as you travel through the book. I hope you enjoy your journey!

> **Facebook Community - Private Group:**

Remember, you’re not on your own. You now have access to the English Pronunciation Roadmap Community via a private Facebook group, where you can ask me questions directly, speak to others who are on the same journey and get helpful tips and advice. I’m looking forward to helping you.

Once you’ve taken attended the Live Workshop and become a member, you’ll be able to join the group and become part of the EPR tribe.

> **Who is the Author?**

Ashley Howard is an experienced British Voice Coach trained at the Royal Central School of Speech and Drama in MA Voice Studies. He did a further two years of training with Kristin Linklater author of *Freeing the Natural Voice 2007*. *British English Pronunciation Roadmap: A Clear Path To Clear Speech* is a distillation of thousands and thousands of hours of coaching, with hundreds and hundreds of clients and students from almost every country and every language. For more info on Ashley, visit www.englishpronunciationroadmap.com or www.ashleyhoward.me.

Disclaimer:

The information in this book has been compiled by way of general guidance in relation to the specific subjects addressed, but is not a substitute for individual professional guidance on specific circumstances. Please consult a medical professional before beginning any physical exercises or speech related exercises, particularly if you have known specific issues that may influence their general safety and efficacy. If you engage in the exercises in this book, you agree that you do so at your own risk, are voluntarily participating in these activities, assume all risk of injury to yourself, and agree to release and discharge the author and publisher from any and all claims or causes of action, known or unknown, arising out of the author or publisher’s negligence.

My Pronunciation Roadmap

The inspiration for the name of this book came from a session I had a long time ago when a client of mine was talking about navigating around a new city to which he had recently moved. At the end of the session he said, 'knowing which sound to use in which word is becoming a little easier', to which I replied, 'yea, it's a bit like navigating around the new city in which you're now living - without a roadmap it can feel a bit overwhelming. So think of this process a bit like getting a roadmap to your new pronunciation'. It seemed to be a perfect comparison.

It's also true that when learning anything new, there is a sort re-mapping of the roadmap inside the brain - where new synaptic connections are made. These synaptic connections take time to establish. In the same way that learning a new route or journey takes repetition and repetition before it becomes something that you can do without thinking, so these new pronunciations take time and practice before they become second nature.

So, over the page is your very own pronunciation roadmap. If you've already had a personalised assessment from me, then your journey is all mapped-out and you just need to follow the path to clearer and more confident speech. If you chose to work alone, you'll discover, sound by sound, which ones apply to you and you can tick each one accordingly. and your roadmap will emerge. This way, you'll be able to navigate the book and practice more specifically on the things that will deliver the most change for you.

If you'd like to have a personalised assessment from us, that's also an option that I'll talk about in the Live Workshop.

Remember, you're not on your own. You now have access to the English Pronunciation Roadmap Community via a private Facebook group, where you can ask me questions directly, speak to others who are on the same journey and get helpful tips and advice. I'm looking forward to helping you.

Once you've taken attended the Live Workshop and become a member, you'll be able to join the group and become part of the EPR tribe.

My Pronunciation Roadmap

Consonants

R	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.15	S and Z	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.41	K and G	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.70
Rhotic / Non-Rhotic	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.19	TH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.45	SH and ZH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.74
M	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.22	NG	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.49	DG and CH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.77
P and B	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.24	N	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.54	H	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.82
W	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.28	L	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.57	Consonant Clusters	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.84
F and V	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.31	T and D	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.61			
Yod	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.35	Syllabic Consonants	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.66			

Vowels

SCHWA	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.92	THOUGHT, NORTH,		NEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.145	
NURSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.96	FORCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.120	DRESS	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.149
GOAT	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.100	CHOICE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.125	FACE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.153
BATH, PALM, START	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.104	TRAP	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.129	SQUARE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.157
STRUT	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.108	MOUTH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.133	GOOSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.161
PRICE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.112	FLEECE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.137	FOOT	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.165
LOT, CLOTH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.116	KIT	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.141	CURE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.169

Word Stress, Relationships between Words and Intonation

Syllable stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.174	Syllable/stress timed	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.208	Apologising	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.224
Compound words	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.177	Resting rhythm	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.208	Ongoing thought	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.225
Dates, times, money	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.180	Mono/polysyllabic words	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.210	Listing	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.225
Primary/secondary stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.182	Short/long vowels	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.211	Naming places, people...	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.226
Unstressed syllables	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.183	Phrasing/pausing	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.211	Parenthesis	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.227
Prefixes & Suffixes	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.186	Asking a question	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.221	Quoting/paraphrasing	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.227
Linking/intrusive sounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.195	Rhetorical questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.222	Irony/sarcasm/satire	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.229
Elision & contractions	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.198	High Rise Tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.222	Expanding a statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.229
Assimilation	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.199	Responding to questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.222	Antithesis	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.230
Weak forms	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.202	Statements, commands...	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.224	but... or... so...	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.231

How to Navigate Each Page

How much time to set aside for each sound

The red icon of a mic suggests that you could record yourself saying the words before exploring the sound. This will enable you to compare yourself to the audio example and discover your habit

Explanation of how and where the sound is made and whether it is voiced or voiceless

Identify your habit by reading aloud the examples, listening to the audio examples and comparing to your recording

Use the relevant subsection to help change your specific habit

15min

phonetic symbol - m

This sound is pronounced in words like:

mine more most remember September sombre I'm him them

> **How is the M sound made in an RP accent?**

The upper and lower lips come together and touch, the soft palate is low and vibrations travel into the mouth space but the vibrations exit continuously out of the nose. The jaw is loose, the tongue tip is behind the bottom teeth and the teeth are apart. This sound is voiced and belongs to the bilabial and nasal consonant groups.

> **What do I do habitually?**

- Are you adding a B sound unnecessarily in some 'mb' spellings?

There are many words containing the 'mb' spelling where the 'b' is pronounced as a B sound (p.24), as in 'amble', 'cucumber' and 'number'. However, in some 'mb' spellings, the 'b' tends to be silent, as in 'limb', 'comb' and 'numb'. Listen to the follow words, firstly spoken with a B sound and then with the 'b' silent, as they should be in RP: 'limb', 'comb', 'numb' 'climbing', 'plumbing', 'bomber' and 'lambing'. If you do this, go to

- Are you leaving your lips slightly apart?

Some speakers do not bring the lips completely together before releasing them, and subsequently make more of a VV sound (p.28) (or a sound similar to a V sound). This means that 'men' might sound more like 'when' and 'meet' might sound more like 'wheat'. If you do this, go to

> **How do I change my habit?**

- How do I avoid adding a B sound unnecessarily in some 'mb' spellings?

A B sound is made with a sudden release of the lips. It belongs to the plosive group of consonants. Whereas an M sound is more continuous and flowing – the sound travels up into the nose.

Whilst there are some exceptions where the B should be spoken, a good way to start might be to lengthen the M sound at the end of a word like 'lamb' and then slowly reduce the volume of your voice – like turning down the volume dial of a speaker – so that the M fades into silence instead of ending suddenly. It's a bit like a little boat travelling out across the ocean, getting smaller and

The colour in the corner indicates the section that you're in

The target sound under which is its phonetic symbol for reference

Words that contain the target sound

A drawing of the position of the tongue, soft palate and also the lips (when relevant)

At the end of each 'What do I do habitually?' section, there is a coloured icon of a spanner. It suggests that you go straight to the same coloured icon in the 'How do I change my habit?' section to help you 'fix' your habit

There is a list of words and the most typical spellings for each sound. Record yourself saying the words then imitate and practice with the audio examples to help guide you to the new pronunciation

There are also practice sentences for each sound. Again, record yourself saying the sentences then imitate and practice with the audio examples to help guide you to the new pronunciation

phonetic symbol - m

smaller, gradually disappearing over the horizon. Whilst doing this, keep the lips together and avoid any movement or release. Whilst the M sound is not as long as this in conversational speech, it might help you to feel and hear the possibility of the lips staying still and the sound being longer and uninterrupted. It might look a bit like:

lammmmmmmmmmmmm

climb thumb womb limb succumb comb tomb numb

- How do I encourage my lips to completely close?

