

FREE RESOURCE · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

Common English words 251 to 260

The ten words in this set (idea, cost, less, room, until, reason, form, spend, head, car) cover the talking points of IELTS Speaking Part 1 and the argument words of Task 2. The common mistakes are small: in my idea instead of in my opinion, spend time to study instead of spend time studying, and fewer or less with the wrong kind of noun.

The words

WORD	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE
idea noun	/aɪ'diə/	a thought, plan or suggestion.	<i>One good idea is to open school libraries in the evening.</i>
cost noun, verb	/kɒst/	the money needed to buy or do something; to need an amount of money.	<i>The cost of living in large cities keeps rising.</i>
less determiner, adverb	/les/	a smaller amount of something; not so much.	<i>There is less traffic on the roads during school holidays.</i>
room noun	/ru:m/	a part of a building with its own walls; space.	<i>There is plenty of room for improvement in the city's bus service.</i>
until preposition, conjunction	/ən'tɪl/	up to the time when something happens.	<i>Many young people live with their parents until they find a stable job.</i>
reason noun	/ri:zn/	the cause of something, or an explanation for it.	<i>One reason for the decline in rural schools is the fall in population.</i>
form noun, verb	/fɔ:m/	a document, on screen or on sheets, that you fill in; a type or kind; to create or make.	<i>Applicants must fill in an online form before the end of the month.</i>
spend verb	/spend/	to use money or time.	<i>Many students spend too much time on their phones.</i>
head noun, verb	/hed/	the top part of the body; the leader of a group; to go towards.	<i>The head teacher announced a new reading programme.</i>
car noun	/kɑ:/	a road vehicle with four wheels and an engine.	<i>Car ownership has risen quickly in many Asian cities.</i>

Exercises

- Last week I bought a jacket that _____ a lot of money.
 - costed
 - cost
 - costing

2. There is far _____ traffic here than in the capital.
- a. less
 - b. fewer
 - c. few
3. Wait here _____ I come back.
- a. for
 - b. until
 - c. by
4. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) Many students (2) spend (3) time to study (4) in the library.
5. What is the _____ for your decision?
- a. explain
 - b. answer of
 - c. reason
6. Correct this: *I will fill the form tomorrow.*
7. Which syllable is stressed in **idea**? i · de · a
8. Which word has the same vowel sound as car?
- a. for
 - b. far
 - c. fur
9. He drives to work _____ car every day.
- a. with
 - b. on
 - c. by

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-251-260/practice/

IELTS tip. In Speaking Part 3, give a reason and develop it: One reason for this is... For this reason... In Writing Task 1, use less than and fewer than correctly with figures and amounts, and describe costs with the verb cost or the noun cost of.

FOR TEACHERS · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

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AIM	Learners recognise, pronounce and use ten high-frequency words (idea, cost, less, room, until, reason, form, spend, head, car) accurately in IELTS-style sentences.
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

Ask learners to name three things they spend time on every week, then say one thing they would like to spend less time on.

Lesson steps

1. Show the ten words on the board. Learners sort them into three groups: I use it, I know it but do not use it, I am not sure. Compare answers in pairs.
2. Use the Hear audio. Drill each word chorally, then individually, marking the stressed syllable. Pay attention to: the stress in idea (i-DE-a), the long /ɑ:/ in car, and the short /e/ in head and spend.
3. Learners read the collocations and example sentences, then close the page and rebuild three collocations from memory. Check the watch-out notes together.
4. Learners complete the ten-item quiz alone, then explain to a partner why each wrong option is wrong.

Extension

Learners write a short opinion paragraph on car use, using reason, cost, less and fewer, and read it aloud with natural stress.

Answer key

1. b) cost. Cost has the same form in the past, so the past form is cost.
2. a) less. Traffic is uncountable, so we use less. Fewer is for countable nouns.
3. b) until. Until shows that the waiting continues up to a time. By is a deadline.
4. Part 3: *time to study* → **time studying**. After spend time we use an -ing form.
5. c) reason. We say the reason for. The other options do not fit grammatically.
6. I will fill in the form tomorrow. The phrasal verb is fill in or fill out a form.
7. **iDEa**. The stress is on the middle syllable: i-DE-a.
8. b) far. Car and far both have the long /ɑ:/ . Fur has /ɜ:/ , and for has /ɔ:/ .
9. c) by. The fixed phrase is by car, with no article.

Questions learners often ask

What is the difference between less and fewer? Use less with uncountable nouns (less water) and fewer with countable nouns (fewer people). In a Task 1 report, using the right one shows control.

Do I say spend time to study or spend time studying? Say spend time studying. After spend, use an -ing form.

Is in my idea correct? No. Say in my opinion, in my view or from my point of view when you give your own view.

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 edition. Oxford University Press.

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