



Talk to yourself – in English

There's a very simple technique. Everyone does it in their native language. It's easy. It's free. You can do it anywhere. And when students do it in English, it gives them extra practice. The technique: *Talk to yourself- in English.*

By “talk to yourself”, I don't mean like the crazy people we sometimes see arguing with themselves and losing the argument. I'm talking about silently practicing English. This is really a kind of mental rehearsal. But, unlike rehearsal for a speech or a drama, you may or may not ever actually say these sentences out loud. It doesn't matter. Just spending time “mentally speaking” gives practice and a review of vocabulary and other part of language.

Talk to yourself in English – practice ideas

Many students spend time on trains or busses every day. Here are some easy ways to practice English. Use these ideas. Talk to yourself *silently* in English.



- **Introductions.** Look around. Notice people in the bus/train or on the street. If you were meeting them, what would you ask? What would you say about yourself? (“Hi, I'm (name). I'm a student at (school's name)./ What do you do? ...”).
- **Describing people.** Look around. Notice the people in the bus/train or on the street. In your mind, describe their clothing, hair, etc. (“He's wearing a purple shirt, jeans and sunglasses. He has medium-length hair. He's cute! ...”).
- **Schedules and routines.** On the bus/train on the way home, think about your schedule today. Was it typical? (“I got up at 7:00. That's what I usually do. Today I had a new partner in English class. I hardly ever talk to her.”).
- **Describing places** Look out the window. In your mind, describe the buildings/places you see. (“That building is green. Actually, it is kind of ugly green. There's an old house with a blue roof. ...”).
- **Giving directions.** Imagine the bus is a taxi. In your mind, you are giving the taxi driver directions in English (“Turn right at the next corner. See that signal? Turn left there.”).
- **The past** On the bus/train on the way home, think about every thing you did today. How many different verbs can you use? (“I ate toast and drank coffee for breakfast. I took a shower and washed my hair....”).

- **Jobs, abilities and interests.** Look at people in the train/bus or on the street. Or look at stores and businesses. What jobs do you imagine the people do? What abilities do they need? ("She's beautiful. She could be a model. A model has to be able to look good all the time. There is a doctor's office. A doctor has to have a license...").
- **Invitations.** In your mind, think of all the ways you know to invite people. Then look around the bus/train. Imagine all the people are your friends. What would you like to invite each person to do? Think of what you would say in English. ("Hi. Would you like to play tennis this afternoon? How about going to a movie?").
- **The future.** Think about next weekend (or your next school vacation. What do you want to do? Use as many verbs as you can. ("I'm going to meet my friends Saturday night? Maybe we'll go to (place)....").

OR • Think about your life in 5, 10, 20 years into the future. What is your dream? Describe it in English. What little things can you do TODAY to help make that dream come true? (Someday, I'll travel around the world. Having good English will help me. Today I am practicing by thinking of English sentences right now!...").

- **Shopping.** Look out the window. What kinds of stores do you see? When you see a store, how many things can you think of that they sell? ("There's a stationery store. They sell notebooks, pens, mechanical pencils, erasers,...").
- **Process (how to do things)** Think of things you know how to do or foods you can make. In your mind, give the directions in English. ("This is how to make cup noodle. First, boil water. Then...").
- **Likes and dislikes** Look out the window. What do you see that you like? What don't you like? ("That couple is holding hands. I like the feeling of love. Some guy is smoking. I dislike cigarette smoke. ...")
- **Feelings/emotions.** Look at people in the bus/train or on the street How do you think they feel? What are their emotions? Imagine the reasons. ("That man looks really bored. I'll bet he had a hard day at work. That couple looks really happy. They are holding hands. I think they are in love. ...").
- **Giving reasons.** Look around the bus/train. Notice things people have. Imagine the reasons they have them. ("She's wearing glasses. Maybe she needs them to read. He's using his mobile phone for texting (emailing). Maybe he's using it to write to his girlfriend. She's got a designer bag. Maybe...")
- **Instructions** (imperatives). Look at people in the bus/train or on the street. What are they doing? Imagine they are robots. You are the robot master. What did you tell them to get them to do things? ("Stand up!. Hold on to that pole. Walk down the street. Push the "open" button. ...")
- **Music** If you carry an iPod or other mp3 player, try listening to English songs. Really pay attention to the words. If you need extra help, you can usually find the words on the internet. Search for: (song title) lyrics. ("lyrics = song's words). If you don't carry an iPod, think of a song in your first language. How would you explain it in English?
- **Happiness.** On the bus/train on the way home, think about your life. How many good things can you think of? ("The weather is nice today. My family loves me. I ate chocolate today. It was delicious.").