

Stop learning English for school! Have fun practicing English on your own material, speak fluently and **think** in English.

# HOW TO LEARN ENGLISH

A guide to speaking English like a native speaker



**FABIEN SNAUWAERT**

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# HOW TO LEARN ENGLISH

A GUIDE TO SPEAKING  
ENGLISH LIKE A NATIVE  
SPEAKER



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**A word of warning!** The present copy of **How to Learn English** is a FREE edition of the book.

As such, you will not find all of the content available in the full version. Please see details below.

You will find:



**Chapter 1**, on using music to learn English. This is great if you have not practiced your English in a long time.



**Chapter 2**, on using the Internet to learn MUCH more English, MUCH faster.



**Chapter 3**, on making friends online and finding things YOU like to do in English.

You will NOT find:



**The introduction chapter**, with tips on how to best use the book.



**Chapters 4 to 10**, which cover many other techniques to practice English at your own pace. They let you improve your English in **ALL** possible ways (social, visual, verbal; understanding, expression and many others).



**The appendixes** with recommendations on books to read, TV shows to watch and how to get American or British television from abroad.

Thank you for reading and have fun practicing your English!

## **How To Learn English**

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# Music, songs & lyrics

## In the mood for English

*“Words make you think a thought.*

*Music makes you feel a feeling.*

*A song makes you feel a thought.”*

– E.Y. Harburg, composer

## GOAL & EXIT

### Goal

The goal in this chapter is to get you practicing English again. No hassle, no stress. Your mission here is just to have a good time practicing and get used to hearing English again.

In order to do so, we will be using music, songs, and lyrics.

If you have not practiced your English in awhile, now is the chance to check your basics again: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. On the contrary, if you have never lost the habit of practicing your English, you may want to skim through this chapter.

### Exit

Do not wait until you perfectly understand the lyrics of any song you hear before moving on to the next chapter! As soon as you feel you have shaken the rust off of your English-speaking abilities, move on to the next chapter.

## **ENGLISH SONGS: QUITE AN ASSET**

One thing I've noticed, time and time again, is that people who were quite good in English at school had usually one thing in common: they *loved* English music. It is not just that they liked listening to the music: they also had an urge to understand what the lyrics actually meant.

This is great practice because you then get to learn vocabulary in context. Learning new words does not only mean understanding them. Learning new words means knowing how to use them, having a story around those words. Songs provide us with such a story.

What's more, the very nature of music provides one additional dimension: the mood, the feelings provided by the song. By linking words to meanings, stories and feelings, all at the same time, we increase our chance to recall later on what we heard.

Finally, everybody loves music and this makes it the easiest content with which to start our practice.

## **WHERE TO FIND LYRICS**

You most certainly have websites in your native language where you can find your favorite lyrics. The best thing to do, however, is to not use them and instead, to exclusively use 100% English-speaking websites. This is our way to get closer to the real thing, to real English, and will make it easier to think in English (and hence speak English) later on. So, for this chapter, as well as all throughout the book, please use websites that are 100% in English.

Lyrics are pretty easy to find on the Web nowadays. Please refer to the vocabulary section later in this chapter if you need

## *Music, songs & lyrics*

help finding them through a Web search. For now, I would like to introduce you to a few handy tools.

### **Lyrics software**

Lyrics software loads automatically when you start the music player on your computer, and displays the lyrics of the song currently playing. This is most useful if you listen to music on your computer directly (CD or MP3). You have two main options here:

#### *Evil Lyrics*

EvilLyrics [<http://www.evillabs.sk/evillyrics/>] is most likely the most famous one. This works with a number of music players, including iTunes.

#### *Lyrics Plugin*

Lyrics Plugin [<http://www.lyricsplugin.com>] has a much nicer interface than the previous software but only works with WinAmp and Windows Media Player.

### **Music and lyrics on the Web**

The number of free websites that allow you to legally listen to music streamed over the Web has increased over the last two years. Here are a few recommendations:

#### *Deezer*

On Deezer [<http://www.deezer.com>], there is a huge quantity of songs available. You can find pretty much anything. The only limitation is that the availability of titles varies from country to country; hence, you may not always be able to listen

to the songs you would like, depending on where you live. Try it and see what it is like using it from your country.

### ***YouTube***

YouTube [<http://www.youtube.com>] is an obvious choice. The sound quality may not always be great, but if the song has a music video, you can be sure it is on YouTube.

### ***Last.fm***

Last.fm [<http://www.last.fm>] is great for discovering new music similar to what you already like. Just listen to your favorite songs there and see the recommendations.

### ***Spotify***

Spotify is actually a piece of software you need to install on your computer. It then lets you listen to streaming music, similar to what one can do with Deezer. There too, the list of titles available varies depending on the country you reside in.

## **VOCABULARY**

Here are a few words related to music.



## **Music, songs and lyrics**

**Lyrics** are the words of a song. *“The Beach Boys have very melancholic lyrics.”*

A **song** is a piece of music made for singing. *“That song is in Ab (“A-flat”).”*

A **record** is a sound recording, such as a disk to be played on a phonograph. *“Michael Jackson was awarded his first gold record for the album Thriller.”*

A **track** is a sound recording, usually of a song. *“Put the next track on the CD please!”*

An **LP** (for “Long-Playing” record) is a type of vinyl record. This is usually used, however, as another word for “album”. *“Eminem’s new LP is out on Monday!”*

## **PRACTICE**

The idea here is to get you listening to various songs in the coming days and weeks and make sure you get the most out of them. We will focus on one song at a time.

