



# Accents and Dialects: How Language Changes

KS3 ENGLISH

Ages 11-14 ⌚ 3 min read

## What is an Accent?

An **accent** is the way someone **pronounces** words. It's about the sounds they make when they speak. Think about how people from different parts of the UK say the word "bath" — some say "bahth" and others say "bath" (rhyming with "cat"). Both groups are using the same word, but their accents make it sound different.

Think of it like different people playing the same song on a piano — the notes (words) are the same, but each person plays them with their own style and speed.

An accent changes which sounds you stress and how you shape your mouth. Someone from **Scotland** might roll their "R" sounds, while someone from **London** might drop them entirely. These are accent differences, not dialect differences.

## What is a Dialect?

A **dialect** is much bigger than an accent. A dialect includes your accent, BUT it also includes different **vocabulary** (different words) and **grammar** (different sentence structures). It's the whole way a group of people speaks.

For example, in **Northern England**, some people say "our kid" instead of "my brother." In **Scotland**, people might say "aye" instead of "yes." These aren't just pronunciation differences — they're completely different words. That's dialect.

Think of it like comparing two video game versions: an accent is just changing the background music's speed, but a dialect is changing the music, the characters' names, and even the rules of the game.

## Accent vs Dialect: The Easy Way to Remember

**An accent = pronunciation only.** It's how you say words.

**A dialect = pronunciation + vocabulary + grammar.** It's how you say words, which words you use, and how you put them together.

Someone might have a **Cornish accent** (they pronounce things in a Cornish way) but speak with **Standard English dialect** (using the same words and grammar as most English speakers). Or they might have both a **Cornish accent AND a Cornish dialect** (pronounced differently AND use different words).

Both accents and dialects are totally normal and natural. Every single person has an accent — even people who think they don't! Dialects help show where we're from and connect us to our communities. Being able to recognize the difference helps us understand language and respect how different people speak.