

IMPROVEMENT OF SPEAKING SKILLS AFTER ENGLISH CLASSES

Practising speaking is one of the most fun and rewarding parts of learning English. Once all students can speak even a little English, there are loads of ways to improve their skills quickly while having tons of fun or other pleasant activities. The best thing about English is its popularity. Most people speak it at one level or another. Outside the classes, be the first to say “Hello” to classmates when you see them, even if you do not know their names. All you need to do is look around and take advantage of the resources you already have to carry your speaking to the next level. Here are tips for improving spoken English and having a great time while students do it!

1) Learn “real conversational English”, rather than the “proper” or book-taught language. Native speakers do not speak textbook English. They use a lot of idioms, slang and figures of speech when they speak. Talk to the people around you. Ask people about their culture and values and share your culture’s rituals and values; eg. favourite foods, national holidays, weddings and funerals - what really goes on, education systems, names and their meanings, how and when to swear. Be non-judgemental, curious and friendly and people will respond.

2) Keep a diary in English. Learn to express ideas in English. Students’ brain needs to learn to “think” in English, not your native language.

3) Students should be confident and speak as often as possible to as many people as they possibly can! And teachers must tell them almost each class time: “Do not be shy to make mistakes! The more you practice the better and more confident you will become in your pronunciation and vocabulary. Remember, speaking is a skill like learning a musical instrument or new sport – the only way you can get good is to actually do it!”

4) Avoid studying things such as international phonetic alphabet (IPA). Learn pronunciation through the “ear”. No one ever improves pronunciation and accent by watching someone else’s shape of the mouth! Students must improve their speaking skills by speaking, not watching or listening.

5) Never memorize vocabulary. Rather learn how to actively absorb new words. Students will choose a word they would like to work on and use practice it in different sentences. Use the word until they have learnt it and keep using it regularly.

Online dictionaries often have audio examples so you can check your pronunciation and there are lots of great dictionary apps that you can take everywhere with you on your smartphone. Make sure not to become too reliant on these tools, though. Have a go at saying the words first then check afterwards to see if you were right!

6) Students should build on their vocabulary gradually, beginning egocentrically. That is, begin with words needed to communicate basic needs and wants. Then build your vocabulary outward, ultimately realizing the ability to express abstract thoughts and ideas.

Read the newspaper or a magazine out to yourself. You could even find a script for your favourite TV show and act it out! This is a great way to practise pronunciation because you only need to concentrate on making sure you English sounds great and don’t need to worry about sentence structure or grammar.

7) A smartphone can be a powerful tool for learning languages. Use it to record yourself speaking then listen back to see how your English sounds to other people. Make the most of all your favourite productivity apps to organise your practice time and make a note of all the new words you learn. Chatting (talking casually), even if it’s just typing, can help with your conversation skills. If you decide to chat in English online, be sure to use good grammar and spellings instead of using online slang. Here’s the thing about the internet: While chatting, you usually don’t want to make the other person wait. This means that you’ll try to come up with answers fast. Internet connections are fast these days, so you can still look up words you don’t know and answer your chat buddies swiftly (fast). This assists (helps) you to think in English, making you a faster speaker in the long run. With so many social networking sites and active online forums, you can find at least a couple of websites

that focus on your interests. Just pick a website you like, create a free account and start chatting with like-minded people. If you notice other users are being strict about grammar and use of language, start by saying that English isn't your native tongue. They'll be friendlier and more understanding about your mistakes. And while you shouldn't worry too much about being 100% accurate, it won't hurt to read what you have typed before sending it out there. This self-editing practice will help you in the professional world as well.

If you live with students of the same language background, have an 'English hour' each night to practice your language skills. For that hour, only speak to each other in English - practice articulating your thoughts and try out some new vocabulary. A gold coin penalty for not speaking in English applies. Use any money you collect to buy pizza or donate to an agreed charity.

8) Embrace all forms of technology to help you practice. There are a host of Apps, websites, films and videos that can help you immerse yourself in English. Smartphones and iPads give you access to a range of materials at any time and (almost) anywhere - you can practice while waiting for the bus or just hanging out at home.

Talk back to the television. While you're watching movies or television shows in English, you'll have some great chances to practice English listening and speaking skills. Because most TV shows rely on continuity, they're bound to repeat certain things. Pick a TV show or a movie you already love and don't tire of watching. Since you already know what's going to happen and what everyone will say, you won't have to worry about understanding anything. Watch once and just practice paying attention to dialogue (conversations) and how people speak. Pause at regular intervals to emulate (match, typically by imitation) their tone and pronunciation. Repeating what people say will help you sound more natural. Do this regularly. You can even record your own voice to catch any mistakes you make while practicing.

9) Never miss an opportunity to talk to strangers. This is especially true when you're spending time in international coffee shop chains or pubs where speaking to strangers is more or less expected. Coffee shops are great places to meet with friends, have a cup of coffee and unwind (relax). They've become so popular that nowadays they're frequented by several different demographics (particular groups of a population), so you'll probably see many people about your age. People usually go to coffee shops to work (or play) on their laptops and use the wireless internet connection, so it's easy to start a conversation by asking how it works (if you're new there) or helping newcomers with their questions. You don't have to be best friends, but when you spot a foreigner you can offer friendly advice and take it from there. Sometimes people will talk to you first.

10) Think in English. Sometimes the difficult thing about English speaking isn't the language itself, but how you think about it. If you think in your native language and then try to speak English, you'll always have to translate between languages. Translating isn't an easy thing to do! Even people fluent in two or more foreign languages have trouble switching between languages. The solution is to think in English. You can do this anywhere, anytime. Try to use English when you're thinking about your day, or when you're trying to decide what food to order. Even try to use an English-to-English dictionary to look up words. That way you never have to use your native language and translate words. You'll notice that when you think in English, it's easier for you to speak in English.

11) Use a Mirror. Whenever you can, take a few minutes out of your day to stand in front of the mirror and speak. Choose a topic, set a timer for two or three minutes and just talk. The point of this exercise is to watch your mouth, face and body language as you speak. It also makes you feel like you're talking to someone, so you can pretend you're having a discussion with a study buddy.

Talk for the full two or three minutes. Don't stop! If you get stuck on a word you don't know, try expressing your idea in a different way. You can always look up how to say that word after the two to three minutes end. This will definitely help you find out what kinds of words or sentences you have trouble with.

Thanks to English, people with completely different native languages—maybe Ukrainian, Hindi, French and Japanese—can sit down and have a conversation together.