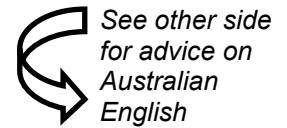


UNDERSTANDING ACCENTS



You will meet and work with people from all over the world at university and beyond, so it is important to expose yourself to many different accents and varieties of English to fully participate in conversations both in Australia and internationally.

Appreciate your accent

First, everyone has an accent, and no accent is 'better' than another. Accents are tied to identity, so even if you need to work on some aspects of pronunciation to make sure other people understand you better, it is important to value your own accent.

Accents are incredibly diverse. They can tell us a lot about the person speaking: for example their place of origin, class, age or educational background. The more you are exposed to particular accents the better you become at distinguishing their variations: for example, the "Scottish" accents spoken in Edinburgh are different to the ones spoken in Glasgow, and the "Chinese" accents from Beijing are different to the Hong Kong or Chengdu accents.

Listen up

Although the International Phonetic Alphabet can be useful to note the sounds rather than the spelling of words, it is very hard to capture different accents in writing. Learning to understand accents requires a lot of listening practice, so see our Survival Guide on Listening and Speaking in English for advice on improving your listening comprehension.

Practise different accents

Some people are skilled at using many different accents, and may even find their speech shifts naturally to mirror the dominant one in their environment. Actors need to know how to use different accents accurately, and you can find many YouTube videos with advice and examples of how to switch between accents.

Practising different accents can be fun—but be aware that 'putting on' a different accent can be seen as mocking people whose natural accent you are imitating.

Do your research

There are useful online databases of recordings of different accents. For example, try

- IDEA International Dialects of English Archive (dialectsarchive.com); and
- The Speech Accent Archive (accent.gmu.edu)

You might also find it useful to learn about the key characteristics of different languages to help you understand when those features are transferred into English. For example, Finnish speakers often find 'th' sounds [ð] and [θ] challenging, and [f] and [v] do not exist in Japanese.

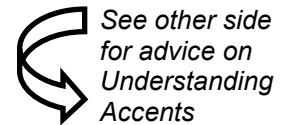
Ask for help

If you are speaking to someone whose accent you cannot fully understand, ask them for clarification. Everyone wants to be understood, and most people are happy to help their listeners follow the conversation.

"[Each accent is a] linguistic flower in the garden of English language flowers."
- Professor David Crystal



AUSTRALIAN ENGLISH



The English spoken in Australia has many distinctive features. Keep an ear out for

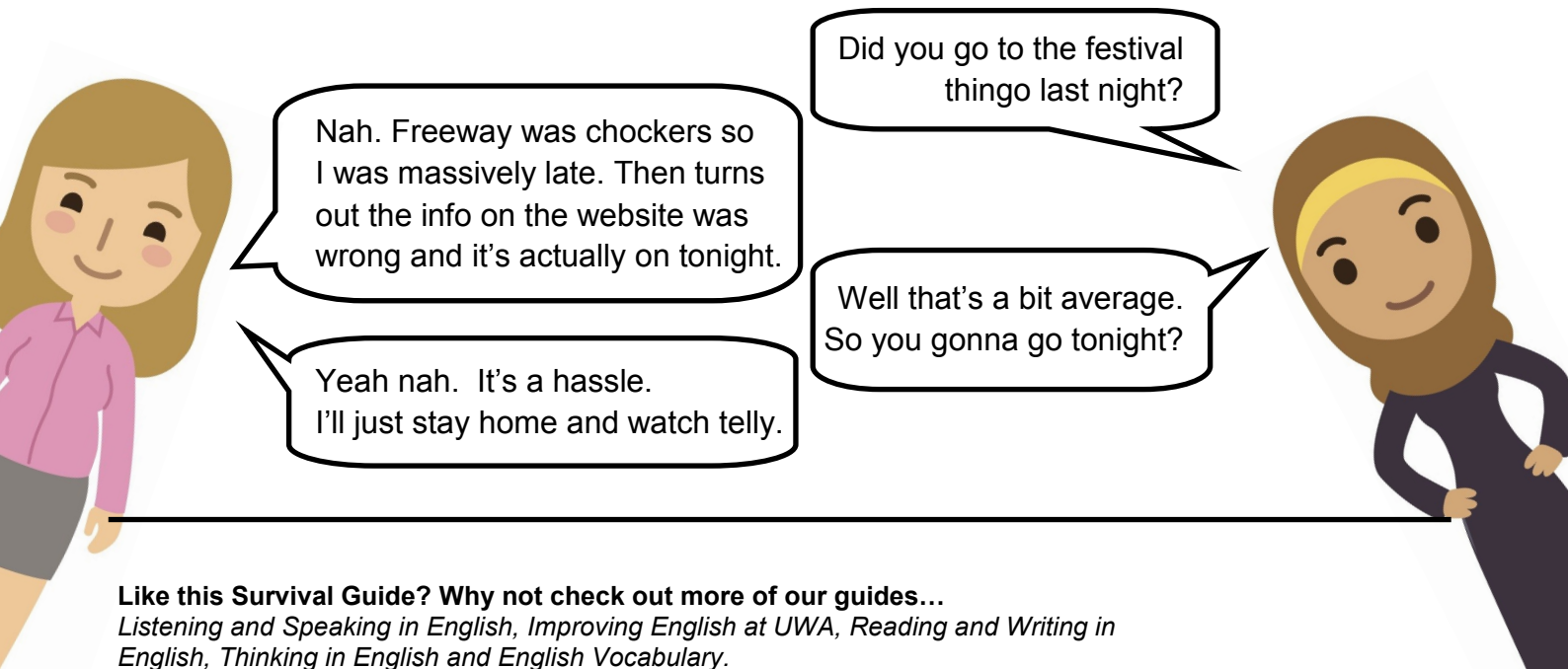
shortened words, often with an 'ie' or 'o' ending

common expressions, such as

chuck a u-ie	do a U-turn
flat out	busy
heaps	very, many
I reckon	I think, I agree
no worries	you're welcome
stoked	pleased, happy
veg out	relax

brekkie	breakfast
dunno	I don't know
iffy / dodgy / shoddy / shonky	questionable, unreliable
intro	introduction
sickie	sick day off work

You will learn a lot from context - so try the example conversation below!



Nah. Freeway was chockers so I was massively late. Then turns out the info on the website was wrong and it's actually on tonight.

Yeah nah. It's a hassle. I'll just stay home and watch telly.

Did you go to the festival thingo last night?

Well that's a bit average. So you gonna go tonight?

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