



Speak English with Confidence

Tips and methods to help you
improve your English



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Table of Contents



Introduction



Feel confident when you speak English



Methods to improve your vocabulary



How to improve your speaking skills



How to sound more effective in
conversations



How can I sound more natural?



How to practise English by yourself



Common mistakes in English



Immerse yourself in English



Believe in yourself

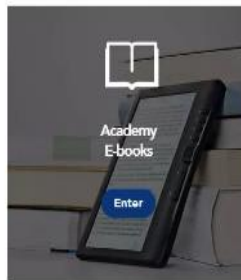


Final thoughts

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Welcome to the Academy.
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Idioms that describe excitement

To perk up =
to feel more **cheerful** or lively

"We **perked up** when we heard the good news"



To crack up =
suddenly start laughing
(we also say "burst out laughing.")

"The whole class **cracked up** when the teacher spilled her coffee all over her desk."

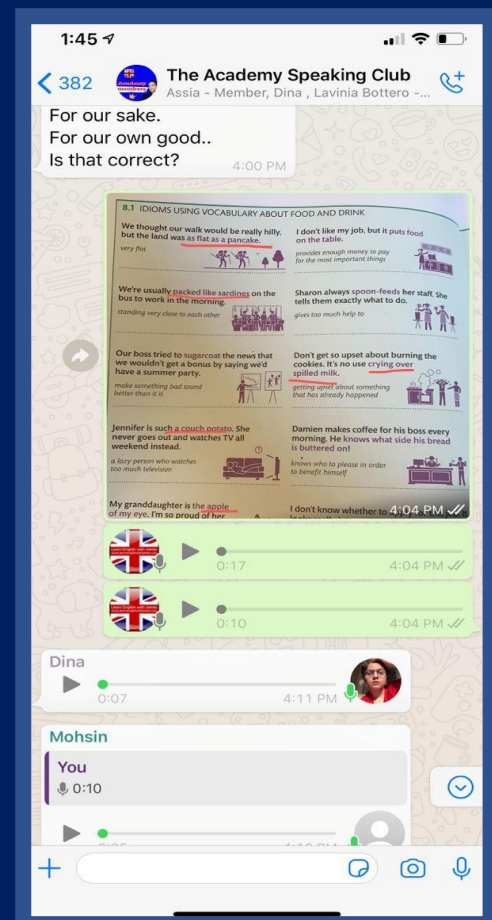


Worked up =
to become too excited about something

He was very **worked up** about seeing his family again after so many years.



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Introduction

Speak English with Confidence

My name is James Warren, I am a British English teacher and I have been teaching English for quite a while. I started in 2010 when I was in Italy learning how to cook Italian cuisine. I was beginning to get fed up with the cookery course and realise it was not my cup of tea, when I suddenly had another idea. It started when I saw some international students communicating with each other in English. I noticed they were making a ton of mistakes, so that was when I intervened. I began correcting them and doing my best to help them sound more natural and confident. The joy and pleasure I got from helping these students made me want to start supporting other people in this field, and that was when I set up my own little English teaching business in Italy. I got a lot of interest from people who wanted to improve their oral English with me.

Later on, I had to leave Italy and return back to England. Of course, I didn't leave my teaching behind but instead continued and built it up again in my hometown. I got my CELTA teaching qualification at Leicester University and did quite a few other courses, mostly online.

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I became busy with new international students booking lessons with me and I could feel that I had a burning passion to help students to improve the way they expressed themselves. Hearing them use new words in context with me in conversation was really rewarding. I could see the improvement my students had made with me with time and practice in their previous classes; it really showed when they spoke to me. They were able to express themselves naturally, freely and with confidence. Seeing this was fantastic. In this e-book I am going to explain and guide you on how you can do the same.

Feel Confident when you Speak English

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Feeling confident when you speak English is key. It is one of the main things that students lack when they try to communicate.

Nervousness stops people from going into real life conversations and speaking. The best way to become confident in English is to believe in yourself and to learn by doing. The more you get out there, come out of your comfort zone and make the effort to speak to people, the more you will improve.

Another way to feel more confident is to slow down when you speak English. Try not to speak too fast because you will end up feeling nervous. If you speak slowly and think about what you want to say first, then this will help you develop longer and more accurate sentences, improving your fluency and making you sound more convincing.

I would also advise you to train yourself to be more confident by surrounding yourself with capable speakers and trying to copy them. Try to focus on the tone of your voice and always speak loud enough

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for others to hear you properly. A great way to become more confident at speaking clearly and articulating your words is to practise reading out loud and recording your voice so you can listen to yourself afterwards. Start with something simple or a text you know well. Practise reading in front of a mirror and listen to the way you say the words. With patience and perseverance, you will become more confident and other people will hear that.

