How To:

Learn an American Accent with Amy series

updated August, 2016

1) Vowels - The Flesh of the word

2) Consonants and Letter Combinations and Omissions - The Bones of the word

3) Melody - The Emotional Meaning of the word

4) Rhythm - The Contextual Intention of the word

5) The Vibe - The Feeling being expressed through the word.

Part 1: Vowels

ə

Schwa: (resting place of the accent; mid-vowel sound): the, um..., love, was, today, money, wonder, for you, word, forever, because,

A

long ä (ah, aw, all, ol, off, ough -also ô): ah, all, law, talk, car, party, farm, awesome, always, on, stop, ought, follow, offer, holiday

short a: grass, have, that, can, traffic, answer, ask, pass, glass, aunt, banana, bath, dance, staff, advantage, photograph

diphthong ā (a, ai, ay, eigh...): brain, game, paper, pay, Amy, thanks, parade, tomato, favorite, playing, weigh, eight

E

short e: left, men, friend, went, whenever, tenth, everybody, ready, excellent

long ē (e, ee, ea, eo...)" we, even, people, feelings, reason, scenic, read, freedom, events, *really, *feel, (*often a diphthong)

I

short i: bit, pick, six, lift, which, tip, winter, dinner, finish, simple, stimulating

diphthong ī (i, y, igh...): my, find, time, child, childhood, rice, wild, finance

O

long oō: room, bloom, move, true, blue, through, you, *few

short ŏ: good, book, cook, stood, would, wooden, look

diphthong ō: oh, no, grow, overall, phone, home, road, golden, grown

diphthong ou: how, now, out, about, house, powder, shout, powerful

U/Y

short ə: *see schwa (up, cup, etc.)

diphthong yoō (u, you, iew...): usual, you, view, universe, human,

Part 2: Consonants and Letter Combinations and Omissions

t - d

time, tint, trick, taped, afternoon, best, between,
dock, dip, dime, diamond, draft, delve, dappled, radiant

Substitutions: butter, better, water, daughter, bought her, met her, met him, get it

Omissions: mountain, fountain, what?, bet, met, it, I'll do it, d'you?, wanna

"th" words

θ thought, thanks, bath, math, path, with, therapy, mouth

ð lather, bathe, father, mother, these, those, there, weather, whether,

r

read, ready, road, real, bread, friend, strict, shrine, shrink, strap, prime, father, mother, paper, picture, fingers, there, report, smart, figure, sure, sugar, nearly

l

lift, luck, little, label, blend, lullaby

s

sip, sand, stop, structure, sassy, saxophone, past, pace, space, science

z

zebra, zipper, maze, hazel, lazy, dazzling, raspberry

zh

measure, treasure,

ch

chips, match, watch, champion, chief, each, reach, which one?, each piece

j

jump, June, jam, gel, angel, manage, age, pageant, magical, *fragile

b

born, bubble, beauty, about, absent, absolutely, grab, maybe, baby

p

pack, paper, wrapper, page, pebble, apt, map, camping, speakers, principle

w

world, went, whoa, mew, row, lawnmower, yawn, while, when, which

v

vast, view, vehicle, every, even, victory!

Part 3: Melody

Statements:

Hi.

Hello.

My name is Amy.

Nice to meet you.

Sure.

I'd love to.

I did it.

Yes.

Yes!

Thank you.

Yeah, thanks.

I don't know.

Absolutely.

Awesome!

Totally.

No problem.

Because -'cause

Questions:

Hello?

How are you?

Do you want some? Would you like some?

Do you want to come with me?

What do you think?

What's your name?

I'm Amy, by the way. What's your name?

Do you ever go to the movies?

Exclamations:

Hi!

It's so good to see you!

I love it!

Shoot! *substitute other language w/ same melodic pattern

Practice Contemporary Dialogue:

A: Hello?

B: Hi! It's _____(your name)___.

A: Hey! How are you?

B: Good*, thanks, how are you? (* "well" is proper grammar, but rarely used)

A: Good, yeah, I'm fine. What's up?

B) Oh, I was just wondering if you want to go to the movie tonight, if you're not busy.

A) Oh, what's playing?

B) Um, *Connected*, actually, that awesome-looking family comedy-drama one.

A) Oh yeah, I totally want to see that! What time?

B) Uh... 6:15, 8:30, and 9:45. How about the 8:30, huh?

A) Yeah, 8:30's good. Wanna do dinner first?

B) Sure. Maybe Thai?

A) For sure. Let's go to that one place...

B) Yeah, they have the best Thai iced tea.

A) Sweet. Meet you there, yeah?

B) Perfect.

Part 4: Rhythm and Stress

1) **Stress/Lean on the most important piece of information:**

How <u>are</u> you? How are <u>you</u>?

What do <u>you</u> think? What do you <u>think</u>?

2) **The More important it is, the more you stress it:**

I <u>love</u> that color on you!

I <u>really</u> think we should go the other way.

I really think we should go the <u>other</u> way.

I'm <u>never</u> doing that again.

That movie was <u>brilliant</u>!

Things get truncated, when not emphasized:

Would you -wouldja

Could you -couldja

Want to -wanna

I don't want to -Ida wanna

I don't know -I dunno

Practice Sentences:

It's for you.

I'm going to go over there; want to come?

I'm gonna go over there; wanna come?

Do you want to have some bread with that?

D'you wanna have some bread with that?

Practice Contemporary Dialogue: (notice the mitigators: So, uh, yeah...)

A: So what did you think of the movie? (So wha'j'you think...)

B: Loved it. Totally brilliant. The acting, the script, I mean it was hilarious!

A: I know, right? It reminded me of this one family reunion we had when I was like six.

B: Yeah?

A: Yeah. My Mom and my aunt got into this full on fight about who was supposed to make the jello salad. I'm like, "Seriously? Who even makes jello salad anymore."

B: Right?

A: And they're supposed to be the adults.

B: For sure. It's so the other way around.

Practice "30's-60s" Dialogue: (notice the pacing and clipped, rapid dialogue)

A: Good evening Vivian.

B: Hank. What are you doing here?

A: It's Saturday night.

B: I'm aware of that.

A: What's a Saturday night without two G&Ts and a room full of steaming jazz?

B: A Sunday morning.

A: Can I buy you a drink?

B: Can Chick Webb play the drums?

A: Martini?

B: Dry.

Part 5: The Vibe: How does it Feel?

1) What qualities do you want to portray through this accent or character?

Sample qualities:

***** Straightforward

***** Assertive

***** Comfortable

***** Confident

***** Informal

***** Warm

2) What does "an American", or the American you wish to portray "look like"? - you might try dressing differently, to get into the feeling.

You have to BE American in order to sound American. You have to believe it. Believe you can. I believe you can, if you want to.

Dude!

Sweet!

What?

Sure.

Absolutely.

I'm a producer.

I founded the organization.

Sure, I can do that.

No, thanks, I'd rather not.

I'd love to.

I believe in you.

I know it'll work.

Together, we can do anything.

3) I'm going to ask you some questions. Pause it after each one, and answer in your Standard American accent. Practice these until you're so comfortable and confident in your answer that you're no longer thinking about how you sound or whether people will believe you. If you believe it, we'll believe it.

1) What's your name?

2) What do you do?

3) Do you have family here?

4) What's your favorite thing to do?

5) Tell me the story of a favorite memory from your childhood.