

Phrases and pauses

Reading aloud

A

When you listen to English, perhaps you think it's difficult to understand because it's too fast. And perhaps you would like to speak faster. But when people speak English – or any other language – they don't speak fast and non-stop. They speak in short phrases, and they stop, or pause, between the phrases.

B

First, read this story, and make sure you understand it.

Lots of people get arrested for dangerous driving, of course. But how old is the oldest? Who's the world record holder? Well, I read about a man who was a hundred and four! He went through red lights, crashed into parked cars and drove along the pavement. And how old was his car? Only thirty.

C29a

Now listen to the story, reading at the same time, and notice the pauses between the lines.

Lots of people get arrested for dangerous driving,
of course.
But how old is the oldest?
Who's the world record holder?
Well,
I read about a man
who was a hundred and four!
He went through red lights,
crashed into parked cars
and drove along the pavement.
And how old was his car?
Only thirty.



C29b

It's OK – or even better – to pause more often, because it gives you more time to think of what to say next, and it makes listening easier. Listen to this version – the words are the same, but there are more pauses.

Lots of people
get arrested
for dangerous driving,
of course.
But
how old
is the oldest?
Who's the world record holder?
Well,
I read about a man
who was
a hundred and four!
He went through red lights,
crashed into parked cars
and drove along the pavement.
And how old was his car?
Only thirty.

C29b

It's also important to stress the most important words. Listen again, and this time notice the stress on the words in bold.

Lots of people
get **arrested**
for **dangerous driving**,
of **course**.
But
how old
is the **oldest**?
Who's the **world record** holder?
Well,
I read about a **man**
who was
a **hundred and four**!
He **went** through **red lights**,
crashed into **parked cars**
and **drove** along the **pavement**.
And **how old** was his **car**?
Only thirty.

Practise reading this story, phrase by phrase, paying attention to the pauses and the stresses.

Exercises

33.1 Listen to this story and mark the pauses like this: / .

C30

A few years ago / I read in a newspaper / that the staff at a library ...

A few years ago I read in a newspaper that the staff at a library in a small town in the west of England had noticed that the number of visitors to the library was going down and down, and the number of books they were borrowing was going down even faster. They couldn't understand this, so they decided to do some research to find out the reason. They interviewed people and asked them to fill in questionnaires and so on. And guess what they discovered. The reason was simply that everybody had read all the books already!

Check with the Key.

C30

Listen again and mark the main stresses by underlining them.

A few years ago / I read in a newspaper / that the staff at a library ...

Check with the Key and practise reading the story yourself. You could also practise reading together with the recording.

33.2 Listen to this story and mark the pauses.

C31

This seems unbelievable but it's a true story in fact. A farmer was working in the fields with his tractor. The tractor crashed and he fell out and landed on the ground unconscious. As he fell, his mobile phone fell out of his pocket. Soon after, a bird that was flying around the fields saw the phone and started pecking it with its beak. Amazingly it dialled the number 999 and soon the emergency services arrived to help the farmer.



Check with the Key.

C31

Listen again and mark the main stresses.

Check with the Key and practise reading the story yourself. You could also practise reading together with the recording.

Tip: You might find it helpful to rewrite the stories with each phrase on a separate line, like this:

A few years ago

I read in a newspaper

that the staff at a library ...



Note: When we write, we mark some of the main pauses with commas, like this:
This seems unbelievable, but it's a true story, in fact.