

Recommended Resources for Students & Alumni

OUR GOALS FOR THIS LIST OF RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

At English Now!, we want to help you become better at learning, learn faster, and use English well. We hope this list of resources will be helpful in your studies and empower you to become a better English language learner. This list is a work in progress, as new Internet resources are constantly being developed. Please tell your instructor about your suggestions about what to add to this list, or email your suggestions to us at info@english-now.com.

INTERNET RESOURCES: GENERAL ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING SUPPORT

Many of these websites are for English speakers generally, as well as for English language learners. We have selected these websites because they are well-organized, well-edited, engaging, and offer content on many topics. These websites are frequently updated, and you can use apps to access them on a computer, laptop, smartphone, or other device.

Check out the following:

- <http://www.biography.com/> *Biography.com*: One good way to learn about a society is through biographies of its more famous citizens. This website presents biographical documentaries about famous people, mostly Americans.
- <http://www.npr.org/> *National Public Radio* – National Public Radio (“NPR”) is an American English nationwide radio broadcast of news, interviews, and talk shows. Look under Programs for News and Conversations shows, including “The Diane Rehm Show”, “Morning Edition” or “All Things Considered”. Visit the Storytelling and Humor programs to access Storycorps, personal stories told by typical Americans. Transcripts are available for The Diane Rehm Show and Storycorps. Download the NPR app for iOS or Android, for better access. And from the website you can listen to 88.5 FM WAMU, live Washington, DC radio from NPR, from wherever you are in the world.
- <http://www.ted.com/> *Ted: Ideas Worth Spreading*: TED is a fantastic collection of short video speeches on society, politics, economics, culture, and the arts. TED talks are delivered around the world at conferences and workshops. They are great examples of public speaking. TED talks are usually 15-20 minutes in length. TEDx talks are usually shorter, five to 10 minutes. Many talks have transcripts. Search the site by topic, and enjoy.
- <http://tedxesl.com/> *Tedxesl*: A small number of TED talks have been prepared for use in English language learning classrooms. Our teachers may use these in the classroom, and you may also view and listen to them and view “lesson plans,” which include notes on target vocabulary.
- <http://smithsonianeducation.org/> *Smithsonian Museums Online Exhibits* Watch videos and read about American art and history. Smithsonian American Art Museum's online exhibitions complement and extend the museum's gallery and traveling shows.
- <http://learningenglish.voanews.com/> *Voice of America (VOA)*: VOA Programs are especially designed for English language learners. Programs include “Learn With the News”, Learning English TV”, and “English in a Minute”. Programs are famous all over the world for language learners. They introduce learners to American society, politics, and culture, and offer an American perspective of the world.

INTERNET, RADIO, and PRINT RESOURCES: FOCUS ON SPECIFIC SKILLS AREAS

Listening

The general resources listed above are great for listening practice. In addition, we suggest the following:

- <http://www.esl-lab.com/> *Listening Lab*: This website is a well-organized website provides listening samples and exercise at all levels of English proficiency
- www.eslpod.com *English as a Second Language Podcast*: ESL podcasts with comprehension exercises. Speech is slow-paced so this site is good for all levels. Option to pay for a subscription for access to transcripts and more exercises.
- betteratenglish.com *Better at English*: offers authentic dialogues with transcripts - great for intermediate to advanced.
- <http://www.wtop.com/> *D.C. General Interest Radio – 103.5 FM WTOP*: General news/weather/traffic/talk show radio. Listen online or listen on your radio.
- <http://espn.go.com/espnradio/> *Sports Radio – 980AM ESPN Radio*: ESPN is the main source of sports news and sports talk shows in the United States.

Reading

Improving your reading comprehension, and your reading speed, takes time. Reading is a skill area that is important to everyone and especially to those that want to work or study in English. Also, reading is the best way to improve your vocabulary. We recommend the following for regular reading practice:

- <http://www.newsforyouonline.com/index.asp> *News for You*: This is a weekly newspaper designed for English language learners. This is a good resource for students at the High Beginner to Intermediate levels. Available at English Now!'s reception area, you can subscribe yourself after you return to your home country.
- <http://www.usatoday.com/> *USA Today*: General national daily newspaper with short articles, suitable for Intermediate to High Intermediate levels, and easier than the Washington Post and New York Times, though not as important as those newspapers in the public discourse.
- <http://www.washingtonpost.com/> *Washington Post*: Washington's top newspaper. General local daily newspaper with great coverage of politics, suitable for High Intermediate and Advanced level students.
- <http://www.nytimes.com/> *The New York Times*: Considered the top U.S. daily paper, suitable for High Intermediate and Advanced level students. Limited number of articles available for free on the NY Times website.
- *Express*: Free local weekly newspaper with news about politics, sports, and celebrities. Short articles for Intermediate level students and up. Available at metro stations and bus stops.

Pronunciation

- <http://pronuncian.com/> *Pronuncian.com* has videos of pronunciation, good minimal pair practice for vowels and consonants, explanations, podcasts, and more.
- <http://www.spokenskills.com/student-activities.cfm> *Spoken Skills* allows students to hear phrases and record themselves while repeating the phrases.
- <http://www.manythings.org/pp/> *Many Things* has practice quizzes organized by specific minimal pairs. There is also a section on telling jokes. You can read the jokes and listen to an audio file, then practice saying them yourself.
- *English Pronunciation Made Simple*: The most popular pronunciation textbook amongst teachers, this well-organized book may provide some useful exercises for work outside of class. Ask your teacher or at our reception desk.

Grammar & Writing

We include grammar with writing, because good writing requires good organization and accurate grammar. Consider supplementing your work on grammar, including verb tenses, as part of your effort to become a better writer.

