Tips to improve your pronunciation and speaking skills

Within the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary premium online iSpeaker, there are a number of extremely useful resources to help you perfect your pronunciation and improve your speaking skills, either in British or American English.

1. By clicking on 'sounds' in the iSpeaker


The first thing to do is to watch the video of the model saying the words. Pay attention to the position of the lips as the sound is made.

Use a voice recording app or the camera function on your mobile phone to record yourself saying the sound and the example words. For example, for the sound /əʊ/ the three words are open, coat and know. Use the recording to see how accurately you are matching the model’s pronunciation. And of course you can do it as many times as you need to see an improvement.

TIP B: USING VIDEO

Watch the video of the model saying the words. Use the 'selfie' camera function on your mobile phone to video yourself saying the words along with the model. Try to copy exactly the shape of his/her mouth. Then you can compare your video with the model video.

TIP C: CHOOSING WHICH SOUNDS TO WORK ON

Work your way through the consonant sounds and vowel sounds in a logical progression down the page. Make a note of the sounds you feel you need to practise most and come back to them.

Keep a personal record of your progress by clicking on 'review' and checking the ‘I can’ statement when you are happy with your pronunciation.

We recommend that you use your own phone to record your own speaking rather than the iSpeaker recording functionality, which will not work on all browsers and devices. See www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/system-requirements for more information.
2. By clicking on 'conversations' in the iSpeaker

TIP A: IDENTIFYING FUNCTIONAL PHRASES

When you have watched a conversation, for example 'Making suggestions', play the video again but this time you need to read the script as you listen. Find the functional phrases in the script - in this case words and phrases for making suggestions. Check the answers using the tick box below the script which will reveal the phrases by highlighting them.

TIP B: SENTENCE STRESS

If you are an advanced student, try to identify the stressed words in a conversation. These will normally be key information words such as times, events, actions, places and people. For example, in 'Giving orders', the stressed words are:

Hi I'm here to see the head of human resources.

Could you wait here for a moment. I'll just see if she's free...

TIP C: REPEATING THE USEFUL LANGUAGE

If you are going to add new phrases to your active vocabulary, you need to repeat them several times both to memorise them and to perfect your pronunciation. Remember to expand the ‘Listen’ section and click on each phrase and repeat it. When you feel you’re getting close to the correct rhythm, try to say the phrase with the speaker rather than repeating afterwards. This will help you to speak at normal speed and link words naturally.

TIP D: WORKING TOGETHER

You can work alone using the iSpeaker conversations but it’s useful to work with someone else after practising alone. Create and record a dialogue together. Try recording your conversation using a Skype, FaceTime or WhatsApp call. You can personalize the conversation and use any of the useful phrases from the ‘Listen’ section. Record your conversations as many times as you need until you’re satisfied with the final version. Share it with your teacher.

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