

Improve Your Speaking Alone

In this lesson, I'm going to help you boost your English speaking skills, and guess what? You can do it all by yourself! Whether you're starting out or levelling up, this lesson's got you covered. I'm going to give you different exercises and techniques that will help you at every stage of your English learning journey. Ready to chat like a champ? Let's get started!

English Speaking Warm-up

Let's begin our lesson with a fun yet effective warm-up: **Tongue Twisters!**

These are great for practising those more challenging vowel and consonant sounds and are perfect for all levels. Tongue twisters help improve pronunciation by forcing you to repeat tricky sounds. The idea is to start off slowly and then gradually speed up as you gain confidence. This repetition helps train your English-speaking muscles and will get your tongue used to making English sounds.

First up, a tongue twister for **beginners**, designed to help you practise the **voiced /b/** and **unvoiced /p/** sounds, which can be a bit challenging for some learners.

- Big **b**ears **p**lay **b**efore **p**ainting **p**ictures.

My lips close to make the **/p/** and **/b/** sounds. In fact, the only major difference between these two sounds is that the **/b/** is **voiced** - that means your **vocal cords vibrate**. The **/p/** is **unvoiced**.

Lucy's Tip!

Another way to check if you're accurately making these sounds is to put a piece of paper in front of your mouth. We generally expel more air with unvoiced sounds, so the paper should move when you make the **/p/** and stay still when you make the **/b/**.



Now let's try one that's a little bit more advanced. Pay attention to the **/θ/, /ð/, /s/** and **/ʃ/** sounds:

- The **sixtieth** sheikh's **sixth** sheep's sick.

Try saying that 3 times fast!

Remember, the key is to **start slow**, then **gradually speed up** while maintaining clear pronunciation. These exercises are a fantastic way to warm up your mouth and get ready for more speaking practice.

Now, I'm going to share some of my favourite methods and exercises that you can start doing today that will greatly improve your English speaking ability. I will break these down by level because I want to give you techniques that will help you at any stage of your English learning journey.

A1-A2

First, I want to focus on a few fantastic methods for my lovely beginner learners. These exercises and techniques are perfect for A1-A2 level students but could be useful for more advanced learners, too.

1 Repeat After Me

The first exercise is **Repeat After Me**. We are focusing on two important parts of speaking English: improving your pronunciation and building up your basic vocabulary.

Here's how it works -

1	Play a recording of simple English phrases or sentences.
2	Listen carefully to the sentence or phrase, then pause and repeat what you heard.

3

You can also practise repeating the sentence at the same time as the speaker. This will challenge you to speak faster.

Make sure to match the pronunciation as closely as possible.

Doing this **trains your ears to understand English sounds and your mouth to produce them correctly**. It's a powerful way to get comfortable with everyday phrases and important vocabulary.

You don't have to stick with the basics. Work your way up and try this activity with different phrases, and gradually, your pronunciation will improve.

2 Describe Yourself

Alright, here's another fun and practical activity for you: **Describe Yourself**.

This exercise is fantastic for practising simple vocabulary about physical appearance and clothing. All you need is a mirror, or you could record yourself on video using your smartphone or computer.

Here's what you do. Stand in front of a mirror and start describing what you see. It could be your **hair colour, your clothes, your smile...** anything!

For example -

I am wearing a blue shirt and black trousers. I have blonde hair and green eyes.

If describing yourself feels a bit awkward, choose a character from your favourite TV show or film. Describe them instead.



Sherlock Holmes wears a long coat and a strange hat. He has sharp eyes and looks intelligent.



You can even talk about what you did that morning to practise vocabulary connected to daily routines.

Your sentences don't need to be long but try to use newly learnt vocabulary in complete phrases. Practising new words in **chunks** like this **will help you remember them for life!**

If practising full sentences and phrases is a bit too much, practise with my phonemic chart so that you become familiar with all of the different English sounds. Here's the link to my online interactive phonemic chart: t.ly/tSNhH

Understanding the individual English sounds can help move your pronunciation accuracy to the next level. By learning exactly how each sound is made, you can increase your confidence and speak more clearly.

Here's one example, though there are many more:

Vowels

English distinguishes between **rounded vowels** like /u:/ in 'mood' and **unrounded vowels** like /ʌ/ in 'mud.'

- **mood** → /mu:d/
- **mud** → /mʌd/

Practising in front of a mirror or recording yourself on video is a great way to check that your mouth is making the right shapes! You can slow down, exaggerate sounds and notice the details, like how your lips move. You can also take time to focus on individual sounds or sounds that tend to give you trouble. This targeted practice leads to more precise and consistent pronunciation.