- <http://www.myenglishpages.com/> *My English Pages*- Grammar, Reading, Speaking, Listening, Reading and Writing explanations and exercises for all levels. Songs and song lyrics are also available for listening and practice.
- <http://www.englisch-hilfen.de/en/> *Learning English Online* This Dutch website has very good grammar exercises and explanations for students of all levels.
- <http://www.eslcafe.com/grammar.html> *Dave's ESL Café* Good grammar and vocabulary explanations, including “confusing words” such as “get”, “bring”, and “take”. Quizzes on a variety of topics, including American History.
- <http://www.usingenglish.com/quizzes/> *Using English*: Review grammar concepts and quiz yourself with the online exercises.
- <http://www.englishpage.com/> *Englishpage.com* offers free English lessons with English grammar and vocabulary exercises online.
- <http://grammar.ccc.commnet.edu/grammar/> *Guide to Grammar and Writing*: This website explains general grammatical concepts and tips/explanations for writing well in English.
- <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/> *Online Writing Lab*: This website, published by Purdue University, provides useful writing and grammar modules and instruction.
- <https://www.edx.org> *EdX Program on College Writing*: EdX is a collaboration between Harvard University and MIT and presents college-level course materials online. There is class on College Writing authored by a University of California-Berkeley professor, who usually teaches ESL classes. “College Writing” is offered in a set of five-week modules, year-round. Enrollment is free, and you benefit from short video clips of the professor and from peer review of your assignments. Visit the website and search for “College Writing”.
- *Understanding English Grammar*: This grammar textbook is available in three levels, with supplemental exercises, and is a great reference for your continued language study. Ask your instructor or at our reception desk for information.

- ***English Grammar in Use & Advanced Grammar in Use:*** These grammar textbooks are available in two levels, with supplemental exercises, and are another great reference for continued language study.

Speaking

The best way to improve your spoken English is to speak! Our small classes are great for encouraging students to speak more freely. We recommend the following to focus on your spoken English proficiency:

- **<http://www.procon.org> Take Sides in a Debate:** Speaking often depends on the topic. This website has great summary overviews of major social, political, and cultural issues. Prepare to talk about the issues of the day!
- ***Meet Other Students:*** One of the most important drivers of success while you are here in classes is meeting other students and practicing your English. Join another class for a lunchtime talk or a break to meet more people with whom you can speak English!
- ***English Now! Friday Outings:*** Every Friday, we take a group of our students into Washington, DC to visit museums, monuments, and other tourist destinations. These outings are great opportunities to meet other students and speak English!
- ***Bethesda Library Conversation Club:*** While you are here in the area, there is an informal English-language conversation club that meets seasonally September through May, at the Bethesda Library located on Arlington Road. Typically this club meets on Wednesday and Thursday afternoons. This is a great way to supplement your work on speaking.
- ***English Now! Hybrid Programs:*** Finally, we would be very happy to help you continue working on spoken English by meeting with you online. We consider these “hybrid” lessons, in other words a mix of face-to-face and online studies, because we think these lessons work best with students that we know, that have studied with us face-to-face. Talk to our office staff or email us at info@english-now.com if you are interested in trying these lessons.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES & TEST PREPARATION

American Culture & Society

Our students come from many, many different countries, and we love sharing American culture through discussions in our classes as well as through the resources described below. Several resources are available for students at the school, which we are sure you will find useful.

- **<http://www.interchangeinstitute.org/> The Interchange Institute:** *Newcomers' Almanac:* English Now! has a relationship with a Boston-based organization called The Interchange Institute that publishes a monthly newsletter called *Newcomers' Almanac*. This newsletter is about American culture and society. We strongly recommend this newsletter, which is appropriate for Intermediate level students and above, as a helpful part of your American experience. We distribute this newsletter each month to many students at the school, and back issues are available at our front desk.
- ***The Interchange Institute: Hello USA! & Understanding American Schools:*** These are two books, also published by The Interchange Institute, that provide a good introduction to the US generally and to American schools. Available for reference at our reception desk.
- ***Programs on U.S. Education:*** Inspired in part by the Interchange Institute, we have developed programs on the U.S. education system that we have delivered at the school to students with children in public schools. These programs are designed to help families better understand some of the unique aspects of the American education system. We are also

willing to deliver these programs for community organizations. Ask our staff for more information, if you are interested.

TOEFL and Other Test Preparation

We are often asked about the TOEFL and other tests. Many students want to study at the university level in the United States, and we are happy to help you understand the requirements for TOEFL or other tests. We suggest the following, as ways to better understand these tests:

- <http://www.ets.org/toefl> *Learn About the Test Online:* ETS, which publishes and administers the TOEFL, has a great website, with many resources.
- http://www.ets.org/toefl/ibt/register/centers_dates *Where is the Test Offered?:* The TOEFL test is offered frequently, at many locations, often at colleges or universities in the Washington, DC area, and around the world. For information about locations and dates, in DC or overseas, visit the ETS TOEFL website.
- *Other Tests:* Please also email us for more information about other tests. We are happy to help our students or alumni understand how to achieve their objectives as they prepare to apply to universities or be certified in their professional field.

Vocabulary & Idioms

Finally, vocabulary is often a principal driver of success in TOEFL and other tests. We offer these recommendations:

- <http://dictionary.com/> Use *Dictionary.com* to look up words and hear them pronounced correctly. You can find English to English definitions, synonyms and antonyms.
- <http://www.idiomconnection.com/> *Idiom Connection:* This well-designed website lists common idioms alphabetically and by topic.

Thank you for your interest in these resources. We hope that this is helpful and that you can become a better English language learner by considering these resources. We also ask if you can offer us other recommendations, if you know great, high-quality resources that are not on this list. Talk to your instructor, or email us at info@english-now.com with your suggestions.

We wish you well in your continued studies and hope that we can help you communicate more effectively in English!