



BLOOMSBURY INTERNATIONAL

How to sound like a native British speaker



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1. Intonation, intonation, intonation!

The British are super polite (unless you're on the tube) and have a knack for sounding a lot more socially eager than their American counterparts. We have mastered the art of pretending to care about our colleague's lunch choices and are pioneers in prolonging conversation beyond tolerable levels. When you ask someone about their weekend, you really have to sound interested.

How was your weekend?!

When you ask someone about their pet, you have to sound super excited and moved by their canine companion.

OH MY GOD! You have a Labrador, that's like my favourite breed ever!

It's actually law to ask them to show you photos and give you a breakdown of their dietary requirements. I joke, but you get the idea. It's important to show your interested in conversations by raising your intonation. It lets your audience know you're being respectful as you're investing your full attention. Of course, if someone is telling you something sensitive, it important to sound tentative and caring, nodding your head in acknowledgment and softening your voice. For more intonation info, check out this great link

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/article/intonation>

2. Pronounce past simple regular verbs correctly.

The amount of times I've heard this:

Teacher, I walkid to school today.

When my students hear this I usually frown at my students. A few moments later they tend to realise their mistake and beg for forgiveness. I mean, we all know our past simple regular verbs so why don't we focus on how we say them? With any language, pronunciation is so important and being conscious of your pronunciation is one of the key components to achieving a high level of fluency. In English pronunciation is paramount and whilst you may think ah it's fine people can understand me, there's no need to be so specific, the -ed (t) sound is one of the most common sounds we forget to use in our everyday speech. Can you believe that something so small, could actually make a vast difference to your fluency?

3. Don't stutter, use filler words.

Do Scottish accents scare you? Do you faint at the sound of a Geordie? Don't worry, most Brits do. There'll be situations where you'll have no idea what you've been asked nor will you have the faintest idea how to respond. Instead of running away, why not buy yourself some time and use a filler word. When we need some time to think of a response, we say well, Ummm, let's see, so, basically...etc. Filler words are universally understood and allow the listener to give you some time to respond. So next time you're in trouble, don't mumble, keep calm and use fillers.

4. Finally, Don't be afraid to make mistakes.

Yes I know, this is easier said than done. It can be frightening speaking in a language you're still getting used to so I totally appreciate that public speaking probably isn't at the top of your agenda. However, as a teacher, I notice the students who attempt to speak at every opportunity are the ones who improve the fastest. Remember that speaking is all about communication and your audience won't be judging your grammar and prepositions; they just want to hear your views. So, speak up! Make yourself heard. Visit speaker's corner in Hyde Park and discuss the big topics of the day, visit a pub and spark up a friendly chat with the locals or invite your classmates out for a coffee.