

10 secrets of success for English speakers

Do you get tongue-tied when you try to talk in English? Want to know how to get more speaking confidence? Even the best English speakers had to start somewhere, so read on to learn the secrets of their success.

Putting the pieces together

To speak English well, a number of different elements need to work together: knowing (and choosing) suitable vocabulary, using the right grammar and sentence patterns, and producing the correct sounds, stress patterns, rhythm and intonation. You have to work on these individual elements if you want to see improvements.

Two-way process

Speaking is about interacting with another person, and involves listening as well as talking. Check that the other person is following, by using conversation strategies like emphasizing key words, rephrasing, or using expressions like **You know what I mean?** or **Don't you agree?**

It's not just what you say...

Non-verbal communication is very important for effective speaking, even for native English speakers. Use gestures, body language and facial expressions for explanation or emphasis, and try to read what the other person's body language is saying.

Sing a song!

Music is a great way to improve your speaking skills, practice the rhythm of the language and learn some useful expressions. Look up the lyrics (song words) to your favorite songs on the Internet, and then practicing singing aloud.

Take a chance!

You need the right attitude to improve your English. Look for every opportunity to practice speaking, like talking to people at parties, approaching a foreigner who looks lost, or just putting up your hand when your teacher asks a question.

Think in English every day.

This is a great way to improve your spoken English, and you can do it anywhere, anytime. At home, you can talk to yourself while doing everyday tasks like preparing a meal. If you are on the train or bus, then describe the people around you (in your head, not aloud!), and when you go to sleep, go over the day's events in English.

Listen to the sound of your own voice.

Even though you might not like hearing your own voice, this is a very useful way to find out what's wrong with your spoken English. Record yourself speaking and then listen to the tape, or ask a native speaker for some advice.

Keep a talking journal.

Record your thoughts in English before you go to sleep at night. You can play the tape at the end of the year to look back on important events, as well as monitor your English progress.

Take extra classes.

If you feel you need extra practice and want to interact with other English learners, why not join a language class? There are plenty of language schools around, or even online courses. Don't think you can learn to speak on the Internet? In Englishtown's teacher-led classes, all you need is a headset and microphone to talk to the world!

Find English-speaking friends.

If you are really serious about becoming a good English speaker, you need to meet people you can speak to in English. This does NOT only mean native-speakers, though. English is spoken by many more people as a second language than as a native language, and being able to understand different accents is very important.