

Accent Reduction Therapy



References.

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American Speech-Language Hearing Association. (1993). *Definitions of Communication Disorders and Variations* [Relevant Paper]. Available from www.asha.org/policy

www.asha.org/public/speech/development/accent_mod.htm

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What is an accent?

The American Speech-Language-Hearing Association defines an *accent* as “the unique way that speech is pronounced by a group of people speaking the same language” (www.asha.org).

Accents may be considered regional, resulting from a dialect of English (e.g., Southern American English), or foreign (e.g., Spanish-influenced English).

An accent is **not** a speech impairment. It is the effect of speech sounds from an individual’s first language (or dialect) being carried over into his or her production of Standard American English.

Why Accent Reduction Therapy?

While an accent is not a speech impairment, an individual may decide that he or she would like to modify his or her accent for personal or professional reasons. These may include:

- A desire to improve overall communication
- Frustration at having to repeat yourself to make yourself understood
- Listeners missing your message because they are distracted by your accent

If you wish to change your accent, a speech-language pathologist certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA) will be able to help you.

What can I expect from an evaluation? From therapy?

The goal of *accent reduction therapy*, also known as *accent modification therapy* is not to

“erase” a person’s natural accent, but to facilitate the production of a Standard American English (SAE) accent.

Accent reduction therapy begins with a complete evaluation of your individual speaking patterns. You may be asked to read individual words, sentences or entire paragraphs. In addition, a conversational speech sample will be collected to assess your overall intonation patterns or prosody. Your perception of SAE vowels, consonants, and sentence-level stress or intonation patterns will also be assessed to determine if it should be included as a therapy goal.

Individual therapy goals will be chosen based on the results of your evaluation and your specific communication needs. Goals may include the perception and pronunciation of particular vowels or consonants, as well as the overall stress or intonation patterns of Standard American English.