### **Choosing the song**

Pick a song that you already know and like. You do not need to know the lyrics by heart but you should know the song well enough; this should be one of your favorites.

Preferably, do not pick any song with slang in it. If you like rap a lot, you might need to pick a song in a different genre to

start with. If you insist on using a song with slang in it, make sure you know what the slang means. When you first start, you might not know what slang actually looks like, so just keep away from rap songs and use something where they speak slowly and clearly.

## Understanding the song

Your goal here is to understand every part of the song.

### ① Text

Read the lyrics once: just the lyrics, no music for now. This is so you know the text. Next, read through the lyrics again, this time, while listening to the music. The goal here is for you to get a basic idea of how to pronounce the words.

### ② Pronunciation

Read the text again, this time, without the music, and try to pronounce the lyrics. Your goal is to focus on the words so you are able to pronounce them correctly. Put the song back on, once in a while, to check your pronunciation. Alternate between pronouncing the lyrics and listening to them, to ensure you are doing it right.

Go as slowly as possible. At this point, it is okay if you do not know the meaning of the lyrics: your goal is to open your *ears* and be able to reproduce what you hear.

Once you know the lyrics well enough (what they are and how to pronounce them), proceed to the next step

### ③ Meaning

Now, check your resources (dictionary, translator) as to what the words mean. (We will see fast ways to check and remember the meaning of a word in the next chapter; for now, do as you

are used to). Proceed as follows:

- Read the lyrics, one sentence at a time.
- When facing a word you do not know, check it with your dictionary or translator.
- Try to *picture* the meaning of the word in your mind. If you know the translation in your native language, see what the word evokes to you: what picture do you see, in your mind, when you think of the word?
- When reading the lyrics again, *picture* the meaning in your mind again and try to hear the *pronunciation* in your mind, both at the same time.

**Examples:**

- If the song you are working on is “Stairway to Heaven,” when you read the words “Stairway to Heaven,” you might picture in your mind’s eye a series of steps (stairway) that lead to clouds (Heaven), for example; and you should hear the correct pronunciation also. When you read “All that glitters is gold,” you might picture a sparkling gold bar or something similar, along with the pronunciation again.
- If you are working on the song “Thriller,” when you read “the beast about to strike,” you would picture a werewolf, a vampire, or anything similar (the beast), moving and about to hit something (strike); again, you should hear the proper pronunciation mentally at the same time.

I am talking about picturing things because most of us are visually oriented. You could also imagine a feeling (touch or emotions), a sound or even a smell, depending on the vocabulary. The main point is that you need to *link* these words to something in your mind. This will help your memory. More on this later.

## **Hearing it right**

As you practice the method described in this chapter, you may have doubts about how a word is supposed to be pronounced. As you compare the pronunciation in the song to how you *thought* it was pronounced, you may observe major differences! You may even have a hard time hearing the lyrics properly at times, not able to differentiate a syllable from the next. Just keep in mind that it is okay for now. This is actually pretty normal, as you have been trained to hear things a certain way your whole life, a way that is based on your native language. For now, do your best. We will cover phonetics and pronunciation in later chapters.

Most importantly, for now, trust the words you hear over the text you read. English is more about sound than about text. Even though it may sometimes surprise you, mimic the words you hear in the actual song. Your ears will open up gradually with time.

## **Using this on the long-run**

You should move on to the next chapter once you know the meaning of every word of at least one song. No need to do plenty of songs for now; we all listen to music often enough to get back to this practice later on.

The core idea, to get the most out of this habit, is to remember your song's lyrics throughout the day. Think about them as you are doing something else, I do not care if this is while you do your dishes or wait for the bus or whatever; just make sure that you think of them during the day. Think of them again the next day and for the next few days. Do that again, for the same song, two weeks later. As you do so each time, remember the words – what they mean (the mental pictures) and how they are pronounced (you can sing mentally or out

## *Music, songs & lyrics*

loud). By doing so, you will remember the vocabulary from the song forever.

Our memory works in such a way that if you memorize something one day, recall it for the next few days, and then recall it again about two weeks later: you will then remember it forever. This works for lyrics; this works for anything else.

Once you have applied this technique to at least one song and remember it properly (words, pronunciation, meaning/pictures), you can move on to the next chapter.

Repeat this technique with various songs, week after week, as you practice the other methods presented in this book.

## **WRAPPING IT UP**

- ❖ Get the lyrics for one of your favorite songs.
- ❖ Listen to the lyrics. Speak them or even *sing* them to get the words in your mouth.
- ❖ Break down the meaning of the lyrics word after word. Remember what the words mean: *picture* that meaning in your mind.
- ❖ Check the song again the next day and for the next few days. Check again two weeks later. You will now know all the vocabulary in that song perfectly.

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# Internet Tools

## Learning rapidly and easily

*“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.  
Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”*  
– Chinese Proverb

*“Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day.  
Teach him to use the Internet and he won’t bother you for  
weeks!”*  
– Internet Proverb

## GOAL & EXIT

### Goal

Make learning *easy* and *fast*. To do that, you will acquire *tools* enabling you to quickly grasp meanings and memorize words. You will also discover *content* you can use to quickly and easily investigate specific topics. In so doing, you will become more comfortable using the Internet in English, making the world’s largest resource readily available to you.

