



by QUYNHNGUYEN

## 12 Tips on How to Improve Your English Speaking Skills

English is the world's *lingua franca*, a common language that people with different native languages can use to communicate.

Thanks to English, people with completely different native languages—maybe Hindi, French and Japanese—can sit down and have a conversation together.

English now spans across countries and cultures, and [the ability to speak it well](#) will open many doors for your career and social life.

[The more fluent you are in English](#), the more interesting, exciting and insightful conversations you can have.

It enables life-enriching experiences like traveling, studying and working abroad, not only in the US but also many other countries where English is widely spoken.

The world is your oyster (the world is yours).

The other good news is that you can [improve English speaking skills without a classroom partner](#) or stressful lessons. It's totally possible to [have fun and master speaking a language at the same time](#).

[Pronouncing the words correctly](#) is the key to eloquence, but it is not everything. This article will take you beyond the foundational aspects to [reach communicative competence](#).

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# How to Improve Your English-Speaking Skills

## Build a Strong Foundation

In order to express yourself eloquently in English, you need a wide variety of vocabulary and the correct pronunciation.

### 1. Expand your vocabulary

#### Learn New Words Every Day

Gleaning new words day in, day out is a good way to widen your vocabulary. Commit to a suitable target: it can be three daily words or it can be ten daily words.

Even if you only have time to learn one new word per day, it is still worth trying. By learning one word every day, after one year you will have learned 365 new English words.

Write the number down to remind yourself frequently. If you have a learning partner, share it with her so that she can check on your progress.

Some good resources for words are the news, songs and TV shows, depending on your daily habits. If you love listening to music, pay attention to the lyrics and take note of the words you do not know. [Songs often contain a lot of useful vocabulary](#), phrases and expressions, therefore, they are great for learning English. You can do the same thing with [FluentU videos](#).

## Learn Words in Phrases and Chunks

It is important that you learn words in groups. For example, you refer to beverages as *a glass of wine*, *a pint of beer*, *a cup of tea*, *a pot of coffee*, etc. It is better to learn those phrases than merely *wine*, *beer*, *tea* and so on.

You can also benefit from learning words that are related. The moon has four phases during a lunar month: crescent, gibbous, waxing and waning. It is more efficient to learn all four words at the same time.

## 2. Improve your pronunciation

You might know a lot of words, but if you fail to say them correctly, you will not be understood. That seems like a waste of the time spent on remembering words, right?

When using online dictionaries such as [Macmillan](#) and [Merriam-Webster](#), make use of the little speaker symbol to check the pronunciation of any word that you are not sure about. There are English pronunciation tutorials on YouTube or podcasts like [English Pronunciation Pod](#) or [American English Pronunciation](#) to teach you the many aspects of American English pronunciation.

When you are ready for something more challenging, try out tongue twisters. Some examples are available [here](#). Personally, I love the [Fork handles](#) sketch from the show “The Two Ronnies.” It might not be a typical example of everyday conversation, but it shows you the richness of spoken English. Besides, you will have a good laugh.

## 3. Learn the natural flow of English

Being able to say individual words correctly is great, but the secret of [speaking fluently in English](#) lies in the flow of sentences. Whenever you read a piece of poetry, listen to a melodic song or watch a hilarious sitcom, pay attention to the following:

- **Linking.** Notice how native speakers link words together: joining two sounds, making a sound to disappear or changing a sound for a better flow.
- **Contractions.** Contractions are shortened forms of two words. For example:
  - I + am = **I'm**
  - he + will = **he'll**
  - they + have = **they've**
  - do + not = **don't**
- **Stress.** There are stressed syllables in a word and stressed words in a sentence.
- **Rhythm.** The rhythm is the overall result of stress, contractions and linking. It is the ups and downs, the musical feature of English.

## 4. Build English speaking confidence

One of the biggest barriers to developing English speaking skills is confidence. It is certainly something that all language learners have difficulty with and one of the best ways to overcome this is to get out there and practice.

If you think you've got what it takes, then get out there and practice English with strangers!

That's right, by following the tips in the video, you'll be able to focus on a sometimes forgotten component of language learning: confidence! After a while, you'll completely rid yourself of any English speaking fear building a strong foundation in the language.

