

Tips for Practicing English

Learning English is difficult. However, the more you practice, the more you learn. Don't be afraid to make mistakes -- this will greatly help you to become more fluent. Practice your English everyday -- practice listening, practice speaking, practice reading. It is tiring, but the more you do it, the easier it will become.

Advice for Listening and Speaking English

Listen/Watch and Read the News Online

At some local television station websites, you can read the news story and watch/listen to the video of the exact same story. It's best to watch the video first to see what you can understand. Afterwards, read the story for better understanding, then watch the video again.

<http://www.wicz.com/>

<http://www.newschannel34.com/Default.aspx>

Here are some news websites specifically for ESL learners:

VOA <http://www.voanews.com/specialenglish/index.cfm>

CNN <http://literacynet.org/cnnsf/archives.html>

BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice/learningenglish/index.shtml>

Don't try to listen for or try to understand every single word. Try to understand the main idea of the story.



Compare & Contrast

- For a more advanced activity, go to the major news websites where you can watch a news story and then read about it (although not always the exact words).
- Afterwards read the same news story from a news website in your native language, and compare what you understood (or what and how the story was reported).
- You can search for the transcripts, or written copy of these stories on these websites. (Transcripts may be free or purchased for a small fee)

CNN <http://www.cnn.com/>

BBC <http://news.bbc.co.uk/>

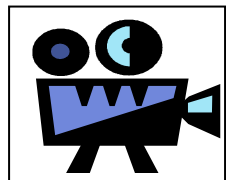
NPR www.npr.org

To find a newspaper from a specific country:

<http://www.onlinenewspapers.com/>

Audio Books

Listen to a book on CD or cassette tape that is read by an actor. At the same time, you can read the printed version (or do one first, then the other). You can find matching audio/printed books at major bookstores or the library. Make sure you get a book that is exciting and interesting to you!



Watch DVDs in English with Sub-titles

When you watch your favorite American (or English-Speaking) movie, program it so the sub-titles in English are "On". If you didn't understand something, first try to guess from the context of the situation. (or of course, you can go back and watch it again.)

Ask Questions

Don't be afraid to ask questions! It is a very effective way to learn -- about vocabulary, the meanings of phrases, or how to say something.

Americans like to use a lot of **idioms** or phrases with cultural references. For example: "This is driving me nuts!" (I'm frustrated)



“Houston, we have a problem”. (Apollo 13)

If you don't understand what they meant, ask them. I'm sure they would be happy to explain.

Here are some websites that list frequently used idioms and their meanings:

<http://www.idiomsite.com/>

<http://www.eslcafe.com/>

<http://www.rong-chang.com/idioms.htm>

<http://www.englishdaily626.com/idioms.php>

Bravely Speak English with Mistakes

When you speak English, don't be afraid to make mistakes. Relax. Don't try to be perfect, just practice. This is the best way to learn and improve your skills quickly.

“English Only” (as often as you can)

- If you often hang-out with friends of your native language group, and always are speaking your native language, suggest having an **“English Hour”** or **“English only” meal** where only English can be spoken.
- Then invite a classmate who doesn't speak your language. (Many cultures feel it is rude to speak your language in front of others who don't understand it.)
- If someone speaks your native language during this time, choose a playful “punishment”. (ex: they must stand up and sing a song in front of the group). Make the “English Hour” fun -- laugh at your mistakes!



Want to Speak English with More Americans?

- Join Conversation Pairs (Writing Center) To fill out an application online visit <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/YRFZRSW> Applications are accepted at the start of each semester, in Spring 2011, the deadline is February 15, 2011. If you have any questions about this survey please contact the English Conversation Pairs Director Shannon Hilliker-VanStrander at svanstra@binghamton.edu
- Join the Friendship Family Program (ISSS Office), or a student group here at Binghamton University (see list below)
- Invite some classmates to have coffee with your group of friends or start a multi-lingual study-group. You will probably need to take the initiative with your American classmates. Don't expect that they will always invite you. Ask them questions about themselves, or about a recent movie, what music they recommend, or for advice about what you should do while you are here.

Here are some other ways to meet other Binghamton University students:

- Join a club or student group <http://paws.binghamton.edu/organizations> or <http://www2.binghamton.edu/student-life/clubs-and-organizations.html> (You are in a new place, try something new!)
- If you live in a residence hall, participate in the programs sponsored by your RA staff.
- Go to the Fit Space to exercise or join an intramural sports team or club sport. <http://campusrecreation.binghamton.edu/>
- Participate in activities, trips and classes outdoors with the Binghamton Outdoors Program: <http://outdoorpursuits.binghamton.edu/>
- Go to “BU Late Nite” activities <http://latenite.binghamton.edu/>
- More information about how to get involved, check out the Office of Campus Life <http://campusactivities.binghamton.edu/>



Listen for the “Rhythm” of American English

Each language has its own rhythm and melody of how it sounds. When watching a TV show or listening to your American classmates, listen to the intonation, the pauses,

grouping of words, flow of the conversation (give & take between all participants). Try to mimic this language "rhythm" when you speak English.

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