The M sound is a nasal consonant, which means that at the end of a word like 'him', the vibrations exit exclusively through the nose. If the lips do not come together fully, vibrations will also be coming out of the mouth. You can tell whether the lips have come together fully by looking in a mirror. You could also pinch and release your nose whilst extending the length of the M sound, and if the sound stops when you pinch your nose and continues when you release your nose, then you've successfully sent all the vibrations through your nose which means that your lips are completely closed. The tongue tip should be behind your bottom front teeth and the back of the tongue should be low. Play the same game with the following words:

mum mime main me my more him hem home ham

> **Silent 'm'**

There are very few words in which a written 'm' is silent, but they tend to be spelt 'mn' and are variations on the word 'mnemonic' – ni'monik. Whilst there is no conclusive pattern to follow, one way to be sure is to look at the phonetic transcription in a reliable dictionary.

> **Practice words and typical spellings for the M sound**

M me must meal small lamp am came team warm

MM comment summer mummy summary recommend **ME** someone

came some home become come somebody sometimes mime thyme

Thames **MB** climbing thumb womb lamb **MN** condemn hymn

autumn column

> **Practice Sentences for the M sound**

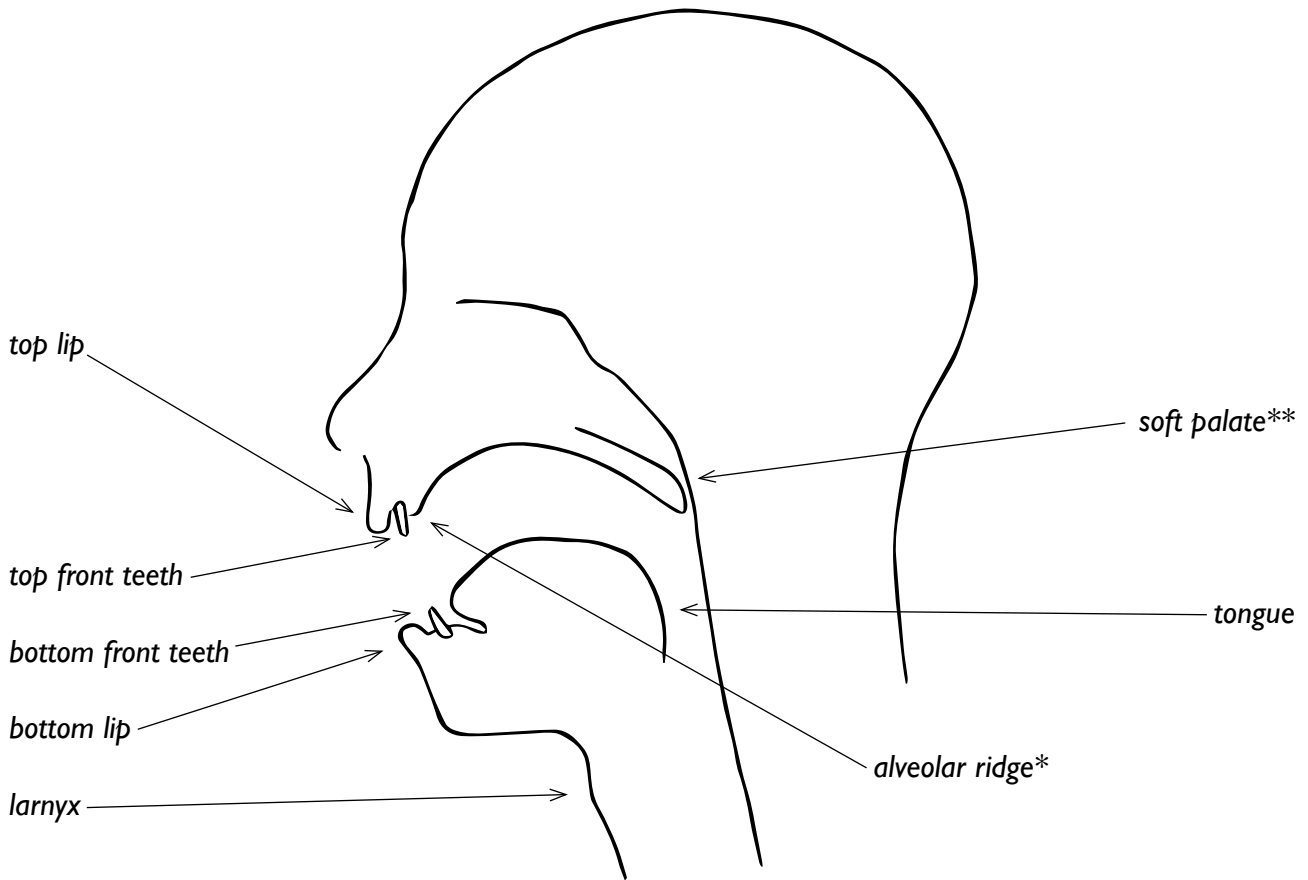
- My mother was an amazing woman, not least because she made magnificent marmalade!
- This autumn I'm coming home to help Martha move out and make amends with Martin.
- His summation was amazing – it so clearly marked the main problems that we face.
- Someone stole my shampoo and smashed my compass – I'm never coming camping again!

p.241

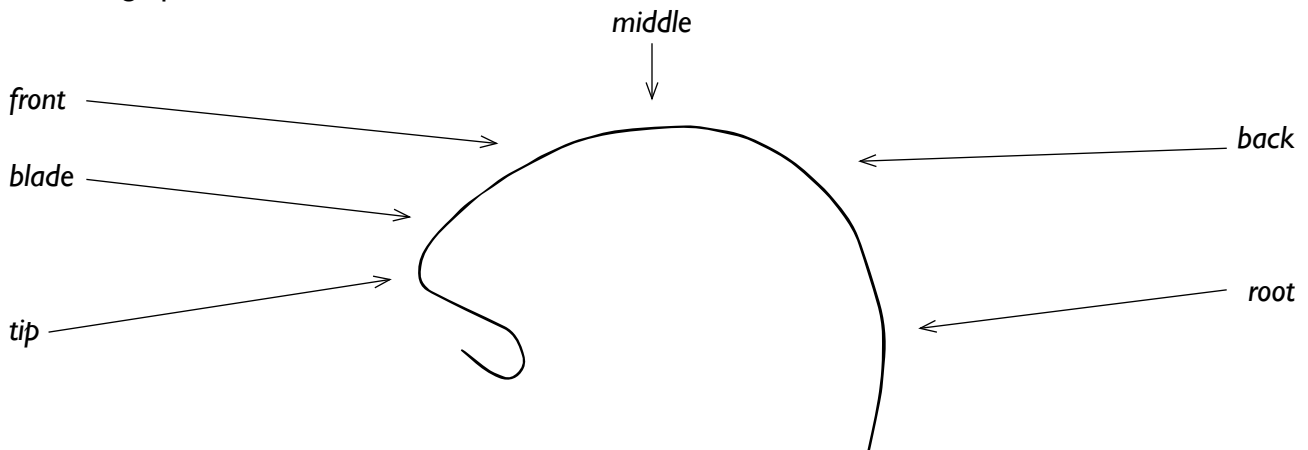
The grey icon of a speaker indicates an audio example along with its track number

This green icon of a pencil indicates that there is further practice material for this sound