Give it a try! It's a great way to make learning English a part of your daily routine.

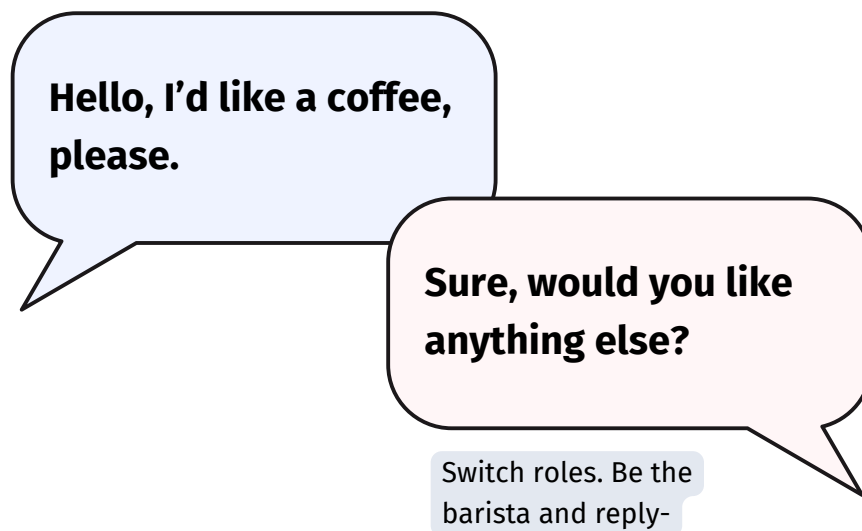


3 Role Play

Next up, we've got **role-play**. This is a fantastic way to practise real-life conversations right at home. I actually did this a lot when I was learning Spanish because it helped me to think about questions people might ask me while I was out and about.

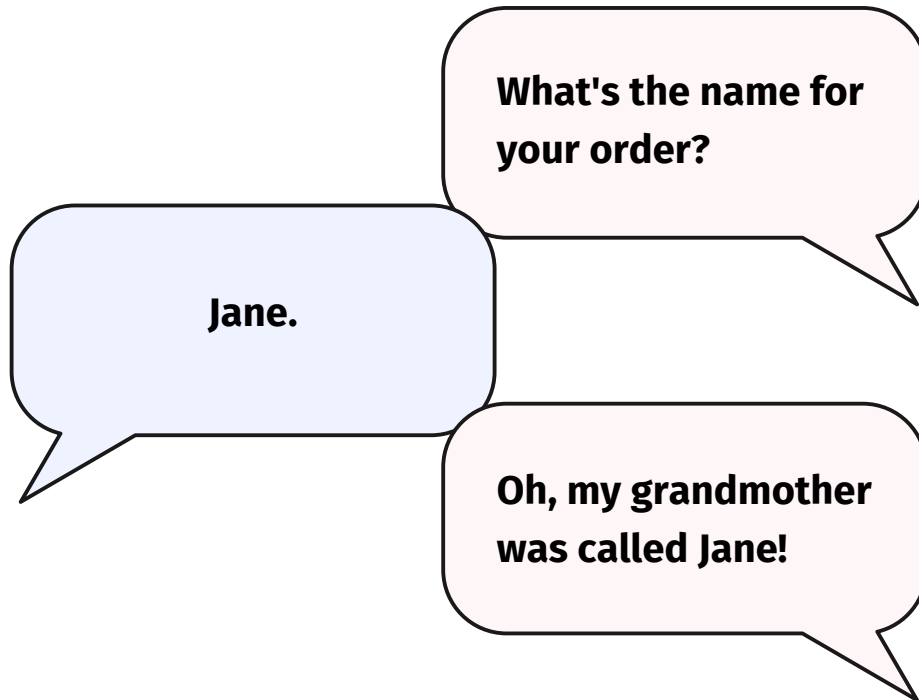
Let me give you a quick example. Right now, we'll focus on **basic greetings** and **ordering food** as if you're in a shop or a restaurant. The idea is to act out both sides of the conversation by yourself.

Imagine you're entering a café. As the customer, you might start with -



Practise different responses and how you might react. Get creative and have some fun!

This kind of role-play helps you **anticipate** and **practise the flow of real-life conversations**. It's great for building confidence and preparing for these situations in the real world, as prediction is a massive part of understanding while listening. Do a '**dress rehearsal**' of likely questions and responses. Try to think of more unusual ones, too, for example -



Try different scenarios - ordering food, asking for directions, making a purchase or any aspect of your daily life in which you could use a little confidence boost.

