

An American Accent —Here Are Some Good Resources

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In one month, Impact Communications received 17 requests for help in achieving an American accent. We heard from actors and actresses living outside of the U.S. who want to expand their career options. We also heard from inside sales and call center representatives in India, the Philippines, and Europe, as well as business people in China, Japan and Korea.

Experts tell us acquiring an American accent is no small task. It is down right difficult. Three things need to be mastered:

- Intonation
- Liasons
- Pronunciation

The first and most important one is intonation. Intonation refers to the rise of fall of the voice to express different concepts or emotions. If English is not your first language, learning the intonation of American words to convey meaning and emotion can be vexing. In other languages, like Spanish or French, words are rearranged or the pitch is changed like in Chinese to show importance. In English, the word order is fixed.

Liasons, the second factor, is the stringing of individual words together to indicate a complete thought. Words are not said separately in American English. They are strung together. It's as if one word is attached to the beginning of the next. Ann Cook in her book, American Accent Training, calls it the hum of the whole sentence that only changes when you come to a comma or a period and maybe not even then.

Finally, Pronunciation refers to saying the word cor-

rectly. In American English, sounds are pronounced differently and require the lips, teeth and tongue to be in different positions than the way the syllables were learned in one's native tongue. The [æ], [a] and [uh] are the most important and the most challenging for foreign speakers.

As you can see, acquiring an American accent takes real effort. Experts typically recommend a coach. Universities and ESL (English as a Second Language) Programs are great for helping an individual understand and remedy his own particular issues. Should you be interested in other sources, there are lots of options available through the web. In doing a "Google Search," the following information was uncovered. (Click on the links below.)

Informative web sites:

www.americanaccent.com
www.englishconnection.com
www.languagequest.com
www.directenglish.com
www.englishonline.net

On-line group:

www.groups.yahoo.com/group/americanaccenttraining

Free Diagnostic Test that utilizes Barron's ESL American Accent Training Principles available on.

www.americanaccent.com

Interesting Books available from Amazon.com

American Accent Training by Ann Cook

NTC's Dictionary of Everyday American English Expressions by Richard Spears, et al

Speak English Like an American
by Amy Gillet

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By checking the sources listed above, you should be on your way mastering an American accent successfully.

Impact Communications, Inc. consults with individuals and businesses to improve their face-to-face and over the phone communication skills. When you have to have impact, phone (847) 438-4480 or visit our web site, www.ImpactCommunicationsInc.com.