

How to improve your pronunciation

In this lesson you will learn ways to make your speaking more effective.

Starter

- 1 Look at the cartoon. Can you explain the joke?



- 2 What aspects of pronunciation do you think are most important for communicating effectively?

Challenge

- 1 Listen to the dialogue. Do the people know each other?
- 2 Different intonation patterns are used in certain questions, and to express emotion. Listen again, looking at the questions below. Mark the intonation patterns. What do you notice about them?

Example: You're Jerry, aren't you?

- 1 You had a good trip?
 - 2 But it's not far to get here from Manchester, is it?
 - 3 What did you think of Moscow?
 - 4 Is it expensive these days?
 - 5 You're going to the plenary talk?
- 3 What does each person's intonation tell you about how they feel?
 - 4 Match a prompt from 1 with a response from 2 and a follow-up comment from 3. Then listen to check your answers. How does the speaker use intonation effectively in the responses?

Practice

- 1 Your colleague (your teacher) has recently been to a conference in Prague. Using the notes below, try to guess some of the details of the trip, and formulate questions to confirm your ideas. Use phrases from **Challenge** and appropriate intonation to help.
 - Hotel - central?
 - Conference talk? Participants?
 - Day trip?
 - Weather?
 - Local food? Beer?

Language box

In *yes / no* questions, the intonation usually rises at the end, while in *Wh-* questions it usually falls. Statements used as questions are *yes / no* questions, so the intonation rises:

Did you go to the meeting? ----- ↗

What did you talk about? ----- ↘

The meetings always last so long? ----- ↗

If you think a situation is possible but unlikely, stress the modal verb and use a rising intonation:

We **might** have the conference in Prague. ----- ↗

If you think a situation is more probable, stress the main information and use a falling intonation:

She may be flying **back** tonight. ----- ↘

Hint

Some nouns and verbs have the same form, but with different stress. The stress is usually on the first syllable of the noun, but the second syllable of the verb:

record (n), **re·cord** (v); **present** (n), **pre·sent** (v)

Some words, however, change their meaning when the stress moves:

dis·count (v) = to reduce the price of something

dis·count (v) = to exclude, consider that something isn't important

1 Prompt

Did I tell you? I'm going to Rome to a conference.

2 Response

Excellent.

3 Follow-up comment

Lucky you!

I'd rather you gave the documents to him personally.

Has he?

And Sam's off work too.

John won't be in today. He's got flu.

Rome?

I'll sign it immediately.

They've finally sent the contract.

Would you?

OK. I'll go after lunch.

- 5 Intonation sometimes carries more meaning than words do by themselves. Listen to the pairs of sentences below. In each case, match one sentence from each pair with the speaker's intended meaning.

1a We may have to postpone the advertising campaign.

It's likely to happen.

1b We may have to postpone the advertising campaign.

I don't know if it'll happen.

2a Are you coming for lunch with us? Yes, I think so.

I don't think so.

2b Are you coming for lunch with us? Yes, I think so.

Yes, it's very likely.

3a They could be here at 5.

But I don't think so.

3b They could be here at 5.

I don't know if they will.

To disagree politely, use positive words but intonation which shows hesitation. The intonation rises and falls more, ending with a rise:

A Are you coming for a drink with us later?

B Well, actually, I'd love to but ...

Stressing the modal verb in a sentence emphasizes the meaning of the modal, while not stressing it emphasizes the information. Flatter intonation is more direct:

You **mustn't** smoke so much.

You **mustn't** smoke so much.

Look

Look again at listening scripts 43.1-43.3 on page 137 and listen to the recordings. Find other examples of intonation and sentence stress.

Lesson record

3 new words

from this lesson

1

2

3

3 useful phrases

from this lesson

1

2

3

Things to remember

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