

Estuary Contemporary London



Estuary or Contemporary London

Rhythm, Intonation and Placement

If Received Pronunciation has no twang and Cockney is bright and brassy, Estuary lies somewhere in the middle. Its placement is both dark and throaty, as well as nasal. Overall, it will feel further back than most American dialects. There is a sliding scale to Estuary, in that it can be nearly RP or nearly Cockney, and everything in between.

The rate of speech for Estuary is faster than American, 110 words per minute to the American 90 words per minute. It is an aggressive, urban dialect, keeping up with the speed of the big city of London.

Estuary uses more pitch variation than American dialects, but is not smooth and melodious like RP. It is more direct and may also have a gliding quality.

The Schwa /ə/

The *schwa* is a phonetic symbol that means a neutral sound and is found in an unstressed position in a word. It sounds like “uh,” as in the second syllable in the word “comma” or the first syllable in the word “above.”

RHOTICITY

"R" or /ɹ/ Dropping

The Estuary accent drops the “vowel r” at the ends of words and, in multisyllabic words, the ends of syllables when the “r” is followed by a consonant. Essentially, they always say the “r” when it is followed by a vowel sound. They drop the “r” when it’s followed by a consonant sound or silence. For Example:

Word → Wɔɹd /wɔɹd/

Rear → Riə /riə/

Robert → Rɒbɪt /'rɒ.bət/

Perforate → Pɛfɔɹeɪt /'pɜ.fə.ɹeɪt/

Words

mʌɹdɪɹ, rɛmɑɹks, pɛɹfɔɹmɑɹns, kɛɹiɹ, tʊɹɪst, θɛɹmɒmɛtɛɹ, grɛɹnɛɹi, ɑɹbɪtrɪɹ, Bɑɹbɛrɑ, fɜɹðɪɹ, tɔɹtʃɛɹ, rɛsɛɹvɛ, tʃɛɹi, sɪɹnɛɹ, brɪɹ

Linking "R"

If one word ends in an "r" and the English word would drop it, and the word that follows it starts with a vowel, the English will put the "r" back in, but attach it to the word that starts with the vowel.

Peter and I → Petuh rand I /pi.tə_rænd aɪ/

Phrases

soar up, far away, there is, near and far, over and over, our audience, Arthur is

Intrusive "R"

An intrusive "r" works much the same way, only it is inserted where no "r" is present in the spelling of the word.

Linda and I --> Linduh rand I /lɪn.də_rænd aɪ/

Phrases

law and order, idea is, draw up, ma and pa, paw hurts, saw him, area is

Sentence

- a. I have an idea about your grammar: should there be a comma over there?
- b. He is drawing the animals of China and Africa in India ink.
- c. Diphtheria has been cured in America, hasn't it?

CONSONANTS

"T" and "Voiced "T" /t/ and /t/ → /ɾ/ or /ts/

Estuary tends to use nearly every "t" as a "splasy t" or as an occasional glottal stop. Americans most often voice the "t" or they don't release it entirely. The glottal stop is used between vowels or at the end of the word. While both the "splasy t" and the glottal stop are common in this dialect, greater use of one than the other will result in a sound that is either closer to RP or to Cockney. *Generally*, using primarily glottal stops take the dialect closer to Cockney and "splasy t's" take the dialect closer to RP.

Words

little, bottle, putting, fatten, batter, better, lighten, tottering, battle, kettle

Phrases

better butter, little pint of bitters, get in here kitty, a little bit of luck, putting it away, a lot of cattle

Sentences

- a. Two times ten totals twenty.
- b. Take the 10:22 train to Trenton.
- c. Tom Tully tripped trying to tap to the tarantella.
- d. Tina trilled twenty-two Italian trios.