Methods to improve your vocabulary

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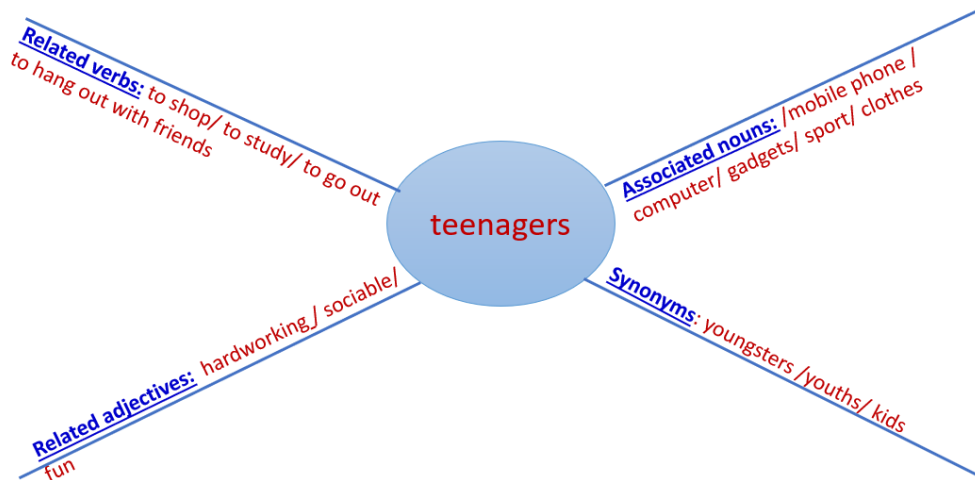
An effective way to build your vocabulary is to read books and write down new words that you don't know. When you write new words down it is always a good habit to write an example with each one and draw a little picture next to it. Doing this will help you remember the new word. You can also write synonyms next to the word to help you to retain it. You can improve your vocabulary a lot this way, but you have to be consistent.

Another way you can improve your vocabulary is by creating a word web. A word web is a visual organiser that promotes vocabulary development. Some people call them "spider diagrams". So for example, you could write "teenager" in the middle of the page, you would have "legs" coming out where you write synonyms and related verbs, adjectives and nouns.

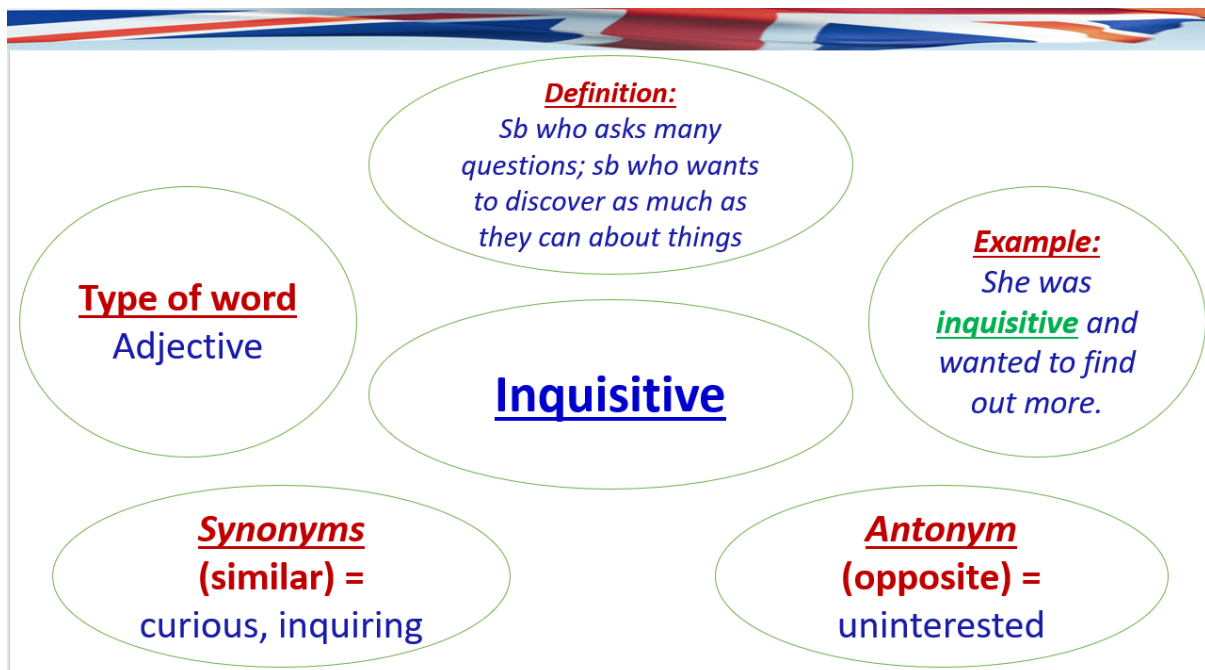
Example 1:

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Use of a word web - example



Example 2:



This technique will help you to expand your vocabulary and understand many uses of the same word.

