



## English Self-study 2: Listening and Speaking

In its simplest form, any language can be broken down into 'productive' skills / knowledge and 'receptive' skills / knowledge.

'Receptive' relates to **reception**. We **receive** language by **listening and reading**.

'Productive' relates to **production**. We **produce** language by **speaking and writing**.

Today, we're going to focus on one receptive skill – **listening**, and one productive skill – **speaking**.

### SELF-STUDY FOR LISTENING

If you want to practice your listening skills, there are many resources for you to try out.

#### Podcasts

1. At **ELT Podcast**, you can listen to conversations for learners of English, from elementary to intermediate levels, **here** (basic) and **here** (intermediate). **Podcasts in English (PIE)** **here** is a pay site, but it has a very wide range of podcasts for all levels. The site also includes a Business English section **here**.

2. The **BBC Sounds** site **here** has a wonderful mix of podcasts with many different topics to explore, including stories, politics, history, science, comedy and sport. **BBC Sounds** also has many musical podcasts where you can listen to music and people talking about music. Most genres are covered and can be found **here**. You can also listen to **Global News Podcasts** on the BBC **here**.

3. **TED** has many podcasts relating to business, psychology, design, science, technology, and many other topics, too. These are mainly for learners who are intermediate level or above. Please see **here**. If you love science, then take a look at this list and brief description of 21 great science podcasts on **Mashable** **here**. For high-level learners, if you want to listen to *Business and Financial news and stories*, why not try out the **Wall Street Journal's** podcast about 'money, business and power' **here**.

#### Some Excellent Resources on the Internet

1. You can utilize the internet for authentic listening. **YouTube** has many different channels covering many areas of knowledge and entertainment. Check out **The Royal Institution** **here** for documentaries about mathematics and science. Or try **TED** and **The Royal Society for Arts (RSA)** for their series of talks about every topic under the sun! **TED** can be found **here** and **here**. The **RSA** can be found **here**. The **RSA** also do amazing, *animated* talks which you can find **here** and **here** where you can watch, read *and* listen!

2. **ELLLO (English Listening Lesson Library Online)** has over 3,000 free listening lessons for all levels **here**. At **ESL-Bits** **here**, you can listen to (and read) novels, short stories, articles and even songs. You can adjust the speed of the listening, too. These activities are mainly intermediate or advanced level. Activities at **Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab** **here** focus on everyday English comprehension skills at three levels, elementary, intermediate and advanced. The **Many Interesting Things** site is non-commercial and has no advertising, but it does have an interesting range of listening materials suitable for beginner level and higher **here**.

3. Something a bit different this time! This site at **Clilstore** has lessons designed for students involved in Content and Language Integrated Learning and has some very interesting materials **here**.



## SELF-STUDY FOR LISTENING

### News Sites

1. Listening to news sites is a great way to broaden your vocabulary. You can listen to the **BBC World Service** [here](#), and **NHK's News in English** is [here](#). At the **CNN** site [here](#), you can find live broadcasts and a wide range of podcasts, too.
2. **Breaking News English** has multi-speed listening lessons [here](#) and **VOA (Voice of America)** has reading/listening lessons at different levels [here](#).

### Smartphone Apps

1. You can listen to simple conversations from **BBC Learning English** including *6-Minute English*, *English at Work*, and *The English We Speak* [here](#). Each lesson comes with audio, a transcript, exercises, and a vocabulary list.
2. **English Listening Practice** [here](#) contains lessons that give special attention to English pronunciation and everyday language. **Duolingo** is suitable for all levels (especially Beginner to Intermediate). You can improve listening, pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and reading skills [here](#). Duolingo also has a website [here](#).
3. The **British Council Learn English** app [here](#) has over 40 episodes and 20 free hours listening material on a variety of topics. With each episode there is a moving audio script which is highlighted to help you follow along. There are also comprehension questions and you can download episodes and listen offline, too. **Luke's English Podcast** app [here](#) is especially helpful because it has a feature that lets you speed up or slow down the playback. There are also transcripts available.
4. If it's business news that you want, then check out **The Wall Street Journal's 'What's News'** podcast [here](#) or try **Planet Money** which covers business, finance and economics in a fun and accessible way [here](#). You could also try the '*Money Talks*' podcast by **The Economist** [here](#).

## SELF-STUDY FOR SPEAKING

### What do listening and speaking have in common?

They both require an understanding of the English sound system – the way in which individual sounds, words and sentences are pronounced.

### Pronunciation

Spoken language is the production of **meaningful** sounds. Poor pronunciation will produce sounds that have no meaning and will make you difficult to understand. Therefore, you might need to study pronunciation which will, in turn, help your listening skills which will, in turn, help your communication skills.

### Useful Self-Study Books (All produced by Cambridge University Press)

- English Pronunciation in Use – Elementary – Jonathon Marks
- English Pronunciation in Use – Intermediate – Mark Hancock
- English Pronunciation in Use – Advanced – Martin Hewings

### Other Useful Resources

**Online Oxford English** have an excellent short course about pronunciation on YouTube which you can find [here](#), and the **Podcasts in English (PIE)** pay site mentioned above also has a pronunciation section which can be found [here](#).



## SELF-STUDY FOR SPEAKING

### Improving Fluency

#### **What is 'fluency'?**

Basically, fluency is the ability to speak easily, reasonably quickly and without having to stop and pause a lot.

#### So, how can I improve my fluency?

To improve your fluency, you need to improve your vocabulary range and understanding of grammar. It can also help if you can practice speaking with an experienced native speaker who can help correct your mistakes. Practicing speaking will improve your confidence and, as a result, improve your fluency.

### How can I practice speaking?

#### 1. Online English Lessons

\*\*Please note that these are all pay sites and I can't vouch for their quality or effectiveness \*\*

- **Italki**            <https://www.italki.com/en>
- **EngFluent**    <https://engfluent.com/english-speaking-lessons/>
- **RareJob**        <https://www.rarejob.com/>

#### 2. Friends and Colleagues

If you have a friend or colleague who is also studying English, why not have video conversations together on Messenger, Line, Skype or Zoom? That way you can practice your conversational skills and chat about work, too, if you want to.

Perhaps you could even form a new Micron (English Language Practice) Group?

If you have colleagues whose first language is not Japanese, try chatting to them in English.

#### 3. The English Helpdesk

Having a weekly session at the English Helpdesk will give you plenty of opportunities to practice your English and to ask questions about grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation too.

#### 4. Writing

It might seem strange at first to imagine how writing can improve speaking, but studies have shown this to be true.

#### **Two good reasons to write:**

- It helps you understand what you **can't** do – helps you to focus on what you need to improve in order to become more fluent (and you can do this without making mistakes in front of other people).
- It can serve as speaking rehearsal – giving you an opportunity to practice/rehearse what you want to say. This helps to build confidence in your speaking.

## WORKSHOP ACTIVITY

- What are your best tips?
- Do you have a favorite resource?

Share your ideas and knowledge with the group.