

## Dialect Packet for Iowa Summer Rep 2017:

### *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde

This packet has been designed as an introduction to learning the British RP accent for those of you who are new to this accent and/or dialect study in general. It will also serve as a quick reference for those of you who are veterans of dialect work and just want a brush up! We will go over as much of this packet as necessary in person and additional resources will be provided for you throughout the process.

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#### **What is RP and why are we using it?**

RP means “Received Pronunciation.” It is often referred to as “Standard British.” Unlike many other British accents (i.e. Yorkshire, Hampshire, etc.), RP is not designated by the speaker’s geographical region. It is spoken by “educated” speakers all over the United Kingdom and throughout the former British Empire. In the past, the British Broadcasting Company (BBC) required all broadcasters to speak in RP, thus actors and public speaking professionals were regularly trained to speak it as a neutral “default” English dialect. American Theatre Standard (ATS or “Good Speech”) is the American equivalent. Like ATS, British RP is no longer necessarily the default English accent, however. In fact, many of the royal family have intentionally strayed away from it in order to sound more “of the people.” That being said, for our purposes, RP is the accent to learn. The characters in this play are living in a different time. They want to sound as educated and sophisticated as possible. They choose their words carefully and use them brilliantly. The language will sparkle if we know how to say it and how to use it to its greatest effect.

#### **MOUTH POSTURE**

1. Mouth – not held open wide – think high and tight!
2. Tongue – held up and forward
3. Lips – relaxed and slightly protruded (think forward!)
4. Muscles at corners – slightly tensed
5. Feels like it is all **frontally pronounced**

#### **OTHER CHARACTERISTICS**

1. Instead of using volume for emphasis, RP speakers are more inclined to use pitch. Consider this a golden opportunity to play with your vocal range!
2. RP tends to be faster and quieter and softer in tone than General American speech. Don’t let this become a trap! Intelligibility is more important than authenticity. If we can’t understand you, it doesn’t matter how authentic your accent is! Make clear choices!
3. RP speakers select fewer key words to stress, and tend to begin weaker than American speech but end stronger. Carry the energy through to the end of the line!

## VOWELS

### Pure

#### Column #1:

The “lexical set” words in column #1 of vowel chart (next page) are taken from a diagnostic passage called “Comma Gets a Cure.” You can read “Comma Gets a Cure” at the following link:

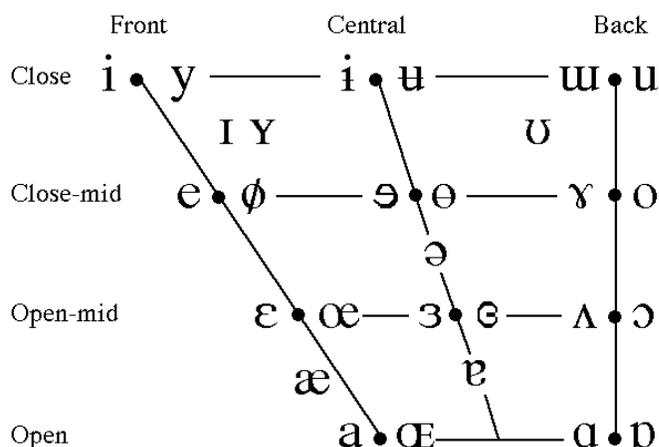
<http://www.dialectsarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/COMMA-GETS-A-CURE.pdf>

“This special passage uses J.C. Wells’ standard lexical set words, allowing the dialect researcher to examine a reader’s English pronunciation across a wide variety of phonemic contexts. It was written by Jill McCullough & Barbara Somerville and edited by IDEA Associate Editor Douglas N. Honorof.” ~ quoted from the International Dialects of English Archive website

#### Column #2:

The words in column #2 of the vowel chart (next page) are taken from Edith Skinner’s book Speak with Distinction.

Skinner developed practice sentences for the different types of vowels, grouping them by where they are formed in the mouth. The tongue position is highest at the beginning of each sentence, and lowers incrementally with each word.



Where symbols appear in pairs, the one to the right represents a rounded vowel.

Front vowels	Lee will let fair Pat pass
Mid vowels	Stir the surprise cup
Back vowels	Who would obey all honest fathers
Diphthongs with “r”	Here’s their poor ore car
Diphthongs without “r”	Pay my boy go now

#### The “Ask” list:

One of the key vowel changes from GenAm (General American) to British RP affects the words in the “bath” set. Americans typically use the front vowel “æ” as in “apple,” thus words in the “trap” set and words in the “bath” set take the same vowel. British speakers typically use the back vowel “ɑ” as in “father,” thus words in the “trap” set and words in the “bath” set take different vowels. See the chart on the next page. If you are not sure if a word belongs in the “bath” set or in the “trap” set, consult the “Ask” list. If it’s on the “Ask” list, it’s in the “bath” set.