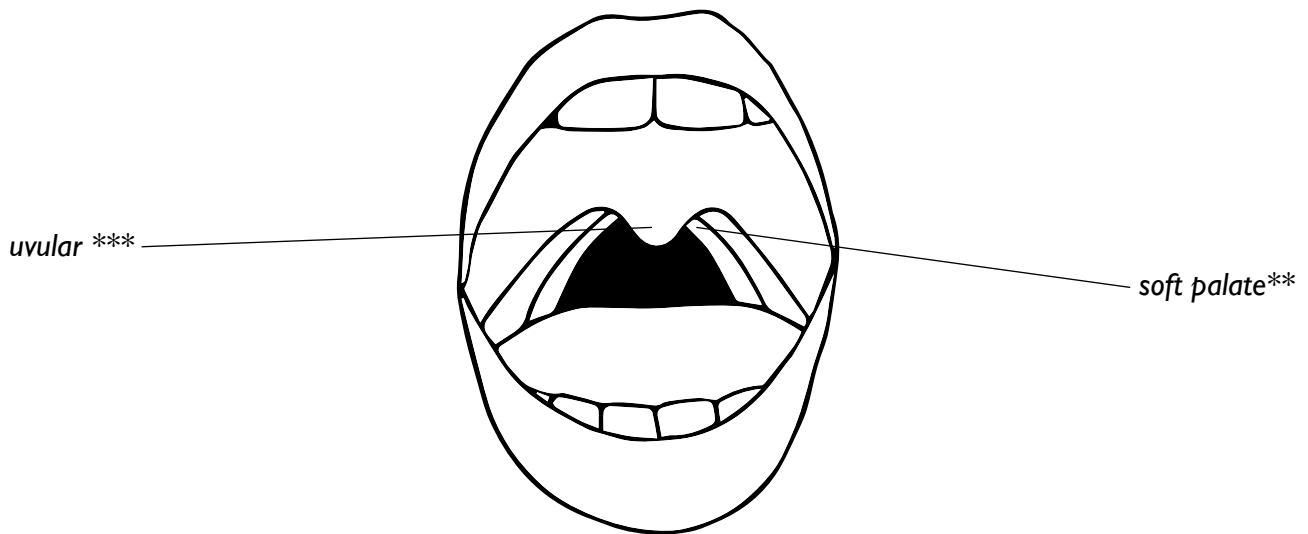
This is just a reference page, so refer to it when prompted.



*** Alveolar ridge** – The shape and prominence of the *alveolar ridge* can vary from person to person. To find this ridge, put the *tip of your tongue* on the back of your *upper front teeth* and then very slowly slide the *tongue tip* up and backwards along the *roof of your mouth* and you should feel a little bumpy ridge less than a centimetre away from your *upper teeth*. If you went further back, you would then feel the main curve of the *roof of your mouth*. The *tongue tip* should NOT touch the ridge, but simply be curling up towards it.



Tongue Divisions – As you can see, for the purpose of speech and articulation the tongue can be divided into different sections and each part can be used to make contact with different parts to make different sounds. Familiarise yourself with the following sections, which will be referred to, especially in the consonant section: *tip, blade, front, middle* and *back*.



**** Soft Palate** – The *soft palate* is the part of the *roof of the mouth* towards the back that is soft. When you look into the *back of your mouth* you might see the *uvular* (the dangly thing in the middle at the back) which comes out of the *soft palate* but is not the *soft palate*. The *soft palate* is behind the *uvular*. One of its jobs in speech is to direct the vibrations of your voice into the *mouth* or *nose*. In speech there are four positions that it tends to be in:

1. When it is lifted high it blocks the entrance to the *nose*, and all the vibrations exit through the *mouth*.
2. When it is dropped low and the *back of the tongue* is raised so that they touch, all the vibrations travel through the *nose*.
3. When it is lifted high and the *back of the tongue* is raised so that they touch, the vibrations gather behind the *back of the tongue* and can only release once either the *tongue* or *soft palate* releases down.
4. When it is dropped low and the *back of the tongue* is also low the vibrations travel through the *nose* and the *mouth* (which produces a nasal quality to speech – some languages like French have certain vowel sounds that are nasal).

***** Uvular** – the *uvular* is the dangly thing in the middle at the back that we often see when cartoon characters scream. It has no real function in speech. It seems to stimulate the gag reflex.

Consonants

My Pronunciation Roadmap

R	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.15	S and Z	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.41	K and G	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.70
Rhotic / Non-Rhotic	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.19	TH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.45	SH and ZH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.74
M	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.22	NG	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.49	DG and CH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.77
P and B	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.24	N	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.54	H	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.82
W	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.28	L	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.57	Consonant Clusters	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.84
F and V	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.31	T and D	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.61			
Yod	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.35	Syllabic Consonants	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.66			

This sound is pronounced in words like:

rip ran rotten railway rocket ripple crash grey from
pretty scream marry hurry carry sorry worry berries



5

> **How is the R sound made in an RP accent?**

The R sound is made with the *tongue tip* curling up towards the area just behind the *alveolar ridge* (p.10) – but not touching – and the *body of the tongue* scooping in the middle. The *jaw* should remain relaxed, the *teeth* parted and the *lips* in a very loose pouting shape. The R is a *voiced* sound and belongs to the *palato-alveolar* and *approximant* consonant groups – so the R sound used in RP can be referred to as a *palato-alveolar R*.




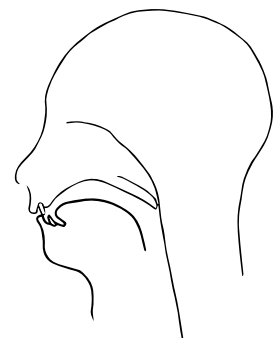
6

> **Which R do I use habitually?**

There are many types of R sounds, made in very different ways. Some are more obviously different to the R sound in RP, but others are much subtler to hear and feel. Here is a list of the most typical R sounds:


- Are you using a *Labiodental R* sound?

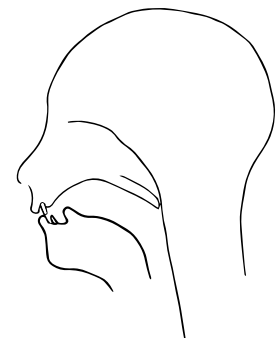
A *labiodental R* (lip and teeth R) sound is made with the *lower lip* lightly touching the *upper teeth* and the *tongue tip* down behind the *bottom front teeth*. It looks very similar to a V sound, but it is not a *fricative*. Listen to the following words, firstly spoken with a *labiodental R*, then with the R used in RP: 'rip', 'ran', 'crash', 'grey', 'hurry' and 'carry'. If you do this, go to 



7


- Are you using a *Weak R* sound?

A *weak R* sound is made in a similar way to a *labiodental R*, but the *tongue tip* is very slightly curling up towards the *alveolar ridge* at the same time. . Listen to the following words, firstly spoken with a *weak R*, then with the R used in RP: 'rip', 'ran', 'crash', 'grey', 'hurry' and 'carry'. If you do this, go to 




8

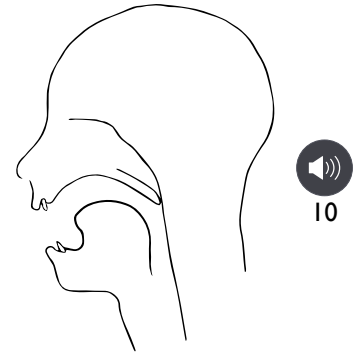
- Are you using a Retroflex R sound?

A retroflex R sound is made with the *tongue tip* curling further up and back towards the centre of the *roof of the mouth*. Listen to the following words, firstly spoken with a retroflex R, then with the R used in RP: 'rip', 'ran', 'crash', 'grey', 'hurry' and 'carry'. If you do this, go to 




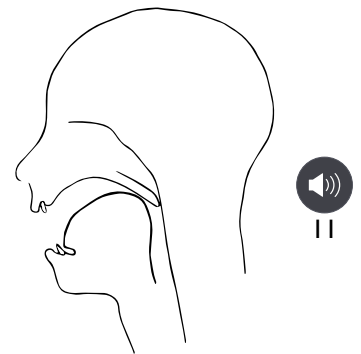
- Are you using a Molar R sound?

A molar R is made with the whole *tongue* retracting back in the mouth, bunching without the *tongue tip* curling upward. The upper back edges of the *tongue* are touching the inner edges of the upper back *molars*. Listen to the following words, firstly spoken with a molar R, then with the R used in RP: 'rip', 'ran', 'crash', 'grey', 'hurry' and 'carry'. If you do this, go to 




- Are you using a Uvular Fricative R sound?

