Resources to Help You Practice English
Developed by English Language Services, Illinois Tech

This page contains links to English language websites to help you practice speaking, listening, reading, pronunciation, and grammar. We have also listed several sites that we like around the topics of life in the US and life in Chicago.

- Speaking
- Vocabulary
- Pronunciation
- Listening
- Reading
- Writing
- Grammar
- Learning about American Culture
- Exploring Chicago

Speaking

SPEAK conversation sessions at Illinois Tech
This is an in-person event. Every week during the university “lunch hour,” meet with international and domestic students and English language instructors to practice your spoken English. Lunch is provided! See our website for more details.

Toastmasters International
Tips and resources to help with public speaking and giving presentations, including mini-courses, podcasts, and videos to develop your public speaking skills.

Bank of English conversational phrases
The University of Michigan developed this extensive list of phrases commonly used in discussion. Also includes audio for pronunciation

English Central
Large collection of videos featuring native English speakers and tools for pronunciation practice. Also offers Interactive exercises and quizzes that reinforce vocabulary, comprehension, and speaking skills

BBC Learning English
The BBC has a large collection of audio and video lessons, interactive exercises, quizzes, and language tips. Go to “courses” and scroll down. There are also free short courses to practice specific skills in speaking.

Speak Confident English
Many videos with useful speaking tips (pronunciation / vocabulary / functions)

Vocabulary

Quizlet
This site helps you create flashcards to practice new vocabulary. You can also add images and access shared lists of vocabulary from other users.

BBC Learning English – Learning Vocabulary
The BBC has a section dedicated to building spoken language vocabulary – more of a focus on idioms and phrases
Good videos and activities to building vocabulary skills

Many useful podcasts with focus on building vocabulary

Listening sites with audio and video for different levels. Includes transcripts and vocabulary quizzes

Wide variety of short videos with pronunciation exercises

YouTube channel with a wide selection of pronunciation and conversational videos

Hundreds of authentic business conversations, lessons, and quizzes

Listening sites with audio and video for different levels. Includes transcripts and vocabulary quizzes

Different audiobooks and audio stories in English together with their transcriptions. All the audio materials are available for listening online (no downloading option).

Audio and video lessons, interactive exercises, quizzes, and language tips. Go under “courses” and scroll down. Many lessons have video and comprehension questions to improve listening skills.

Short videos with questions to test comprehension

A variety of news and entertainment podcasts

Voice of America news podcasts, and videos on several topics. Includes audio at slower speeds and transcripts to follow along as you listen.

Several news’ podcasts and videos on scientific topics

Several podcasts on many topics such as business, politics, contemporary topics, and issues.

Academic lectures from MIT courses to practice academic listening skills

A local show about Chicago restaurants and food
Story Corps
A collection of stories on several cultural topics including justice, love, military, and parenthood

The Kids Should See This
Interesting short videos on current subjects in science and technology

The Daily Podcast
New York Times podcast that is released daily on a current event. Short podcasts of 20-30 minutes

ESL Lab
Many different listening activities with pre-listening exercises, comprehension questions, and post-listening tasks

My Unsung Hero
Short (~5 min) stories about people helping each other

Reading

ELC Study Zone
Short readings sorted by level, followed by comprehension quizzes

ESL bits
Selection of audiobooks and novellas to read online

Scientific American
Science and engineering related articles from a popular magazine

JSTOR Daily
Articles attempting to enlighten the current events in our world from various standpoints

Reader's Digest
Hundreds of short news stories to choose from

Rong Chang
A variety of links to essays, short stories, mini novels, and dictation practice organized by level

Short Story Guide
A collection of short stories to choose from

The Conversation
A variety of news and academic articles for the general public

Writing

UEFAP (Using English for Academic Purposes)
This website gives students the chance to practice all the basics of academic writing online. Click on the yellow "Exercises" tab on the left to access topics.

Purdue Online Writing Lab Grammar Exercises
A collection of grammar exercises to help students practice grammar skills

Write & Improve
Practice grammar, vocabulary, and general writing skills independently, anywhere and at any time, without the physical presence of a teacher. You submit your writing and the tool gives you feedback and advice on your writing.

Academic Phrasebank
A list of useful phrases for academic writing

Writing Guides (University of Michigan collection)
Writing Guides and Tools (George Mason University collection)
Writing Tips and Tools (University of North Carolina collection)

Other Writing sites:

Purdue Online Writing Lab
Purdue University Writing Center website that includes information on academic writing and citation
Zotero
A tool to help you collect, cite, and store research. Online tutorial available here!
Longman English Dictionary
Online dictionary that includes grammatical information, examples, and pronunciation
Merriam Webster’s Thesaurus
Online thesaurus which includes synonyms, antonyms, related words, and phrases
Merriam Webster Learner’s Dictionary
Online dictionary that includes the most popular words, as well as vocabulary quizzes
Wordnik
Dictionary site that also includes how the word is being used right now on Twitter and other social media sites

Grammar

Road to Grammar
Site with explanations and quizzes on a wide variety of English grammar points

Grammar Bytes
Grammar practice with many different grammatical errors

Rong Chang - English Grammar
Several links to grammar exercises and tips

Purdue Online Writing Lab Grammar Exercises
A collection of grammar exercises to help students practice grammar skills

English 4U
A collection of grammar exercises organized by skill and topic

Englisch Hilfen
A collection of grammar exercises (and explanations!)

Learning about American Culture

News:
Vox
Slate
CNN
CNN 10 (10 min news videos for students)
New York Times

To access your free New York Times subscription through Illinois Tech’s Galvin Library, follow this link to the library website.

English Language Services Resources, updated June 2023
Life in the U.S.:
Useful guide to living in the U.S.
Guide to cultural differences in the U.S.

Exploring Chicago

These sites give up-to-date information on what is happening in and around Chicago:
Chicago Metromix
Chicago Reader
Timeout Chicago
Welcome to Chicago
Chicago Magazine

Other Resources:
Chicago Eater
A local magazine with different up-to-date current events and topics mostly about Chicago
Check, Please Chicago
A popular TV show on which local people review and discuss restaurants in the city
Yelp
Local restaurant news and ratings as well as ideas of places to dine in the city
Chicago Tribune
Chicago's largest daily newspaper
Chicago Sun-Times
A daily Chicago newspaper

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