Another simple way of developing your vocabulary further is by listening to good English speakers having conversations with each other and writing down any new words or phrases you hear. Even advanced English speakers can benefit from this. It is always a good

habit to write down new vocabulary according to topics because then you have a track of what you have learnt that you can refer to it whenever you want. A good way to advance your vocabulary is to watch English language films with English subtitles. This will help you associate the written word with the pronunciation and understand how words are used in context. It will also give you the opportunity to spot any words you are unsure of. Even better, if you see a word you do not know then pause and write it down in your word journal. If necessary, use a dictionary or thesaurus.

If you make the effort to learn at least three new words a day, then with time you will see real improvement.

How to improve your speaking skills

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A good way to improve your speaking skills is the **LRRC** method. This is how it works. **L**isten to a native speaker saying an English phrase, then **R**epeat the phrase, write it down and **R**ecord yourself saying the phrase. When you have done this, **C**ompare the way you said it to the original. Then try again.

One of the best ways to improve your speaking skills is to speak and understand your own mistakes and then correct them as you go along. Why not pick a topic and do a mini-presentation to a friend and ask them to give you feedback afterwards to help you make improvements to your oral English? You could of course pay a private teacher who would help you to express yourself better while correcting mistakes. This would probably be the easiest way, although you would have to be prepared to make a financial investment. This is one of things I help my students with. I help them to learn the English we use in everyday conversation and more advanced vocabulary, to let them sound more natural and more like a native.

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Other ways of improving your spoken English without any cost are as follows. You could offer to teach your own language to a native speaker in return for some conversation practice together, which could work out nicely for you. You could also use your phone to record your voice daily, listen out for any words you are not saying correctly and practise saying them aloud. Ask a native to give you feedback and advise you on how you can improve the way you speak. Take note of this and try to improve next time you practise your speaking skills.

How to sound more effective in conversations

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When you are having conversations with people it is always a good habit to show that you understand what the speaker is saying by acknowledging it. You could say “I see what you mean”, “I get where you are coming from” or “I know what you are trying to say”. These expressions prove you are listening, rather than just saying “hm hm”. It is important to keep the conversation two-way instead of just letting the speaker speak! You should ask follow-up questions to help the conversation develop to a deeper level.

To be effective you should vary your intonation and not let it drop. If you speak in a monotone, then you will sound boring and the conversation won't sound interesting. If the topic is about something surprising then use rising intonation and use expressions like “gosh, fancy that” or “really?”. This shows you are interested in what the speaker is saying. Your voice is your most important tool for successful communication. You should utilise it in the most effective way by matching your intonation to the topic you are talking about. During conversations try not to say “um” or “er”, because this makes you sound weak and not confident in what you are saying.

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Effective communication is about using your voice, but how you deliver something orally is also about having the right body language. You should stand or sit up straight and keep your chin up. If you act confidently, then you will find that you will speak with confidence too.

Another method of encouraging effective conversation is to paraphrase the speaker's words to show you understand. Speak slowly since this will give you the chance to think about what to say. You should also use short pauses between sentences.

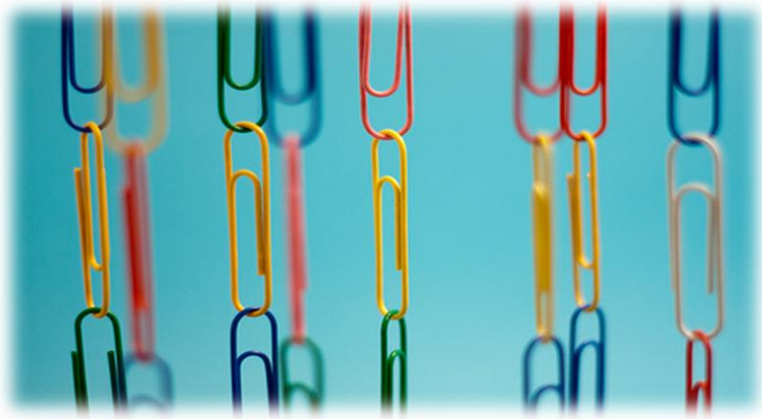
How can I sound more natural?

