



Being able to speak clearly in English is not just about pronouncing individual sounds or words correctly. It also involves:

- pausing to allow listeners to take in ideas
- matching rhythm and intonation to your specific meaning
- linking words together with relaxed pronunciation.

The best way to develop clear speech is to practise. Talk with fluent speakers whose pronunciation you would like to copy, as much and as often as you can, but when you do, listen and actively focus on one aspect of pronunciation that you want to improve. Here are some ideas:

THOUGHT GROUPS

Listen to how native speakers divide up their speech. They pause slightly after words that group together to make an idea. This helps the people listening to understand their ideas.

If people don't understand what you are saying, don't think you have to repeat yourself saying every word really slowly. Instead, try speaking at a normal speed but take a short rest after each thought group. In written text, punctuation usually indicates where you can take a breath.



For example, the following sentences could be divided into thought groups like this:

Some of the benefits of having a dog as a pet include: guarding the house and providing companionship.

If outside in hot weather, remember to: drink lots of water, wear a hat, use sunscreen, and wear sunglasses.

STRESS AND INTONATION

Listen to how native speakers emphasise a few words in every phrase. They tend to make the content words (or the words that carry the most meaning) a little longer, louder or higher pitched than other words around them. This helps people listen more carefully to the words that are the most important for understanding.

If you speak without emphasising any words, or if you emphasise every word, the people listening to you will get tired quickly because they have to listen carefully to every word. Instead, try copying the way native speakers use stress. By placing emphasis on the key words in the sentence, you help your listener understand your meaning better. Sometimes the meaning can shift depending on which words are emphasised.

For example:

“**DO** you like chocolate?” = Are you sure?

“Do **YOU** like chocolate?” = You personally

“Do you **LIKE** chocolate?” = Like, not eat or buy, for example

“Do you like **CHOCOLATE**?” = Chocolate, not coconut, for example



PRONUNCIATION



LINKED SPEECH



Listen to how native speakers change the pronunciation of words and syllables depending on where they are in a phrase. To join words together smoothly, native speakers leave out or change some sounds at the beginnings and ends of words. They also make important words even more obvious by using 'lazy' pronunciations for words that are not important. If you pronounce every word perfectly, your speech will not flow or sound natural. Instead, try listening for the types of pronunciation native speakers use that are different from a dictionary.

For example:

“Good day” can be “G’day”

“I can play tennis” will flow into “I c’n play tennis”

DIFFICULT SOUNDS

It can be difficult to produce sounds in English that are very different from sounds in your first language. If people have trouble understanding some words you say, it may help to practise saying these difficult sounds. A dictionary will show you how to pronounce them, using symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet. This chart will help you understand those symbols. Some electronic dictionaries also have good audios of correct pronunciation.

i:	ɪ	ʊ	u:	ɪə	eɪ		
beach	bin	could	moon	here	pain		
e	ə	ɜ:	ɔ:	ʊə	ɔɪ	əʊ	
bend	about	fur	call	pure	boy	go	
æ	ʌ	ɑ:	ɒ	eə	aɪ	aʊ	
band	cup	car	hot	there	my	now	
p	b	t	d	tʃ	dʒ	k	g
pen	but	tin	do	chair	jump	cat	go
f	v	θ	ð	s	z	ʃ	ʒ
fun	very	thing	father	sun	zoo	she	casual
m	n	ŋ	h	l	r	w	j
mine	nine	song	hat	late	run	what	yes

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This website will give you some more practise and show you exactly how to produce sounds:
<http://www.macmillanenglish.com/pronunciation/interactive-phonemic-charts/>