STANDARD BRITISH (Upper Class) Also known as Received Pronunciation

NOTE: Modern RP differs from Victorian Era to mid 20th Century RP. We will be focusing on the crisp, Victorian era Queen’s British.

PLACEMENT: The RP placement is right on the tip of the tongue with heavy emphasis on crisp lip movement for articulation. We call this “forward placement”. You should feel the sides of your cheeks pull forward and the lower jaw is fairly relaxed.

GENERAL: The RP British doesn’t use the same downward inflection on sentences the way American dialects do. RP British tends to stay in the same tone throughout the sentence and rise or lower in pitch on one or two words of importance. The most important word(s) in the sentence is stressed and the most important syllable in the most important word in a sentence is stressed; usually by lengthening the word and a rise in pitch. Conversely you can lengthen the word and drop the pitch. This will give you an authentic sound.

For example: I couldn’t BELIEVE she was the killer the WHOLE time.
You REALLY have no idea, do you?

The musicality of Cockney/Working Class has been somewhat stolen by Modern day RP speakers but they continue to be quite conservative with vocal inflection.

RP CONSONANTS
In general, your consonants must be crisp and vibrant, particularly in the middle and at the ends of words.

Non-Rhotic- ending and medial [r] becomes [ə]
RP is generally non-Rhotic, that is to say R is not pronounced in the middle of words or at the ends of words (unlike Standard American). There is a slight “feeling” of the R sound but it is not sounded. R IS sounded at the beginnings of words.
Pour, after, argue, her, over, where, park, for, more, whether, father, weird, clear, sure, surpass

The “R” hook [r]
RP and Working Class speakers add an R between a word ending in a vowel and a word beginning in a vowel (or vowel sound):
Mothe[r] and I, Idea[r] of it, solo[r] of, Joanna[r] and I, tea[r] and scones, draw[r]ing

[W] becomes [HW] - Especially for the Royals and people of education
All words in this era beginning WH are pronounced the same as the WH sound in WHISPER.
Whistle, wise, who, what, when, where, why, which, would, work, wheel, squint, quiet, equal, acquaintance
Medial & Final T
The medial and final T should be crisp and aspirated
*Settle, that, caught, prestige, accent, associate, greatly, lost, titillating, writing, caught, bottle*

R- Flip [ɾ]
The beginning or medial R before a vowel is lightly tapped or flipped. ONLY before a vowel sound.
*Read, red, arrow, begrudge, terrible, rocking horse, herring, miracle, far away, dreary*

Two Syllable Suffix changes to One Syllable: [ɛɚ I], and [ɔɚ I] = [rI]
The ary and ory endings move from American pronunciation of ARY and ORY to RP (ri), collapsing to one syllable: *ordinary - ordin(ri)*
*Exemplary, momentary, imaginary, necessary, satisfactory, secretary, laboratory, chemistry, history*

RP CONSONANT CHEAT SHEET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ending/Medial [r] = [ɹ]</th>
<th>[ɾ]</th>
<th>[W] = [HW]</th>
<th>[ɾ]</th>
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<tr>
<td>[ɛɚ I], and [ɔɚ I] = [rI]</td>
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RP VOWELS

[æ] becomes [a]—Broad A shift
*ask, dance, craft, command, castle, dance, pass, class, last, bath, France, rather, after, advantage, example, answer, banana*

Final [i] changes to [I]:
*Happy, really, coffee, navy, very, every, mostly, foggy, mighty, lovely, thorny, unfortunately, priority, democracy*

[əʊ] becomes [əʊə] more forward and rounded
The O sound is elongated and tends to begin with a slight schwa sound.
*go, throw, know, hello, below, spoken, romance, mobile, open, over, alone, grow, alone, home*

[ɔ] more forward and rounded = [ɔː]
Really allow your lips to pull your cheeks forward and throw the sound out of your mouth.
*Law, awful, what, caught, thought, saw, call, waltz, flawless, quarter, Santa Claus, laundry*

[ʊ] becomes [ɔ]
*not, honest, rotten, obvious, stop, swamp, wander, constant, John, holiday, nominate*
[u] becomes [ju]
    news, duty, stupid, Tuesday, endure, assume, lose, pursue, reproduce, amused, unique

[aɪ] lengthens to [ɑːɪ]
    high, try, why, mileage, flier, decide, pirate, timing, white, design, idealistic, Viking

RP VOWELS CHEAT SHEET

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QUIRKS OF RP

A note on AGAIN & BEEN: In RP, ca. 1930 and earlier, most native speakers used “bean” as the strong (stressed) form and “bin” as the weak (unstressed) form. 90% of speakers used BEAN 90% of the time.

"Again " in this era is pronounced – [agæn] as it rhymes with rain. The same rules apply to against.

OUR - is pronounced HOUR.
    Never the American ARE.

Body Suffix:
    American speakers pronounce BODY. In RP it often reduces to a sound like bdi, tight and compact. someBODY = sʌmbɔdi. This is not as true of RP speakers in modern times. It is true of RP speakers in the early 20th Century and prior to 20th Century and depends on whether the word is an operative in the sentence. Somebody, anybody, nobody, busybody, disemboby, everybody

Special British Pronunciations

Figure [flɡə] vitamin [vɪtəmɪn] tissue [tɹɪʃu] Schedule [ʃedʒUl] weekend [wɪkˈɛnd]

BBC: You can still hear some proper RP on the BBC but increasingly Speakers are from other regions and other places in the world. Be careful about making this your main source material.

MOVIES/TV

Keira Knightley - The Duchess, Pride and Predjudice, Atonement
Colin Firth—Bridget Jones’ Diary, Pride and Predjudice
Love Actually- Variety
Downton Abbey
Sherlock- (Sherlock/Mycroft)
Alan Rickman- Harry Potter movies
Finding Neverland
A Room With A View
Remains of the Day
Howard’s End - Any Hopkins movie where he is using his RP
Mary Poppins or any Julie Andrews movie
The Madness of King George
Enchanted April
Camelot/ Julia - Any Vanessa Redgrave film
Kenneth Branagh’s FRANKENSTEIN
Much Ado About Nothing - Emma Thompson/Kenneth Branagh
Olivier’s Hamlet, Richard III, Henry IV
Sense and Sensibility
The Ruling Class - Any Peter O’Toole he has beautiful speech and amazing diction.

Practice:
Shakespeare’s Sonnets

"My love is as a fever..."

My love is as a fever, longing still
For that which longer nurseth the disease;
Feeding on that which doth preserve the ill,
The uncertain sickly appetite to please.
My reason, the physician to my love,
Angry that his prescriptions are not kept,
Hath left me, and I desperate now approve
Desire is death, which physic did except.
Past cure I am, now reason is past care,
And frantic mad with evermore unrest;
My thoughts and my discourse as mad men’s are,
At random from the truth vainly express’d;
    For I have sworn thee fair and thought thee bright,
Who art as black as hell, as dark as night.

SONNET 29
When, in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes, I all alone beweep my outcast state
And trouble deaf heaven with my bootless cries And look upon myself and curse my fate,
Wishing me like to one more rich in hope, Featured like him, like him with friends possess’d, Desiring this man’s art and that man’s scope, With what I most enjoy contented least; Yet in these thoughts myself almost despising, Haply I think on thee, and then my state, Like to the lark at break of day arising From sullen earth, sings hymns at heaven's gate; For thy sweet love remember’d such wealth brings That then I scorn to change my state with kings.