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Imitating a Speaker Model: How to Improve your Speaking, Listening, and Pronunciation

1. Choose a video for practice from a website that provides a written transcript (e.g., [TED Talks](#), [EnglishCentral.com](#), [YouTube](#), etc.). Try to locate a speaker teaching or talking about concepts from your field. You only need to choose one minute for practice (or up to 2 minutes but no more than that).
2. Listen to the video—without looking at the transcript—just to see how much you understand. Replay parts that are hard for you to catch. Watch the body language of the speaker to see how people move when they speak.
3. Once you've had an opportunity to listen with no script, print out a hard copy of the transcript.
4. At first, read along silently as you listen to the model. This technique allows your brain to make stronger connections between what you hear (which may be difficult for you to understand) and what you read (all or most of which I assume you will understand). Pay special attention to the parts that were hard for you to comprehend orally in step 2. You should underline new vocabulary or interesting uses of language on your transcript. You can look these words or phrases up in the [Merriam-Webster online dictionary](#) and/or in the spoken corpora listed below.
5. Practice reading the script aloud while you listen. Try to maintain the same speed, rhythm, and intonation as the speaker. At this point, don't worry AT ALL about how you sound; just try to let the speech flow through you.
6. If it helps you, feel free to mark pauses, stress, and intonation on your transcript.
7. When you feel ready, make a recording—audio or even better, video—of the transcript for yourself.
8. Listen carefully to the recording and reflect on your performance: Which parts did you pronounce well and which parts are still hard for you? Feel free to listen and record the same 1-2-minute segment again. The more you listen and the more you repeat while listening, the more familiar the melody and rhythm of the speech will become to you. Practicing intensively with shorter segments of speech can provide enormous benefit to your listening speaking, and pronunciation.

- **Spoken corpora search tools:**

A corpus is a database of transcripts (spoken and/or written) that can be searched for a particular word or string of words. This is useful for checking the frequency and usage of words, expressions, and idioms.

- Ted Talk search tool: <http://yohasebe.com/tcse>
- Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English: <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/cgi/c/corpus/corpus?page=home;c=micase;cc=micas>
[e](#)
- Corpus of Contemporary American English: <http://corpus.byu.edu/coca/>