

What is Accent Recognition in IELTS?

Worksheet

Accent recognition is identifying whether a speaker uses British, American or another English accent by listening to vowel sounds, word stress, rhythm and vocabulary choices that differ across varieties of English.

Questions

1. A speaker says 'I live in an apartment' with a pronounced 'r' sound and stresses 'a-PART-ment'. What accent is this?
A) British English
B) American English
C) Australian English
D) Cannot determine
2. Which word PAIR would help you identify a British accent?
A) 'can't' with dropped /t/
B) 'car' with silent /r/ at the end
C) 'tomato' with stress on second syllable
D) 'water' pronounced as 'woder'
3. A speaker says 'I'm going to the lift in the building.' What accent is most likely?
A) American—uses 'lift' for elevator
B) British—uses 'lift' for elevator
C) Both could use this
D) Australian only
4. Why is accent recognition useful for IELTS listening, apart from interest?
A) Different accents have different word counts.
B) Vowel and stress patterns can help you predict unfamiliar words.
C) Only one accent appears on the test.
D) You must reproduce the speaker's accent.
5. You hear a speaker say the word 'can't'. The vowel sound is short /æ/ and the 't' is slightly dropped. Is this British or American English?
6. A speaker says 'tomato' (TOM-ah-toe) vs (tuh-MAH-toe). Which accent?
7. A speaker says 'Can I use the lift to the third floor?' Another says 'I'll take the elevator up'. What do you learn about each?
8. Define: What is the most obvious difference between British and American R sounds?
9. Define: How does stress differ between British and American English?
10. Define: What vocabulary clue signals British English?

Answer Key

1. B) American English — Pronounced 'r', vocabulary 'apartment', and stress pattern all point to American English.
2. B) 'car' with silent /r/ at the end — Silent 'r' at word-end (car, start, park) is a classic British trait. American speakers pronounce the 'r'.
3. B) British—uses 'lift' for elevator — 'Lift' is specifically British English. Americans say 'elevator'. This vocabulary is a strong indicator.
4. B) Vowel and stress patterns can help you predict unfamiliar words. — By recognizing stress, vowel patterns, and rhythm, you can anticipate and understand words even if they're new.
5. Listen to the vowel: short /æ/ suggests American. Listen to the final 't': dropped or glottalized → American (flapping). Conclusion: American English (GenAm).
6. British: TOM-ah-toe (stress on first syllable, short vowel). American: tuh-MAH-toe (stress on second syllable). If you hear the second pattern, it's American.
7. First speaker uses 'lift' → likely British. Second uses 'elevator' → likely American. Vocabulary + accent patterns confirm regional variety.
8. British: 'r' at the end of a word is silent (car, start). American: 'r' is pronounced (car, start).
9. British often stresses the first syllable (photograph). American may stress differently (pho-TO-graph or PHO-to-graph).
10. Words like: flat (apartment), lift (elevator), petrol (gas), boot (trunk), autumn (fall).

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