



Telephone Tutoring

Preliminary Diagnostic Analysis

CD 1 Track 3

This is a speech analysis to identify the strengths and weaknesses of your American accent. If you are studying American Accent Training on your own, please contact toll-free (800) 457-4255 or www.americanaccent.com for a referral to a qualified telephone analyst. The diagnostic analysis is designed to evaluate your current speech patterns to let you know where your accent is standard and nonstandard.

Hello, my name is _____. I'm taking American Accent Training. There's a lot to learn, but I hope to make it as enjoyable as possible. I should pick up on the American intonation pattern pretty easily, although the only way to get it is to practice all of the time.

- | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. all, long, caught | 5. ice, I'll, sky | 9. come, front, indicate | 13. out, house, round |
| 2. cat, matter, laugh | 6. it, milk, sin | 10. smooth, too, shoe | 14. boy, oil, toy |
| 3. take, say, fail | 7. eat, me, seen | 11. took, full, would | |
| 4. get, egg, any | 8. work, girl, bird | 12. told, so, roll | |

| A | B | C | D | E | F |
|-----------|----------|----------------|---------------|------------|------------|
| 1. pit | 1. bit | 1. staple | 1. stable | 1. cap | 1. cab |
| 2. fear | 2. veer | 2. refers | 2. reverse | 2. half | 2. have |
| 3. sue | 3. zoo | 3. faces | 3. phases | 3. race | 3. raise |
| 4. sheer | 4. din | 4. cashew | 4. casual | 4. rush | 4. rouge |
| 5. tin | 5. gin | 5. metal | 5. medal | 5. hat | 5. had |
| 6. chin | 6. then | 6. catcher | 6. cadger | 6. rich | 6. ridge |
| 7. thin | 7. gut | 7. ether | 7. either | 7. bath | 7. bathe |
| 8. cut | 8. race | 8. bicker | 8. bigger | 8. tack | 8. tag |
| 9. yellow | 9. breed | 9. million | 9. correction | 9. say | 9. sore |
| 10. would | 10. man | 10. coward | 10. surprise | 10. how | 10. peeper |
| 11. him | 11. name | 11. rehear | 11. summer | 11. soul | 11. palm |
| 12. lace | | 12. collection | 12. runner | 12. people | 12. can |
| 13. bleed | | 13. supplies | 13. kingdom | | 13. sing |

| |
|----------------------------------|
| 1. Go upstairs. |
| 2, I am going to the other room. |

| |
|---|
| 1. Betty bought a bit of better butter. |
| |

| | | |
|---|---------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 3. My name is Ann. | | 2. Beddy bada bida bedder budder. |
| 4. It is the end of the bad years. | | |
| 5. Give it to his owner. | 3. Italian Italy | |
| 1. Go ^(w) upstairs. | 4. attack attic | |
| 2. I ^(y) am going f thee ^(y) ether room. | 5. atomic atom | |
| 3. My nay mi Zæn. | 6. photography photograph | |
| 4. Idiz the ^(y) en d'v th' bæ dyearz. | | |
| 5. G' v' to ^(w) i zon'r. | 7. bet bed | |

x

Chapter 1 American Intonation

The American Speech Music

CD 1 Track 4

What to Do with Your Mouth to Sound American

One of the main differences between the way an American talks and the way the rest of the world talks is that we don't really move our lips. (So, when an American says, "Read my lips!" what does he *really* mean?) We create most of our sounds in the throat, using our tongue very actively. If you hold your fingers over your lips or clench your jaws when you practice speaking American English, you will find yourself much closer to native-sounding speech than if you try to pronounce every ... single ... sound ... very ... carefully.

If you can relate American English to music, remember that the indigenous music is jazz. Listen to their speech music, and you will hear that Americans have a melodic, jazzy way of producing sounds. Imagine the sound of a cello when you say, *Beddy bada bida beader budder* (Betty bought a bit of better butter) and you'll be close to the native way of saying it.

Because most Americans came from somewhere else, American English reflects the accent contributions of many lands. The speech music has become much more exaggerated than British English, developing a strong and distinctive intonation. If you use this intonation, not only will you be easier to understand, but you will sound much more confident, dynamic, and persuasive.