### Exit

The techniques described in this chapter will make your life *much* easier for the rest of this book and to learn English in general. As such, you should master them and make them part of your daily life.

Make sure you use the tips given in this chapter for at least a week, in order to make them easy to use and get in the habit of using them.

## **WWW: A NUMBERS GAME**

The Web (originally WWW, for “World Wide Web”), the world’s largest language resource, is at your disposal. You can quickly find a lot of free information. You already know that in your native language. Almost half of all websites are in English and there are 5 to 10 times more web pages in English than there are in major languages such as Spanish, Japanese, German or Arabic.

This means that using the Web in English is not just a good opportunity to practice your English: this also gives you an edge by making so much more information and tools available to you. Besides having more options, the content is up-to-date.

We will use these resources to increase our knowledge in general, and to improve our English skills in particular.

## **TOOLS**

### **Online Dictionaries**

Having a good dictionary at your disposal is critical to learn English quickly and easily. The best thing to use is an English-English dictionary. This way, you get in the habit of learning in English, avoiding the pitfall of translating in your head (bad habit, more on this later). In so doing, you start to get into the habit of *thinking* in English.

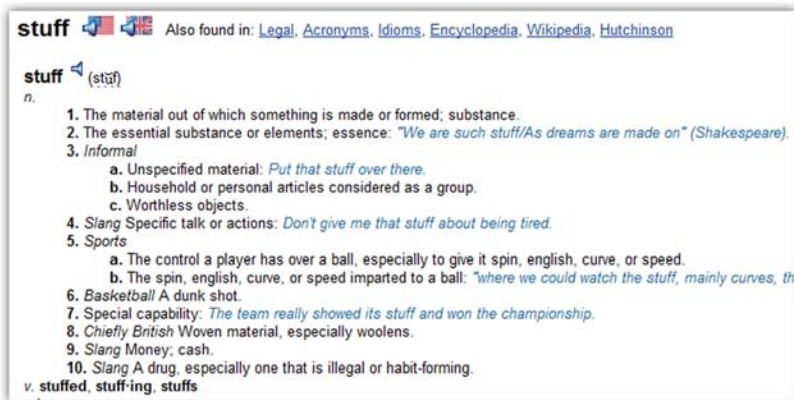


## Internet Tools

A good dictionary will also provide the pronunciation – phonetic transcriptions of the words using the International Phonetics Alphabet, as well as audio files you can listen to.

## TheFreeDictionary

TheFreeDictionary [<http://www.thefreedictionary.com>] provides all of the above. It is here to stay. Anytime you have doubts regarding a word, I recommend you to lookup the word on TheFreeDictionary.



The screenshot shows the definition for the word "stuff" on TheFreeDictionary. At the top, it says "stuff" with a speaker icon and a small American flag icon, followed by "Also found in: [Legal](#), [Acronyms](#), [Idioms](#), [Encyclopedia](#), [Wikipedia](#), [Hutchinson](#)". Below this, the word "stuff" is listed with a speaker icon and the phonetic transcription "(stʌf)". The definition is categorized as a noun ("n.") and includes ten numbered items: 1. The material out of which something is made or formed; substance. 2. The essential substance or elements; essence: "We are such stuff/As dreams are made on" (Shakespeare). 3. Informal: a. Unspecified material: Put that stuff over there. b. Household or personal articles considered as a group. c. Worthless objects. 4. Slang Specific talk or actions: Don't give me that stuff about being tired. 5. Sports: a. The control a player has over a ball, especially to give it spin, english, curve, or speed. b. The spin, english, curve, or speed imparted to a ball: "where we could watch the stuff, mainly curves, th... 6. Basketball A dunk shot. 7. Special capability: The team really showed its stuff and won the championship. 8. Chiefly British Woven material, especially woollens. 9. Slang Money; cash. 10. Slang A drug, especially one that is illegal or habit-forming. Below the numbered list, it is categorized as a verb ("v.") with the forms "stuffed", "stuff-ing", and "stuffs".

TheFreeDictionary extensions are available for free for FireFox and Internet Explorer, so that you can look up a word quickly from any web page.

## Slang dictionaries

Sometimes, you need to know about words you will not find in your typical dictionary. This is called *slang*. This is how people talk casually – be it among friends or families (usually, they do not use the same words in both groups!).

Urban Dictionary [<http://www.urbandictionary.com>] provides great insights into slang, especially American slang. Definitions are contributed by readers. It used to be a truly

great resource to learn more about how people actually spoke in real life. With time, it has lost much of its value. Many entries have turned into jokes more than actual definitions. It is still worth visiting regularly, especially for the most obscure forms of slang.

Ted Duckworth's Dictionary of slang [<http://www.peevish.co.uk/slang/>] is also well worth visiting. This one focuses on slang used in the U.K. primarily but also covers common American slang.

