



Kev's English Podcast: Episode 11: How to Find Language Exchange Partners To Practice With

In this episode I talk about how and where to find English speakers to practice with, both online and off.

My links..

If you want lessons, click here <https://www.italki.com/en/teacher/1078268>

If you want to see my videos, click here <https://www.youtube.com/@TheEnglishNative>

Hello and welcome to Kev's English Podcast, Real English, every week. Hello, hello. Welcome to Kev's English Podcast, episode number 11.

It's been a week or so since the previous one, but we've had lots of building work in my apartment block, so not very quiet, not very ideal conditions for recording. Anyway, it seems to be quiet now for the time being, so I'll see if I can get something recorded. Now, what I want to talk about today is how to increase your speaking practise, how to get more opportunities to speak in English.

This will help you with your pronunciation and fluency. Now, this came about... I was talking to some of my Iranian students on my group in Telegram, IELTS9.pro, if you want to find us and join. And as you may know, I have live speaking sessions two or three times a week there, you know, just a bit of practise.

If they've got any questions about IELTS, I answer them, etc. And one of the things they were complaining of was that in their country there's virtually no natives. I mean, English, you know, American, Canadian, etc., for reasons which we won't go into here, though you can probably guess.

And how they, you know, they have a general lack of practise, so their pronunciation is usually not so good, they have no one to correct them, or, you know. So, I said, right, well, we'll have to see what we can do about that. I mean, I try and, you know, and help out, like I say, two or three speaking sessions, but it's not enough.

So, there's many apps and websites where you can actually find language exchange. Now, when I say language exchange, I mean, say, if you are Persian, you find a native Englishman, American

woman, whoever, who wants to learn your language, Persian, Farsi in that case, and you do an exchange, yeah. So, there's quite a few language exchange sites where people, native English speakers, want to learn Chinese, or Russian, or Italian, or French, Persian, yeah.

And you find a speaking partner, you contact them, and do your language exchange. You correct them, they correct you. Win-win for everybody.

Okay, so I've just got a few of these language exchange sites. Now, there's obviously lots of sites where you can simply find teachers and find natives. However, the criteria for, you know, which I used to choose these particular sites, number one, they must be free.

There's lots of paid sites, there's lots of ones with premium subscription that are free to join, and yet if you want to get the database of potential partners, you have to pay. So, all the ones I'm going to talk about now are completely free. Okay, so that's the main thing.

If you're wondering why some websites or apps are missed out, that's why. They're not free, okay. Now, the first one is one which I'm on as a teacher, italki.com. The advantages of italki, it's completely free to join.

Obviously, if you want lessons with teachers, you need to pay them, but they have a community page where you can specifically look for, search, or post your request for language exchange. So, that's good. The only thing is, you need to contact people first, so you need to wait for them to respond before you can set a time, etc., which may take, you know, a while, but it's completely free.

Now, another one which is not necessarily for language exchange, but I've included it because it's instant, is free, F-R-E-E, the number four, talk.com, free for talk.com. Now, the main advantage here is it's always live because it works on Google, Google Hangouts. So, you need a Gmail account to sign in. So, it's not a language exchange, right? It's a platform for, as the name says, free talk.

So, there's many languages there. English is the number one, many, many groups. So, what you'll see, you don't need to create a profile or anything.

You just sign in with your Google account, everything's done, and you'll see different groups, intermediate, advanced. Simply click on a group, join, start talking. Or, you can start a group of your own.

You can choose a title, choose the level, etc. So, free for talk. Check it out.

I recommend it. Another one which I haven't personally used is tandem.net. T-A-N-D-E-N.net. Now, I've been told about this. I read some reviews.

Now, the advantages, it's free to join and your applications to become a member are vetted. So, they take a look at you. They check you out first to make sure that all is kosher, that there's nothing dubious about you and that your intentions are clear.

So, if you're concerned about strange people, you know, who might be wanting other things than to practise their English, all your applications are checked out first. You can search by location and interests, and there's multiple ways to both talk and chat. You can type, you can call them, you can do a video chat, you can write a letter, etc.

