



‘Pronounce Your Ts!’

Does How Old You See Yourself Affect Your Ts?

When you say:

“ THE BEER HERE
TASTES LIKE WATER OUT
THE WEAR ”

how do you say ‘water’? What does the ‘T’ sound like?

You might have been told at some point in your life to ‘say your ‘T’s properly’ or ‘not drop your ‘T’s’, but there are actually many different ways to say ‘T’ in English, and the Geordie accent is a great example of the variation possible. These include ‘proper T’ (like wor-ter) - like it would be said on the news - and other types that are ‘not standard’ (like wa’er). In our study, 77% of Geordies interviewed actually used the non-standard variant - meaning almost 4 in 5 people don’t pronounce their ‘T’s ‘properly’!

Lots of research has shown that speakers use non-standard pronunciations when they are younger and older, but in middle age, they use standard pronunciations.

It is thought that this is to try and show competence in the work-place, assert power and make a good impression. However, the amount of years that have passed since you were born are not the be all and end all. There are other measurements of age which are based on how old you look, feel, act and your interests - this is called Subjective Age. If you want to, you can work out your subjective age here. (You may need a calculator though.)

For each of the categories below, put the midpoints of the decade you think applies to you, e.g. 85, 75, 65, 55 etc. You can fill in your answers in the right hand boxes.

Take each of your answers, add them together and divide the total by 4 and that will give you your subjective age.

How old do you think you look ?	
How old do you feel ?	
How old do you act ?	
What age category are your interests in?	

Our study on Tyneside English showed that people who feel younger actually act younger, too, even regarding how they speak! So, people with a younger subjective age - under 55 - are slightly more likely to use the 'proper' 'T', for example by saying wor-ter rather than wa'er, regardless of how old they actually are.

Now that you have worked out your subjective age, you can see whether you would be more likely to use the 'proper' 'T' (wor-ter) or the non-standard 'T' (wa'er).

Our study shows that age really is just a number and that your age doesn't determine how you act or speak - you can decide that.

There are lots of other factors which affect how you speak, too. Research suggests that your contact with younger people, the size and diversity of your social group, and whether you are socially active can all affect how you pronounce your 'T's. This could certainly be useful in understanding how your lifestyle affects your behaviour, and once again, that age is just a number!