## **Google**

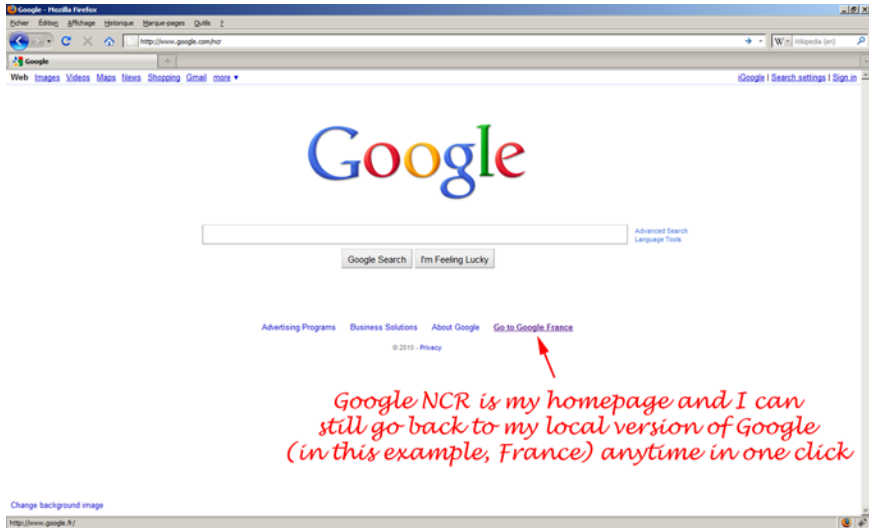
### *The Web in English*

To get things going, you need to start using the Web in English. We will use Google because it has some pretty smart tools and is ranked the most popular search engine for a number of reasons. Feel free, however, to apply the same tips to any other favorite search engine of your own.

To use Google in English, either click the "Google.com in English" link available at the bottom of the Google homepage, or use this link directly: <http://www.google.com/ncr> ("NCR" stands for "No Country Redirect"). This will bring you to the American version of Google – totally in English.

Make the above link your homepage. This will get you into the habit of using this page directly to perform your searches. When you want to perform local searches in your native language, you can always resort to your local Google version (link at the bottom of the homepage).

## Internet Tools



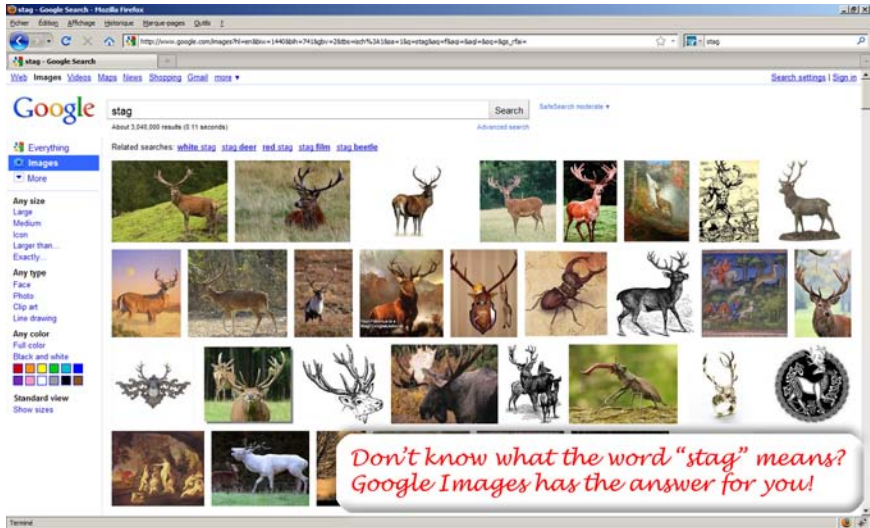
## Picturing it

Translating is a bad habit, because it pushes you to think in your native language, instead of letting ideas and words flow in English directly. A good way to be able to think in English, as indicated in the previous chapter, is to associate pictures (or feelings, or sounds; any sense and mental activity) directly with English words.

One way to build this skill is to link pictures and words directly when you are looking them up. This is especially useful when you have never seen the word before or when the definition in an English-English dictionary may seem a little obscure to you.

As such, when looking a word up, think of looking it up on Google Images. Quite simply, go to Google's image search [<http://images.google.com>] and search for the word you want to understand.

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### Concrete examples

For some words, the result will be obvious. You will not even need a dictionary to tell you the meaning, but instead to simply give you the pronunciation.

Try this technique. Search the following words on Google Images: raccoon, heart, ground, goat, Earth, grass, lid, and crowd.

You will also encounter cases where the word may have various different meanings. When that happens, the best thing to do is to search not just for one word, but for a group of words or expression.

Compare searches for: bow, violin bow and ribbon bow; chest, chest tattoos and treasure chest; trunk, elephant trunk, trunk of a car.

### Cultural examples

Sometimes, your ability to really understand the word will depend on your own culture. Maybe you do not know the word for that thing in your own native language; one cannot know

## *Internet Tools*

everything. The point is, you will still be able to *name* that thing, directly in English, the next time you see it.

See for yourself in these examples: hummingbird, power supply, tea ball, scraper, and motherboard.

### **General words and abstract examples**

Sometimes, the result will be not-so-obvious because of the nature of the thing the word is referring to; either because it refers to a quality rather than an object, or, because it refers to something abstract.

Try the following words: glow, answer, lonely, sparkling, and glitter.

The image search still provides value in that it *hints* at what the word means; and, **provides a visual support to help remember the word**. As such, get in the habit of using image searches as a complement, and even sometimes an alternative, to your dictionary.

## *The majority is right*

Google knows what people search for and you can use that fact to learn the most popular way to say something.

This is valuable information because we want to be able to express ourselves just as a native English speaker would. Such a search lets us know how people are actually saying things.