And it's got a desktop and a mobile version, too. Now, the only disadvantage which I've heard of, I

haven't seen this, is that some people might use it like a dating app. So, just keep that in mind.

But, from what I've seen, read, it sounds pretty good. OK. Another one, kind of similar, is HelloTalk.com. That's H-E-L-L-O-T-A-L-K.com. Now, this is another app with a desktop version, the same as Tandem.

And it's got multiple communication tools, text, video, audio, you know, calls, chats, etc. The only thing is, you have to give them certain personal information when you sign up. You know, so they want to know a little bit about you.

So, it's kind of like the previous one in Tandem. You know, they want a profile. So, that's, you know, obviously, it's up to you whether you give them the correct information.

The other thing is, not everything about it is free, 100% free. The basic features are, but there's one or two things, I think, that you need to pay some premium subscription for. But still, for a communication tool, it's free.

Another interesting site is EnglishBaby.com. That's E-N-G-L-I-S-H-B-A-B-Y.com. I tried this out once. Some of my Chinese students told me about this some years ago, and it's still going. Advantages, free to join, and you can search for people by country and language, etc.

Some features are not 100% free. There's some premium features, but you can still contact people. I mean, right, so they've got some lessons.

They've got video lessons and other things, which you need to pay for those. But the actual chatting, getting hold of members, arranging a talk is free. The only thing is, though, no vetting.

So you need to be careful. Some of my Chinese students told me they had some interesting experiences on this site. So, you know, don't put your best profile picture on, and don't say, oh, I'm only 16, oh, and here's a picture of me in a bikini.

If you do that, then what do you expect? Anyway, so just be cautious there. Now, another one, Speaky.com. That's S-P-E-A-K-Y.com. App, desktop, version, free to download and join. I've heard about this most.

The main thing I've heard is not everybody is serious. I think, well, you know, the Internet's the Internet. I think some people do use it as a dating app or more like a social media thing, but an actual serious learning tool.

But still, you can contact people and you can arrange to sort of talk on whichever medium you see fit. That's the main thing, that you can find people, contact them and try and arrange some kind of language exchange. So let's see, we've got Speaky, English Baby, HelloTalk, Tandem, FreeForTalk, iTalki.

So I would check those out and see what you think. Now, one last thing before I go. Depending where you live, you can meet native speakers in person.

Now, Meetup.com, that's M-E-E-T-U-P.com. That's a worldwide group or site you can find the meetings in most major cities and capital cities. You can search around the world and usually have some kind of meetup in person, whether it's for language or sports or whatever. There's quite a lot of activities there.

I mean, for example, where I am now, Bratislava, I used to run a meetup group. We used to meet every Friday and we still have one now on Facebook, Bratislava International Friends, where the default language is English. Another one, Couchsurfing, C-O-U-C-H-S-U-R-F-I-N-G.com. Sorry, yeah, Couchsurfing.com, it used to be .org. This is an interesting one.

This is where people can host you and you can stay at people's houses around the world, but most major cities have a meetup for Couchsurfing as well. So again, it's international, so the default language is in English. Now, the third one, Internations.org, I-N-T-E-R-N-A-T-I-O-N-S.org. This is more a professional one, it's like a business networking kind of a group.

Again, there's one here and we have meetings once a month and the de facto language is English and they are worldwide. Most of the capital cities of the world and secondary ones, they have Internations groups. So you've got meetup, Couchsurfing, Internations to find people in person.

And if you go on social media, on Facebook, WhatsApp, Telegram, etc., often you'll find many groups on those, like on Facebook here we've got International Friends, British Slavic Language Exchange, there's, I don't know, 234 different groups we can meet people and practise in English. So if you can't meet in person, try the online sites and apps I mentioned. So that's it really for today.

I hope that works. You know, as I say, it's a major problem for lots of people, they can't find anybody to speak with or talk. So check them out, speakee.com, English Baby, HelloTalk, Tandem, Free for Talk, italki and get talking.

OK, hope that helps. See you next time, Kev's English Podcast.