

## ACCENT REDUCTION -

### East European Languages - Accent Breakdown

*Russian, Polish, Czech, Slovakian, Ukrainian, Croatian, Slovenian, Serbian, Bosnian, Bulgarian plus German*



## Eastern European/German Language Features

### **Default Posture**

All these accents hold tension in the jaw and cheeks which isn't present in the much more 'floppy' faced RP Default Posture. This reduces the size of the space inside the mouth, often there's much less vertical space there making the differentiation of a lot of vowel sounds difficult. It also reduces the availability of lip-rounding.

The lateral tension in these accents' default posture often makes the resonance (tonal quality) of the voice very different too. Russian speakers often place the voice strongly in the hard palate area of the mouth, Polish speakers can direct it towards the back of the mouth. German speakers can end up with a very bright resonance - just in the cheekbones. RP resonance comes forwards into the mask of the face (around the eyes and cheekbones), but is filled out by a lot of vertical space in the mouth due to a very loose jaw. Achieving greater relaxation in the jaw, tongue and cheeks can help adopt this RP sound, much improving the accuracy of your accent.

Our Voice training Articulation Exercises will help train these tensions away when speaking English, so your muscle use is closer to a native speaker of RP.

### **Stress & Intonation Patterns**

All of these accents have a flatter intonation range than the rather mountainous RP. For example; German speakers tend to have a fast, regular rhythm that lifts regularly throughout the phrase, often going up on a weak syllable where English will go smoothly over the top of a mountain and resolve down; Polish can sound rather flat to an English ear; and Russian intonation tends to start central and then plummet downwards - this can sound very low to us, sometimes almost depressed!

Our Levels of Stress and Emphasis training will easily get you speaking with the rhythm and music of RP intonation.

## Specific Consonant Differences

The main points of work are as follows. They are covered in Stages 1 and 2:

1. to adopt **TH** accurately;
2. to differentiate **W** and **V**;
3. to change **R** and **L** as required;
4. to improve word endings. Word endings with **S Z** and **T D** (plus others) are very often inaccurate, partly through misunderstanding spelling rules, partly through a more aspirated pronunciation;
5. Russians also need to address a heavy **H** sound in comparison to RP;
6. **K** and **G** may need to come forward in the mouth for many of the Slavic accents, particularly Russian;
7. **H** may need attention.

## Specific Vowel Differences

These are the general points, again mostly covered in Stages 1 and 2 (although Stage 3 will revisit the all important Short Neutral (Schwa) vowel):

1. in general all of these accents need to address the differences between the long and short vowel pairs - in particular the Horizontal pair **sit** and **seat**;
2. the short Neutral vowel, 'the schwa' tends to be over-pronounced, following the spelling;
3. other vowels are effected strongly by the different Default Position of the muscles, with a lack of Verticality in the sounds and not strong enough lip rounding for words like **you** and **your**, **pot** and **put**.
4. diphthongs usually need considerable work
5. **R** after vowels in the spelling needs removing, affecting **air**, **here**, **pure**, **core**, **her** and **car** vowels;

These are just some of the specific issues we will focus on in your lessons and homework. See the syllabuses for all three stages below for more information, and bear in mind that our teachers always adapt the work to provide the most useful experience for the exact make-up of your group.

## ACCENT REDUCTION - Stage 1 - Course Contents English Pronunciation & Elocution

### Week 1

How to release the jaw and face muscles  
Default setting of RP English  
Neutral vowels

#### **Before filming**

### Week 2

How to release the back of the tongue  
Strong and weak stress/strong and soft vowels  
Vertical vowels

### Week 3

How to strengthen and use the tongue tip  
The most common consonants, TH, S, Z, T, D, N, L  
Horizontal-Vertical vowels

### Week 4

How to strengthen and use the lips  
Lip consonants - W, V, F, M, B, P  
Sagittal and Vertical-Sagittal vowels

### Week 5

Middle of tongue mobility and strength  
The R, L and /j/ sounds  
Horizontal vowels  
Short and long vowels

### Week 6

Complete articulation workout  
Your consonant targets  
The whole RP basic vowel system

#### **After filming**

**Please note:**  
your teacher will personalise the contents of your course to your group's precise needs, but this is a rough outline of what you will study.

## ACCENT REDUCTION - Stage 2 - Course Contents

### Total Speech Accuracy

#### Week 1

How to say the 'o's  
Plosive consonants  
Word endings - voiced/whispered

#### **Before filming**

#### Week 2

How to say the 'a's  
Fricative consonants  
Reduced vowels & contractions

#### Week 3

How to say the 'u's  
Nasal Consonants  
Linking - consonant to consonant

#### Week 4

How to say the 'e's  
Semi-vowel consonants  
Linking - vowel to vowel

#### Week 5

How to say the 'i's  
Affricate consonants  
Clusters and syllabic consonants

#### Week 6

How to say the 'gh's  
Accent self-analysis  
Your vowel and consonant targets

#### **After filming**

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## ACCENT REDUCTION - Stage 3 - Course Contents

### Stress and Intonation

#### Week 1

Basics of Stress - Strong/Weak system  
Syllable stress - Level 1  
Sentence stress - Level 2

#### **Before filming**

#### Week 2

Weak forms and the Schwa  
Linking  
Stress in word groups - introduction

#### Week 3

Stress in word groups - noun phrases, descriptions  
Stress in word groups - numbers, names, verb phrases

#### Week 4

Tonic syllable - Level 3  
Phrasing  
Intonation basic patterns - Level 4

#### Week 5

Question intonation  
Tag questions

#### Week 6

Stress and intonation in rhetorical patterns  
Public speaking practice

#### **After filming**

**Please note:**  
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