

Connected Speech

Let's Learn!

What is connected Speech?

Maybe you've been studying English for a while now and you've already got quite a good grasp of the language. Perhaps you've learned all the irregular verbs, you feel comfortable using the different tenses from the simple present to the past perfect continuous in context, and maybe you even know the difference between “who” and “whom”. But even with all your actual knowledge of English and your ability to use it correctly, you may not sound natural when you speak. Natural spoken English comes down to more than just pronunciation and speaking fluently. It requires using connected speech.

English sentences are not always pronounced the way they are written. When we speak naturally we do not pronounce a word, stop, then say the next word in the sentence. The sounds in English sometimes change because we speak in streams of speech, not word by word. To make speech flow smoothly the way we pronounce the end and beginning of some words can change depending on the sounds at the beginning and end of those words.

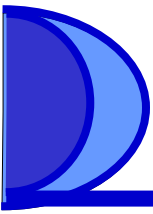
In written English, there is a space between words: *What is her name?*

In spoken English, there is no space between words: *Whatsername?*

Words in a thought group are linked or joined together and often sound like one long word. It is sometimes difficult to tell the end of one word from the beginning of the next.

Is connected speech important?

Yes and no. Yes, because this is how native speakers really talk. If you can't understand English as it's really spoken, you're not really able to use the language. But, producing connected speech isn't very important since native speakers don't need you to use connected speech to understand you. If you speak English clearly, carefully enunciating each syllable, you may sound a bit unnatural, but you'll certainly be understood.



Features of Connected Speech

1. Sounds link

Linking is a way of joining the pronunciation of two words so that they are easy to say and flow together smoothly. In English there are different ways that this happens.

a. Consonant to vowel linking – when the first word ends with a consonant sound and the second word begins with a vowel sound.

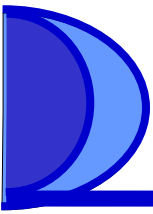
For example:

- “an apple” often sounds like “anapple”
- ‘trip over” often sounds like “tripover”
- “hang out” often sounds like “hangout”
- “that orange” often sounds like “thadorange”
- “clean up” often sounds like “cleanup”
- “pick it up” often sounds like “pikitup”
- “what is it” often sounds like wotizit”

b. Vowel to vowel linking – when certain vowels come next to each other, an extra sound is added to make the link smooth.

For example, we often say:

- “he asked” more like “heyasked”
- “do it” more like “dewit”
- “go out” more like “gowout”
- “there is” more like “therris”
- “True or false?” more like “Trueworfalse”
- “she answered” more like “sheyanswered”
- “tea or coffee?” more like “teayorcoffee?”



2. Sounds disappear

When the sounds /t/ or /d/ occur between two consonant sounds, they will often disappear completely from the pronunciation.

For example:

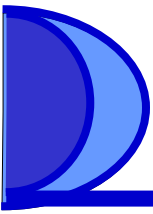
- “next door” often sounds like “nexdoor”
- “you and me” often sounds like “youanme”
- “most common” often sounds like “moscommon”
- “used to” often sounds like “usetto”
- “left back” often sounds like “lefback”
- “stand by” often sounds like “stanby”
- “must go” often sounds like “musgo”

3. Sounds join together

When a word ends in a consonant sound and the following word begins with the same consonant sound, we don't pronounce two sounds – both sounds are pronounced together as one.

For example:

- “social life” often sounds like “socialife”
- “pet turtle” often sounds like “pe-turtle”
- “I want to” often sounds like “I wanto”
- “single ladies” often sounds like “single-adies”
- “we'll look” often sounds like “we-look”
- “class schedule” often sounds like “cla-schedule”
- “bad day” often sounds like “ba-day”



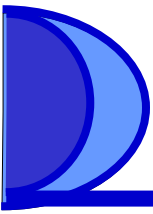
4. Sounds change

When a word ends in a consonant sound and the following word begins with a consonant sound, depending on the particular sounds, the last sound of the first word or both the last sound and the first sound of the next word can change.

For example:

- “don't you” getting blended into “don-chu”
- “meet you” getting blended into “mee-chu”
- “did you” getting blended into “di-dju”
- “would you” getting blended into “wud-dju”
- “can't you” getting blended into “can-chu”
- “haven't you” getting blended into “haven-chu”
- “could you” getting blended into “cu-dju”

***Note that none of these cases does the spelling actually change. It's just the sounds that change when we say them.*



Connected Speech

Lets' Try!

A. Underline the hidden words in the quotes and read each quote to your teacher.

Hidden Words

Quotes

1. **lit** Why do they call it rush hour when nothing moves?
2. **sit** Let's face it. Friends make life a lot more fun.
3. **doubt** How can you get burned out doing something you love?
4. **fizz** Life is a crazy ride and nothing is guaranteed.
5. **fin** In the end, it's not the years in your life that count. It's the life in your years.
6. **kit** As a child, my family's menu consisted of two choices: take it or leave it.

B. Read the following questions about driving rules. Link the words in the highlighted phrases.

1. If you **need to make a** turn, / what **should you** do?
2. What **should you** do with your phone / while driving?
3. If you **start to fall asleep** while driving, / what **should you** do?
4. On which **side of the road** / **should you** drive?
5. If your gas tank is **almost empty**, / what **should you** do?
6. If you see a police car with flashing lights **behind you**, what **should you** do?
7. How **should you set your** car's headlights / in foggy weather?
8. If you're feeling dizzy / and **need to** get home, / what **should you** do?

C. Your teacher will ask you the questions in B and you have to select the answers from the box below. Each answer should sound like one word.

fill it up	put it away	take a break	the right side
Set them on low	take a taxi	turn on your signal	pull over