There are two ways to get that information:

### **Google will suggest corrections**

If you search for something (word or expression) that is not the usual form, Google will suggest that you look for the more popular way to say it.

It does not always mean that there is a mistake. For example, if you search for the word “raccoon” (with one ‘c’), Google will ask you if you meant “raccoon” (with two ‘c’-s). Both spellings are correct, but the second one is the typical spelling.

If you search for “dictionary”(sic), Google will suggest the correct spelling: “dictionary.”

## Google lets you check the popularity of a phrase

Let us say you have a doubt regarding a phrase. You are wondering whether or not this is correct. You can run a search for the phrase on Google to see if people actually say that, based on the number of results.

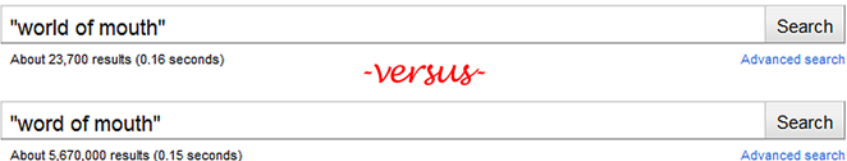
To search for a phrase in Google, simply put it between quotes, like so:



"example phrase"

When in doubt, you can also use this technique to compare two phrases, and see which one is more popular and hence more likely to be correct.

Example: Do we say “world of mouth” or “word of mouth”?



"world of mouth"   
About 23,700 results (0.16 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

*-versus-*

"word of mouth"   
About 5,670,000 results (0.15 seconds) [Advanced search](#)

From the number of results, we can see that one form is obviously used much more than the other. With over 5 million results, “word of mouth” is indeed the correct expression. With around twenty thousand results, “world of mouth” either contains misspellings or is a play on words.

## Internet Tools

Overall, this technique lets you estimate if a way to say something is incorrect (no result or hardly any), acceptable (some result) or popular (many results). It is very useful when composing messages.

## CONTENT

On the Internet, content is king.

We will talk more about finding information you are passionate about in the next chapter. For now, I would like to show you a couple of well-known content sites and how you can use them to improve your English.

## Wikipedia as a translator

Unless you have been living under a rock for the past five years, you must have heard about Wikipedia [<http://www.wikipedia.org>] by now. Wikipedia: “the free encyclopedia that anyone can edit”.



Maybe you have been using it in your native language until now. What I would like for you to do, however, is to start using it in English. Actually, as you search the Internet in English, you will often encounter Wikipedia entries.

A particular feature that is of interest to us is the “Languages” sidebar. Provided that there exists at least one article in another language for the same subject, the “Language” menu appears on the left and lets you

switch to other languages.

For example, this is interesting because if you are on an article written in German or Spanish or Arabic, then you can usually switch to an article on the same subject in English. (Sometimes the other article is a translation; sometimes it is a different article on the same subject, written by different people. It is often a mixture of both.)

Conversely, if you are on an article written in English, you can often swap to an article in your own native language.

What this means is that you can easily read about the same topic in two languages and **this makes figuring out the vocabulary a lot easier**. You can quickly click your way through the English article onto connected subjects or definitions, and switch in-between languages to help you understand everything.

Another benefit is, quite simply, found in the name of the articles. If you are not sure how to say something in English, go to the Wikipedia article on the subject in your native language and, from there, click on the English article link to see how they say it in English. This will not always be a perfect match. At the very least, this gives you a lead on how to talk about the subject in English. For very specific topics that are hard to find in a bilingual dictionary, **this is a great way to know how to say things in English**.

### **Simple English**

Wikipedia also features a language called “Simple English” [<http://simple.wikipedia.org>]. This is a subset of regular English, with less vocabulary and simpler syntax. This is very useful for someone *just* starting learning and reading English.



## VOCABULARY

### Surfing the web

A **link** is a clickable piece of text or picture that leads to another page, or to another part of the same page.

A **search engine** is a website whose job is to help you find pages you are interested in, based on the keywords you type.

A **blog** (short for “web log”) is a website that usually displays postings in reverse chronological order. They often focus on a specific topic, feature a comments system, and link to similar blogs or websites, making it easy for people to socialize online.

A **browser** is a program used to view web pages, usually available through the Internet or other types of networks.

**Wikis** are collaborative websites to which readers can easily contribute content.

### Google News

Google News [<http://news.google.com>] makes it easy to read about the news happening anywhere around the world in various languages and with the focus on different countries.

Everybody wants to keep up with the news, but let us be honest, most news is not all that important because it does not directly affect our lives. As such, it makes for great reading material in English (because, if you do not understand each and every thing, it is not the end of the world).

I do not care if you read about sports, show business or more serious topics. As long as you apply yourself to reading in English, you are a winner! Just read what you fancy. You will learn a lot of vocabulary. With the various languages available,

you can switch between English and your native language. This makes it easy to compare what you have read in English with what you may read or hear in your own country and language. This is a perfect way to check your understanding and compare languages.

Browse the various English editions available, especially: U.S., UK, Australia, Ireland, Canada and New Zealand.

## WRAPPING IT UP

- ❖ Use the Internet to understand *more quickly*.
- ❖ Start using English-English dictionaries online to quickly get the *definition* and *hear* the pronunciation.
- ❖ Get in the habit of looking up words on Google Images to help you *comprehend* and *memorize* the vocabulary more precisely.
- ❖ Take advantage of the multi-lingual nature of Wikipedia to learn a lot of vocabulary on a specific topic. This can also help you translate more easily when needed.