B1-B2

Okay, let's move on to some intermediate exercises.

4 Explain It Like I'm 5

First up, I've got a unique challenge for you. I call it '**Explain it like I'm 5.**' This exercise is all about clear communication using simple vocabulary.

Pick a complex topic, maybe something related to one of your hobbies or work. Now, you have to explain it to a five-year-old. The goal is to make your explanation as simple and clear as possible.

As Albert Einstein once said,

If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough.



So here we are, putting this idea to the test!

This exercise is a fantastic way to **practise using straightforward language** and **breaking down complex ideas**. It also helps in mastering the art of clear and effective communication.

Let's say you're interested in Earth science. Try explaining a concept like **'Why is the sky blue?'** in the simplest terms. You might say -

The sky looks blue because of how sunlight reflects off the air.

Why not record your explanations while you're at it? You could even send them to other people you know who are learning English to check if they understand.

Give it a try with a topic you're passionate about. If you talk about something you're passionate about, this will help increase your motivation and engagement. And the more engaged you are, the more likely you are to retain the information. Remember, the key is to be clear and concise and use plain English! It's harder than it seems. Give it a go!

5 Storytelling with Prompts

Moving on! This next exercise is great for all you creatives out there: **Storytelling with Prompts**.

In this activity, you'll use random images, objects or online story prompt generators to spark your imagination. Your challenge? To create and narrate a short story aloud using these prompts.

You should **focus on adding rich details, vivid descriptions** and **lively dialogue** to build a complete narrative. This exercise enhances your creative thinking and helps you focus on creating sentences in narrative tenses. You also get a wonderful vocab boost!

Here is a great website that generates random story prompts: t.ly/EHoZY

Let me give you a quick example. Let's say the prompt is -

A mysterious letter in the mail

Imagine who sent it, why and what happens next. Narrate your story, incorporating descriptions of characters, their feelings and some settings.

Something like this -

Athena found a strange letter in her postbox one day. It had a very old seal on it and was written in beautiful handwriting she didn't recognise. The letter told her to go to an old house. Feeling curious, Emily went to the house. The house looked mysterious in the evening light. Inside, she found a secret room that told her about her family's history. They were important people who protected the area. The letter was inviting her to be part of this big story, and it changed her life.

Level 1:

If you want to make this exercise a bit easier, write a few notes on what you'd like to say before you speak. Then, say your story aloud.

Level 2:

To make it slightly more challenging, set a timer for 1-2 minutes to give yourself time to think before you speak.

Level 3:

Now, if you want to make it super challenging, start speaking immediately - no prep!

Let your imagination run wild.

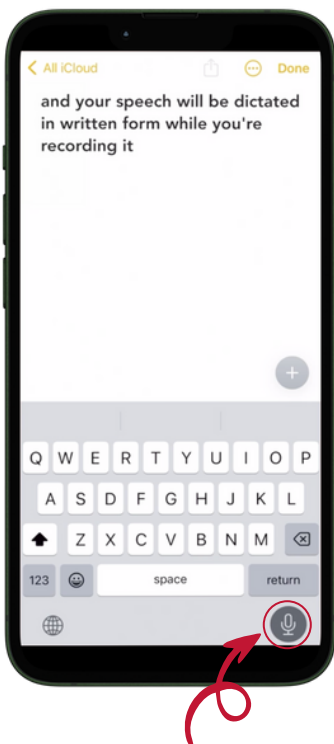


6 Daily Audio Diary

This next exercise is actually my favourite one in this section. I strongly recommend keeping **an audio diary**. Why? Well, there are so many benefits. Let me explain how it could work first.

It's as simple as making a cup of tea, sitting down and having a relaxed chat with your phone. Yeah, I know it sounds a little odd, but stick with me on this! Talk about your day, your thoughts or experiences. It shouldn't be a stressful exercise; it's about practising your English in a conversational way.

As you narrate your diary, if you stumble upon a word that doesn't come to mind in English, **jot it down in your native language**. At the end of your entry, look up these words using an online dictionary tool like the Oxford Learner's Dictionaries and pay attention to their pronunciation. Then, try your sentence again with the new English word.



While you're recording yourself, you can also open up your Notes (or similar) application on your phone and click the little microphone icon here at the bottom. This way, **your speech will be dictated in written form while you are recording it**. This will give you immediate 'feedback' on your pronunciation. If the app understands you and transcribes your words correctly, you know your pronunciation is accurate. If not, it's an indicator of where you might need to improve. Keep in mind that these programmes aren't perfect! Use them as a general guide, but don't become fixated on the dictation.

