

## CONCISE GUIDE TO IMPROVING ENGLISH SPEAKING

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Lovin' English: [www.nochinglish.org](http://www.nochinglish.org)

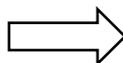
In my twenty plus years of teaching in China, by far the most frequently asked question Chinese students ask me is, “How can I improve my oral English?” In a word, and literally a single word, the answer is simple: *Practice*. However, learners of English want something more concrete, something specific they can do when they “practice.” In other words, they want to know *how* to practice. This simple guide does not expound upon the many complexities of language study, but it should be enough to help the reader begin making measurable improvement.

After I tried, perhaps thousands of times, answering the question about improving one’s spoken English, I realized I needed to give students more than a one-word answer. In order to avoid having to spend hours answering the question, I decided to write my entire answer in a book. So, if you want my short answer, just continue reading this brief article. However, if you are serious enough about improving your spoken English that you desire a more complete answer, read the book.

“Teacher, how can I improve my spoken English?” I used to answer this, too-often asked, question with one word: “Practice!” Most people were not satisfied with this answer, so I would often spend long periods of time explaining the process of improving oral English. I don’t waste time doing that anymore. Now, if “practice” doesn’t satisfy the person, I just say, “Read the book.” This book is my answer to the question, “Teacher, how can I improve my spoken English.”

How can I  
improve my  
English speaking?

Read the  
book.



美国老师教你说出好英文，  
机械工业出版社

After you read all of the books you can find about oral English, you still have to practice. So, let’s talk about who to practice with, and how to practice.

### Who to Practice With

There is no single best answer to the question of who to practice speaking English speaking. The “who” question stems from two problems students often mention, the first a question, and second a statement: (1) Is it better to practice with other Chinese or with “foreigners?” and (2) “I can’t find anyone to practice with.” These two problems, if not solved, can lead to a delay in oral English improvement.

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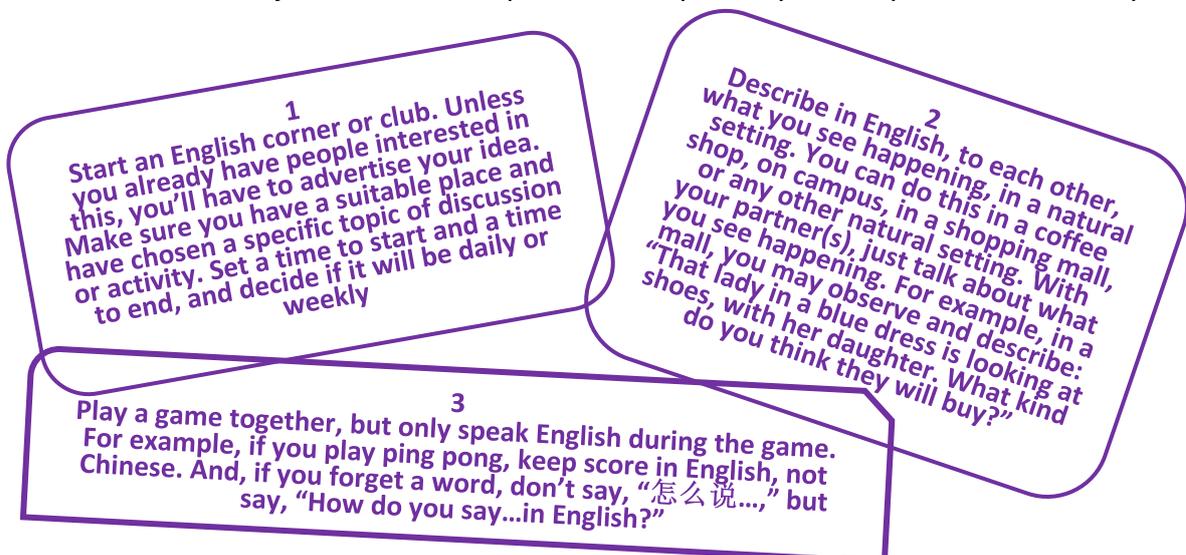
For the first part, my answer may not be what you hope to hear, but for the most immediate results, practice English with *anyone* who is willing to practice with you. Even if the other person has a strange accent, it doesn't mean you cannot speak to them. You don't have to copy their accent, but you can still practice speaking. Also, perhaps noticed my use of quotation marks around the word, "foreigner." I have to ask: what do you mean by a foreigner? Do you mean you want to practice English with someone from Japan or India? That would be OK, since you should practice with anyone who is willing, but I think when you say you want to practice with a foreigner, you mean a native English speaker. Foreigner, Chinese, or native English speaker, it doesn't matter. Don't wait for the ideal language partner. You need to start improving today, so you must practice with anyone who is willing.