# Making friends online

English speakers only a click away

*“You can make more friends in two months by becoming interested in other people than you can in two years by trying to get other people interested in you.”*

– Dale Carnegie

The previous two chapters have been the chance to read more English and memorize what you learn more easily, by clarifying and visualizing the meaning of what you see. If you have not practiced those two chapters, please do so now. Reading about what to do is not enough; you need to actually *do it for yourself*.

## GOAL & EXIT

### Goal

The goal in this chapter is to start expressing yourself in English. Rather than just reading or receiving the information, you will now be *active* and *interact* with other people. The purpose of this chapter is to get you finding your own words to formulate your own ideas.

### Exit

Move on to the next chapter once you have made 10 friends on the Internet with whom you can readily chat.

## **MEETING PEOPLE ONLINE... AND LIKING IT**

### **What you like**

The Internet is big enough for you to meet a lot of enjoyable people. One of the best ways to do that is to seek those who share the same interests.

Let us assume your passion in life is film. Then, a good start would be to find a place online where you can discuss your common interest with people just like you. It does not matter from which country you are from, or where they are from (as long as they are native speakers of English). Talking about your passions will make it easier to socialize, easier to provide the required efforts, and it actually may teach you a thing or two (or a hundred) about the things you love. Finding such a place online – where you can discuss your passions – is pretty easy.

This is true about film. This is true about your favorite band, your favorite video game, computer science, musical instruments, sports, travelling...and a thousand other topics. You choose!

### **Going at your own pace**

Starting to express yourself in writing can seem pretty challenging. Luckily, we have options at our disposal to balance the difficulty on this one. Basically, you have two ways to write online:

#### ***Self-paced writing***

We call self-paced writing any place where you can take as much time as you want to leave a message. Namely, this will

## *Making friends online*

mean writing on forums, leaving comments on blogs or writing e-mails.

## *Real-time writing*

We call real-time writing any place where you are supposed to respond instantly, close to the speed of a normal conversation (depending on your typing skills!). Namely, this will include chat rooms, instant messaging applications, and other similar options, such as IRC.

## *This is training*

The beauty of both options is that **they leave you enough time to look things up in a dictionary or check on your spelling and grammar before answering.** The first way (self-paced writing) is low-pressure: you have sort of all the time in the world to answer. The second one is more demanding and prepares you to real, in-person conversations.

## **FINDING YOUR OWN SPOT ON THE NET**

Your mission here is simple: find places you like and where you can interact with people on the Internet.

Even if you feel confident with your writing, I suggest you start with *self-paced* writing first. This will give you an opportunity to find your words and shape your own ideas, in English, on topics you like. This will help you write really well, rather than jump into real-time chat, where people write with less care. Once you have gotten in the habit of writing at your own pace, you will move on to real-time chat. Also, this may actually be easier to move from self-paced to real-time because you could then chat with the people you have met on forums, blogs, and similar places.

## Where to write

So you need to first find websites you like. This is more of a web search than anything. The best thing to do is to just open Google or your favorite search engine and search for your favorite subject + “blog” or “forum”.

For example, if you love Alfred Hitchcock’s films, you would search for:

The image shows two screenshots of a search engine interface. The first screenshot is for the search term "hitchcock blog". It shows a search bar with the text "hitchcock blog", a search button, and a result count of "About 1,770,000 results (0.25 seconds)". Below the search bar are three search results, each with a blue link, a snippet of text, and a URL. The second screenshot is for the search term "hitchcock forum". It shows a search bar with the text "hitchcock forum", a search button, and a result count of "About 1,270,000 results (0.24 seconds)". Below the search bar are three search results, each with a blue link, a snippet of text, and a URL.

**hitchcock blog** × **Search**  
About 1,770,000 results (0.25 seconds) Advanced search

▶ [It's Only a Movie... - Alfred Hitchcock Wiki](#)  
The scene has become one of the most famous in cinema history and the movie is now considered to be one of **Hitchcock's** greatest films. ...  
[www.hitchcockwiki.com/blog/](http://www.hitchcockwiki.com/blog/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

[Alfred Hitchcock Geek](#)  
He is currently finalizing plans for the publication of his film guide Notes from an Alfred Hitchcock Geek. **Blog:** [www.alfredhitchcockgeek.com](http://www.alfredhitchcockgeek.com) ...  
[www.alfredhitchcockgeek.com/](http://www.alfredhitchcockgeek.com/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

[The Film Vituperatem: Alfred Hitchcock Blog-A-Thon \(November 2006\)](#)  
15 Nov 2006 ... Alfred Hitchcock Blog-A-Thon (November 2006). Well here it is! My contribution to the many Blog-A-Thon Entries in honour of Alfred Hitchcock ...  
[pasquish.blogspot.com/.../alfred-hitchcock-blog-thon-journal.html](http://pasquish.blogspot.com/.../alfred-hitchcock-blog-thon-journal.html) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

