



FREE RESOURCE · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

Common English words 281 to 290

The ten words in this set (least, age, low, speak, within, process, public, often, train, possible) are useful for describing numbers, ages and processes in IELTS. Common errors are I have 25 years, public transportation in British English, and a small price instead of a low price. All are quick to fix.

The words

WORD	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE
least determiner, adverb	/li:st/	the smallest amount; the lowest degree.	<i>At least half of the students in the survey used public transport.</i>
age noun, verb	/eɪdʒ/	the number of years someone has lived; a period of history.	<i>People over the age of sixty are more likely to use local buses.</i>
low adjective	/ləʊ/	not high; small in amount or level.	<i>The price of oil was low in the early part of the period.</i>
speak verb	/spi:k/	to say words; to use a language.	<i>Few people in the region speak more than two languages.</i>
within preposition	/wɪð'ɪn/	inside; not later than; not more than.	<i>Applicants will receive a reply within three working days.</i>
process noun, verb	/ 'prəʊses/	a series of actions with a result; to deal with information or goods.	<i>The process of making cheese begins with heating the milk.</i>
public adjective, noun	/'pʌblɪk/	for everyone; relating to people in general.	<i>Public transport is cheaper than owning a car in most cities.</i>
often adverb	/'ɒfn/	many times; in many cases.	<i>Students often work in groups to finish a project.</i>
train noun, verb	/treɪn/	a rail vehicle; to teach someone a skill.	<i>More commuters take the train than the bus in this region.</i>
possible adjective	/'pɒsəbl/	able to be done or to happen.	<i>It is now possible to study a full degree online.</i>

Exercises

1. He moved abroad _____ the age of twenty.
 - a. in
 - b. at
 - c. with

2. My grandmother _____ eighty years old.
- a. is
 - b. has
 - c. does
3. Please reply _____ three days.
- a. while
 - b. within
 - c. in during
4. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) The government (2) is investing (3) in public (4) transports.
5. Correct this: *She tells English very well.*
6. Which word begins with the same vowel sound as often?
- a. oak
 - b. on
 - c. out
7. Which syllable is stressed in **possible**? pos · si · ble
8. At _____ ten people came to the meeting.
- a. lest
 - b. least
 - c. less
9. The _____ of making cheese takes several weeks.
- a. processing
 - b. processed
 - c. process

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-281-290/practice/

IELTS tip. In Writing Task 1, use at least, within and the age of to describe numbers and time precisely. In Speaking Part 1, answer age questions in a full sentence: I am twenty-five years old, and I work as an engineer.

FOR TEACHERS · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

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AIM	Learners recognise, pronounce and use ten high-frequency words (least, age, low, speak, within, process, public, often, train, possible) 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 say how old they are, how often they use public transport, and what languages they speak.

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 long /i:/ in least and speak, the stress in possible and process, and the silent or pronounced t in often.
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 prepare a short description of a process they know (making tea, applying for a visa) using the process of, within and often.

Answer key

1. b) at. The fixed phrase is at the age of.
2. a) is. In English age uses be: she is eighty years old.
3. b) within. Within three days means before three days have passed. The other options are not grammatical.
4. Part 4: *transports*. → **transport**. Transport is uncountable here, so it has no plural. The British word is public transport.
5. She speaks English very well. We speak a language. We tell a story or the truth.
6. b) on. Often and on both begin with the short /ɒ/.
7. **POS**sible. The stress is on the first syllable: POS-si-ble.

8. b) least. At least means not fewer than. Less and lest do not make a phrase with at.

9. c) process. After the we need a noun, and process is the noun.

Questions learners often ask

How do I say my age in English? Say I am twenty-five years old, or just I am twenty-five. Do not say I have twenty-five years.

Is it public transport or public transportation? In British English the usual phrase is public transport. Public transportation is mostly American.

What is the difference between within and in? Within three days means before three days have passed. In three days means after three days.

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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