

Talk a Lot

Focus on Connected Speech

What is Connected Speech? (Student's Handout)

The aim of spoken English is to communicate clearly and efficiently.

We can achieve this by:

- a) stressing the **correct syllables** in the sentence (see sections 12 and 13)
- b) putting the **correct vowel sound** on each stressed syllable (see p.18.6)

Example of Procedure

1. Starting sentence (from Book 2, "Cars"): David is clearing the ice from his car windscreen.

2. Identify content words: David clearing ice car windscreen.

3. Identify stressed syllables: Da clea ice car wind

4. Vowel sounds on stressed syllables: /ei/ /ɪə/ /aɪ/ /ɑː/ /ɪ/
(the **sound spine**)

- c) Once we have the sound spine – the most important sounds in a sentence – we can use **connected speech techniques** (see p.11.3) to join them together as tightly as possible

Connected speech is the term we use to describe a series of techniques that enable us to speak English quickly by joining together words and sounds. If you speak fluently, using the right vowel sounds and stressed syllables, whilst all the time employing the techniques of connected speech, your listener will understand you well and want to keep listening. If you speak in a stop-start or plodding manner, using the wrong stressed syllables – or no stress at all – and incorrect vowel sounds, listening to you will be a chore. It will be too tiring for your listener's ears and brain to keep listening; their attention will start to wander, and they may want to switch off and stop listening to you altogether.

When we speak in English, we don't pronounce words individually – One. By. One – but we join them together and speak with rhythm by stressing the vowel sounds on the stressed syllables of content words in a sentence. This allows us to speak quickly and fluently and be understood, instead of over-pronouncing every word by stating each sound in full, and giving every syllable and word the same level of stress. That would be the equivalent of me writing like this:

DO. YOU. THINK. THAT. THIS. WOULD. BE. A. BRILL. I. ANT. I. DE. A?

No, I thought not!

It's really important to understand and accept that learning the techniques of connected speech is an essential part of learning spoken English. Unless you really wish to end up sounding like a posh BBC Radio announcer from the 1930s, you should begin to use connected speech techniques in your own spoken English. The Connected Sentence Cards (see p.3.1) and Connected Speech Templates (see p.4.1) in Talk a Lot Elementary will give you plenty of practice in understanding and using the techniques of connected speech.

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Understanding connected speech will also really help you when you're listening to English being spoken – particularly by that bothersome bunch of people who are so difficult to understand: native speakers! So go on, have a go!

As E. M. Forster once wrote in the wonderful novel *Howards End*: “Only connect.”