**hitchcock forum** × **Search**  
About 1,270,000 results (0.24 seconds) Advanced search

▶ [Alfred Hitchcock Wiki Forum • Index page](#)  
**Hitchcock** DVDs. No new posts, DVD **Forum**. General discussion relating to the films of **Hitchcock** on DVD. 218. 1257. Sun Aug 08, 2010 1:32 pm. Mr\_Lowery ...  
[www.hitchcockwiki.com/forums/](http://www.hitchcockwiki.com/forums/) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

[Alfred Hitchcock Forum - Topix](#)  
Alfred Hitchcock Forum. Forums and message boards for Alfred Hitchcock. Search Forum. Start a Discussion · Email me when the Alfred Hitchcock Forum is ...  
[www.topix.com/forum/who/alfred-hitchcock](http://www.topix.com/forum/who/alfred-hitchcock) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

[Alfred Hitchcock Forum - Discussion Boards at MovieTome](#)  
Visit the Alfred Hitchcock discussion board and join the crowd at MovieTome.  
[www.movietome.com/people/...hitchcock/forums/index.html](http://www.movietome.com/people/...hitchcock/forums/index.html) - [Cached](#) - [Similar](#)

This works especially well for well-defined topics such as: specific hobbies, celebrity’s names, or the sciences. For more general terms (such as “movies”, “music”, “sports”) you will get so many results that it can be a hassle to look through them all – or, this could be the chance to check them out and see what

## *Making friends online*

the mood is like on each forum, before joining the one you like the best.

If you have a specific topic you would like to discuss, now is your chance to do so. Just look for an online discussion of the subject and get writing. Remember, the more you are interested in the topic, the easier and the more natural it will be for you to participate.

### ***Finding your forum online, as easy as 1-2-3!***

#### **❶ Go to Wikipedia, to the version in your own language**

Think of your hobby you like the most and locate the Wikipedia article dedicated to it.

#### **❷ Look for the translation in English**

In the left column, in the languages area, click the “English” link. This takes you to the English article about your hobby. In the English article, note the name of the article. This is the term you should look for regarding your hobby.

#### **❸ Look for a forum!**

On Google or your favorite search engine, look for “forum” and the name of your hobby.

And *voilà!* You should see a list of forums regarding your hobby. Visit 3-5 of them, see which one you like best, and start reading and posting – in English!

## **What to write**

What to write about on a blog is self-evident: you comment on the blog posts that interest you.

On a forum, it is often best to first look for existing topics, rather than create your own.

## **How to write**

Writing is a personal thing that is influenced both by your own personality and your exposure to the subject matter. As such, you will inevitably convey your own personality through your writing. At the same time, you also have to be critical of what you read, to examine what is good English and to decide what you like and do not like. As time goes by, you will be able to express yourself with good English in your own style.

To start with, make profit of the existing posts – be it on a blog or forum – to learn about the vocabulary in use for the topic (a topic you do like, if you chose it properly!). Use the techniques of the previous chapter to make it easier for you to understand what you read.

Next, make sure you know what you want to write about. Here, we are more concerned about *reacting* to what you have just read rather than coming up with new topics. Explore how the post inspired you. How do you feel about what you have just read? What did you particularly like? What does it remind you of? Make a list of all those impressions so as to have a summary of what you want to write about in your post.

It is best to make that list in English obviously, but at this point, it is still acceptable if you do it in your own native language. This is just a list.

Your job is then to expand on each of those points in English. Make a paragraph for each one. If you still feel somewhat insecure about grammar, now is the time to address it. You may also want to use the Google comparison technique shown in the previous chapter, in order to check that what you write is indeed correct English.



## *Making friends online*

Keep in mind that a well-written piece of text is not just about good English construction. It must also be interesting. The two often go hand-in-hand.

As you share your experience and comments, try to bring something valuable. This could be an interesting insight, a funny comment, or information anyone interested in the original post might want to read.

If you need extra help with the vocabulary, use the Wikipedia technique of the previous chapter, and toggle between articles written in English and those in your own language if need be. It is perfectly okay to do your own web-searches and document yourself while writing your message.

Finally, do not try to be perfect. The value of the exercise is in getting into the habit of writing. Of course, your texts in six months will be much better than the ones you write now. As they say: “no worries.” Just make sure you post something that you think is valuable, then move on.

## **The habit of writing**

Remember the goal in this chapter is to get you writing frequently. Depending on how much you write and how long it takes you, you should post 1-3 comments a day. If you take the time to write long and detailed replies, this could take you an hour a post. In that case, it is okay to post a reply just once a day. If you go for short replies (1-3 paragraphs), make sure that you write at least three of those per day.

Also, try to be both a friendly and regular visitor, so as to foster a good feeling with the people on the blog or forum. This way, it makes it all very natural to ask for their MSN or Facebook contact in order to chat.

## **FINDING YOUR WORDS, FASTER**

### **Transitioning**

As soon as you feel you can write fast, you should consider moving to real-time chats *in addition* to the forums and blogs mentioned above. You should proceed this way for two main reasons. The first one is to keep working on writing proper English. The other one is to keep networking with people and get more contacts.

Meeting people through the Internet is unlike meeting them in real-life. People may open up more easily because they feel safe, knowing you are miles apart. On the other hand, they can sort of close down because they do not feel safe exchanging contact information with people over the Internet. This is all perfectly okay. Just move on to the next person when you feel someone is not willing to chat with you.

### **Real-time tools**

You have quite a few options to chat with people online. You will find a quick list below, along with a brief overview.