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One way you can sound more natural and less robotic is if you link your words together. In spoken English we often use contractions. Contractions are basically shorter versions of the same word. For example, a contraction of "want to" is "wanna" (you find that a lot in American English). A contraction of "have to" is "hafta". A contraction of "do you" is "dya", for example "Dya want to go out later". In fast speech we often omit sounds to make words easier to produce and sound more natural. For example, instead of saying "do you want to go out later" you could say "Dya wanna go out later?". Another example is "How's it going?" – this means how are you. You pronounce it "howzit going?".

You should also connect your sounds together, for example using "the linking R". When you have a phrase with an r sound and the next word begins with a vowel then the R intrudes (links) to the next word. For example: "here and there", "more examples", "Never ever getting back together". It can also happen when the previous word finishes in an "a" sound or a "shwa" (uh) sound, for example "Pasta and chicken". Pasta finishes in a "shwa" (uh) sound so the **linking R** also occurs here

and joins over to “and”. “Pasta ‘r’ and chicken”. Joining sounds together will make your speech more natural.



How to practise English by yourself

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One way of practising your English by yourself is to watch or listen to the BBC news regularly and learn the vocabulary being used. You may hear formal and rather advanced words which will be difficult to understand, but with time and practice you will get used to them. Accents are important in English, and you will sometimes hear regional accents that are hard to understand. For example, even native speakers from England find a strong Scottish accent difficult to follow. English is easier to follow if it is clear, not too fast and about something you find interesting. Watching British movies with subtitles is a good idea. One of my personal favourites is “Kingsman”, which uses many everyday phrases. I would also advise you to listen to a podcast in English every day for at least 10 minutes to improve your listening skills and pick up some really useful expressions. Another way you can learn by yourself is by listening to English songs while reading lyrics you have printed from the Internet. You could take notes from any words you picked up from the lyrics. When you learn some new words or phrases, practise saying them out loud. A next step could be to record your voice and listen to the way you sound.

A good way of retaining the new words in your brain is to use flashcards. Get some plain ones online or from your local store and simply write the new words on one side of the card and on the other draw a little picture to represent the word and help you remember it. You could even ask a friend to test you by showing you the picture you drew while you say the word out loud. Another way to practise English is to watch YouTube learn English videos, but choose teachers with a good British accent that explain things clearly.

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Common mistakes in English

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Common Mistakes	Correction	Explanation
<p>"Have you any time for a drink tonight?"</p> <p><i>Use of the auxiliary verb 'have' in the question without the accompanying full verb.</i></p>	<p>Have you got/ do you have any time for a drink together tonight?</p>	<p>You can only use 'have' in the present tense interrogative (question), either as an auxiliary verb or as a full verb. 'Have' cannot be used by itself when asking a question. 'Have you got' – 'have' = auxiliary verb, 'got' = full verb.</p> <p>'Do you have' – 'do' = auxiliary verb, 'have' = full verb.</p>
<p>"During my stay in England last year I have met many interesting people."</p> <p><i>'Use of the present perfect' Instead of the past simple.</i></p>	<p>During my stay in England last year I met many interesting people.</p>	<p>'Have met' can be used without the past adverb of time 'last year' and would mean that you are still in England. Since you are no longer in England, then the past simple tense is required.</p>
<p>"When I phoned him, his father said that he slept."</p> <p><i>The use of 'the past simple' in the second clause instead of 'the past continuous'</i></p>	<p>When I phoned him, his father said that he was sleeping (you can also say was asleep)</p>	<p>Remember to use the past continuous when referring to actions in progress at a certain moment in the past.</p>
<p>"My brother wishes he didn't get married. He feels tied down"</p> <p><i>The use of the 'past simple' after 'wish' instead of past perfect.</i></p>	<p>My brother wishes he hadn't got married. He feels tied down.</p>	<p>Remember to use the past perfect to express a wish that has a past reference. Use the past tense when referring to a present wish. E.g. "I wish I were thin". 'Were' is used in all persons for "wishes"</p>
<p>"Can you remember me to phone mum at 8?"</p> <p><i>Use of the verb 'remember' instead of the verb 'remind'</i></p>	<p>Can you remind me to phone mum at 8?</p>	<p>Use 'remind' to mean cause to remember or make remember. Remember on the other hand means that you recall a memory or that you didn't forget something. E.g. I remember my old teacher from school. (I recall the memory of my teacher) I always remember people's birthdays. (I don't forget them)</p>
<p>"I need an information"</p> <p><i>Use of 'an' before the noun 'information'</i></p>	<p>"I need some information"</p>	<p>'Information' in some other languages is countable, which misleads students when translating into English.</p>

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Immerse yourself in English

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Surround yourself with English. Speak and use English as much as you can. Read English books, listen to English music and watch British movies with English subtitles. Write down and learn the words that are used. Listen to an English podcast for at least 10 minutes every day and write some notes about it. Then you could ask a friend and perhaps give a little talk about what you have heard.

