

A French Accent

Remember not to intrude a glottal [ʔ] in place of the elided /h/. [ʔi ʔiz ʔiəʔ]

EXAMPLES: *in hell, behind, hit his head, rehearsal, inhabited, inhuman, key-hole*

8. The *post-vocalic /l/* of *feel* and *stale*, which is a *velarized* or *dark /l/* in RP and GenAm [ɫ], is rendered as a *light /l/* [l] in French; e.g., *mal, oncle, Balzac* [ma.l, ɔ̃kl, balzak]. So this habit is brought into the speaking of English. I have found it to be a mispronunciation that survives long after other English sounds have been mastered.

EXAMPLES: *ill, well, temple, small, malcontent, self, almost, baffle, careful*

9. One of the strongest markers for this accent is the treatment of /r/. In French, whether /r/ precedes or follows the vowel, it is sounded, and the place of articulation is the *uvula*. French uses the *trilled uvular /r/* [ʀ], although, in connected speech, it does not always achieve that degree of definition. It is often just a cursory, little *fricative* scrape [ʁ] often *devoiced* [χ], or even simply a gesture in that direction without any contact at all, resulting in an *approximant* [ʁ̥]. Actors adopting a French accent will do better if they understate the /r/ in this way. Interestingly, with the RP and GenAm *approximant* [ɹ] being so different from [ʀ], both English and French speakers are apt to have a go at doing each other's /r/, and often overdo it. An "overdone" English /r/ might sound like this: *strange, parents, arrange*, etc. So a good tip is to either understate the [ʀ] or overstate the [ɹ].

EXAMPLES: *run, bring, bird brain, car park, forty, strict, approach, crowd, growl, fear, score, careful*

10. The voiceless *plosives* [p, t, k] are pronounced in English with *aspiration*, an h-sound [p^h, t^h, k^h]. These are pronounced without aspiration in French in initial and medial positions. Additionally, [t], like [d] and [n], is rendered with the tongue tip nearer the teeth than in English. This is also a subtle difference and, therefore, a hard mispronunciation to overcome.

EXAMPLES: *place, possible, proud, empower, time, tour, entire, California, kill, account, increase; BUT, IN FINAL POSITIONS, steep, Philip, light, rate, like, arc*