

What follows is an introductory skills-based approach to speechwork for the actor. These skills can be applied to any circumstance in order to create a pronunciation pattern appropriate for any particular context. In laying out this approach, we have defined a set of guidelines designed to be challenged from time to time, by you, the user of this text. Here are our Principles (perhaps) or Precepts (possibly). Do you agree?

1. Everyone has an accent. No one's speech is "neutral" or "general."
2. There is no good or bad way to speak. There is only what is good (or bad) *for* a particular context. Speech itself has no inherent qualities that could be assessed as good or bad. You may *prefer* one accent or pattern to another, and that's fine. Having preferences is human.
3. All humans have preferences. Whether conscious or not, preferences can become prejudices against or in favor of a group of people if separated from our sense of fairness. At this point they become biases. Perhaps we can't ever fully free ourselves from our biases, but being aware of our biases is essential so as not to inadvertently weaponize them.
4. The only baseline "standard" our role as storytellers requires is being understood (unless obfuscation is the goal). But intelligibility is a moving mark based on your target audience. It is not one truth held by one person or persons (including the authors of this speech text!). Intelligibility is about communication, and communication is both giving and receiving. It is a relationship between speaker and listener. Whatever skills we deploy in our speech must be guided by the changing needs for communication within that relationship.
5. Speech training is an essential and deeply integrated layer of actor training and as such it is part of a complex and subtle developmental process. As with all parts of actor training the development of skills is not arrived at mechanically or by rote, but by cultivation and play, and by an incremental deepening of experience.
6. A skills-based approach to speech training invites the actor to explore all skills, not merely those that have been marked as socially preferred. Limiting the opportunity to play with the full range of possible speech sounds is impoverishing to the imagination. This work trains actors in the practice of expanding expressive territory through speech.
7. Even though this text is originally being written in English, the work within begins with an exploration of the fundamentals of human language. It represents a universal approach which can be applied to any spoken language. We hope to see this work taken up across languages and cultures, translated and continually reimagined as a panlingual approach.

**Your Three AAA's:** You have Autonomy, Agency, and the Ability to choose your level of engagement in this work. We will ask you to explore various inquiries, exercises, and experiments within this text designed to test the boundaries of your comfort. It's up to you to decide when you've hit a boundary you're not able or willing to cross. These boundaries may shift throughout the training process of an actor, and certainly throughout the lifetime of an actor. So, you may want to revisit a boundary from time to time that previously felt fixed or immovable. You may not agree with your past self's boundaries!

**All Bodies are Different:** The first anatomical image we introduced in this text a few pages ago is rather impressionistic. That was by design. We want you, the reader, to learn about your own anatomy free from judgement about what is good or right or correct. Seeing an anatomical image, and discovering that one's own anatomy may not align with said image, can tell a story that is not true. "I'm not like this image; therefore my body is not ideal or correct." **Not. True.** We must keep in mind that anatomical images represent an *average* of many bodies but *not* a standard or correct body. Remember this as we introduce more anatomical images. Your uniqueness is what we celebrate...not your conformity.