The "Liquid U"

Estuary inserts a "y" or a "yod" /j/ in front of an "oo" /u/ sound, such as in "news." This is called a "liquid u" and comes after the consonant sounds below:

N

New/Knew → nyew /nju/ - nuisance, nutrient, innumerate, nutrition

D

Duke → dyuke /djuk/ - induce, duty, due/dew, during, dubious

T

Tuesday → Tyuesday /tyuz.deɪ/ - tune, tuba, tumult, tulip, tutorial

Dark /ɫ/ --> /ɫ̩/

"L" functions in two ways. A "light l" or /l/ comes before a vowel and is made by flicking the tip of the tongue on the alveolar ridge. A "dark l" or /ɫ/ comes after a vowel, as in "full" or "cold" and is made by the middle of the tongue pressing against the roof of the mouth and soft palate, depending on how "dark" your "l" is. Estuary speakers often replace the "dark l" with an unreleased /w/ sound. They also do it for syllabic "l"s which occur in words like bottle, paddle, little etc. In an unreleased /w/, the lips round as though to shape a /w/, but never release into the "wuh" sound of a released /w/.

Words

tattle, will, usual, bubble, oil, cold, film, ball, tilt, told

Phrases

will fill, futile battle, cold pole, tall old Bill, call the wild bull, all fall down, smell like hell, toll the bell

Sentences

- a. The little girl filled the bottle till it was full.
- b. The hobbled camel gobbled a gulp of hay and wriggled his middle.
- c. The cattle grazed in the hills and dales near the tall baronial castle.

MONOPHTHONGS

Back Vowel Separation

Lot/Cloth /ɑ/ → /ɒ/

Start with the "Doctor's ah," as in "father." Then round the lips halfway.

This sound is always short.

Words

Lot, log, cloth, off, toss, God, often, floss, top, odd, plot, trough, consonant, conversation, sausage, Boston, coffee, ominous, shop, blot, clog, odd, gone, cloth, bother, doff

Phrases

rotten log, fog and smog, top of the lot, proper job, off and on, cotton smock

Thought /ɑ/ → /ɔ:/

This sound is an entirely separate sound, however, for Americans it can be found in a similar way. Start with "ah", then round the lips past /ɒ/ all the way until it looks like you are about to kiss someone. The back of the tongue will also rise a bit higher in the mouth, but the lip rounding is the easier of the two movements to feel and control.

This sound is always long.

Words

Thought, bought, sauce, sort, source, fought, talk, walk, lawn, paw, auburn, auger, fawn, wall, lawyer, jaws, brawn, court, torn

Phrases

enthralled applause, jaundiced nausea, lawless brawl, gaudy shawl, prawns in sauce

The "Bath" List /æ/ → /ɑ:/

This is a list of words that, in General American, rhyme with "Trap", but in Estuary rhyme with the first vowel sound in "Father" for Americans.

Bath → B-ah-th /bɑ:θ/

After → Ah-ftuh /ɑ:ftə/

Last → L-ah-st /lɑ:st/

Common words that Americans miss all the time:

can't, after, last, past/passed, chance, ask, answer, path, laugh, nasty, cast, demand, master, fast, advance, class, dance, castle, plant, vast, wrath, mask

For a complete list, try the following link:

<http://www.lachsa.net/ourpages/auto/2016/9/19/50757706/Ask%20List%20for%20Brit%20Dialect.pdf>

Or search "the ask list dialect"

The "Goat" Vowel /oʊ/ → /Λʊ/

The long "o" sound, as heard in the word "goat," is actually a diphthong, which means a sound made up of two vowel sounds put together. In Estuary, the "goat" vowel starts at the "strut vowel" /Λ/.

Words

go, cold, told, over, throat, ochosen, shown, onotice, ago etc.

Phrases

go slowly home, old coal stove, golden moments, hopeful gigolo, goal post, rosy omen, only coping, boldly going

Sentences

- a. The lonely old crone went slowly home alone.
- b. The cloak was mauve with golden thread sewn in its folds.
- c. The bowl lay broken on the cold stone floor.
- d. Old Joe is only going to load the stones.

Schwa Elevation

General American tends to use the schwa in the unstressed second syllable of words that end in “ed”, “et”, “ish”, “es” etc. In Estuary, the schwa is often elevated to the vowel sound in the word “kit”. There is no concrete spelling rule, but the word endings above are the places it often happens.

