



FREE RESOURCE · PRONUNCIATION

Connected speech

Connected speech is the way English speakers join words together in natural talk, so that sounds link, change, shrink or disappear at word edges. 'Turn it off' becomes one flowing chunk, and 'did you' sounds like 'didja'. Knowing the main patterns helps you understand fast speech and sound more fluent.

What to know

What is connected speech?

When people speak naturally, they do not say a list of separate words. They say chunks. Inside a chunk, the end of one word flows into the beginning of the next. The result is smoother, faster speech.

Pattern 1: a final consonant joins the next vowel

When a word ends in a consonant sound and the next word begins with a vowel sound, the consonant slides over. Turn off sounds like 'tur-noff'. Pick it up sounds like 'pi-ki-tup'. An apple sounds like 'a-napple'.

- *turn off* · *tur-noff*
- *pick it up* · *pi-ki-tup*
- *an hour ago* · *a-nou-ra-go*

Pattern 2: a small glide between two vowels

If one word ends with a vowel and the next begins with a vowel, a small sound appears between them. After a rounded vowel such as /u:/ or /əʊ/, the glide is a quick /w/: 'go on' sounds like 'go-won'. After a spread vowel such as /i:/ or /aɪ/, it is a quick /j/: 'see it' sounds like 'see-yit'.

- *go on* · *go-won*
- *see it* · *see-yit*
- *far away* · *fa-raway*

Pattern 3: dropped sounds

Sounds often disappear in the middle of a group of consonants. In 'next week' the /t/ is usually dropped, and the phrase sounds like 'nex-week'. In 'last night' the /t/ is very light. In 'old man' the /d/ may almost disappear.

Pattern 4: sounds that change or merge

Some sounds change because of the sound next to them. 'Did you' becomes /dɪdʒə/, 'don't you' becomes /dəʊntʃə/ and 'would you' becomes /wʊdʒə/. In 'ten people', the n often moves towards an m before p, so it sounds like 'tem people'.

How to make the sound

1. Say turn off as if it were one word: tur-noff. Keep your voice going between the words.
2. For go on, round your lips and let a quick /w/ glide appear before on.
3. For see it, spread your lips and let a quick /j/ glide appear before it.
4. Do not add a pause between words in a chunk. Pause only between meaning groups.

Exercises

1. In natural speech, 'pick it up' sounds most like which of these?
 - a. pick. it. up. with stops
 - b. pi-ki-tup, one flowing chunk
 - c. pick-eet-oop with long vowels
2. Which sound is often added between 'go' and 'on'?
 - a. /w/
 - b. /j/
 - c. /r/
3. Which sound links 'see' and 'it'?
 - a. /r/ as in red
 - b. /j/ as in yes
 - c. /w/ as in we
4. In fast speech, 'did you' is often said as which sound group?
 - a. /dɪfə/
 - b. /dɪgə/
 - c. /dɪdʒə/
5. In 'next week', what often happens to the /t/ in 'next'?
 - a. It is said louder than the rest
 - b. It becomes a /k/ sound
 - c. It is dropped between two consonants
6. Which word is usually weak in 'She can swim well'?
 - a. swim
 - b. can
 - c. well
7. Find the mistake and write the right form: (1) Connected speech means (2) words are joined together, (3) so a final consonant (4) stays far away from the next vowel.
8. Which stress pattern is natural? *She wants to go to the shop.*
 - a. **SHE** wants **TO** go **TO THE** shop
 - b. She **WANTS** to **GO** to the **SHOP**
9. Write the two words that *gonna* stands for in *I'm gonna study tonight.*
10. In a cup of tea, how is the word 'of' usually said?
 - a. /əv/
 - b. /ɒv/ with strong stress

c. /ɔ:f/

Practise online, free: hear every example and check your answers at www.ielts-laboratory.co/free-resources/connected-speech/practice/

IELTS tip. In the Speaking test, flowing speech in meaning groups is easier to follow than a list of separate words. Practise your Part 2 answer in chunks of three to six words, and let the small words go by quickly. In the Listening test, knowing these patterns helps you catch words that are said fast, such as 'what do you' or 'kind of'.

FOR TEACHERS · PRONUNCIATION

Connected speech

AIM	Learners will recognise and use linking, glides and weak forms in short phrases and sentences.
TIME	30 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

Say 'what do you do' naturally and ask learners to write the words they heard. Compare their answers with the slow version.

Lesson steps

1. Present the five patterns with one example each. Model each slowly and then at natural speed.
2. Dictation: say five short sentences at natural speed and have learners write them. Check and mark where the words joined.
3. Chunk practice: learners mark the chunks and links in a short text, then read it aloud with a partner.
4. Shadowing: play a short natural recording and have learners speak with it, a little behind.

Extension

Learners record a 45-second answer to a Part 2 prompt, mark three places where they linked words, and note one place to improve.

Answer key

1. b) pi-ki-tup, one flowing chunk. The final consonants slide onto the next vowels, so the phrase runs as one chunk. Stopping after each word sounds unnatural.
2. a) /w/. Go ends in a rounded vowel, so a quick /w/ glide joins it to the next vowel: go-won.
3. b) /j/ as in yes. See ends in the spread vowel /i:/, so a quick /j/ glide is natural: see-yit.
4. c) /dɪdʒə/. The /d/ and /j/ join to make /dʒ/, so 'did you' sounds like 'didja'.
5. c) It is dropped between two consonants. A /t/ in the middle of a group of consonants is often dropped, so next week sounds like 'nex-week'.
6. b) can. Can is a grammar word, and it is usually weak: /kən/. Swim and well are content words and carry the beat.
7. Part 4: *stays far away from the next vowel.* → **slides onto the next vowel.** In connected speech the final consonant moves onto the next vowel, as in turn off.
8. b) She **WANTS** to **GO** to the **SHOP**. The content words wants, go and shop carry the beats. The small words She, to and the are quick and weak.

9. going to. Gonna is the fast, connected form of going to. Use going to in writing.

10. a) /əv/. Of is a weak word, so it becomes /əv/, a short sound with the weak vowel schwa.

Questions learners often ask

Is connected speech the same as speaking fast? No. You can use linking and weak forms at a slow, clear pace. It is about joining words smoothly, not about speed.

Do I need to copy every change in connected speech? No. Start with linking, weak forms and the glides. You need to recognise the other changes when you listen, but you do not have to use them all when you speak.

Does connected speech matter in IELTS Listening? Yes. Speakers in recordings use natural speech, so words such as 'did you' or 'want to' may be joined together. Knowing the patterns helps you catch them.

Is it wrong to pause between words? Short pauses between meaning groups are natural. Pausing after every single word makes speech sound slow and broken.

Sources

- Roach, P. (2009). English Phonetics and Phonology: A Practical Course (4th ed.). Cambridge University Press.
- Brown, G. (1990). Listening to Spoken English (2nd ed.). Longman.

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