Intonation, or speech music, is the sound that you hear when a conversation is too far away to be clearly audible but close enough for you to tell the nationality of the speakers. The American intonation *dictates* liaisons and pronunciation, and it *indicates* mood and meaning. Without intonation, your speech would be flat, mechanical, and very confusing for your listener. What *is* the American intonation pattern? How is it different from other languages? *Foa egzampuru, eefu you hea ah Jahpahneeze pahsohn speakingu Ingurishu*, the sound would be very choppy, mechanical, and unemotional to an American. *Za sem vey vis Cheuman pipples*, it sounds too stiff. *A mahn frohm Paree ohn zee ahzer ahnd, eez intonashon goes up at zee end ov evree sentence*, and has such a strong intonation that he sounds romantic and highly emotional, but this may not be appropriate for a lecture or a business meeting in English.

1

American Intonation Do's and Don'ts

Do Not Speak Word by Word



Connect Words to Form Sound Groups

bä bizän the foun.



Use Staircase Intonation

| | | |
|---|--|--------------|
| Bä | | foun. |
| //////// bi | | //////// |
| //////// ////////// zän | | //////// |
| //////// ////////// ////////// the | | //////// |
| //////// ////////// ////////// ////////// | | //////// |

Start a new staircase
when you want to emphasize
that information, generally a *noun*.

+ Do not speak word by word.

If you speak word by word, as many people who learned "printed" English do, you'll end up sounding mechanical and foreign. You may have noticed the same thing happens in your own language: When someone reads a speech, even a native speaker, it sounds stiff and stilted, quite different from a normal conversational tone.

+ Connect words to form sound groups.

This is where you're going to start doing something *completely different* than what you have done in your previous English studies. This part is the most difficult for many people because it goes against everything they've been taught. Instead of thinking of each word as a unit, think of *sound units*. These sound units may or may not correspond to a word written on a page. Native speakers don't say *Bob is on the phone*, but say [bäbizän the foun]. Sound units make a sentence flow smoothly, like peanut butter— never really ending and never really starting, just flowing along. Even chunky peanut butter is acceptable. So long as you don't try to put plain peanuts directly onto your bread, you'll be OK.

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+ Use staircase intonation.

Let those sound groups floating on the wavy river in the figure flow downhill and you'll get the staircase. Staircase intonation not only gives you that American sound, it also makes you sound much more confident. Not every American uses the downward staircase. A certain segment of the population uses rising staircases—generally, teenagers on their way to a shopping mall: *"Hi, my name is Tiffany. I live in La Canada. I'm on the pep squad."*

What Exactly Is Staircase Intonation?

In saying your words, imagine that they come out as if they were bounding lightly down a flight of stairs. Every so often, one jumps up to another level, and then starts down again. Americans tend to stretch out their sounds longer than you may think is natural. So to lengthen your vowel sounds, put them on two stairsteps instead of just one.

We're here. I

| |
|---|
| We |
| //////// 're |
| //////// ////////// he |
| //////// ////////// ////////// re. |
| //////// ////////// ////////// ////////// |

The sound of an American speaking a foreign language is very distinctive, because we double sounds that should be single. For example, in Japanese or Spanish, the word *no* is, to our ear, clipped or abbreviated.

No

////////

Clipped

No

////////// **ou**
////////// //////////

Standard American

When you have a word ending in an *unvoiced consonant*—one that you "whisper" (t, k, s, x, f, sh)—you will notice that the preceding vowel is said quite quickly, and on a single stairstep. When a word ends in a vowel or a *voiced consonant*—one that you "say" (b, d, g, z, v, zh, j), the preceding vowel is said more slowly, and on a double stairstep.

seat

//////////

Unvoiced

see

////////// **eed**
////////// //////////

Voiced

There are two main consequences of not doubling the second category of words: Either your listener will hear the wrong word, or even worse, you will always sound upset.

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Consider that the words *curt*, *short*, *terse*, *abrupt*, and *clipped* all literally mean *short*. When applied to a person or to language, they take on the meaning of *upset* or *rude*. For example, in the expressions "*His curt reply ...*," "*Her terse response...*" or "*He was very short with me*" all indicate a less than sunny situation.

Three Ways to Make Intonation

About this time, you're coming to the point where you may be wondering, what exactly are the mechanics of intonation? What changes when you go to the top of the staircase or when you put stress on a word? There are three ways to stress a word.

+ The first way is to just get *louder* or raise the volume. This is not a very sophisticated way of doing it, but it will definitely command attention.

+ The second way is to *streeeeetch* the word out or lengthen the word that you want to draw attention to (which sounds very insinuating).

+ The third way, which is the most refined, is to change *pitch*. Although pausing just before changing the pitch is effective, you don't want to do it every time, because then it becomes an obvious technique. However, it will make your audience stop and listen because they think you're going to say something interesting.