Ticket → tickit /tɪ.kɪt/

Needed → needid /ni.dɪd/

Words

British, intimate, sordid, pathetic, illustrate, militant, business, sentimental, practice, jacket, territory, beautiful, privacy etc.

The “Goose” Vowel /u/ → /ɔ̃u/

The “Goose” vowel /u/ shifts from a monophthong to a diphthong, with the schwa serving as the first vowel.

Words

threw, due/dew, retinue, Sue, super, abusive, cumin, prudent

Phrases

too aloof, fruit juice, cute cupid, stupid fool, fluid elocution, waterproof roof, shrewish buffoon

Sentences

- a. Two soup spoons were used to scoop the cooling fruit juice.
- b. June’s use of rouge cued the youth to woo her in the moonlight.
- c. The moody and gloomy fool rued his aloof attitude.

The “Fleece” Vowel /i/ → /ɔ̃i/

The “Fleece” vowel /i/ shifts from a monophthong to a diphthong, with the schwa serving as the first vowel.

Fleece Vowel /i/ → /ɔ̃i/

Words

beast, people, Easter, heed, keep, heap, real, leave, indeed, please, cream

Phrases

leave Eden, read tea leaves, sweet treacle, leaner and meaner, devious bee keeper, field of dreams

Sentences

1. Steve deceived three seasoned tea dealers.
2. The beast feasted each evening on a meal of sheep's knees.
3. Peter reads the weekly scandal sheet.
4. You needn't believe in words - only deeds.

Trap and Strut /æ/ and /ʌ/

These sounds are not actually different sounds in General American and Estuary, however, the placement of the dialect makes them sound different.

The “Mouth” Vowel /aʊ/ → /æʊ/

The “Mouth” vowel is replaced by the *ash* or “Trap” vowel.

Words

mouth, house, bow-bough, found, now, cow, trowel, account, scout, doubt, proud, louse, mountain, brown, sounds, mouse

Phrases

about the house, tower of power, a bout of gout, flower bower, pounce on the mouse, stout count, how now brown cow

Sentences

- a. The mousy dowager, prayed with a devout countenance.
- b. See how proudly Howard sits upon his stout mount.
- c. Our house was aroused by the sounds of carousing.
- d. The down and out lout groused about his foul fate.

The “Price” Vowel /aɪ/ → /ɔɪ/

The “Price” vowel remains a diphthong, but the Cleopatra /a/ is replaced with the “Lot/Cloth” vowel.

Words

try, find, bicycle, like, society, rifle, highway, kind, dice,

Phrases

I'm right fine, high minded ideals, my time of life, hitchhike at night, nice white tights, white knight, icy eyes

Sentences

- a. I fly high in the sky.
- b. Mike was a fine lad with a mind of his own.
- c. I write of my life by candlelight by the fireside.
- d. With a bright brar pipe and shot of rye, I'm a fine lucky guy.

The "Face" Vowel /eɪ/ --> /ʌɪ/

In Estuary, the first vowel in the "Face" diphthong shifts to the "Strut" vowel /ʌ/.

Words

paper, away, amazing, toupee, heyday, potato, flaky, hay

Phrases

maybe baby, hated days, praised greatly, craved fame, shaved his face daily, great day for sailing, laid waste

Sentences

- a. Today is the day they take the babies away.
- b. Lady Kate was weighed at eighteen stone yesterday.
- c. The stranger waited in the doorway, safe from the rain.
- d. A day in jail made Dave evaluate his daily intake of Red Label.

Some British Vernacular

American	British
elevator	lift
apartment	flat
counter-clockwise	anti-clockwise
garbage/trash can	rubbish bin
sidewalk	pavement
popsicle	ice lolly
sweater	jumper
tank top	vest top
cell (phone)	mobile (phone)
stroller	pram
eggplant	aubergine
truck	lorry
lawyer	barrister
zucchini	courgette
hood (car)	bonnet
trunk (car)	boot
realtor	estate agent
bangs (hair)	fringe
arugula	rocket
vest	waistcoat
shopping cart	trolley
underwear	pants
pants	trousers
flight attendand	air hostess
bathroom	loo/ toilet
chips	crisps
fries	chips
"to go"	"take away"