A uvular fricative R sound is made with the *back of the tongue* rising up towards the *uvular* – in the same way as a K sound (p.70) – but instead of touching it, it creates a narrow space causing a friction-like sound when vibrations pass up and out. Listen to the following words, firstly spoken with a uvular fricative R, then with the R used in RP: 'rip', 'ran', 'crash', 'grey', 'hurry' and 'carry'. If you do this, go to 




- Are you using Tapped and Trilled R sounds?

The retroflex R and the R used in RP can be *tapped*. They can also be *trilled* as can the uvular R. For a *tapped* R, instead of the *tongue* holding its position and the sound travelling through the space around and over it, the *tongue* very quickly touches then releases from the closest point of articulation depending on which R you make. For a *trilled* R the *tongue* touches and releases many times in rapid succession. Listen to the following words, firstly spoken with a *tapped* and *trilled* retroflex R, then with a *trilled* uvular R, then a *tapped* and *trilled* R used in RP, and then the R used in RP: 'crash', 'grey', 'hurry' and 'carry'. If you do this, go to 



- Are you replacing an R sound with an L sound?

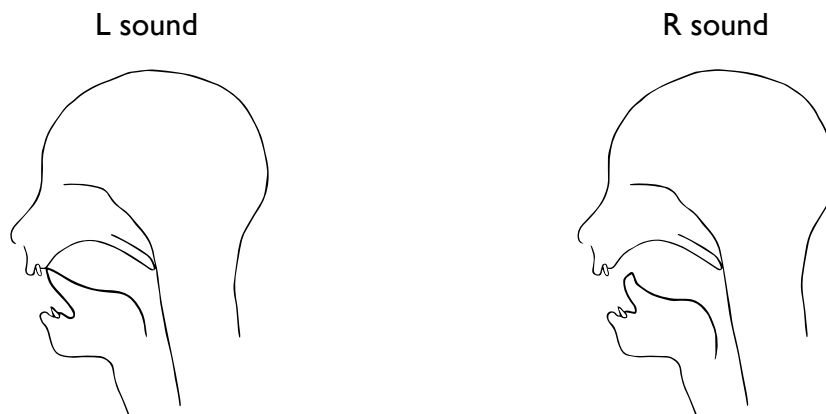
Some speakers replace an R sound with an L sound (p.57). An L sound is made with the *tongue* in a very similar shape to the R sound used in RP, except that the *tongue tip* actually touches the *alveolar ridge* for an L sound, so 'rag' might sound more like 'lag' and 'wrong' sound more like 'long'. If you do this, go to 



> How do I change my habit?

- How do I change to the R sound used in RP?

Whilst there are some big differences in the type of R that you might be using habitual, changing your habitual R to the R sound used in RP is all about creating a curving, scooping shape with your *tongue body* and with the *tongue tip* pointing up towards the area just behind your *alveolar ridge* without them touching. So use the following exercise to help create this curving, scooping shape. An L sound (p.57) as in words like 'light', 'lee' and 'lane' is made in a very similar way to this R sound, the only difference being that for an L sound the *tongue tip* touches the area just in front of the *alveolar ridge*. Sustain the L sound and pay attention to the feeling of its shape inside your *mouth*. It's okay if your *tongue tip* doesn't normally touch the *alveolar ridge* for your habitual L sound, but for the purpose of this exercise, put the *tongue tip* on the *alveolar ridge* and compare the following pictures:



Say the word 'Lorraine'. Once your *tongue tip* releases after the L sound encourage the *body of your tongue* to remain in the same shape and position as for the L sound but without the *tongue tip* touching the *alveolar ridge*. Play the same game with 'Loretta', 'larynx', 'lorry' and 'Larry'. Other consonants that have a similar shape and position are T, D and N. Play with 'terrain', 'derive' and 'narrate'. Another way to use this exercise is to play with word combinations, where the first word ends with an 'l' and the second word starts with an 'r', for example 'pale red', 'feel ridiculous', 'call Robin', 'tall rock' and 'sell rockets'.

- How do I change a weak or labiodental R?

Changing a *weak R* or *labiodental R* (lip and teeth R) sound is about discouraging your *lower lip* from touching your *upper teeth* and encouraging your *tongue tip* to curve up. Firstly, hold a finger vertically over your *lips*, as if you were asking someone to be quiet. Then roll your *lower lip* down by sliding your finger down towards your *chin*. Keep your *lower lip* held down, so that your *lower front teeth* are very slightly exposed, then say the following words:

ran run write rod rang ring rack rock rag rouge

Now, take your finger away from your *lower lip* but keep your *lower lip* in a subtler version of that same position with the muscles of your *lips*. It might feel like a subtle pout – ensure that the lower lip is down, exposing the bottom teeth. Look in a mirror and your *lower front teeth* should be very slightly exposed. Repeat the words above, encouraging your *tongue tip* to curve up and backwards towards the area just behind the *alveolar ridge* and your *lips* in a very subtle pout. It's vital that as soon as you

have said the R sound you release your *lips* into their resting position.

Building this new habit may some take time and regular practice. The words above are useful in as much as there are no other consonant sounds that use the *lips*. Once you are confident with these, play with other words where the R sound is in between two vowel sounds, or words that have a consonant before an R sound, for example:

hurrry marrrry carrrry currry crrredit crrrisis crrream grrrape grrroan



Many British speakers use a *weak R* sound, and it is actually becoming much more widely accepted in English pronunciation. However, if you still wish to change towards the R used for RP, a *weak R* can be a particularly stubborn habit to break, so whilst the suggestions above for how to change your habit are hopefully useful and effective, they may not offer you the specific guidance that you might need, in which case you might benefit from some one-to-one coaching. But as I said, it is a small part of a big picture, and should only receive the attention that you choose to place on it.

> **Anything else?**

- *Should I pronounce every written R?*

Not every written 'r' is spoken, so we'll look at this in the following section called *Rhoticity* (p19).

- *'pr', 'tr' and 'kr' consonant clusters*

This is a very minor detail, but in 'pr', 'tr' and 'kr' consonant clusters (p.84), especially when they are at the beginning of a word on a stressed syllable, the R sound is actually pronounced as *voiceless* and a bit friction-like in quality. This is in part because the P, T and K sounds are themselves *voiceless* sounds (p.14). For most, this is likely to happen instinctively. Even so, whisper the following words and you may notice this quality. Say them again, only coming onto voice on the vowels:

prrractice prrrevent prrride trrrain trrrack trrrail crrry crrrack crrrease



> **Practice words and typical spellings for the R sound**

R orrriginal rrrang rrring prrride brrroken crrrash **RR** marrrry worrrried
 surrrround carrrry **WR** wrrrong wrrrite wrrrap wrrreathe **RH** rhrrubarb
 rrrhythm diarrrrhoea rrrhetoric rrrhapsody rrrheumatic



> **Practice Sentences for the R sound**

- The rroad we live on is rright next to rreadrring rrain station.
- Thankfully Chris is rrough the rrreally rrproblematic phase of his rrtreatment.
- rrRalph is always rrunning late. His rrunpredictability is rrinfuriating.
- I've been rrbrought the rrwrong files. Who is rresponsible?
- Would you rrarry that rrfurry rrgrey cat and put him outside the rrorange basket.



You can download the audio for the R Sound here: [Audio Download](#)

Everything else is included in the Complete Roadmap Training. I'll tell you more about this in the LIVE WORKSHOP. Can't wait to meet you!