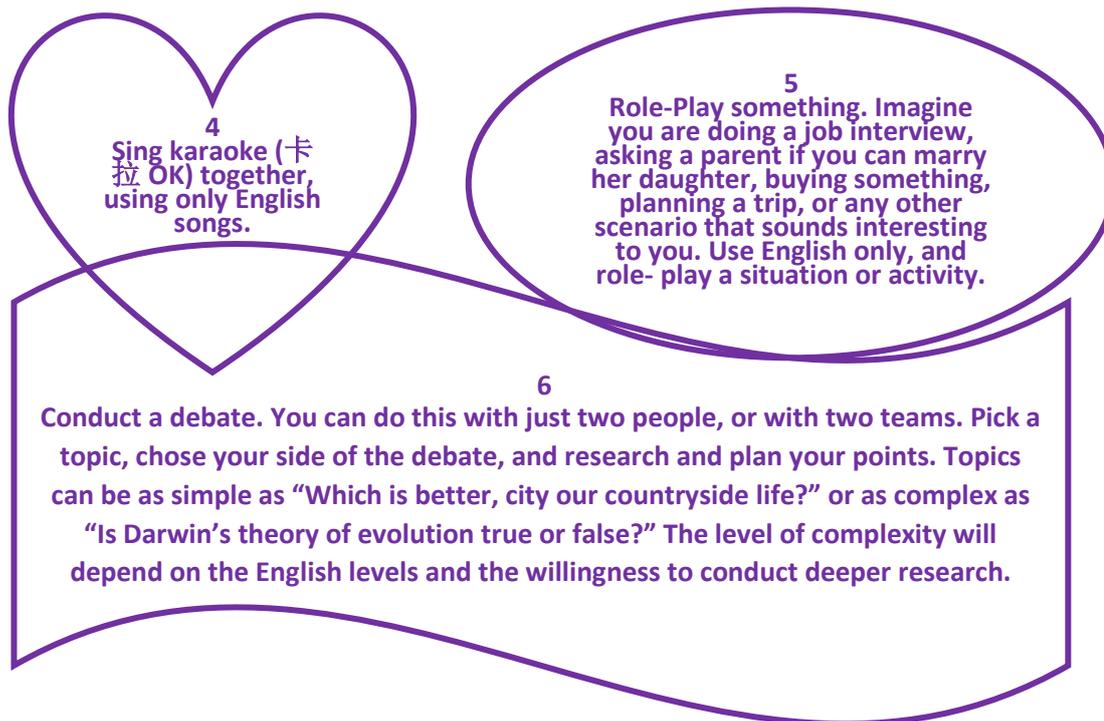
As for the second excuse, "I can't find anyone to practice with," it is just that; an excuse. How can you live in a country with over a billion people and not be able to find someone who wants to practice English. You are not the only person in China who wants to improve their English communication skills. Put up a notice in your school. Post your notice on WeChat. If you have to, tape a paper on your shirt with the notice. However you choose show it, today, and don't delay, write a notice that says: "I am looking for someone to practice English with." You can even write your notice in Chinese, and include your phone number. Somebody else out there wants to practice English.

The real question is not whether or not someone is willing to practice with you; the real question is how bad to you really want to improve your spoken English. Have you ever watched a beggar? I don't mean a fake one, but a real one, a person who is hungry. They ask every person who passes by them for money. Are they more successful at getting food money than you are at finding someone to practice English with? It all depends on how bad you want it.

## How to Practice Spoken English

If you search the internet, you'll find thousands of ideas for practicing Oral English, so for this article, we'll just look at a few practical, easy ideas you and your friends can try.





## Practicing Alone

It’s nearly impossible to reach native-level conversational English without someone to practice together with, but if you really apply yourself, you can make tangible improvement alone. However, it requires a lot of self-discipline. You can’t always just do what you feel like. With a language partner, you both agree to start speaking English together at a set time, and you hold each other accountable. But, without another person, it’s easy to just take a nap or revert back to one’s mother language when tired or otherwise distracted. So, the most important element of practicing spoken English alone is self-discipline.

If you must practice without a partner, try one of these activities:

**1**

Watch an English movie, and imagine you are one of the characters in the show. Every time that character speaks, you speak together with him/her. Try to match the character’s accent and intonation. This activity works best if the movie has English subtitles. Otherwise, you won’t know what to say.

**2**

Read an English novel out loud. I don’t recommend this activity for beginners, because they tend to develop a habit of sounding like a book when they speak English. If you decide to try this simple activity, be careful to use correct intonation. Don’t simply read speaking monotone, like a robot.

**3**

Listen to an English recording, preferably by a native English speaker, and repeat each sentence. Again, pay attention to intonation. To do this activity, you'll have to be able to stop the device after each sentence in order to give yourself enough time to speak.

These few activities should be enough to get you started, but there are lots of other methods, activities, and useful ideas for effectively improving English speaking. If you are serious about improving your English communication skills, I'll give you the same answer I give to others:

