**How to Think in English in 6 Simple Steps**

**1. Think in single words**

**When:**When your mind is clear and you’re not busy, one to two times a day.

**How:**[If you’re just starting to learn English](https://www.fluentu.com/english/blog/english-writing-tips/), don’t worry—it’s never too early to start thinking in English. You can begin as soon as you know even a small number of vocabulary words.

Start by thinking in single words. You might not be able to make important decisions in English yet, but you can notice your surroundings in English by thinking the names of objects that you see, or actions that you do. When you wake up in the morning you can think “Good morning!” And when you’re going to sleep at night you can think, “Long day. Tired. Happy. Good night!”

When you’re just starting, you might find it hard to remember to think in English. Here are some tricks you can use to remind yourself to think in English once or twice a day:

* **Use your phone.** Change your phone’s lock screen to say “Think in English!” This way every time you look at your phone, you get a reminder.
* **Turn it into a game.** Give yourself points every time you remember to think in English for five minutes. Once you reach a certain number of points, you can give yourself a reward!
* **Leave notes around the house.** For example, leave a note on your bathroom mirror with words that you would use in a bathroom. This reminds you to do your daily English thinking, and gives you a group of vocabulary words you can use.

With just these small steps, you’ll make it easier for you to think in English as you learn more words. The more you grow your skills, the more you can add to your thoughts, and soon you’ll be thinking in full sentences.

**2. Narrate your day**

**When:**When your mind is clear and you’re not busy, one to two times a day.

**How:**A narrator is someone who tells or reads the story. In books, the narrator is the part without dialogue, which describes what’s happening. Many movies—especially documentaries—use narrators to explain certain parts. Now you get to pretend to be the narrator in your life, as if your life were a movie!

Narrate your own day-to-day life as you go through it. You can do this in your own voice, or pretend someone else is narrating your life, like legendary narrators [Morgan Freeman](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ch5MEJk5ZCQ) or [James Earl Jones](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NykmXl24qcc).

Your daily life narration might sound something like this: “It’s morning. She wakes up and rubs her eyes, preparing to face the day. She yawns as she makes herself a cup of coffee, and wonders what she should wear today.”

You can speak about yourself in the third person (“he/she”) or use the first person (“I”). You can describe everything from what you’re doing to how you look or what you think. This will get you lots of practice with using commonly used words, as well as speaking in full, correct sentences.

**3. Make up conversations**

**When:**When you’re alone and not busy, once a day.

**How:**Of course, when you speak to other people you don’t just tell them about your day. Conversations come in many different topics, so you’ll want to practice conversations as well.

And to practice, all you have to do is make some up!

Choose a topic and pretend you’re speaking to someone about it. [If you’re getting ready for an interview](https://www.fluentu.com/english/blog/english-job-interview-questions/), you can pretend to be at the interview. If you’re just trying to learn a new list of vocabulary words, you can ask yourself questions about the words. Any topic is fine! If you’re stuck, you can find a huge list of conversation topics [here](http://www.conversationstarters.com/101.htm).

For example, if you’re [planning to go to a restaurant](https://www.fluentu.com/english/blog/english-restaurant-vocabulary/) soon you can practice a conversation with the waiter. Think of both the waiter’s parts and yours. Your conversation might look something like this:

Waiter: “Hello, and welcome to our restaurant. Do you know what you’ll be ordering?”

You: “I’m not sure yet. What do you recommend?”

Waiter: “If you like seafood, our fish of the day is fantastic.”

You: “Great, I’ll have that, then.”

You can try the conversation in different ways, and seeing how differently it turns out each time.

Since you’re practicing in your head, you can focus better on the topic—instead of being distracted by pronunciation or fear of speaking to an actual person. You can also practice anywhere.

We recommend practicing out loud and with a partner after you’ve done some pretend conversations in your head, once you’re more comfortable with the topics and the details. This way you can be confident in what you’re going to say—and how you’re going to say it.