Vowels

My Pronunciation Roadmap

SCHWA	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.92	THOUGHT, NORTH,	NEAR	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.145		
NURSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.96	FORCE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.120	DRESS	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.149
GOAT	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.100	CHOICE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.125	FACE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.153
BATH, PALM, START	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.104	TRAP	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.129	SQUARE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.157
STRUT	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.108	MOUTH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.133	GOOSE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.161
PRICE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.112	FLEECE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.137	FOOT	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.165
LOT, CLOTH	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.116	KIT	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.141	CURE	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.169

This sound is pronounced in words like:

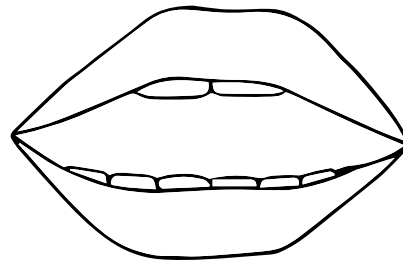
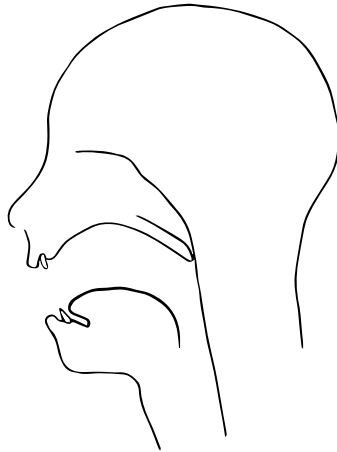
a about around Alan necklace **o** obtuse oppose purpose customer
u uppose support Autumn alum **e** hunded sullen open
i possible **o**r forget forsake director minor **e**r perhaps percent
other longer **u**r survive surprise survey v. **u**re nature posture
ar standard custard **ou** fabulous scandalous **iou** cautious curious
ough thorough borough **urgh** Edinburgh **our** saviour colour



349

> **How is the SCHWA vowel sound made in an RP accent?**

This vowel sound can be described as the most common and the most neutral in RP. The *tongue tip* is behind the *bottom teeth* and the *middle of the tongue* is in the *middle of the centre of the mouth*. The *lips* are *neutral*, the *jaw* is loose and the *teeth* are apart. The SCHWA vowel sound is *short* in duration.



350

> **Remember this!**


The SCHWA is a vowel sound that has a specific role, which is to represent the vowel in a *weak/unstressed syllable(s)* (p.183) of most polysyllabic words, as in 'tuna', 'offend' and 'announce', or the weak form of a grammatical word (p.202), as in 'the a car', 'a cup of tea' and 'an apple'. This means that it can be spelt in many, many different ways and could be considered as one of the most frequently used vowel sounds in RP. For example, in the word 'abandonment', the underlined letters are all pronounced as a SCHWA vowel sound. And the same is true for the underlined 'o', 'a' and 'er' in 'photographapher'.



351

> **What do I do habitually?**


-Are you pronouncing every written 'r'?

If you are a *rhotic* speaker (p.19), your habit is to pronounce every written 'r'. The SCHWA vowel sound is often spelt with a written 'r', especially at the end of a word, as in 'other', 'weather', 'mirrour', 'nature', 'colour' and 'doctor'. But RP is a *non-rhotic* accent so a written 'r' is only spoken when it is followed by a spoken vowel sound. Listen to the words above, firstly spoken with the R sound and then without, as they should be in RP. If you do this, go to 




352

- Are you replacing the SCHWA vowel sound with the STRUT or DRESS vowel sound?


Some speakers replace the SCHWA with the STRUT vowel sound (p. 108 - which is made with the *middle of the tongue low in the centre of the mouth, and the lips equally as neutral*) or the DRESS vowel sound (p. 149 - which is made with the *front of the tongue in the middle of the front of the mouth, and the lips slightly spread*). Listen to the following words, firstly spoken with the STRUT vowel sound, then the DRESS vowel sound, and then with the SCHWA vowel sound, as they should be in RP: 'other', 'weather', 'mirror', 'nature', 'colour' and 'doctor'. If you do this, go to 

- Is your pronunciation guided by the spelling?

Many non-native speakers use the spelling of a word as a guide to its pronunciation. But because British English is not written phonetically, one vowel sound can be represented by numerous spellings. For this reason, the spelling in British English cannot be trusted for vowel pronunciation. For example, the SCHWA vowel sound can be represented as the 'er' in 'other', the 'or' in 'mirror', the 'ure' in 'nature', the 'our' in 'colour', the 'a' in 'about', the 'o' in 'obtuse', the 'u' in 'support', the 'iou' in 'cautious' and many, many more. But all these words, despite the variation in spelling, are pronounced with the SCHWA vowel sound.


This tendency to pronounce a word with a vowel sound that you associate with the spelling, means that you might be pronouncing the 'a' in 'about' with the TRAP vowel sound (p. 129 - as in 'tab'), the 'o' in 'oppose' with the LOT vowel sound (p. 116 - as in 'opposite'), the 'u' in 'support' with the STRUT vowel sound (p. 108 - as in 'supper'), and the 'e' in 'open' with the DRESS vowel sound (p. 149 as in 'pen'). But again, all these words, despite the variation in spelling, are pronounced with the SCHWA vowel sound. All of this might seem a bit overwhelming, but I have some simple and effective solutions that will help you: go to 

> How do I change my habit?

 - How do I avoid pronouncing a written 'r' that should not be pronounced?

There are some words that end with the SCHWA vowel sound that are not spelt with a written 'r', so it might be helpful to compare them to words that are. In RP, the 'a' in 'tuna' and the 'er' in 'tuner' are both pronounced with a SCHWA vowel sound. When saying, 'tuner', encourage your *tongue tip* to be behind your *bottom front teeth* after the 'n'. This way, the words rhyme with one another. Say the word 'tuna' before each of the following words, encouraging the *tongue tip* to stay down behind the *bottom front teeth* after the final consonant. Listen to the audio to help you imitate the sound accurately and watch your *tongue* in a mirror:

tuna... other weather mirror nature colour doctor paper lighter

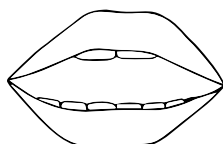
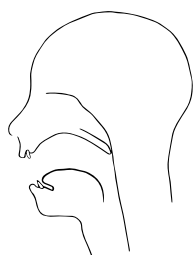
 - How do I find the accurate tongue position for the SCHWA vowel sound?

The SCHWA vowel sound is almost like the sound you might associate with a Neanderthal grunt – a sort of unformed, shapeless, language-less, neutral sound. It is *short* in duration, without any movement in the *lips*, and the *middle of the tongue* is in the *middle of the centre of the mouth*. The position of the *tongue* and *lips* for the SCHWA vowel sound is almost identical to their positions for the NURSE vowel sound (p. 96), so it might be helpful to compare them. Look in a mirror as you say 'her' and 'lover' (angle yourself towards a light or use a very small torch). It might be helpful to say

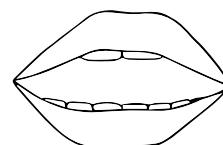
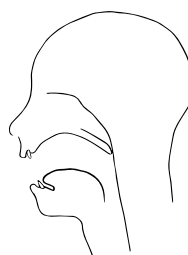
the vowel sounds on their own after saying the words, in order to see the *tongue* more clearly. For 'her' (the NURSE vowel sound) encourage the *lips* to be *neutral*, the *middle of the tongue* to be in the *middle of the centre of the mouth* and the sound to be *long* in duration. For 'lover' (this is the target SCHWA vowel sound) encourage the *middle of the tongue* to be in the *middle of the centre of the mouth*, but the sound to be *short* in duration.



NURSE



SCHWA



The SCHWA vowel sound in the 'ver' of 'lover' should sound exactly the same as the 'ver' in the word 'veranda'. Say 'lover' then 'veranda', encouraging the 'ver' in both words to sound identical.



Say the word 'her' before each of the following words, encouraging your *lips* and the *middle of your tongue* to remain in the same positions for the SCHWA vowel sounds, which have been underlined. Encourage the sound to be *short* in duration. Listen to the audio to help you imitate the sound accurately:

her... about necklace oppose customer support Autumn album
 hundred open possible forget director percent longer survive
 survey v. posture standard fabulous cautious thorough borough saviour



Here's another game to play: say the SCHWA vowel sound on its own before saying each word, to help you hear whether or not you are pronouncing it accurately and also to give you a reference for how it should sound in the word. Listen to the audio to help you imitate the sound accurately:

around Alan obtuse purpose suppose album sullen open
 possible forsake minor perhaps other surprise nature
 custard scandalous curious thorough Edinburgh colour



- How do I avoid being guided by the spelling?

