



FREE RESOURCE · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

Common English words 11 to 20

The common English words in this set are he, for, they, not, that, we, on, with, this, I. Together most are tiny grammar words: pronouns, prepositions and a helper word that make sentences work. You need them in every Speaking answer and in each paragraph of a Writing task, so accuracy with them matters.

The words

WORD	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE
he pronoun	/hi:/	Means the male person or animal that is already mentioned or known.	<i>My uncle is an engineer, and he travels abroad every month.</i>
for preposition	/fɔ:/	Shows the purpose of something, the person who receives it, or how long something lasts. In fast speech it is said /fə/.	<i>I have lived in this city for ten years.</i>
they pronoun	/ðeɪ/	Means more than one person or thing that is already mentioned. It is also used for one person when the gender is not stated.	<i>Young people say they want flexible jobs, but they also want security.</i>
not adverb	/nɒt/	Makes a sentence or phrase negative. After a helper verb it is often shortened to n't.	<i>Public transport is not always cheap, but it is often faster than driving.</i>
that determiner, pronoun, conjunction	/ðæt/	Points to a thing or idea that is further away or already mentioned. It also joins a clause to a verb (I think that...) and begins relative clauses (the book that I read). As a joining word it is often said /ðət/.	<i>Many people believe that cities are becoming too crowded, and that is why new parks are needed.</i>
we pronoun	/wi:/	Means the speaker and one or more other people.	<i>In my country, we celebrate the new year with a big family meal.</i>
on preposition	/ɒn/	Shows contact with a surface, a day or date, or the topic of something (a book on climate).	<i>On the other hand, working from home can make people feel isolated.</i>
with preposition	/wɪð/	Shows that people or things are together, that you use something, or that someone has a feature (a girl with long hair).	<i>Governments must deal with pollution before it harms more people.</i>
this determiner, pronoun	/ðɪs/	Points to something near in place or time, or something just mentioned or about to be mentioned.	<i>This is why many young people choose to study abroad.</i>
I pronoun	/aɪ/	The word you use to talk about yourself as the person speaking or writing. It is always written with a capital letter.	<i>I grew up in a small village, but I now live in a large city.</i>

Exercises

1. My parents have lived here _____ twenty years.
 - a. since
 - b. for
 - c. ago
2. Many students depend _____ their families for money.
 - a. of
 - b. on
 - c. from
3. Anna and Tom said that _____ are moving to Leeds.
 - a. they
 - b. their
 - c. there
4. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) My brother (2) not likes (3) spicy food (4) very much.
5. Which word starts with the same sound as 'they'?
 - a. this
 - b. tree
 - c. think
6. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): future / of / for / the / protect / environment / We / should / generations.
7. Correct this: *I not agree with that idea.*
8. _____ students in the front row are from Brazil.
 - a. That
 - b. This
 - c. Those
9. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) On the other hand, (2) many people (3) depends of (4) their cars.

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-11-20/practice/

IELTS tip. In Speaking Part 3, phrases like 'for example', 'on the other hand' and 'this is why' make your ideas easy to follow. In Writing Task 2, use this plus a noun ('this trend') so your reader knows exactly what you mean.

FOR TEACHERS · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

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AIM	Students understand, pronounce and use the common English words he, for, they, not, that, we, on, with, this, I, 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 interview a partner for two minutes using 'he, she, they' to report back what they heard, then check the verbs.
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

Give a short text with the wrong prepositions after depend, agree and deal. Students fix them and write three new examples.

Answer key

1. b) for. For goes with a length of time. Since needs a starting point.
2. b) on. The phrase is 'depend on'.
3. a) they. A subject pronoun is needed: they are moving.
4. Part 2: *not likes* → **does not like**. A negative present sentence with he needs does not + base verb.
5. a) this. They and this both start with the voiced /ð/. Think starts with /θ/.
6. We should protect the environment for future generations. Subject, modal verb, base verb, object, then for + the group that benefits.
7. I do not agree with that idea. A present negative with a full verb needs do not.
8. c) Those. Students is plural, so we need those.

9. Part 3: *depends of* → **depend on**. People is plural, so the verb is depend, and the preposition is on.

Questions learners often ask

What is the difference between for and since? For is followed by a length of time (for three years). Since is followed by a point in time (since 2022).

How do I say the 'th' in with and this? Touch the back of your top front teeth with the tip of your tongue and let your voice buzz. When you practise slowly, you can let the tip show a little between your teeth. In they, this and that it is a voiced sound, so you can feel a small vibration.

Can I use we in an IELTS essay? Yes, for general statements, but use it sparingly. Words such as people or society often make the idea sound more formal.

Sources

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- Wells, J. C. (2008). Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (3rd ed.). Pearson Longman.

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