**4. Get creative**

**When:**Every time you don’t know how to say something in English.

**How:**So you’re sitting in your car and practicing your English. That’s great! But what do you do when you can’t think of how to say a word? Instead of interrupting a conversation to pull out a dictionary app, it’s time to get creative.

There’s always more than one way to express something. Even if you don’t know a word, you can get your idea across by thinking creatively and using other words.

For example, if you’re trying to explain to someone that you lost your key, but can’t remember the word “key,” you can tell them instead that “I can’t open my door because it’s locked,” or “I can’t get into my house, I lost the thing you use to unlock the door.”

Both sentences don’t use the word “key,” but they’re both clear enough to be understood.

So if you get stuck while thinking in English, don’t cheat and use your native language. Instead, think of a way around the word. This will be a huge help to you when you’re having an actual conversation and can’t remember a word.

Some ways to describe a word you can’t remember are:

* It’s the opposite of…
* It’s similar to…
* It’s a place where…
* It’s something you use to…
* It’s an action you do when…

Here are a few more examples: If you can’t remember the word “garage,” you could say it’s “the place where you park your car at home.” If you can’t recall how to say “excited,” try saying that it’s “when you’re really happy, the opposite of being bored.”

To strengthen your skills in creative speaking, you can try playing some fun games with your friends or a speaking partner. The games [Taboo](http://www.amazon.com/Hasbro-A4626-Taboo-Board-Game/dp/B00D4NJSBW?tag=fluentu-20" \t "_blank) and [Catch Phrase](http://www.amazon.com/Hasbro-A4625-Electronic-Catchphrase-Game/dp/B00D4NJS9O?tag=fluentu-20) challenge you to say things without using specific words. You can play your own variation on the games with your speaking partner by making a list of words you often forget. Then, try to get your partner to guess what word you’re thinking of without actually using the word.

**5. Build your vocabulary**

**When:**Every time you think in English.

**How:**You know that word you couldn’t remember earlier? (The words you don’t know, which cause you to get creative in #4.) As soon as you can, write down the “definition” in English or the word in your native language. Carry around a little book or use a note app on your phone. Every time you can’t think of a word (or don’t know a word) in English, write it down. At the end of the day, [look up these words in English](https://www.fluentu.com/english/blog/best-english-dictionary-app/) and write them down. This will help you fill in the gaps in your vocabulary.

Now that you have a long list of new words, what can you do with them? The first step is to use them in conversations (and your thoughts). A good way to do this is by grouping the words into chunks. Choose a group of around five words every morning, and use them throughout the day. This will help you remember them in the long run.

Something else you can do with your growing vocabulary list is move them to the digital world. [Wordnik](https://www.wordnik.com/" \t "_blank) is a website where you can look up a word and see real examples of it being used. You can also make a list of words here. Add your new words and learn how to use them. As you *internalize* these new words you can move from your “vocabulary” list to a “learned words” list.

The [Dictionary](http://www.dictionary.com/) website (and apps) also lets you add words to a list of favorites, as does the [Vocabulary](https://www.vocabulary.com/) website. Use these websites and lists!

**6. Use an English to English dictionary**

**When:**Every time you look up a word.

**How:**When you feel more comfortable thinking in English, make sure to do this in your daily life whenever possible. This includes looking up words in an English to English dictionary (with definitions in English). The less you translate, the easier it will become to just think and speak in English.

Once you make the change, you might be tempted to go back to your English to native language dictionary. Don’t do it! In fact, delete all your current dictionary apps and leave only a good English to English dictionary app (or two).

At first you might find that English dictionaries use words you don’t know to define other words you don’t know. Don’t let this frustrate you. Instead, choose a good dictionary app or website that’s meant for English learners or children. These use simpler language to explain words. Two excellent learner dictionaries are [Vocabulary](https://www.vocabulary.com/) and the [Merriam-Webster Learner’s Dictionary](http://learnersdictionary.com/).

There are many other ways you can help your brain switch to thinking in English. For example, you can change the language on your apps, phone and social media to English. But start with these six steps, and it will only get easier to think in English!

And don’t forget to start making decisions in English. Remember, you’ll be making *better* decisions this way. It’s scientifically proven!