Once you have used the exercises above to help you achieve an accurate pronunciation of this vowel sound, go to the *Lexical Sets* subsection (p.90) for advice on how to avoid being guided by the spelling.

> Anything else?

The SCHWA vowel sound can also be heard in weak forms of grammatical words, like 'the', 'to' and 'a', which helps to find the rhythm and intonation of RP. This is fully explained in the subsection *The SCHWA in grammatical words* (p.202).

> **Practice words and typical spellings for the SCHWA vowel sound**

a about around ahead again ballad Alan necklace banana
 roundabout India England Nottingham **o** obtuse oppose offend official
 completely computer communicate consume conductor concern condition
 melon paddock purpose customer pantomime **u** suppose support
 suggest circus Autumn album perjury adventurer upon **e** hundred
 sullen open present v. present n. begin commitment **i** possible
or doctor minor forget director forsake mirror author forbid
 actor sector juror Windsor major raptor manor doctor
 sailor **er** perhaps percent perceive heather singer other
 sister teacher brother longer father mower power yesterday eastern
 mother wonderland **ur** survive surprise survey v. **ure** nature
 posture **ar** burglar tankard custard standard standardise jeopardy
 calendar **ou** fabulous scandalous cautious ferrous glamorous
 Bournemouth curious curvaceous vicious marvellous boisterous disastrous
 gracious anxious **ough** thorough borough Scarborough Loughborough
 Middlesbrough **urgh** Edinburgh **our** harbour saviour succour colour



363

You can download the audio for the Schwa here: [Audio Download](#)

Everything else is included in the Complete Roadmap Training. I'll tell you more about this in the LIVE WORKSHOP. Can't wait to meet you!

Syllables and Word Stress

My Pronunciation Roadmap

Syllable stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.174	Dates, times, money	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.180	Unstressed syllables	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.183
Compound words	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.177	Primary/secondary stress	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.182	Prefixes & Suffixes	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.186

Stressing the right syllable in a word is an important part of pronunciation. Sometimes it can even change the meaning of a word. Moreover, learning how to stress a syllable in an RP accent will also help with intonation and inflection.

> **How might I approach syllables and word stress?**

Much of this section is about understanding the structure of words, the nature and number of syllables in a word, and learning patterns. This is as much to do with the English language, as it is to do with speech, pronunciation and communication style. For these reasons, the habits amongst non-native and regional English speakers have not been identified. Instead, the focus is on clarifying the typical word stress patterns in British English and the ways that an RP might stress a syllable or word. Hence, there are a lot of facts and descriptions but also a lot of examples and audio for you to listen to and imitate.

Treat each page like an actual coaching session: each page suggests how long to set aside. Take your time. Read each part, record yourself when recommended and listen to the audio examples. Where appropriate, use a mirror to see what your habit might be. Play with each exercise and by the end you will hopefully know and feel what to aim for, what your habit is, how to change it and how to practice the new habit.



20min

> **What is a syllable?**

Generally speaking, a syllable is a single unit of speech. Typically, this unit of speech is made up of a vowel (known as the centre or nucleus of the syllable), which may have a consonant or consonant cluster before and/or after it. For example: 'at', 'to', 'bit' and 'can'.

> **What is the difference between monosyllables and polysyllables?**

A word that is *monosyllabic* simply means a word made up of only one syllable:

at to bit can bite stack thwart click our or are



693

A word that is *polysyllabic* is made up of two or more syllables (the dot (.) in the following words indicate the syllable divisions):

2 3 4 5 6
a.head a.men.ded ra.di.at.or a.bbrevi.a.ted au.tho.ri.ta.ri.an



694



p.276

> **Polysyllables - Stressed and Unstressed Syllables**

In *polysyllabic* words it is important to know which syllables are *stressed* and which are *unstressed*. For example, in a word like 'a.HEAD', 'HEAD' is the *stressed syllable* and 'a' is *unstressed*. In 'a.MEN.ded', 'MEN' is the *stressed syllable*, and so 'a' and 'ded' are *unstressed*. Some speakers stress too many the syllables and some stress the wrong ones. I'll talk more about how to identify the correct *stressed* and *unstressed syllables* later on. The *stressed syllables* in the following words are written in capital letters:

RA.di.at.or a.BBRE.vi.a.ted au.tho.ri.TA.ri.an a.MA.zing WON.der.ful



695

> How should I stress a syllable in a polysyllabic word?

Record yourself saying the following sentence:



al.THOUGH you are a GE.ni.us you are in.CRE.dib.ly frus.TRA.ting



696

Stressing a syllable in a *polysyllabic* word is quite simply about making the right part of a word stand out. For now, let's keep it simple. There are three main ways to stress a syllable in a *polysyllabic* word: pitch, loudness and pace. In my opinion, loudness is not as relevant or useful as pitch or pace, simply because loudness tends to make people sound unclear in speech. For example, speak the sentence above, and make yourself louder on the *stressed syllables* indicated in capitals and remain at your normal volume of speaking for all other syllables and *monosyllabic* words in lower case letters.

The *stressed syllables* certainly stand out, but hopefully you also noticed how it makes your speech sound very jumpy, almost like a thudding pulse, slightly staccato, and so there isn't a natural flow to your speech. The phrase 'boom and fade' might be a good way to describe this method of stressing syllables, particularly because the *unstressed syllables* and other *monosyllabic* words seem to fade away and sound unclear.

Say the sentence again, and this time let volume remain constant, and instead focus on pitch. The way pitch is used in speech varies greatly and is influenced by a number of things, and we'll talk more about this in the section entitled *Intonation – Pitch (p.213)*. Listen back to your recording and pay attention to how you use pitch: you might be using *lower* pitches to make the *stressed syllables* stand out; or the *stressed* and *unstressed syllables* might have the same pitch; or you might be using *higher* pitches on the *stressed syllables*.

RP speakers tend to use a slightly *higher* pitch on *stressed syllables* and the *unstressed syllables* and other *monosyllabic* words have a *lower* pitch. Picture the way a heart monitor measures the rate of the heart - think of the vertical peak of the line on the monitor as the *stressed syllables* and the *unstressed syllables* as the resting horizontal line in-between the strong beats. Listen to the audio to help guide you.

al.THOUGH you are a GE.ni.us you are in.CRE.dib.ly frus.TRA.ting



697

You may have noticed how the *stressed syllables* stand out but also your speech flows from one word to another. For now, the focus is just on stressing syllables in *polysyllabic* words, and we'll move onto what to do in sentences a bit later. Remember this – typically, *stressed syllables* have a slightly *higher* pitch and *unstressed syllables* have a slightly *lower* in pitch. Have another go with these individual *polysyllabic* words:

al.THOUGH GE.ni.us in.CRE.dib.ly frus.TRA.ting RA.di.at.or
a.BBRE.vi.a.ted au.tho.ri.TA.ri.an a.MA.zing WON.der.ful



698

> Which syllable should I stress?

Stressing the right syllable in a polysyllabic word can mean the difference between correct and incorrect pronunciation in RP, even if you are pronouncing the vowels and consonants accurately. The only conclusive way of knowing is by checking a word in a reliable dictionary – or better still a pronunciation dictionary – which often marks the *stressed syllable* like this ' - so 'al.THOUGH' would

be written ɔʔ'ðəʊ. One thing is certain, always stress the vowel and never stress the consonant(s).

However, there are some useful patterns that might be helpful to consider. The following suggestions cannot be described as conclusive rules, as there are always exceptions, but for the most part, they will form a useful guide. Consider recording yourself saying the words in each of the subsections below before reading about how to stress them accurately.

- *Pattern 1 - Two-syllable verbs, nouns and adjectives*

Often, two-syllable verbs stress the second syllable:

a.TTACK pro.VOKE en.TICE a.TTRACT se.DUCE ex.CITE in.DULGE



Often, two-syllable nouns and adjectives stress the...

You can download the audio for word stress here: [Audio Download](#)

Everything else is included in the Complete Roadmap Training. I'll tell you more about this in the LIVE WORKSHOP. Can't wait to meet you!

