

# Southern accent

Southern accent in American English

A little theory and a few examples

## A little theory

- The so-called „southern accent“ can be heard in 16 out of the 50 states in the USA
- It covers the south of the States, goes from Maryland through Florida all the way to Texas.
- Approximately 130 million people speak this accent, this figure also includes the American capital, Washington D.C.
- Origins of the southern accent can be traced to the first british colony in the US, Virginia

# Typical features of Southern

- People in Virginia, being the British colony, needed to establish their position on top of the society, so they used British RP to emulate their social and financial situation by using „posh“ British accent.
- Due to getting rich through trade of cotton, tobacco and sugar cane, the need for further differentiation materialized in the adoption of the way British aristocracy and top of society spoke
- In the beginning, the typical features of Southern accent were the drop of „R“ and elongation of the vowels.

## Further evolution

- This area was subjected to further changes due to increased human trafficking and immigration in the coming years, the wealth attracting immigrants and the rich upper class bringing in more and more slaves to work on the plantation.
- This had a huge impact on the accent and the way people talked.
- The French and Spanish had their colonies there, all the people brought in spoke to each other in pidgin and Creole, and specifically African nations influenced the southern accent quite a lot

# Types of Southern accent

- Atlantic

This accent is probably the one accent most people associate with being „Southern“. Made popular by movies such as Gone with the Wind, it is spoken in Maryland, Virginia, North and South Carolina and in Georgia.

- Famous (and infamous) people speaking this are South Carolina senator Lindsey Graham

(<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0xuzbJw1qr8>)

- Maryland accent (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1-MHVxLXvVQ>)

# Types of Southern accent

- Appalachian
- This variety covers Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, Georgia, Mississippi, Alabama.
- Phonological features include pronouncing the „r’s“ rather than dropping them, and a special feature of h-dropping.
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=03iwAY4KIIU&t=19s>

# Types of Southern Accent

- Missisipi Delta and Texan accents
- Missisipi – Johnny Cash, Britney Spears
- Texas – Mathew McConne
- Texas accents – Young Sheldon:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4iDDw2PpCC4>

# Features of Southern accent

- Southern lilt
- Southern accents slow down and elongate the vowel sounds, turning vowels turn into diphthongs.
- Bill → /bee yill/
- Pet → /pe yut/
- Cat → /ca yut/
- The tone of the vowel will rise then fall to make a classic Southern accent.
- R dropping
- Most Southern accents will drop the r's on most words.
- Mother → /mu thuh/





# More examples:

- Senator John Kennedy (Louisiana): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FAGusWzYAEw>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fGxsH6SgKYk>

southern way of pronouncing certain words

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M\\_NCzNSoE8A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M_NCzNSoE8A)

southern slang explained

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YJKnJrDm8mk>

# The Legend of Bagger Vance

- The movie, made by Robert Redford, has famous actors replicate the southern accent. The movie is set in Savannah, Georgia, and you will watch and hear an exchange between Matt Damon and Charlize Theron as Junuh and Adele, and also a clip when Charlize Theron as Adele speaks to the town's people's delegation:
  - 1: 11:35 – 14:35
  - 2: 1:07:40 -