Just use the option most convenient to you and your contact. It is best to send a private message (on forums) or an e-mail (on blogs) to people to exchange contacts and arrange a chat.

### **Facebook**

This is my favorite means of contact nowadays. If you comment on blogs and sign up to be updated on new comments, you will oftentimes receive e-mails from the person running the blog. From there, you may want to look for them on Facebook, based on their e-mail address (just paste the e-mail address in the search field, where you would usually type

## *Making friends online*

the person's name) and *voilà*, you can add them to your Facebook contacts.

### **MSN**

MSN used to be like *the* big chat thing in the 2000's. Nowadays, it is still in widespread use but has lost a lot of ground to Facebook. I would usually add people that often post on forums in MSN, because people who are into forums often are into MSN.

### **Skype**

Skype is well-known for its phone-like capabilities. However, you can also use it as a chat system. Not bad if you come across people who use it, since it makes it easy to transition to (quality) voice conversations when you feel like it.

### **Google Talk**

This chat system is compatible with many others but is not used widely. This is handy if you have a Gmail address and your contacts do also because, then you can chat directly from Gmail.

### **ICQ**

ICQ used to be by far the most popular chat client. It never really got the credit or long-term success it deserved. It was eclipsed by Microsoft's MSN and bulldozer-style marketing. There is still a vibrant community around it though.

### **IRC**

IRC is a special case. IRC is not a brand or an instant messaging system like the other systems previously mentioned. You can use IRC to join a lot of different, independent servers. This is great to find chat rooms on highly targeted topics. The

added bonus is that people there are often *regulars* and *experts*, who can provide valuable help. Please see the IRC guide in this chapter.

### **General chat room**

If you need a place where you can quickly and easily chat with people, I recommend you try ICQ chat [<http://www.icq.com/icqchat/>], as you do not need to install anything to use it. This works well as a “Plan-B” when you need to go practice your writing skills live but have no contacts available. Keep in mind that it is better to create some serious contacts, as described above, through blogs/forums (and of course real life!), because then you can have more personal and interesting conversations.

### **A quick guide to IRC (*Internet Relay Chat*)**

On IRC, chat rooms are called “channels”.

IRC is especially popular among people who are into technology, video games, and *animes* (animation and comics from Asia, especially Japan). This is sort of the *geeks' chat system*. It easily counts in the tens of thousands of users per server. I recommend it if you are into any of the aforementioned topics.

To use IRC, you will need an IRC client, that is to say: a program to connect to the IRC servers. The most popular one by far is mIRC [<http://www.mirc.com>], for Windows. Apple users can use IrCle [<http://www.ircle.com>]. Visit the website and install the program.

Once the program is installed, you will need to choose a nickname and, all especially, an IRC server. If you have no particular ideas, I will introduce you to a couple below:

QuakeNet is great for multiplayer video games. If you love video games, especially computer video games, this is definitely the place to visit. This is also the largest IRC network in the world and is mostly European. Great to hang out and have a laugh.

Freenode is great for new technologies, especially, free software and open-source. A must-visit for any web or software developer. Great to talk shop and get help.

Finally, note that, despite the descriptions above, you can usually find many different topics on each of those IRC servers. As an example, on those networks you can find an *#iphone* channel, even though the main common interest on that network has nothing to do with the iPhone. So once you are on a network, try your luck on subjects you fancy.

## **VOCABULARY**

Language-wise, a major difference between self-paced and real-time discussion is that real-time chat makes heavy use of slang: general slang, Internet slang and acronyms.

To help you figure it all out, here are the main terms in use in chat rooms.

Enjoy using slang in the chat rooms, as this prepares you to talking in person (because of the way real conversations favor brevity). Do keep striving to write perfect English when you participate in forums and on blogs, forever. This is important to have both skills: the ability to write great English; and, the ability to talk in a more relaxed, casual, way.

## **WRAPPING IT UP**

- ❖ Find blogs or forums on your favorite topics.
- ❖ Participate in those websites regularly so people remember you and you remember them.
- ❖ Get in touch with the people you appreciate, in order to chat with them in real-time.
- ❖ Keep at it until you have at least 10 friends you can regularly chat with.

## Online slang and acronyms

AFAIK	As Far As I Know
AFK	Away From Keyboard
ASAP	As Soon As Possible
ASL	Age, Sex, Location
ATM	At The Moment
BBL	Be Back Later
BBIAB	Be Back In A Bit
B/C	Because
BRB	Be Right Back (“I will be right back”)
BS	B*llsh*t
BTW	By The Way
CU or Cya	See You (“See you later”)
FYI	For Your Information
G2G or GTG	Gotta Go (“I have (got) to go”)
IDK	I Don’t Know
IRL	In Real Life
J/K	Just Kidding
K	O.K.
L8R or LTR	Later (“See you later”)
LMAO	Laughing My Ass Off (Laughing a lot)
LOL	Laughing Out Loud or Lots of Laughter
NVM	Never mind
NP	No problem
OMG	Oh My God!
PLS or PLZ	Please
PPL	People
ROFL	Rolling On The Floor Laughing
THX	Thanks
WB	Welcome Back
WTF	What The F***
YW	You’re welcome



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Appendix 1: **recommended novels** to start reading in English.



Appendix 2: **recommended TV programs** to improve your English.




Appendix 3: ways to **watch American and British TV from abroad**.

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Have fun improving your English!

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