Intonation - Rhythm and Pitch

My Pronunciation Roadmap

Syllable/stress timed	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.208	High Rise Tone	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.222	Parenthesis	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.227
Resting rhythm	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.208	Responding to questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.222	Quoting/paraphrasing	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.227
Mono/polysyllabic words	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.210	Statements, commands...	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.224	Irony/sarcasm/satire	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.229
Short/long vowels	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.211	Apologising	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.224	Expanding a statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.229
Phrasing/pausing	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.211	Ongoing thought	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.225	Antithesis	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.230
Asking a question	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.221	Listing	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.225	but... or... so...	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.231
Rhetorical questions	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.222	Naming places, people...	<input type="checkbox"/>	p.226			

> **What is intonation?**

Intonation is essentially the way in which each one of us uses our voice to infer meaning by changing two things – *rhythm* and *pitch*. Through *intonation* we turn words into opinions, stories, feelings etc... Without *intonation*, speech would sound robotic. That is to say that without *intonation* the *rhythm* of speech would be a consistent beat, and every syllable and every word would be spoken on the same *pitch*. So *intonation* helps to bring life and colour and more complex meaning to what we say.

> **How might I approach intonation?**

Intonation is such a varied aspect of how we communicate and is influenced by so many different factors. For these reasons, the many, many possible patterns and habits amongst non-native and regional English speakers have not been identified, as has been attempted in the sections on vowels and consonants. Instead, the focus is on clarifying the typical intonation patterns of native RP speakers in as many of the quantifiable communication situations as possible. Hence, there are lot of facts and descriptions but also a lot of examples and audio for you to listen to and imitate.

Treat each page like an actual coaching session: each page suggests how long to set aside. Take your time it. Read each part, record yourself when recommended and listen to the audio examples. Where appropriate, use a mirror to see what your habit might be. Play with each exercise and by the end you will hopefully know and feel what to aim for, what your habit is, how to change it and how to practice the new habit.

Remember that for most speakers, we learn our first language (their mother tongue) through imitation, experimentation and repetition. We watch and listen to those around us and copy the sounds they make and the way they make them in relationship to the context in which they are using them. This is also true for intonation. Learning the rhythm and inflection patterns is done through imitation, experimentation and repetition. And it is through intonation that accurate pronunciation and word stress come together to complete the full picture of communication: sharing our thoughts and feelings about ourselves and the world in which we live.



10min

> **Rhythm**

Rhythm in speech can be likened to rhythm in music. Some music is very constant, some erratic, some slow, some fast – and all the variations in between. Similarly, some speakers have a very steady and regular rhythm, some are very inconsistent, some have more of a staccato rhythm, some have more of a flowing and wave-like rhythm, and so on.

The reasons for these variations are complex, and are influenced by many factors other than just language. For example, rhythm of speech might be affected by: the rhythms of the lifestyle associated with a region; the rhythms of the typical music associated with a certain culture, country, region and language; and, it might sound abstract, but speech rhythms might even be influenced by geography – by the topography and climate of an area. The rhythm of speech, even within one region, can vary greatly. This is because we each have our own unique tempo that might be affected by the way we approach life, our professional environment, and the learnt behaviour we acquire from family or friends.

Aside from these complex and abstract influences, the essence of rhythm comes from language and its pronunciation, and this will be our focus.

- Syllable-timed languages vs. stress-timed languages

Some languages can be described as *syllable-timed*, which means that the time it takes to say what you say is based on the number of syllables in that phrase or sentence, which would all be spoken with approximately equal length. For example 'I want to go for a walk' has seven syllables. To feel the rhythm of a syllable-timed language, say each syllable with the same length.

Other languages can be described as *stress-timed*, which means that the time it takes to say what you say depends on the number of *stressed syllables* or *stressed words*, simply because the words in-between are not spoken with the same emphasis. For example, 'I want to go for a walk' might have two or three *stressed words*, as in:

'I **WANT** to go for a **WALK**' or 'I **WANT** to **GO** for a **WALK**'

Listen to the audio of these phrases and you may notice that it takes very slightly less time to say the first than the second, and even less time compared to the *syllable-timed* version. Record yourself saying this phrase and consider which best describes your habit.

The British English language spoken in an RP accent is *stress-timed*, so the length of what you say is based on the number of *stressed words* or *stressed syllables* in any one given phrase or sentence. This translates as a rhythm in speech, so the change of rhythm between the first and second examples above is because of the differing number of words that are *stressed*.

Listen to the audio and then repeat the following examples spoken firstly in *syllable-timed* and then *stress-timed*:

'What's the most **im.POR.tant** part of this training?'

'I'm **going** to the **shops**, do you **want** anything?'

'I've never **flown** before – I'm quite **NER.vous**.'

'We **all** arrived on **time**, but **Tom** was **three hours late**!'

- The Resting Rhythm of Speech

In the section entitled *How should I stress a syllable in a polysyllabic word (p.175)*, I said that the simplest way to indicate the *primary* and *secondary stressed syllables* in a *polysyllabic word* is with a slightly *higher* pitch, and *unstressed syllables* with a slightly *lower* pitch. For a moment, extend this idea to the way in which we might stress the important, essential words in a sentence and the way in which we might weaken *grammatical words*: to stress important, essential words, we might use a slightly *higher* pitch and to weaken *grammatical words* we might use a slightly *lower* pitch. Listen and play with the following sentence. The stressed words are in bold capitals:

'I'd **LOVE** to **GO** to **BED**, **READ** a **BOOK**, and **REST** for an **HOUR** or **TWO**'

Whilst this is a simplistic way of looking at how to stress important, essential words, it is a useful starting place. You might also notice that when stressing these words in this way, a natural rhythm develops, much like the resting rhythm of the heart. Pay attention to this rhythm, especially in *these*

parts of the sentence:

'I'd **LOVE** to **GO** to **BED** **READ** a **BOOK** and **REST** an **HOUR** or **TWO**'



890

If we use 'tee' for a *weak syllable* and *weak forms of grammatical words* and 'TUM' for a *stressed syllable* and important, essential words, we might rewrite the sentence:

tee TUM tee TUM tee TUM TUM tee TUM tee TUM tee TUM tee TUM
 'I'd **LOVE** to **GO** to **BED** **READ** a **BOOK** and **REST** an **HOUR** or **TWO**'



891

This rhythm is very much embedded in the British English language, and it is in part because of William Shakespeare, his peers and predecessors. Essentially, Shakespeare and his peers inherited a form of writing called verse, which was at the time a very fashionable way of writing dramatic and poetic language. Verse, of any kind, tends to have a rhythmic structure. For example, in Shakespeare's Sonnet Twelve:

'When **I** do **COUNT** the **CLOCK** that **TELLS** the **TIME**'
 tee TUM tee TUM tee TUM tee TUM tee TUM



892

We might say that this 'tee TUM tee TUM' rhythm is clock-like, metronomic, like the resting rhythm of the heart, or indeed the *resting rhythm of speech*. Another way of writing this might be 'weak STRONG weak STRONG' – a *weak syllable* or word followed by a strong, *stressed syllable* or *stressed word*. Pay particular attention to this part of the line:

'the **CLOCK** that **TELLS** the **TIME**'
 weak STRONG weak STRONG weak STRONG



893

Here, the *grammatical words* 'the', 'that' and 'the' are weak but they are also pronounced with the SCHWA vowel sound (p.92), which is, as I have said, a naturally weak sounding vowel sound. So observing the SCHWA vowel sound in *grammatical words* not only helps to strengthen the essential words, but also reinforces this aspect of intonation – the *resting rhythm of speech*. Even in the beginning of the line:

'When **I** do **COUNT**'



894

Whilst the words 'when' and 'do' are not pronounced with the SCHWA vowel sound, this *resting rhythm* is still present, so long as you lift the pitch of the essential words and *lower* the pitch of 'when' and 'do'. Here are some other examples of this *resting rhythm of speech*. Any words pronounced with the SCHWA vowel sound have been underlined:

'the WAY to OX.ford CIR.cus' 'I've GOT to GO to WORK'
 'we HAVE to CATCH the BUS' 'I'll CLEAN the CAR to NIGHT'
 'WE should GO and ASK' 'WHO was IN the PUB'
 'we're OUT of ALL the BREAD' 'I'm NOT as FIT as YOU'
 'but ALL the TOYS have GONE' 'ALL the WAY from LON.don TOWN'



895

Of course, just as the heartbeat changes rhythm depending on what you're doing or feeling, the

rhythm of speech changes depending on the words being used, their order, the context of the situation, the speaker's intention and their emotional state. But we might conclude that this *resting rhythm* is the inherent, typical rhythm of this accent, to which an RP speaker will always return.



