



# Let's Talk

## Accent Modification: Changing the Way You Speak

“ I have lived in this country all of my life. People don't understand me when I speak. They say my accent is too strong. I want more people to understand me, but I still want to sound like myself. I'm afraid that if I work to change my speech I may lose my accent completely. ”  
—Kim

### Do People Have a Hard Time Understanding You?

Everyone speaks with an accent. You may not notice it because you sound like most people around you. But you may notice it when someone else sounds different.

A person from the South usually sounds different than a person from New England. They are both speaking English, but they say sounds and words differently. They both have an accent.

People may also use words or expressions that are only used by people from the same part of the country (like saying “soda” or “pop”).

Accents are a natural part of speaking. No one accent is better than another. And having an accent is not a speech or language problem. But accents can make it hard for people to understand each other. It can affect your communication on the job and even your social life.

### How Can a Speech-Language Pathologist Help?

Speech-language pathologists, or SLPs, are experts in speech and language. SLPs work with people who want to change their accent. This is called accent modification or accent reduction. Your SLP will work with you on:

- How you say sounds
- How you put sounds together into words and sentences
- How you stress the sounds in words, such as *OBject* and *obJECT*
- Recognizing words and phrases that you use that are different from words used by others

You can work on your accent alone or in a group. Most programs

#### Fast facts

- Everyone speaks with an accent.
- You may speak with an accent because you are from a different part of the country or from a different country altogether.
- You can change your accent with the help of a speech-language pathologist (SLP).



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will give you work to do at home. You can use computers and video cameras to help you practice.

It is really important for you to practice what you learn. Practice by yourself, practice with your friends, and practice in your everyday life. And listen—both to how you sound and how other people sound.

### Will My Accent Be Gone Completely?

Probably not. Most programs work on helping you speak so that others can understand you better. This doesn't mean that your accent will be totally gone. It's really up to you. You and your SLP will work together to set goals for your program.

### Who Pays for an Accent Modification Program?

Accents are not speech or language disorders. Your health insurance will not pay for these programs,

however, some employers will pay for them, so check at work.

### Can't I Just Buy a Book or DVD and Work by Myself at Home?

You can, but you may not have as much success. Your SLP is the expert on how to change your accent. It can be hard to train the parts of your mouth to work together and say sounds differently. Your SLP will know the best ways to develop this skill.

Your SLP will develop a program just for you. Books and other products are made for anyone who buys them. They can't tell you what you need. And they can't give you feedback about how you are doing. You may want to buy a book or DVD to help you practice, but they shouldn't be the only things you use.

“My refrigerator broke the other day, and I had to call customer service. For the first time, they didn't ask me to repeat anything. I'm so glad that I worked with the SLP. I used to spend most of my day repeating myself. Now, no one asks me where I was born!” —Kim

### You can change the way you speak. Help is available.

To learn more about accent modification or to find an SLP near you who has been certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), visit [www.asha.org](http://www.asha.org) or call 800-638-8255 or TTY-301-296-5650.

My SLP's name is

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Appointment

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Compliments of  
American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA)  
and