Exercise 1-1: Rubber Band Practice with Nonsense Syllables CD 1 Track 5

*Take a rubber band and hold it with your two thumbs. Every time you want to stress a word by changing pitch, pull on the rubber band. Stretch it out gently, don't jerk it sharply. Make a **looping** ° figure with it and do the same with your voice. Use the rubber band and stretch it out every time you change pitch. Read first across, then down.*

| A | | B | | C | | D | |
|----------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|----------|--------------------|----------|-----------------|
| 1. | duh duh duh | 1. | la la la | 1. | mee mee mee | 1. | ho ho ho |
| 2. | duh duh duh | 2. | la la la | 2. | mee mee mee | 2. | ho ho ho |
| 3. | duh duh duh | 3. | la la la | 3. | mee mee mee | 3. | ho ho ho |
| 4. | duh duh duh | 4. | la la la | 4. | mee mee mee | 4. | ho ho ho |

Read each column down, keeping the same intonation pattern.

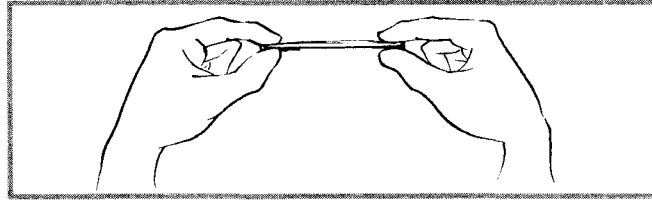
A

B

C

D

- | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. duh duh duh | 1. duh duh duh | 1. duh duh duh | 1. duh duh duh |
| 2. ABC | 2. imprecise | 2. condition | 2. alphabet |
| 3. 123 | 3. a hot dog | 3. a hot dog | 3. hot dog stand |
| 4. Dogs eat bones . | 4. They eat bones . | 4. They eat them. | 4. Give me one. |



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Staircase Intonation

CD 1 Track 6

So what is intonation in American English? What do Americans do? We go up and down staircases. We start high and end low.

| | | | |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| We ////// go ////// | up ////// ////// ////// | and ////// down ////// | stair ////// cases. ////// ////// |
|---------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|

Every time we want to stress a word or an idea, we just start a new staircase. That sounds simple enough, but when and where do you start a new staircase?

Statement Intonation with Nouns

Intonation or pitch change is primarily used to introduce *new information*. This means that when you are making a statement for the first time, you will stress the *nouns*.

Dogs bones
////// eat ////
////// ////

Practice the noun stress pattern after me, using pitch change. Add your own examples.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. Dogs eat bones . | 11. Jerry makes music . |
| 2. Mike likes bikes . | 12. Jean sells some apples . |
| 3. Elsa wants a book . | 13. Carol paints the car . |
| 4. Adam plays pool . | 14. Bill and I fix the bikes . |
| 5. Bobby needs some money . | 15. Ann and Ed call the kids . |
| 6. Susie combs her hair . | 16. The kids like the candy . |
| 7. John lives in France . | 17. The girls have a choice . |
| 8. Nelly teaches French . | 18. The boys need some help . |
| 9. Ben writes articles . | 19. _____ |
| 10. Keys open locks . | 20. _____ |

+ Pause the CD.

V Practice the patterns five more times on your own, using your rubber band.

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Statement Intonation with Pronouns

CD 1 Track 8

When you replace the nouns with pronouns (i.e., *old information*), stress the verb.

eat
They //// them
//// ////

If you know that your car is parked outside, however, and someone doesn't see it and asks you where it is, you might think that it has been stolen and your emotion will show in your intonation as you repeat the question. As your feelings rise in an emotional situation, your intonation rises up along with them.

"Where is my **car**?"

| | | |
|-------------------|------|------|
| | | är? |
| | cä | //// |
| Where | //// | //// |
| //////// is | //// | //// |
| //////// //// my | //// | //// |
| //////// //// // | //// | //// |
| //////// //// // | //// | //// |

"Why? Is it **gone**?"

| | | |
|----------------|----------|----------|
| | | än? |
| | gä | //////// |
| Why? | //////// | //////// |
| //////// Is | //////// | //////// |
| //////// // it | //////// | //////// |
| //////// // | //////// | //////// |

Exercise 1-4: Sentence Intonation Test

CD 1 Track 11

Pause the CD and underline or highlight the words that you think should be stressed. Check Answer Key, beginning on page 193.

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Sam sees Bill. | 11. He sees him. |
| 2. She wants one. | 12. Mary wants a car. |
| 3. Betty likes English. | 13. She likes it. |
| 4. They play with them. | 14. They eat some. |
| 5. Children play with toys. | 15. Len and Joe eat some pizza. |
| 6. Bob and I call you and Bill. | 16. We call you. |
| 7. You and Bill read the news. | 17. You read it. |
| 8. It tells one. | 18. The news tells a story. |
| 9. Bernard works in a restaurant. | 19. Mark lived in France. |
| 10. He works in one. | 20. He lived there. |

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Exercise 1-5: Four Main Reasons for Intonation

CD 1 Track 12

Depending on the situation, a word may be stressed for any of the following reasons:

New Information Opinion Contrast "Can't"

1. New Information

*It sounds like **rain**.*

Rain is the new information. It's the most important word in that sentence and you could replace everything else with *duh-duh-duh*. *Duh-duh-duh **rain*** will still let you get your point across.

✓ Repeat: *Duh-duh-duh **rain** I It sounds like **rain**.*

| | | |
|-------------|--|-----------|
| Duh | | ray |
| //// duh | | //// ayn. |
| //// // duh | | //// // |
| //// // // | | //// // |

✓ Make *rain* very musical and put it on two notes: *ray-ayn. Duh-duh-duh **ray-ayn** / It sounds like **ray-ayn**.*

2. Opinion

*It sounds like **rain**, but I don't think it is.*

In this case, intonation makes the meaning the opposite of what the words say: *It looks like a diamond, but I think it's a zircon. It smells like Chanel, but at that price, it's a knock-off. It feels like... It tastes like...* These examples all give the impression that you mean the *opposite* of what your senses tell you.

V Practice the intonation difference between new information and opinion:

It sounds like rain. (It's rain.) *It sounds like rain,* (but it's not.)

3. Contrast

He likes rain, but he hates snow.

Like and *hate* are contrasted and are the stronger words in the sentence.

4. Can't

It can't rain when there're no clouds.

Contractions (*shouldn't, wouldn't*) and negatives (*no, not, never*) are important words since they totally negate the meaning of a sentence, but they are not usually stressed. *Can't* is the exception.

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Exercise 1-6: Pitch and Meaning Change

CD 1 Track 13

Practice saying the four sentences after me. Pay close attention to the changes in pitch that you must make to convey the different meanings intended. The words to be stressed are indicated in bold face.

1. It sounds like **rain**.
2. It **sounds** like rain.
3. He **likes** rain, but he **hates** snow.
4. It **can't** rain on my **parade!** He **can't** do it. (*See also Ex. 1-43 for negatives.*)

Exercise 1-7: Individual Practice

CD 1 Track 14

Practice saying the sentences after the suggestion and the beep tone +. You will be given only a short time in which to reply so that you won't have the leisure to overthink. Start speaking as soon as you hear the tone because I'll be saying the sentence only a few seconds later.

1. Convey the information that it really does sound as if rain is falling. +
2. Convey the opinion that although it has the sound of rain, it may be something else. +
3. Convey the different feelings that someone has about rain and snow. +
4. Convey the fact that rain is an impossibility right now. +

+ Pause the CD.

V Practice the four sentences on your own ten times.

+ Once you're familiar with moving the stress around and feeling how the meaning changes, turn the CD on to continue with the next exercise.

Exercise 1-8: Meaning of "Pretty"

CD 1 Track 15

Native speakers make a clear distinction between pretty easily (easily) and pretty easily (a little difficult). Repeat the answers after me paying close attention to your stress.

Question: How did you like the movie? Answer:

1. *It was pretty good.* (She liked it.)
2. *It was pretty good.* (She didn't like it much.)

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Exercise 1-9: Inflection

CD 1 Track 16

Notice how the meaning changes, while the actual words stay the same.

1. I didn't say he stole the money. Someone **else** said it.
2. I **didn't** say he stole the money. **That's** not true at **all**.
3. I didn't say he stole the money. I only **suggested the possibility**.
4. I didn't say **he** stole the money. I think someone **else** took it.
5. I didn't say he **stole** the money. Maybe he just **borrowed** it.
6. I didn't say he stole **the** money, but rather some **other** money.

7. I didn't say he stole the **money**. He may have taken some **jewelry**.
- I** I didn't say he stole the money. Someone **else** said it.
It's true that somebody said it, but I wasn't that person.
- Didn't** I **didn't** say he stole the money. **That's** not true at **all**.
Someone has accused me and I'm protesting my innocence.
- Say** I didn't **say** he stole the money. I only **suggested** the **possibility**.
Maybe I hinted it. Maybe I wrote it. In some way, I indicated that he stole the money, *but* I didn't say it.
- He** I didn't say **he** stole the money. I think someone **else** took it.
I think someone stole the money, only not the person you suspect did it.
- Stole** I didn't say he **stole** the money. Maybe he just **borrowed** it.
I agree that he took it, but I think his motive was different.
- The** I didn't say he stole **the** money, but rather some **other** money.
We agree that he stole some money, but I don't think it's this money.
- Money** I didn't say he stole the **money**. He may have taken some **jewelry**.
We agree that he's a thief, but we think he stole different things.

