

Episode 0: Introduction

Summary

In this introductory episode to English in 10 Minutes, host Nick Leonard talks about what listeners can expect from the podcast, why listening is important in language learning, and how English in 10 Minutes can help English learners dramatically improve their English.

Transcript

Hello, and welcome to English in 10 Minutes. My name is Nick Leonard and I teach English as a foreign language at a private language school. I'm also an English language examiner¹ at the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Today I'm so excited to introduce you to English in 10 Minutes, a podcast for intermediate and advanced English learners that will help you improve your English significantly. This 'zero' episode of the podcast is an introductory episode to let you know what the podcast is all about, and what you can expect in future episodes.

You know, 10 minutes isn't a long time. It's the time you might spend washing dishes after dinner, or taking a short city bus ride, or waiting in line somewhere, or walking to the supermarket or, if you're lucky to have such a short commute², travelling to and from work. All of us - even the busiest people - have periods of 10 minutes every day when we're not doing anything or, at the very least, when we're doing simple tasks that don't require much brainpower³.

English in 10 Minutes is a way to use this time, and any other free time that you have, productively to improve your English. And I'm not talking about learning grammar rules, or learning irregular verb conjugations, or doing

¹ examiner: someone who tests, or examines - in this case, English levels

² commute: the daily journey to and from work

³ brainpower: use of your brain, thinking

pronunciation drills⁴. No, I'm talking simply about one thing: listening. And listening. And listening.

English in 10 Minutes offers real, unscripted⁵ English conversations, telling the stories of people and places in 10-minute episodes. These episodes feature conversations between native speakers, and occasionally near native-speakers, from all over the English-speaking world. These aren't controlled, or graded⁶ conversations. They're not fake dialogues like you might have listened to in English classes or using other self-study material. No, they're actual conversations, using the language that English speakers use every day. They're not scripted conversations, so you'll get the very best real and spontaneous⁷ language that you would hear on the street.

Plus, beyond the language value of this podcast, these aren't boring conversations about going to the post office, or going to a restaurant. They're genuinely interesting conversations about fascinating people and places that will make you want to listen again and again. And, you can take English in 10 Minutes with you wherever you go, and listen at any time.

So, how does this focus on listening work? Why does it work?

Almost everyone has the same goal when learning a foreign language: to achieve spoken fluency. But a huge part of this is the ability to listen. In fact, it is estimated that 40 to 50% of all language - speaking, listening, reading and writing - is listening, more than any other skill. So listening is the biggest thing we do in our native language, and this is also true of a foreign language. Things like having a conversation in English, watching an English-language TV show or movie, enjoying English-language music, or travelling in many countries around the world all require English listening skills.

With English in 10 Minutes, you're encouraged to listen to the same conversation several times - 3, 4, 5 times or even more. You don't have to understand every word the first time you listen, or the second time, or the third time. Maybe there will be a lot of things you don't understand the first time you listen to a conversation, depending on your level or the subject

⁴ drills: repeated exercises, like soldiers do in the army

⁵ unscripted: without a script or text that the speakers are reading. Instead, the conversation is natural and the transcripts are made afterwards.

⁶ graded: made for a certain level, including only certain vocabulary and grammar, like many coursebook dialogues

⁷ spontaneous: natural or sudden, not predetermined

matter⁸ of that conversation. But once you listen to the same conversation several times, you can focus on different aspects of understanding each time. After several listenings, you'll start to anticipate the next line before it's spoken. This is very important, because you're no longer putting all your effort into comprehension and you can focus on other aspects of listening, like usage and pronunciation. And the more you listen, the more this will happen. And now you're turning input, which is listening, into output, which is speaking. So, using listening as the basis of your English study not only helps your listening skills, but also your speaking skills. This is, of course, how babies learn their native language - by listening extensively⁹ and then eventually being able to reproduce this language themselves.

Many linguists, such as Stephen Krashen, have talked about listening as the most important aspect of second language acquisition. This is often referred to as 'mass input', where large amounts of listening and reading can help you acquire the language in a more effective way than some traditional teaching methods.

But getting back to the podcast: every week, there will be a new episode of English in 10 Minutes. Each episode is a conversation where I talk with my friends, family and colleagues, and my wife Wendy in particular, about a certain topic. These conversations tell stories about places - about countries and cities, and travel, and language and other timeless¹⁰ subjects - but most of all, they tell stories about the people who are speaking. Listening to these conversations doesn't feel like studying, but it's instead something that you enjoy doing.

Each episode of English in 10 Minutes also comes with a worksheet, which you can download at the podcast's website, which is www.englishin10minutes.com. Each worksheet contains a full transcript of the conversation, as well as comprehension and discussion questions, plus an explanation of the most useful language used in the conversation. Because that's one of the main ways this podcast will help you improve your English: by using interesting topics and conversations as a way to teach real language in context.

Using the worksheets will help your listening skills improve even more, because once you've read a transcript of a conversation, you'll be able to

⁸ subject matter: what a conversation is about

⁹ extensively: a lot, to a great extent

¹⁰ timeless: something that is still interesting after a long time

process it much better the next time you listen to it. I recommend listening to each conversation once or twice before reading the transcript. Then, read the comprehension questions to see if you understand some of the main themes of the conversation. After reading the transcript and processing the new language, go back and listen to the conversation again and again. Then talk about the discussion questions with a partner or with the English in 10 Minutes online community. And of course, by using the worksheets, your reading skills will improve as well.

That's a brief introduction to English in 10 Minutes. And all it takes is 10 minutes, whenever you have the time, and wherever you are. The more you listen, the more you'll learn, and the better you'll speak English.

So, what's the first thing you should do? Please subscribe to English in 10 Minutes on iTunes, Google Play or Stitcher - whichever way you prefer to listen to podcasts. You can also visit the podcast website - the address, again, is www.englishin10minutes.com, where 10 is the number 10, one-zero. At the website, you can subscribe to the podcast, download the worksheets and read blog posts that are annotated for English learners. There are also links to our [Facebook page](#), and our [Facebook group](#) just for listeners of English in 10 Minutes, where you can discuss the conversations with fellow listeners.

So, welcome to English in 10 Minutes, please subscribe to the podcast, and happy listening.