

## BASIC RULES FOR FORMAL ENGLISH DICTION

Many of us grew up singing all liturgical music in the original Greek. Now that English translations have been approved for our use, we must be mindful of our responsibility to pronounce the texts in such a way that our regional speech patterns are not apparent. Therefore, we must approach the English translation with some basic rules that will help our collective sound become more consistent and more beautiful, bringing forth the meaning of the words instead of the "American-ness" of our daily speech.

Please print and study this pronunciation guide and apply each of these rules to the texts we will sing next Sunday. Most important is the first: removing all American R's, replacing sounded R's with a flip (glory, spirit, etc.) or roll (risen, crucified, etc.) of the tongue.

Bring this handout with you so that we may refer to it as needed during our rehearsals. Thanks to all of you for your attention to these essential details!

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1. **Rolling or flipping R's** (governed by what follows silent letters (spelled not sounded) in same or adjoining words: where, there, hour, write, know, etc.)
  - a. always before a vowel ("praise", "reign", "glory", etc.)
  - b. never before a consonant ("Lord", "mercy", "courts," etc.)
  - c. not before a pause ("far...", "pasture...", "forever...", etc.)
2. **Unstressed syllables**
  - a. initial = ih ("delight", "rejoice", "before", "eternal", etc.)
  - b. final = schwa ("children", "angel", "presence", "nation", etc.), **the neutral vowel, made by simultaneously saying "eh" with the tongue and "oh" with the lips**
3. **Pronunciations of "the"**
  - a. before a consonant or a glide = schwa ("the Lord", "the sound", "the universe", "the one", etc.)
  - b. before a vowel = "ee" ("the angel", "the earth", "the other", "the hour" etc.)
4. **Preferred Alternatives to "uh"**
  - a. schwa (as in "the", "upon", "about", etc.)
  - b. "oh" (as in "love", "bud", "come", etc.)
5. **"Wh" combinations**
  - a. aspirated as "hw" ("what, where, when, which, why, while," etc.)
  - b. aspirate as "h" ("who")
6. **"Daniel Sitteth" rule**
  - a. use glide "ju" with the consonants "d", "n", "l", "s", "t", "th" ("duty, new, lute, suitor, tune, enthusiasm" also "future, fortune, pasture," etc.)
7. **Raised and lowered vowels**
  - a. They, Their (closed "ay"), not There (open "eh")
  - b. You, Your (closed "oo"), not Yore (open "oh")
  - c. We, We'll (closed "ee"), not Will (open "ih")