

FREE RESOURCE · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

Common English words 31 to 40

The common English words in this set are go, so, all, if, one, would, about, can, which, there. Together several are small function words that connect ideas or ask about things, and two are common verbs of movement and ability. Using if, so, which and there accurately makes your sentences longer and more flexible, which helps in both Speaking and Writing.

The words

WORD	SOUND	MEANING	EXAMPLE
go verb	/gəʊ/	To move or travel from one place to another. It is also used for leaving, for activities (go swimming) and for how things develop (go well).	<i>Many students go abroad for a year to improve their language skills.</i>
so adverb, conjunction	/səʊ/	Shows a result (It rained, so we stayed in), or means 'to such a degree' before an adjective (so tired).	<i>The town has grown so quickly that its roads are always full.</i>
all determiner, pronoun	/ɔ:l/	Every one of a group, or the whole of something.	<i>All students must register before the end of the term.</i>
if conjunction	/ɪf/	Begins a possible situation and shows what follows from it.	<i>If more people cycled to work, city air would be cleaner.</i>
one number, pronoun	/wʌn/	The number 1. It is also used to avoid repeating a noun (a red one) and, in formal English, to mean any person.	<i>One reason for the rise in prices is the cost of fuel.</i>
would modal verb	/wʊd/	Used for imagined or unlikely situations (If I had time, I would travel), for polite requests, and for past habits (we would play outside).	<i>If I could change one thing about my city, I would build more parks.</i>
about preposition, adverb	/ə 'baʊt/	On the subject of something. It also means 'approximately' before a number.	<i>I am writing an essay about the effects of tourism.</i>
can modal verb	/kæn/	Shows ability, possibility or permission. It is followed by the base verb with no to. In fast speech it is said /kən/.	<i>Governments can reduce traffic by improving public transport.</i>
which pronoun, determiner	/wɪtʃ/	Asks about a choice from a known group (Which one?), or introduces extra information about a thing.	<i>The city has a new metro line, which is why traffic has fallen.</i>
there adverb, pronoun	/ðeə/	An adverb for a place away from the speaker. In 'there is' and 'there are' it says that something exists.	<i>There are fewer jobs in rural areas than in cities.</i>

Exercises

1. If it _____ tomorrow, we will cancel the trip.
 - a. will rain
 - b. rains
 - c. rained
2. _____ is a small park near my house.
 - a. Their
 - b. There
 - c. They're
3. My friend _____ speak three languages.
 - a. can
 - b. cans
 - c. can to
4. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) We (2) discussed about (3) the plan (4) yesterday.
5. Which word has the same vowel sound as 'go'?
 - a. good
 - b. got
 - c. so
6. Which syllable is stressed in **about**? a · bout
7. Which word has a silent 'l'?
 - a. would
 - b. will
 - c. all
8. Put the words in order (one or more words are not needed): which / popular / The / park, / has / a / is / families. / with / who / city / new
9. Correct this: *If it will rain, I will stay at home.*
10. She is the woman _____ taught me English.
 - a. which
 - b. there
 - c. who

Practise online, free: hear every example and check your answers at www.ielts-laboratory.co/free-resources/common-english-words-31-40/practice/

IELTS tip. In Speaking Part 3, if and would help you talk about imagined situations (If governments invested more, cities would be cleaner). Using a clear conditional sentence shows range, so practise

it with your own examples.

FOR TEACHERS · COMMON ENGLISH WORDS

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AIM	Students understand, pronounce and use the common English words go, so, all, if, one, would, about, can, which, there, 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 make four conditional sentences with if about their city (If I were mayor, I would...), then share 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

Dictate five sentences with can and can't at natural speed. Students write what they hear and mark where the vowel changed.

Answer key

1. b) rains. After if, use the present simple for a real future condition.
2. b) There. There is says that something exists.
3. a) can. Can has no -s and is followed by the base verb with no to.
4. Part 2: *discussed about* → **discussed**. Discuss is followed by its object directly, with no about.
5. c) so. Go and so both have /əʊ/. Got has /ɒ/ and good has /ʊ/.
6. a**BOUT**. About is stressed on the second syllable: a-BOUT.
7. a) would. The l in would is silent. It is pronounced in all and will.
8. The city has a new park, which is popular with families. Which adds extra information about the park, after a comma.

9. If it rains, I will stay at home. Use the present simple after if, and will in the main clause.

10. c) who. Use who for people.

Questions learners often ask

Is it which or that? After a comma, use which for extra information. For information that is needed to identify the thing, that is usually used: 'the book that I read'.

Why is the l in would silent? The l was pronounced long ago and was later lost, but the spelling stayed. Today would is said /wʊd/ and sounds the same as wood.

What is the difference between there is and have? There is says that something exists in a place. Have says that someone owns or experiences something.

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.

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