Five Essential Techniques for Clear Speech

- Pronouncing the American English ‘th’ and ‘r’

The ‘th’ sound is a continuous sound. To produce a voiceless ‘th’ as in the word “Thursday”:
1. Gently bite the tip of your tongue
2. You must be able to see your tongue
3. Release a stream of air
   To produce a voiced ‘th’ as in the word “father”, do steps 1 and 2 above and use your voice.

To produce a consonant ‘r’ as in the word “react”:
1. Raise your tongue so that the sides, near the back, slightly touch your upper teeth
2. Round your lips and push them forward
3. The tip of your tongue should not touch any part of your mouth
4. Use your voice while quickly releasing your tongue

- Modifying your rate of speech

The key to speaking at a rate that matches your listener’s expectations is to use correct pausing. Pausing helps your listener define grammatical units and gives them time to discern meaning. Pause between phrases and sentences, and before punctuation marks and conjunctions. Be sure to also clearly pronounce all final consonants.

- The need to pronounce the end of every word

In English, unlike in many other languages, **grammar is determined by word endings.**
1. Adding ‘s’ or ‘es’ to the end of a word creates the plural form of that word.
   - ‘s’ may be pronounced as /s/ , /z/ , or /iz/
2. Past tense: Pronouncing ‘ed’ endings is very important, as ‘ed’ changes the meaning of a sentence. For instance, “I create sculptures” and “I created sculptures” have different meanings.
   - ‘ed’ may be pronounced as /d/ , /t/ , or /zd/
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In English, we link final consonants to initial vowels, contributing to the rhythm of our speech.

When a word ends with a consonant sound and the next word begins with a vowel sound, link the consonant sound to the vowel sound. Do not pause between the words or add an extra syllable.

- I’m in a hurry. = I’m inna hurry.
- He was away for a week = He was away fora week.
- Did you book it? = Did you book it?

- Noun/verb syllable stress

Stress the first syllable when the word is a noun. Stress the second syllable when the word is a verb.

conduct vs. conduct  Be sure to conduct yourself with proper conduct.

object vs. object  I object to that object being used as evidence.

address vs. address  She will address the envelope with his address.

- Practicing five minutes a day

When speaking aloud, focus on one sound per day. Set aside a couple of minutes in the morning, in the afternoon, and again in the evening to specifically concentrate on words with a particular sound. This is 'mindful practice'. The goal is to build an awareness of both the sound and how to produce it, consistently, in context. Alternate this practice with reading aloud, underlining or highlighting target sounds in the passage.

Choose someone you speak English with on a daily basis. Perhaps this is a colleague, friend, or neighbor. Every time you’re in a conversation with that person, speak with deliberation and intention. This is the perfect way to practice your pronunciation on a regular basis and in the context of everyday speech.