<http://www.jonescollegeprep.org/ourpages/auto/2007/4/30/1177956052030/ASK%20LIST.pdf>

## VOWEL CHART FOR BRITISH RP

Lexical Set:	Skinner's Word:	Examples:	IPA symbol in this accent:
Kit	Will	Did, Think, It, Listen, Christian, Miss	ɪ
Dress	Let	Expression, Heavens, Mentioned, Susceptible	e
Trap	Pat	Accurately, Bracknell, Jack, Fact, Stamp	æ
<b>*Lot</b>	<b>Honest</b>	<b>Shropshire, Adopt, Lost, Origin, Wronged</b>	<b>ɒ</b>
Strut	Cup	Brother, Bunbury, One, Muffins, Augusta	ʌ
Foot	Would	Good, Couldn't, Should, Wooden	ʊ
<b>Bath</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Aunt, Ask, Fast, After, Task, Rather, Advanced</b>	<b>ɑ</b>
<b>*Cloth</b>	<b>Honest</b>	<b>Shropshire, Adopt, Lost, Origin, Wronged</b>	<b>ɒ</b>
Nurse	Stir	Ernest, Sir, Thursday, Worthing, German	ɜ
Fleece	Lee	Sweet, Three, He, Ideal, Season	i
Face	Pay	Play, Lane, Sake, Lady, Neighbors, Name	eɪ
Palm	Fathers	Mamma, Calm, Brahms, spa	ɑ
<b>Thought</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Walks, Also, Call, Thoughtful, Daughter, Awful</b>	<b>ɔ</b>
<b>Goat</b>	<b>Go</b>	<b>Don't, Told, Moment, Proposing, No, Home</b>	<b>əʊ</b>
Goose	Who	You, Wounded, Cucumber, Truth, Blue	u
Price	My	I, Polite, Science, Life, Right, Vital, Either	aɪ
Choice	Boy	Voice, Noise, Rejoice, Poison, Annoy	ɔɪ
Mouth	Now	House, Crowd, Flower, Count, Bough	aʊ
Near	Here's	Hear, Serious, Dear, Nearly, Fear	ɪə
Square	Their	Aware, Ceremony, Fairfax, Parents, Character	ɛə
Start	Car	Cardew, Hardly, Garden, Heartless, Part	ɑə
+North	Ore	Forte, Shoreman, Ward, Story, Quarter	ɔə
+Force	Ore	Forte, Shoreman, Ward, Story, Quarter	ɔə
Cure	Poor	Pure, Assure, Tour, Fury, Curious	ʊə
Happy	(Will)	Accurately, Impossibly, Hungry, Simply	ɪ
Comma	The	Polite, Derive, Sonata Weak form: what, was, to, a, that	ə
Letter	Surprise	Never, Other, Better, Sugar	ə

\*=The *Lot/Cloth* sets differ in some accents, but in most American and British English accents they are combined into one set.

+The *North/Force* sets differ in some accents, but in most American and British English accents they are combined into one set.

[If the syllable is stressed, it is strong form. If the syllable is unstressed, it is **weak form**.]

IPA = International Phonetic Alphabet in this case, not India Pale Ale!

## CONSONANTS

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# Consonant Chart - English

	bilabial	labio-dental	dental	alveolar	retroflex	alveo-palatal	palatal	velar	labio-velar	glottal
stop	p b			t d				k g		
affricate						tʃ dʒ				
fricative		f v	θ ð	s z		ʃ ʒ				h
nasal	m			n				ŋ		
lateral				l						
glide					r		j		w	

I will refer to the “stops” as “plosives.”

Action:	IPA Symbol:	Examples:	Notes in this accent:
Unvoiced bilabial plosive	p	please, chipper, stop	See Rule #1
Voiced bilabial plosive	b	bother, rubber, slab	See Rule #1
Unvoiced alveolar plosive	t	tomorrow, matter, wait	See Rule #1
Voiced alveolar plosive	d	dent, shudder, made	See Rule #1
Unvoiced velar plosive	k	can, maker, rebuke	See Rule #1
Voiced velar plosive	g	go, baggage, hog	See Rule #1
Unvoiced alveo-palatal affricate	tʃ	choose, matching, touch	
Voiced alveo-palatal affricate	dʒ	jury, magic, badge	
Unvoiced labio-dental fricative	f	free, effort, off	
Voiced labio-dental fricative	v	very, ever, leave	
Unvoiced dental fricative	θ	think, Athens, truth	
Voiced dental fricative	ð	there, other, loathe	

Unvoiced alveolar fricative	s	silly, listen, juice	
Voiced alveolar fricative	z	zoo, hasn't, was	
Unvoiced alveo-palatal fricative	ʃ	shot, mission, hush	
Voiced alveo-palatal fricative	ʒ	treasure, lesion	
Unvoiced glottal fricative	h	who, Mojave	
Bilabial nasal	m	mama, limb	
Alveolar nasal	n	note, finish, women	
Velar nasal	ŋ	long, singer	
Lateral alveolar	l	lollipop, follow, mill	
Retroflex glide	r	rabbit, more of, here is	I will typically write an initial consonant /r/ (i.e. rabbit) or linking /r/ (i.e. more of) as ɹ. If we are tapping or trilling the "r" for style purposes I will typically use r.
Palatal glide	j	use, young, milieu	See Rule #2
Labiovelar glide	w	waver, flower	If initial "wh" is used, I will typically write it as "hw," indicating an unvoiced attack on the glide. <i>Think of Stewie Griffin saying "cool whip."</i>

Rules (more like guidelines than actual rules):

1. Treat every /p/, /t/, and /k/ as unvoiced, aspirated, released **plosives**.

**Good warmups for plosives:**

A. (Unvoiced)

puh puh puh, tuh tuh tuh, kuh kuh kuh,  
puh tuh kuh, kuh tuh puh,

(Voiced)

buh buh buh, duh duh duh, guh guh guh,  
buh duh guh, guh duh buh

B. Topeka Topeka Topeka, Bodega Bodega Bodega

Topeka Bodega, Topeka Bodega, Topeka Bodega, Topeka Bodega

C. "A lot of better writers print a lot of little words."

2. Following alveolar consonants (/t/d/n/l/s/) and preceding u vowel (when spelled “u” or “ui” or “ew”) insert **“liquid u”** aka the palatal glide (sounds like consonant /y/).
  - a. i.e. duel, during, lure, news, nude, assume, student, tune, supervise, suit
  - b. NOT for words like “do” and “too”

**Good warmup for liquid u:**

“The tumultuous news assumed the duke fought a duel in the nude.”

3. Regarding /r/:
  - a. RP is a “non-rhotic” dialect. This means don’t use r-coloring, which means drop your r’s in words like “nurse” or “north.” This also means drop your r’s if a word ends in r (except when the next word begins with a vowel...)
  - b. Linking r is used in this accent. This means if a word ends in r and the next word begins with a vowel (assuming there is no breath taken) then you go ahead and use the r. My rule of thumb is to tie the r to the next word:  
i.e. “here is” = hɪə ɪz
  - c. Always use initial r, aka an /r/ at the beginning of a word (i.e. rabbit)
  - d. Sometimes you’ll encounter intrusive r, which is an r where none is written:  
i.e. “idea of it” = aɪ.ˈdɪə ɪv ɪt
  - e. Remember, when the /r/ is pronounced, it initiates the following syllable rather than coloring the preceding vowel!

**Good warmups for use of /r/:**

- A. The first early bird murdered thirty turning worms.
- B. An enormous tornado tore up the store this morning.
- C. A star called Marx stole our hearts with his harp.
- D. Our brother and sister met a lawyer from Denver.
- E. Courage is need for curry in the borough of Durham.
- F. In Paris Harry shot a sparrow from his carriage with an arrow.
- G. The Shah of Persia insists that Maria is to never abandon her uncle.

4. *-ile* endings:

Use the price set vowel on the second syllable of words like mobile, fertile, futile

**Good warmup for -ile endings:**

“Going south is futile. The farmland is fertile but Oak Road is zoned for mobile homes only.”

5. *-ury* and *-erry* endings
  - a. Instead of the American tendency to rhyme these endings with “airy,” take the “air” out of words like Bunbury, strawberry, and dictionary. Same thought with words that end in *-tory* or *-tary* (i.e. laboratory, secretary)
6. Watch out for different emphasis of syllables in words, such as...

- a. aluMINium
  - b. BERnard
  - c. teleVISION
  - d. magaZINE
  - e. cigarETTE
7. Watch out for different vowel sounds in words, such as...
- a. process (goat set, not lot/cloth set)
  - b. lever (fleece set, not dress set)
  - c. zebra (dress set, not fleece set)

If you're not sure, look it up or ask your Dialect Designer! We will find the answer!

*Whew! Long packet, I know! It may look overwhelming, but remember we will go over it in person as much as we need to, and it is mainly just a reference for you to use as needed.*

**“The Importance of Being Earnest” Dialect Resource Pinterest Board:** [http://pin.it/pfz\\_JEq](http://pin.it/pfz_JEq)

- This is where you will find online resources such as **websites** and **videos**.
- If you have any special requests, let me know and I will add material to the board!

#### **Other recommended resources:**

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#### **BOOKS (with CDs!)**

Accents & Dialects for Stage and Screen by Paul Meier

Speak with Distinction by Edith Skinner

Teach Yourself Accents: The British Isles by Robert Blumenfeld

#### **IPA Keyboards:**

<http://www.i2speak.com/>

<http://ipa.typeit.org/>

*If you are not fluent in IPA, I recommend searching “Interactive IPA” on iTunes or Google Play Store. There are free apps that will play the sound for you when you click the symbol. Check it out!*