Try to make friends with English people and get involved in interesting conversations with them. Find out if there are any English meet-up societies or English clubs in your area and practise your English with other like-minded individuals (provided the English is good, otherwise you will just learn other people's mistakes). You should always look up words you don't know and make a note of them. Merriam Webster is a great online dictionary.

You should also make use of the BBC news, as you will learn a lot of useful vocabulary. If you are at upper-intermediate or advanced level, you could even listen to 6-minute English podcasts. You could write a to-do list in English every day and say it out loud or even let a friend listen to you. You could describe out loud your day-to-day activities as you are doing them. How often you learn is more important than how much time you spend doing it. Spending 15 minutes per day on studying or watching educational content will help you more than two hours at a weekend. Don't over-cram your brain with too much information because you won't be able to remember it.

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Believe in yourself

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If you want to make real progress in English, then you should be consistent and never give up. Believing in your ability to improve your English is the key to success. Staying motivated and being confident in yourself will help you to achieve your English goals. You should always trust your judgment and surround yourself with confident people who will make you also feel confident.

Even if you find something difficult, you shouldn't give up. Have faith in yourself and do whatever you can to make the journey simpler for yourself. Whether it's vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, IELTS or preparation for your Cambridge exams, then you should always keep cool and not get uptight if you don't understand something very well.

The important thing here is just to carry on and always try your best to learn something new every day. I have suggested learning English from an app, YouTube or from the BBC and writing down what you learn *according topics and grammar*, so you do not forget. Use colours to highlight the most important vocabulary, (one colour) and grammatical structures with a different colour. This will help you to remember better.

Never think you are not good enough to learn English, because that is not true. Anyone can learn, but it takes time, effort and practice to become good. If you are consistent and if you set yourself goals and push to improve yourself, then you will get to where you want to be on your English journey. Do your best, focus on your main priorities and do not procrastinate (put it off).

Final thoughts

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You have reached the end of this e-book. Hopefully, you have learned some useful methods to improve your English, which you can implement into your everyday life. Highlight key parts in this book, write them down in your notebook and think about how you are going to improve yourself as a learner of English.

Re-read this book and think about how you can develop some of these methods as part of your journey to fluency. Learning English is a lifetime activity, but you will find with lots of practice you will gradually become better at speaking and find situations in English less daunting (scary).

Do not be afraid to make mistakes because that is the way you learn. Encourage good speakers to point them out and don't be embarrassed.

One of the most important skills in learning is knowing how to learn effectively. If you can be an independent and effective English learner, then you will develop the skills you need to communicate better with native speakers. Have faith in yourself and believe that you can do anything you want if you put your mind to it and really focus. Spend 15 minutes a day. Never give up and if you keep going, you will get to where you want to be.

Until next time, I wish you “all the best” in getting to fluency!



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More examples of idioms



The icing on the cake

- Something that makes a good thing even better than it was.
- **Example:** The concert itself was great, and getting to meet the band afterward was **the icing on the cake**.



Donkey work

- Hard and boring work
- **Example:** Why should I do all the **donkey work** while you sit around doing nothing



Take the biscuit

- Used informally to describe something the speaker finds very annoying
- **Example:** she's opening your letters now? Oh, **that really takes the biscuit!**



Whatever floats your boat

- Saying that although an idea or plan does not seem good to you, you can accept that someone else likes it
- **Example:** You can go shopping or go to the cinema, **whatever floats your boat!**

Examples of idioms



I put my foot in it

I put my foot in it the other day at Linda's house. I asked her if she was going to marry her teacher.

to say something which accidentally upsets or embarrasses someone.



I don't see eye to eye with you

I don't see eye to eye with the new boss.

I don't agree with someone

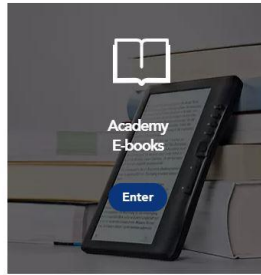
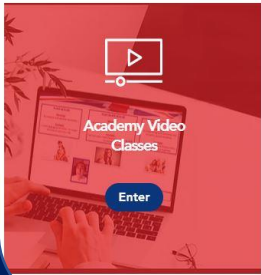


To be under the weather

I have been in bed all day because I am under the weather

To feel ill and feel sick

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