

FREE RESOURCE · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

Common English words 21 to 30

The common English words in this set are do, as, at, she, but, from, by, will, or, say. Together they are mostly small linking words that show place, means, choice or contrast, plus two very common verbs. Choosing the right preposition and linking word is a regular source of small mistakes in Writing, so these are worth learning carefully.

The words

WORD	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE
do verb	/du:/	A helper verb used to make questions and negatives (Do you like it?). It is also a full verb meaning to carry out an action or task.	<i>I do research for my course every weekend in the library.</i>
as conjunction, preposition	/æz/	Can mean 'in the role of' (as a teacher), 'while' or 'because', and is used in comparisons (as tall as). In fast speech it is said /əz/.	<i>As a child, I wanted to work as a pilot.</i>
at preposition	/æt/	Shows an exact place or point, such as a place (at the station) or a clock time (at six o'clock).	<i>At first, I found the lectures hard to follow, but I got used to them.</i>
she pronoun	/ʃi:/	Means the female person or animal that is already mentioned or known.	<i>My mother is a doctor, and she works long hours at the hospital.</i>
but conjunction	/bʌt/	Joins two ideas that contrast: the second is different from, or surprising after, the first. In fast speech it is said /bət/.	<i>Online lessons are convenient, but many students miss face-to-face contact.</i>
from preposition	/frɒm/	Shows a starting point in place or time, or where someone or something comes from.	<i>People from rural areas often move to the city to find work.</i>
by preposition	/baɪ/	Shows who or what did something (written by), the means of travel (by bus), a deadline (by Friday), or an amount of difference (by ten minutes).	<i>Most students travel to campus by bus because parking is expensive.</i>
will modal verb	/wɪl/	Used to talk about the future, to make predictions and promises, and to decide something quickly. It is followed by the base verb.	<i>Experts believe that sea levels will rise if emissions keep growing.</i>
or conjunction	/ɔ:/	Gives a choice or another possibility.	<i>Would you rather live in a flat or in a house with a garden?</i>
say verb	/seɪ/	To speak words, or to give information in words, numbers or writing (the sign says...).	<i>People often say that money cannot buy happiness.</i>

Exercises

1. I usually _____ my homework after dinner.
 - a. make
 - b. do
 - c. say
2. She _____ a decision about her future last week.
 - a. did
 - b. made
 - c. had
3. My cousin works _____ a translator in Tokyo.
 - a. of
 - b. as
 - c. by
4. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) Although the course (2) was expensive, (3) but I enjoyed (4) every lesson.
5. She _____ me that the exam was difficult.
 - a. spoke
 - b. told
 - c. said
6. Which word has the same vowel sound as 'say'?
 - a. dad
 - b. day
 - c. did
7. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): travel / people / Most / on / bus. / work / to / by
8. Correct this: *She go to work by foot.*
9. I think the number of tourists _____ increase next year.
 - a. does
 - b. will
 - c. is

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-21-30/practice/

IELTS tip. In Writing Task 2, but, or and by are quick and clear, but vary your linking words between sentences too. In Speaking, say 'as' for jobs and roles ('I work as...') and 'by' for transport ('by train') to

sound natural.

FOR TEACHERS · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

Common English words 21 to 30

AIM	Students understand, pronounce and use the common English words do, as, at, she, but, from, by, will, or, say, 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 their daily journey using by, from, at and to, then a partner repeats the route back to them.
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

Write ten gap sentences on do/make and as/like. Students fill them in and then write two sentences of their own for each.

Answer key

1. b) do. Homework is a task, so we use do.
2. b) made. We make a decision.
3. b) as. As shows the job or role.
4. Part 3: *but I enjoyed* → **I enjoyed**. After although, do not add but in the same sentence.
5. b) told. Tell is followed by a person. Say would need 'said that'.
6. b) day. Say and day both have the vowel /eɪ/.
7. Most people travel to work by bus. By + the type of transport, with no article.
8. She goes to work on foot. Add -s for she, and the fixed phrase is on foot.
9. b) will. Will + base verb talks about the future.

Questions learners often ask

What is the difference between do and make? Do is for tasks and activities (do homework, do research). Make is for creating or producing something (make a plan, make a mistake).

Can I start a sentence with But? In speech, yes. In formal writing, it is safer to use However, or to join the ideas with but inside one sentence.

Is it by foot or on foot? It is on foot. We use by for transport, such as by bus, by car or by train.

Sources

- Browne, C., Culligan, B. & Phillips, J. (2013). The New General Service List (NGSL) 1.2. newgeneralservicelist.com. CC BY-SA 4.0.
- Swan, M. (2016). Practical English Usage (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Wells, J. C. (2008). Longman Pronunciation Dictionary (3rd ed.). Pearson Longman.

Written by Will Salisbury · IELTS Laboratory · ielts-laboratory.co/free-resources/common-english-words-21-30 · Free to copy for classroom use.