...versation in English (with new people



For more tips and strategies just like the one below, be sure to subscribe to the [FluentU English channel](#).

## Techniques to Improve English Speaking Skills

Now that you have a strong foundation, you can apply some techniques to hone (improve) your English speaking skills.

### 5. Speech shadowing

In a nutshell, this technique is about imitation. You listen to how a native speaker says something and try to copy it.

- **Pick your favorite video with subtitles.** Make sure that it is something you enjoy watching because you will...
- **Listen to it many times.** Listen to the video once and read the subtitles to get a good grasp of the general content and flow. While you are playing it again, complete the next step.
- **Imitate the narrator sentence by sentence.** Play. Listen. Pause. Speak. Record (optional). Copy the speech pattern as best as you can. If you choose to record your practice, you can compare yours and the original. Or else, just listen to your own sound and be critical of the difference or similarity. Repeat this step until the end of the video.

## 6. Self-talk

Talk to yourself in English loudly. It can be anything from a suggestion like, *“Shall we go get a glass of water?”* or a reminder, *“I need to do a load of laundry today.”*

Alternatively, pick up a book and read a couple of pages out loud. This exercise might slow down your reading, but it will speed up your speaking skills.

You can also record yourself, listen to the recording and watch out for any wrong pronunciations. If it is possible, ask for feedback from a native speaker.

## 7. Think in English

If you already think in English, it takes less time to produce or respond in everyday conversations. No translation needed!

A good way to start rethinking is to keep a diary where you express your daily thoughts in English. It does not have to be perfect, it is more about getting out thoughts in English with less and less effort.

## 8. Retell a story in English

Take the challenge a step further by retelling a story. You retrace other people's line of thoughts in your own words.

I would start with a familiar story from your culture. Your translation needs to convey not only the meaning of words but all rhetorical and cultural nuances.

Alternatively, you can choose different words to retell a simple story in English. Start from the basics, reading something like a fairy tale or a fable. Either way will be beneficial to your English communication skills.

## Frequently Practice to Improve Your English Speaking Skills

Practice makes perfect, so do speak English in plenty. Some people think that they do not have the

opportunity to practice speaking because they do not live in the US or another English-speaking country. They might also be discouraged because English is not used at their workplace, or they do not know any native speakers.

There is some validity in those excuses, but do not let them hinder your learning. Thanks to the growth of globalization and technology, you have more chances than ever to practice speaking English. You'll find many ideas below.

## 9. Participate in public speaking events

Big universities, theaters and culture societies organize events like open debates, spoken word readings and improvised storytelling gatherings. These are places where you can come and mingle with like-minded people and practice speaking English.

Many cities are now hosting [TED](#) or [TEDx](#) talks where you can register to participate and share your innovative ideas. Check the events page of your local university to see if there are any available. It might be a nerve-racking experience, but it would be great for your English!

## 10. Go to language cafes

If public speaking terrifies you (and I know it does for many), you can opt for language cafes. Those cafes create a friendly and relaxing atmosphere for people who want to practice and exchange languages.

You can find language cafes through local universities or the [Meetup](#) groups available in your cities.

## 11. Using apps

Another option is to use an app to talk to native speakers online, in the comfort of your own home. Some popular apps are [HelloTalk](#) and [Tandem](#). Basically, you register for an account, introduce yourself, your native language and your hobbies. The app will find you some matches—the people who speak English and want to practice the language you know

well. All you need to do is to press a few buttons and start talking.

## 12. Chat with Siri

I find chatting with Siri is a great way to force myself to speak more clearly. As Siri is a machine, you cannot rely on environmental clues and facial gestures to get your ideas across. Your words are the only tool you have to make yourself understood. Thus, you need to speak as clearly and precisely as you could.

Another plus point of using Siri is that she is always available (as long as your phone is charged and connected to a WiFi network). Just press the home button and start asking questions.

If you own an Android smartphone, you can practice speaking with [Google Now](#).

So, off you go! Choose your preferred method to expand your vocabulary, correct your pronunciation, and boost your English speaking with the methods that are right for you. Do not forget to practice as much as possible.

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