

FREE RESOURCE · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

Common English words 101 to 110

The common English words in this set are last, child, tell, really, call, before, company, through, down, show. Together they are common nouns, verbs and linking words for talking about people, time, business and the way things happen. They are useful for Writing Task 1, where you show information, and for Speaking Part 2, where you tell a story about the past.

The words

WORD	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE
last adjective, verb	/lɑːst/	Coming at the end, or the most recent one before now. As a verb, to continue for a period of time.	<i>Last year, the city opened its first free bike-sharing scheme.</i>
child noun	/tʃaɪld/	A young person who is not yet an adult; also someone's son or daughter.	<i>As a child, I spent my summers with my grandparents in the countryside.</i>
tell verb	/tel/	To give information to someone in speech or writing; also to know the difference (tell the difference).	<i>My teacher told us to describe the picture in as much detail as possible.</i>
really adverb	/ˈriəli/	Truly or very much; used to make a word stronger or to check what is true.	<i>I really enjoyed the course because the lessons were practical.</i>
call verb, noun	/kɔːl/	To name someone or something; to telephone; or to shout to get attention.	<i>A person who studies the stars is called an astronomer.</i>
before preposition, conjunction	/bɪˈfɔː/	Earlier than another time, event or place.	<i>Before I started this course, I had never written a formal essay.</i>
company noun	/ˈkʌmpəni/	A business that sells goods or services; also being with other people.	<i>The company introduced flexible hours so that staff could avoid rush hour.</i>
through preposition	/θruː/	From one side or end to the other; also by means of.	<i>Many people learn about other cultures through travel and films.</i>
down adverb, preposition	/daʊn/	Towards a lower place or level; also used for a decrease.	<i>Prices tend to go down when more companies compete in the same market.</i>
show verb, noun	/ʃəʊ/	To let someone see something, or to make something clear; also a programme on television or a stage.	<i>As the graph shows, the number of visitors rose steadily from June to August.</i>

Exercises

1. Two _____ were playing in the garden.
 - a. childs
 - b. children
 - c. childrens
2. Please _____ me what time the train leaves.
 - a. tell
 - b. say
 - c. speak
3. Two years _____, I started this job.
 - a. last
 - b. ago
 - c. from now
4. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) The graph (2) show that (3) sales rose (4) last year.
5. Which syllable is stressed in **company**? com · pa · ny
6. Which word has the same vowel sound as 'through'?
 - a. blue
 - b. low
 - c. tough
7. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): who / person / astronomer. / studies / A / call / an / is / stars / called
8. Correct this: *She have two childrens.*
9. My teacher _____ us a story about her trip.
 - a. talked
 - b. told
 - c. said

Listening items (1) are online only and are not included in this list.

Practise online, free: hear every example and check your answers at www.ielts-laboratory.co/free-resources/common-english-words-101-110/practice/

IELTS tip. In Writing Task 1, start with 'The graph shows...' or 'The chart illustrates...', then describe the main trend. In Speaking, use 'as a child' and 'before' to place your story clearly in time.

FOR TEACHERS · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

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AIM	Students understand, pronounce and use the common English words last, child, tell, really, call, before, company, through, down, show, and avoid the typical mistakes noted for each word.
TIME	20 minutes
LEVEL	B1 to B2 (IELTS 5 to 6.5)
MATERIALS	This worksheet, one copy per learner; the free online practice for the audio

Warm-up

Write the ten words on the board in random order. Students say which ones they use most often in English and what they think each word does in a sentence.

Lesson steps

1. Present the ten words with their British IPA. Model each word, then students repeat chorally and in pairs, paying attention to weak forms and stress.
2. Students read the example sentences aloud, cover them, and make a new sentence about their own life with each word.
3. Students describe a graph or a simple table with show, rise and fall, then swap with a partner.
4. Run the quiz as a class. For each wrong answer, ask the student to read the watch-out note and explain the rule in their own words.

Extension

Students tell a story about childhood in three sentences using before, as a child and called, then record it.

Answer key

1. b) children. The plural of child is children.
2. a) tell. Tell is followed by a person.
3. b) ago. Ago counts back from now.
4. Part 2: *show that* → **shows that**. The graph is singular, so the verb needs -s.
5. **COM**pany. Company is stressed on the first syllable: COM-pa-ny.
6. a) blue. Through and blue both have /u:/. Tough has /ʌ/.
7. A person who studies stars is called an astronomer. A relative clause names the person, then is called + name.
8. She has two children. Use has for she, and children is the plural of child.
9. b) told. Tell a story. Say and talk do not take a person and story like this.

Questions learners often ask

How do I use before correctly? Use before with a noun (before class), -ing (before leaving) or a clause (before I left). For the future, use the present tense after before.

Why is the plural of child children? It is an irregular plural that has come down from Old English. Learn it as a whole word, like men and feet.

How do I say through? Start with the unvoiced 'th' /θ/ (tongue tip touching the back of your top front teeth), move directly to /r/, then the long vowel /u:/.

Sources

- Browne, C., Culligan, B. & Phillips, J. (2013). The New General Service List (NGSL) 1.2. newgeneralservicelist.com. CC BY-SA 4.0.
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- Wells, J. C. (2008). Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (3rd ed.). Pearson Longman.

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