Now for the benefits. I'll name just a few. This exercise is all about **integrating English into your daily life, actively using new vocabulary and expressing coherent, flowing thoughts.**

It's a practical, reflective and highly beneficial practice for enhancing your spoken English. After a few weeks of audio entries, it'll become a habit and something you'll look forward to doing every day. And beyond that, **you can track your own speaking progress.** You'll be able to listen to your entries from 1, 2 or even 6 months ago to see how far you've come. Listen to the differences in your pronunciation, complexity of language, fluency, intonation and so much more.

Trust me, you're going to want to get started on these audio diary entries right away.

C1-C2

For my advanced and proficient learners, I've got a few exciting and challenging tasks.

7 Podcasts

For our next exercises, let's explore the world of podcasts, an increasingly popular medium for storytelling and sharing ideas.

Create Your Own Podcast Episode

First, imagine you've been invited onto a podcast to discuss a topic you're passionate about. **Prepare some questions you expect to be asked about this topic.** Then, record yourself answering these questions as if you were in a live interview.

This exercise allows you to **practise articulating your thoughts clearly** on subjects you're enthusiastic about, improving both your fluency and ability to think on your feet in English.



For example, if you're interested in environmental conservation, your questions might be -

- **What motivated you to get involved in environmental conservation?**
- **What are some simple steps individuals can take to reduce their carbon footprint?**

Engage With An Existing Podcast

Alternatively, if you feel like kicking this exercise up a notch, find a podcast on a topic you enjoy and do the following -

1	Listen carefully to the interviewer's questions.
2	Pause after each question and answer it as if you were the interviewee. This tests not only your comprehension but also your ability to respond thoughtfully in real time.
3	Then, hit play and listen to the actual response.
4	Compare your ideas and expressions with theirs.

For an added challenge, pretend you're a co-host. Respond to the host's comments as if you're part of the conversation, offering your insights and opinions.

This exercise is excellent for advanced learners as **it mimics real-life conversations** and interviews, helping you to use English in a natural, flowing manner. It's also a fun way to dive deeper into subjects you love while practising your language skills.

8 Teach It!

Okay, let's look at my final exercise. An advanced version of the 'Explain it Like I'm 5', tailored for our proficient English learners. I call it **'Teach It!'**



Think about a hobby or skill that you're proficient in. Now, imagine you have to teach it to someone else, but entirely in English. This could be anything from cooking a specific dish or playing a musical instrument to practising yoga. The key is to **break down your skill into teachable, understandable segments**.

For example, if you're teaching how to make spaghetti carbonara, your instruction might include phrases like -

- First, boil the pasta until it's al dente.
- Gently fry the bacon until it's crispy, then mix it with the eggs and cheese.

This exercise is incredibly beneficial. When you teach something, you have to understand it deeply to be able to explain it. Doing this in English will not only **expand your vocabulary** related to your hobby but also **improve your fluency** and **ability to convey complex ideas clearly**. It's a brilliant way to apply your English skills in a practical, real-world context.

So, prepare a short lesson or a guide in English about your hobby or skill. You can even record yourself teaching, review it and see where you can improve. This exercise will help you on your way to becoming an effective communicator in English.

Bonus Exercises

I know I said that the last one was my final one, but I just love this topic so much that I've prepared a few bonus exercises. I think they will benefit you at every level, so I'm just chucking them in here at the end.

Bonus Exercise 1:

Change the language of your Siri, Alexa or Google Assistant to English. **Every command becomes a mini-pronunciation exercise.** Ask a simple question like -

- What's the weather like today?

If the assistant responds correctly, your pronunciation is good. If not, it's a hint to improve. This method is great for sharpening your pronunciation, receiving instant feedback and getting comfortable using everyday English phrases.

Bonus Exercise 2:

Use karaoke to practise English! YouTube is filled with karaoke videos, complete with lyrics. If a song feels too fast, simply slow down the video. Start with easy songs and gradually challenge yourself with faster, more complex ones. **Singing along can help with pronunciation, rhythm and even intonation.** Plus, it's a lot of fun!

Bonus Exercise 3:

Online gaming can be a fantastic English practice tool. You'll interact with players worldwide, giving you a great chance to practise English in a fun setting. The visuals in games provide helpful context clues. **It's learning through immersion!** However, be mindful that some people online like to use colourful language while gaming. So, this might be more suitable for casual learning rather than formal practice. But dive in and enjoy learning English doing something you enjoy. Learning English should be fun, after all!

