Pronouncing the American /r/

1. Say a prolonged aaaaa sound.
2. As you are making the aaaaa sound, slowly fatten and raise the middle of your tongue. Do not touch any part of your mouth with the tip of your tongue.
3. Repeat, and this time, close your mouth halfway and slightly round your lips.
4. Contrast this sound with a flap sound in pudding, in which the tongue touches the ridge behind your teeth. Practice these pairs:

Flap /r/

putting purring

leading leering

heating hearing

skating scaring

Pronouncing the /r/ at the end of words:

For the final /r/, pull your tongue back, with the tip only slightly curled back. Contrast with words that end in an ah sound:

ah /r/

comma newcomer

cheetah cheater

Alaska I’ll ask her

calla (lily) caller

drama drummer

era error

media meteor

papa popper

ska scar

[Prepared by Lisa Pontoppidan. Source: Teaching American English Pronunciation, Oxford 1992]