You can download the audio for Syllable vs. Stress Timing and the Resting Rhythm here:

[Audio Download](#)

Everything else is included in the Complete Roadmap Training. I'll tell you more about this in the LIVEWORKSHOP. Can't wait to meet you!

Bonus Section: Practice Pages

Consonants

Vowels

Syllables and Word Stress

Relationships between Words - Connected Speech

Intonation - Pitch and Rhythm

- Ex. 1 - Spot the R sound (p.15)



- 1 I drove Robin from Rochester to Reading
- 2 Travelling by train can be great - mostly
- 3 I drew a green field with grey rain clouds
- 4 Is this right? This is Broad Street.
- 5 We've been approved to distribute the food
- 6 We trawled through last month's report
- 7 I'm protesting because he broke the rules
- 8 The rota is crazy – we must take control



1010

- Ex. 2 - Everyday words

drink grip history increase industruy instrument interest print religion
 rhythm trick brick bridge prison ring spring military different every
 very credit direction friend record regret request respect rest
 secretary stretch berry dress thread umbrella electric general necessary
 present ready separate crack carriage camera rat angry married
 natural parallel narrow country crush current destruction discovery
 front rub run trouble brush rough across from tomorrow authority
 profit drop orange rod probable responsible wrong strong agreement
 degree reading receipt tree free



1011

- Ex. 3 – Create phrases from the words above

Create 6 phrases that you might use containing words from Ex. 2 above.

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6

- Ex. 4 - My Word Bank

What are your 12 most frequently used words containing the R sound?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6
- 7
- 8
- 9
- 10
- 11
- 12

- Ex. 5 - My Phrase Bank

What are your 6 most frequently used phrases containing R the sound?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5
- 6


You can download the audio for the R Sound Practice Page here: [Audio Download](#)

Everything else is included in the Complete Roadmap Training. I'll tell you more about this in the LIVE WORKSHOP. Can't wait to meet you!

> **What is the difference between monosyllables and polysyllables?** (p.174)

- Ex. 1 – Count how many syllables there are in the words below:


amazing confront driving photograph mum rearranging sure computer

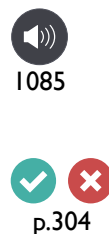
 salary bag wallet purse keys shopping film dinner wonderful
experimental jumper skirt typing shower fortunate well illness



- Ex. 2 – Count the number of syllables of each word in the sentence below:


“What time do you want me to pick you up? I can’t leave for another ten minutes. I’m just waiting on a call. Shall I collect you from the station or near the roundabout? And do you need to go shopping today? Do you want to do that now or this evening? I’ve got some work to do, so I could do that while you’re shopping and then pick you up and we could go for dinner somewhere. Maybe, Alexander’s? What do you think?”

 shopping today? Do you want to do that now or this evening? I’ve got some work to do, so I could do that while you’re shopping and then pick you up and we could go for dinner somewhere. Maybe, Alexander’s? What do you think?”



> **Which syllable should I stress?** (p.175)

- Ex. 1 – Circle the correct stressed syllable in these two-syllable verbs, nouns and adjectives (words in bold):

- a) I want to **upgrade** my phone... is the **upgrade** available to me on this contract?
- b) **Progress** is so slow... can you **progress** without my help?
-  c) It’s faulty. I’d like a **refund** please... it’s been over 21 days, so I can’t **refund** your money
- d) I **suspect** she feels awful about it... he’s their main **suspect**
- e) Have you heard about this **project**?...They **project** a loss of 4.1bn



You can download the audio for the Word Stress Practice Page here: [Audio Download](#)

Everything else is included in the Complete Roadmap Training. I’ll tell you more about this in the LIVE WORKSHOP. Can’t wait to meet you!

> **Syllable-timed languages vs. stress-timed languages** (p.208)

- Ex. 1 – Further practice for the stress-timed rhythm of RP. The stressed words have been written in bold. Listen and imitate:

- 1) I **know** that you do. I don't **care** anymore. Just **leave** it.
- 2) I **know** that you say that there **isn't** a way, but we **have** to find a way to make this work.
- 3) The **main** thing that we **need** to do is to stay **focused**.
- 4) It's **probably** the most **amazing** place that I've **been**.
- 5) We were **about** to go, until **Jack** walked in. He's **always** making us late.



1104

> **The Resting Rhythm of Speech** (p.208)

- Ex. 1 – Further practice for the stress-timed rhythm of RP. The stressed words have been written in bold and words pronounced with the SCHWA vowel sound have been underlined. Listen and imitate:

- 1) **Can** we **go** to **bed** at **10**? I'm **REA**.lly **tired** to. **DAY**! I **think** I'll **sleep** down **here**.
- 2) The **shops** were **REA**.lly **BU**.sy. I **COUL**.dn't **find** that **bar**. **Was** it **on** the **high** street?
- 3) I **think** I'm **GO**.ing **mad**. **Have** we **met** be. **FORE**? I **swear** I've **seen** your **face**.
- 4) The **beach** was **AWE**.some. The **food** was **great**. The **beer** was **good**. A **PER**.fect **day**.
- 5) It's the **ON**.ly **way** to **know**. **Shut** it **down**, then **clean** it **out**, and **start** a. **GAIN**.



1105

You can download the audio for Stress vs Stress Timing and the Resting Rhythm Practice Page here:

[Audio Download](#)

Everything else is included in the Complete Roadmap Training. I'll tell you more about this in the LIVEWORKSHOP. Can't wait to meet you!

A 'must have' practical course in British English Pronunciation

“The English Pronunciation Roadmap PDF is the most helpful of English learning materials I've come across. I worked before with other resources, books as well as PDFs, and even though some of them were good, none of them were as comprehensive and coherent as your material.”

Linda N, Foreign Language Correspondent, German ★★★★★

“The material is unique and very useful... the tips on tongue position and lips were easy, intuitive to learn and I feel they have made a massive difference... I feel my confidence whilst speaking has improved enormously... I'm impressed! ”

Dr Mahesh Jayaram, Consultant Psychiatrist, Indian ★★★★★

It can be tiring always being asked to repeat yourself. And very frustrating being misunderstood or treated differently. Whether you're just learning English or have been speaking it for years, accent and pronunciation can have a huge impact on how effectively you communicate. Even if you are completely fluent and observe every rule of grammar, the way you speak and use intonation can make a big difference.

But where do you start?

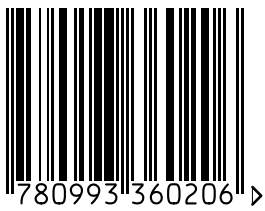
British English Pronunciation Roadmap is a hands-free self-coaching system. It is a distillation of thousands of hours of one-to-one coaching, with hundreds of clients from all over the world. It is a step-by-step practical course helping you to identify your specific habits with detailed, tried-and-tested techniques to change them.

What's inside?

- pronounce all of the vowel and consonant sounds in British English clearly
- straightforward and easy-to-use exercises for identifying and changing each habit
- get crystal clear about the position of the lips and tongue with detailed drawings
 - unlock the patterns of word and syllable stress
 - develop subtly and fluency by understanding intonation
- immediate application with the most common words and spellings laid out
 - colour-coded icons that guide you through each section
- 60 pages of additional bonus practice material for each sound and section
- over 12 hours of downloadable audio to help you imitate and practice

edwinpublishing.com

ISBN 978-0-9933602-0-6



9 780993 360206 >

ENGLISHPRONUNCIATIONROADMAP.COM