

Master 100 Essential Sentences Like a Native

English learning resource · EN

Key words & expressions · English

18 learning entries

Study task: Listen again and notice the expressions you studied.

1

to sound native

DEF

to speak in a way that is indistinguishable from someone who grew up with the language — in rhythm, vocabulary choices, intonation, and cultural references

Sounding native is often misunderstood as having a native accent. It is much broader — it is about the whole feel of the language: the idioms you choose, the contractions you use, the pauses you take. Many non-native speakers sound more native than actual natives in their English.

You don't need a British accent to sound native — you need natural rhythm, idioms, and confidence.

The sentences in this episode are chosen specifically because they will make you sound native in casual conversation.

2

to nail a conversation

DEF

to handle a conversation perfectly — saying exactly the right things with the right tone, leaving the interaction feeling successful

Nail a conversation implies precision and satisfaction — not just getting through it, but doing it well. The goal of learning essential sentences is to give you the tools to nail more interactions in English.

She nailed the conversation with her manager because she had practised the key phrases that morning.

Once you have these sentences ready, you can nail conversations you used to dread.

3

authenticity

DEF

the quality of being genuine and true to yourself — not performing or pretending to be something you are not

Authenticity in language learning challenges the 'sound native' goal. Many learners aim to erase their accent and identity to sound native, but research shows that authentic non-native speakers — confident, genuine, expressive in their own voice — are often more effective communicators. You do not need to be a native speaker; you need to be an authentic one.

Authenticity matters more than perfection — speak in your own voice, not an imitation of one.

She stopped trying to imitate a native accent and instead focused on authenticity — clear, genuine, confident.

4

fluency

DEF

the ability to communicate ideas smoothly and efficiently — without long pauses, searching for words, or losing the thread

Fluency is often confused with perfection. A fluent speaker is not necessarily error-free — they are smooth. They have strategies for when they do not know a word (paraphrase, ask, keep going). Fluency is about flow, not flawlessness. Many accurate but non-fluent speakers freeze mid-sentence; fluent speakers navigate through.

Fluency means keeping the conversation flowing — paraphrase and continue, do not stop and apologise.

Her grammar was still imperfect but her fluency was remarkable — she never lost the thread of a conversation.



5

to pick up on

DEF

to notice, detect or become aware of something subtle — a tone, a social cue, a linguistic pattern — without being explicitly told

Pick up on is the receptive awareness verb. Fluent speakers pick up on social cues, tone shifts, implied meanings, and cultural signals. For language learners, this is a late-stage skill: you cannot pick up on nuance you do not yet have the language to recognise. But as proficiency grows, so does the ability to pick up on subtleties.

Experienced English speakers pick up on sarcasm, irony, and tone very quickly — this comes with exposure.

She had been in the UK for two years when she finally started picking up on British understatement.

6

to blend in

DEF

to fit naturally into an environment or group — without standing out or drawing attention to being different

Blend in is the assimilation goal some language learners have. For some, blending in linguistically — not drawing attention through accent or error — is the goal. For others, standing out is fine. It is worth asking: am I trying to blend in, or am I trying to communicate? They are different goals that require different practice.

You do not need to blend in linguistically — being understood is more important than being indistinguishable.

After three years abroad, she did not quite blend in, but she communicated so well it no longer mattered.

7

to catch yourself

DEF

to suddenly become aware that you are doing, thinking, or saying something — especially something habitual or unintended

Catch yourself is the metacognitive moment in language use. You catch yourself translating instead of thinking in English. You catch yourself using a word you know is wrong. This moment of awareness — the internal editor — is the starting point of self-correction. The goal is not to eliminate errors but to catch them earlier.

Catch yourself when you translate word-for-word — try to think in English directly instead.

She started catching herself mid-sentence using the wrong tense and correcting immediately, which accelerated her progress.

8

to come naturally

DEF

to require no effort or thought because something has been learned so thoroughly that it happens automatically

Come naturally is the acquisition goal. When something comes naturally in a second language, it has been fully acquired — it no longer requires conscious processing. Grammar rules do not need to be recalled. Vocabulary does not need to be looked up. The language just flows. This is the point where using English stops feeling like work.

Fluency comes when grammar and vocabulary start to come naturally — when you stop consciously applying rules.

After two years of daily English, basic conversations came naturally to her — she no longer thought about grammar.

9

to express yourself

DEF

to communicate your thoughts, feelings, opinions, and personality in language — fully and accurately

Express yourself is the ultimate goal of language learning. It is not about grammar or vocabulary — it is about having the linguistic tools to say exactly what you mean, with the nuance you intend. Many learners plateau at a functional level but feel frustrated because they cannot fully express themselves — they are reduced to simpler thoughts than they actually have.

The goal is to express yourself in English exactly as you do in your mother tongue — with all your complexity.

She started feeling truly comfortable in English when she could finally express herself with the same wit she had in Spanish.



10

colloquial language

DEF

informal, everyday speech — the kind of English used in casual conversation rather than in formal or written contexts
Colloquial language is what learners hear when they socialise with native speakers but rarely see in textbooks. It includes contractions, idioms, informal vocabulary, and natural reductions. Mastering colloquial language is what makes a learner sound natural, as opposed to sounding like a textbook — technically correct but oddly formal.

Colloquial language is learned through exposure to real conversation, not through grammar books.

She had excellent formal English from years of study, but struggled to understand colloquial language in social situations.

11

to be trying to

DEF

To be making an effort to do something at the present time.

The continuous form emphasises an activity in progress.

I am trying to improve my listening.

They are trying to solve the problem without delay.

12

to be going to

DEF

To intend to do something or predict a likely event.

The pronunciation often reduces to gonna in informal speech, but formal writing keeps going to.

I am going to call her after work.

Those clouds mean it is going to rain.

13

to be hoping to

DEF

To want something to happen and consider it possible.

Softer and less certain than planning to.

I am hoping to visit London next year.

She is hoping to hear from the university soon.

14

to be looking for

DEF

To be trying to find someone or something.

Look for describes the search; find describes a successful result.

I am looking for a quieter place to study.

They are looking for a new designer.

15

to look forward to

DEF

To feel pleased and excited about something in the future.

To is a preposition here, so it is followed by a noun or -ing form.

I am looking forward to meeting you.

We look forward to the holidays every year.



16

I don't know if...

DEF

A common opening used to express uncertainty about a possibility.

It can also soften a suggestion or disagreement.

I do not know if the shop is still open.

I do not know if that approach will work.

17

right now

DEF

At this exact moment or during the present period.

More emphatic and conversational than now.

I cannot talk right now.

The company is hiring right now.

18

gotta

DEF

An informal spoken reduction of have got to or have to.

Common in speech and lyrics; avoid it in formal writing.

I gotta leave before the last train.

We have gotta be careful with that promise.

