

British accents and dialects by region

British Accent	Region
RP* (Received Pronunciation)	London & South East England
Cockney*	London
Scouse	Liverpool (North West England)
Geordie	Newcastle (North East England)
Brummie*	Birmingham (West Midlands)
West Country English	South West England
Scottish	Scotland
Welsh	Wales
Northern Irish*	Northern Ireland



Accents and dialects of the British Isles

RECEIVED PRONUCIATION (RP)

Received Pronunciation (RP) is often referred to as “Standard English” the “Queen’s English” or “BBC English”. It has traditionally been associated with the middle and upper classes.

RP is considered to have the widest geographical distribution and the fewest regional peculiarities. It was originally the pronunciation of educated speakers in southern England and traditionally used in the public schools. It was also used at Oxford and Cambridge universities and adopted by many speakers elsewhere and widely used in broadcasting.

Speech sample:

Catherine, Princess of Wales <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qZiiLY3enGQ>

COCKNEY

Over the centuries, the cockney accent has become synonymous with working-class London, specifically associated with the East End of London.

The Cockney dialect also gave us rhyming slang, a humorous slang first used by cockneys in the east end of London and now understood widely in London and throughout Britain.

Invented in London in the 1840s by market traders, costermongers and street hawkers, it was probably first used as a language designed to disguise what was being said from passers-by.

Cockney rhyming slang is still in use today – the next time you visit London, keep your ears peeled for it!

Speech sample

Michael Caine <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBjp1oEZcwU>

SCOUSE (Liverpudlian)

The term Scouse refers to Liverpool English and an inhabitant of Liverpool is a Liverpudlian or Scouse(r). The Scouse accent is well-know throughout Britain and the world, mainly due to the Beatles! It is one of the most distinctive regional accents in England, with unique sound variations and a melody all of its own.

Speech sample

Paul O’Grady & Cilla Black <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GmD12063NTI>

GEORDIE (Newcastle-Upon-Tyne)

As the oldest English dialect still spoken, Geordie refers to the people and dialect of Newcastle-Upon-Tyne in Northeast England. It is one of the strongest and most distinctive accents in England. At its broadest, the dialect is very different from Standard English in terms of its pronunciation and some of the constructions and words that are used. Many Geordies say *divn’t knaa* for ‘don’t know’, for example, and talk about their *bairns* (‘children’).

Speech sample

Cheryl Cole <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uEFIB2Fw-b0>

BRUMMIE (Birmingham)

The Brummie dialect is spoken by many people in Birmingham, England, and some of its surrounding area.

The melody of Brummie is truly distinctive. It has a monotone nature with long stretches hitting the same note. But when Brummies stress a word, it tends to lengthen considerably, and this can be followed by sharp rises or falls in tone.

Speech sample

Ozzy Osbourne

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BZki6zZ91g0>

SCOTTISH

Scottish English is heavily influenced by the Gaelic language, which was, and still sometimes is, spoken in certain areas of Scotland, as well as Norse languages from Viking invaders.

Compared to standard English, the Scottish accent has a very different rhythm, giving it a distinct sound. Scots use the sound 'oo' instead of 'ow.' For example, 'house' sounds like 'hoose' and 'about' sounds like 'abooot.' Scots also pronounce 'eh' as 'ee' so you'll hear them say 'heed' instead of 'head.' Another interesting difference is that in standard English 'you' is used as a singular and plural personal pronoun. In the Scottish accent, 'yous' is used as a plural pronoun. For example, "Are *yous* okay?"

Speech sample

David Tennant

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KqI1IFQIBKY>

WEST COUNTRY

The West Country accent can be heard in South West England and extending to the Welsh border. Often, the letter 'r' is pronounced after vowels. Someone with a West Country accent would say 'mutherrr' instead of saying mother as 'muthah'.

Speech sample

Hagrid from Harry Potter

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0JiSQ0bv_qs

WELSH

Wales has its very own language and it is very different to English. In fact, the town with the longest name is in Wales. *Llanfairpwllgwyngyllgogerychwyrndrobwlllantysiliogogoch(!)*

When Welsh people speak English, their accent is instantly recognisable – they pronounce words like 'Wales' as *WEE-alls* unlike the English, who pronounce it *WAY-ells*.

Speech sample

Gareth Bale

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R4EAN9Nb6JM>

NORTHERN IRISH

The Northern Irish accent is quite a beautiful one, and a strong one too. The first thing you'll probably notice about Northern Irish is how many letters seem to be missing from words when people speak it. For example, 'Northern Irish' is pronounced more like 'Nor'n Ir'sh'! They have a very tight, rigid mouth when they say 'cow', 'now', or 'how' and this makes the sound shorter and less round than most other UK accents.

Speech sample

Kenneth Brannagh

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nGXhypC7HYs>
