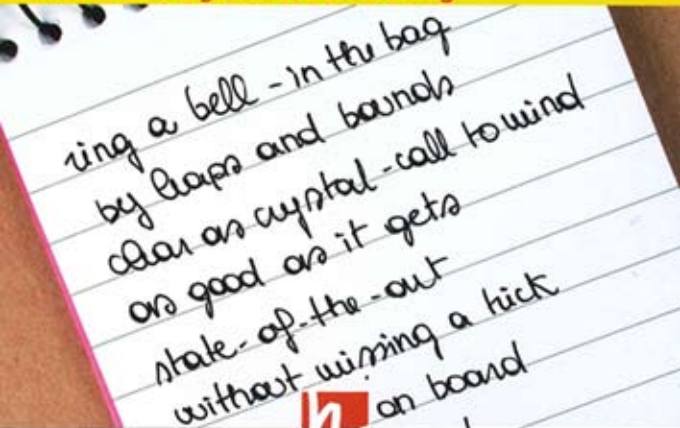


## Sample

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# Teaching Chunks of Language

From noticing to remembering

A photograph of a spiral-bound notebook with lined paper. The paper is tilted and contains handwritten text in black ink. The text is a list of phrases, some of which are hyphenated, suggesting they are language chunks. The phrases are: 'ring a bell - in the bag', 'by leaps and bounds', 'clear as crystal - call to mind', 'as good as it gets', 'state-of-the-art', 'without winning a hick', and 'on board'. The notebook is resting on a brown surface.

ring a bell - in the bag  
by leaps and bounds  
clear as crystal - call to mind  
as good as it gets  
state-of-the-art  
without winning a hick  
on board

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# 2.1

## Reading out loud with pauses

This exercise can be useful preparation for a number of other exercises in this book because it is designed to make your students more aware of how they can use pausing to be more comprehensible and to hold a listener's attention well. Also, because it involves breaking a text up into shorter sections, it can help your students *notice* and *think about* chunks that are in the text that you use.

**Focus** Any kind of chunk; intensive listening & reading; an aspect of pronunciation

**Level** Pre-intermediate–Advanced

**Time** 10–15 minutes

**Materials** A set of handouts (or projectable display) (see pp.101–102)

- Preparation**
1. Choose a short text which includes a number of useful chunks. Brief reports of the day's news are particularly suitable. See also the sample texts.
  2. Read the text out aloud to yourself - very dramatically, as if you were a TV news announcer and as if this were *extremely* serious and important news and you wanted to be understood even by listeners with poor hearing or TVs/radios that produce unclear sound. As you read, try to notice natural pause points. Here are some basic guidelines:
    - If you start with a written text, virtually any punctuation mark indicates a pause. Dashes and semi-colons tend to indicate longer pauses than commas. Ends of sentences are natural places to make even longer pauses.
    - Non-defining relative clauses (i.e. descriptions that provide an extra bit of information to the text, but are not essential to its meaning) are set off between a pair of pauses.
    - There are, in general, no pauses inside short prepositional phrases (e.g. *by the way, of course, at work*), between verb and direct object (e.g. *find the time, have fun!*), or inside common chunks generally (e.g. *the day before yesterday, it doesn't matter, get up*).
    - Pauses for dramatic effect can occur where normal pauses might not (e.g. *I hear someone // laughing*.)
    - Speakers have considerable flexibility about where to pause – and in this exercise, the more pauses the better. However, if you have any doubt whether it is possible to pause at a certain point, don't.
  3. Lay the text out in a way that highlights the pauses you identify. In the example:
    - a big gap between words on the same line = a minor pause point
    - the end of a line = a conspicuous pause point
    - any comma, dash, bracket, semi-colon = a conspicuous pause point
    - the end of sentence = an especially conspicuous pause point.

- Optional: highlight syllables that receive **exceptional** stress, e.g. by making them 'bold'.
- Prepare to display the text in some fashion (e.g. on the board or on handouts).

### in class

- Hand out or display the text and give students time to read it.
- Make sure the text is well understood.
- Read it out dramatically, with all, and only, the pauses you have planned for. Although you may also wish to play a recording, students are likely to be more motivated if you read out the text *live* at some point.
- Ask how the unusual layout of the text matches the way it was read out.
- Let students hear the text again, the same way.
- Repeat Step 5, breath group by breath group, with your class repeating each one after you (or after the recording). Both choral **and** individual repetition will be useful since it is important not to go on to the next step until you know that your students are ready to do it fairly well.
- Ask students to take turns reading the text out to each other in pairs, **with pauses as previously indicated**. Circulate and help as needed.

#### Tips and Notes

- Using literary works is an option; but such works are not necessarily ideal for teaching everyday chunks since literary authors often try to avoid them.
- A good source of authentic materials is the BBC website: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio/>. There is also a children's section.
- Playing an excerpt from a recording of one of Martin Luther King's speeches can powerfully demonstrate the positive effect of good pausing. See, e.g., <http://www.mkonline.net/sounds.html>

#### EXTENSION

To drive home the message that lexical chunks are **not** broken up by pauses, you could also first give a speech or tell a story with **unnatural** pauses, i.e. pauses *inside* chunks (e.g. *On the other // hand; When it comes // to ...; I was // wondering if ...; There's nothing new under // the sun; They're a rock band from down // under*), and ask students to identify what's wrong with your delivery.