Notice that in the first half of these sentences nothing changes but the intonation.

V Repeat after me.

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Exercise 1-10; Individual Practice

CD 1 Track 17

Now, let's see what you can do with the same sentence, just by changing the stress around to different words. I'll tell you which meaning to express. When you hear the tone +, say the sentence as quickly as you can, then I'll say the sentence for you. To test your ear, I'm going to repeat the sentences in random order. Try to determine which word I'm stressing. The answers are given in parentheses, but don't look unless you really have to. Here we go.

1. Indicate that he borrowed the money and didn't steal it. (5) +
2. Indicate that you are denying having said that he stole it. (2) +
3. Indicate that you think he stole something besides money. (7) +
4. Indicate that you were not the person to say it. (1) +
5. Indicate that you don't think that he was the person who stole it. (4) +
6. Indicate that you didn't say it outright, but did suggest it in some way. (3) +
7. Indicate that he may have stolen a different amount of money. (6) +

Overdo It

Practice these sentences on your own, really exaggerating the word that you think should be stressed. In the beginning, you're going to feel that this is ridiculous. (*Nobody stresses this hard! Nobody talks like this! People are going to laugh at me!*) Yet as much as you may stress, you're probably only going to be stressing about half as much as you should.

+ Pause the CD and practice the sentences in random order ten times.

Another reason you must overexaggerate is because when you get tired, emotional, or relaxed, you will stop paying attention. When this happens, like a rubber band, you're going to snap back to the way you originally were sounding (10 percent). So, if you just stretch yourself to the exact position where you ideally want to be, you'll go back almost completely to the old way when you

relax. For practice, then, stretch yourself far *beyond* the normal range of intonation (150 percent), so when you relax, you relax back to a standard American sound (100 percent).

We All Do It

Possibly about this time you're thinking, *Well, maybe you do this in English, but in my language, I just really don't think that we do this.* I'd like you to try a little exercise.

Exercise 1-11: Translation

CD 1 Track 18

Take the sentence I didn't say he stole the money and translate it into your native language. Write it down below, using whatever letters or characters you use in your language.

Now that you have written your sentence down, try shifting the stress around in your own language by going through the stress patterns 1-7 in Exercise 1-9. Don't try to put on a

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particularly American or other accent; just concentrate on stressing a different word in the sentence each time you say it.

For example, if your language is German, *Ich habe nicht gesagt daß er das Geld gestohlen hat*, you would change the stress to: *Ich habe nicht gesagt daß er das Geld gestohlen hat*, or *Ich habe nicht gesagt daß er das Geld gestohlen hat*.

If you translated it into French, you would say, *Je n'ai pas dit qu'il a vole l'argent*, or *Je n' pas dit qu'il a vole l'argent*.

In Japanese, many people think that there are no intonation changes, but if you hear someone say, *wakkanai*, you'll realize that it has similarities to every other language. *Watashi wa kare ga okane o nusunda to wa iimasen deshita*. Or perhaps, *Watashi wa kare ga okane o nusunda to wa iimasen deshita*.

No matter how strange it may sound to you, stress each different word several times in your language. You may notice that with some words it sounds perfectly normal, but with other words it sounds very strange. Or you may find that in your language, rather than stressing a word, you prefer to change the word order or substitute another word. Whatever you do is fine, as long as you realize where your language patterns are similar to and different from the American English intonation patterns. Then, when you do it again, in English, it will be much easier.

Note *An excellent exercise is to practice speaking your native language with an American accent. If you can sound like an American speaking your native language, imagine how easy it would be to speak English with an American accent.*

X Pause the CD and practice shifting the stressed words in your native language.

Intonation Contrast

Below are two sentences—the first is stressed on the most common, everyday word, *book*. Nine times out of ten, people will stress the sentence in this way. The second sentence has a less common, but perfectly acceptable intonation, since we are making a distinction between two possible locations.

Normal intonation Where's the **book**? It's on the **table**.

Changed intonation Is the book **on** the table or **under** it? It's **on** the table.

X Pause the CD and repeat the sentences.

Exercise 1-12: Create Your Own Intonation Contrast

CD 1 Track 19

Write a short sentence and indicate where you think the most normal intonation would be placed. Then, change the meaning of the sentence slightly and change the intonation accordingly.

Normal intonation

Changed intonation
