

ADVANCED ENGLISH

C1-C2 Pronunciation, Prosody & Connected Speech

Thought groups, prominence, intonation, rhythm, reductions, repair, and audience adaptation

C1

Flexible, precise, well-structured language for demanding social, academic, and professional situations.

C2

Fine-grained control of nuance, register, implication, style, and reformulation with very little strain.

Your target

Make advanced spoken English easier to follow by controlling phrasing, prominence, rhythm, and connected speech - without treating accent reduction as the goal.

Inside this guide

15 advanced pronunciation units, speaking drills, C1/C2 prosody goals, listener-oriented practice, a 30-day recording path, and a final performance assessment.

Important accuracy note

CEFR levels describe communicative ability. They do not publish one mandatory list of punctuation rules, vocabulary items, grammar points, or idioms for C1 and C2. This guide is a practical, CEFR-aligned progression designed for advanced learners.

American English conventions are used as the default. Recognized international and British variants are noted where they materially affect meaning or style.

How to Use This Guide

Advanced progress is less about collecting more rules and more about making better choices under pressure. Work actively: notice the option, explain the effect, produce your own version, then revise it.

Step	What to do
1. Mark	Identify thought groups, stressed words, and likely reductions.
2. Listen	Compare a model with your own production.
3. Produce	Practice at slow, medium, and natural pace.
4. Record	Capture a short response and listen as a listener.
5. Repair	Adjust one feature at a time, not your whole accent at once.

C1 evidence

You can choose an effective form for a demanding task, sustain control across a longer response, and repair awkward wording without losing the thread.

C2 evidence

You can deliberately manipulate nuance, rhythm, register, emphasis, and implication, and can reformulate almost immediately when the first wording is not exact.

Recommended rhythm

- Study one unit every two days.
- Day A: notice, analyze, and imitate.
- Day B: retrieve, produce, and edit without looking.
- Recycle older units after 3, 7, and 14 days.

The advanced learner's trap

Knowing that an expression is grammatically possible is not enough. At C1-C2, the questions become: Is it natural here? Is it the right register? Does it imply what I intend? Is there a more precise or more economical way to say it?

C1-C2 Pronunciation, Prosody & Connected Speech - Skill Map

The sequence moves from reliable advanced control to deliberate stylistic control. A learner may meet any feature earlier; the distinction here is the depth, flexibility, and consistency of use.

#	Unit	C1 focus	C2 extension
1	Thought groups and chunking	Group long sentences into meaningful units for listener processing.	Use chunk boundaries to clarify hierarchy, contrast, and rhetorical structure.
2	Nuclear stress and focus	Place main stress on the most informative word in a thought group.	Move nuclear stress to correct, contrast, or reframe meaning.
3	Deaccenting given information	Reduce prominence on repeated or predictable information.	Use deaccenting to make new information stand out naturally.
4	Intonation for continuation vs. completion	Use pitch movement to signal whether a turn is continuing or complete.	Use intonation to manage discourse structure, parenthesis, contrast, and stance.
5	Stance through intonation	Use pitch, stress, and tempo to distinguish certainty, reservation, surprise, and correction.	Control pragmatic meaning without overacting.
6	Reduction of function words	Reduce common grammatical words naturally while keeping key content clear.	Control reduction rather than deleting sounds indiscriminately.
7	Linking and resyllabification	Link consonant-vowel and vowel-vowel boundaries smoothly.	Use linking to maintain rhythm at higher speaking speeds without losing clarity.
8	Assimilation and elision in careful vs. fast speech	Recognize common sound changes in connected speech.	Control style: understand reductions even when you choose not to produce the strongest forms.
9	Consonant cluster control	Maintain intelligibility in complex onset and final clusters.	Use strategic simplification only where it does not erase grammatical meaning.
10	Vowel reduction and schwa	Use schwa in unstressed syllables and function words where natural.	Maintain lexical contrasts while reducing unstressed material efficiently.
11	Word stress in advanced morphology	Predict and verify stress in derived academic vocabulary.	Use stress shifts to distinguish word families fluently.
12	Rhythm in long noun phrases	Keep head nouns and key modifiers perceptually clear in dense phrases.	Use prominence to guide listeners through compressed professional and academic language.
13	Contrastive stress for correction and diplomacy	Use stress to correct details without sounding unnecessarily aggressive.	Combine verbal softening with precise prosodic contrast.
14	Pace, pausing, and repair	Maintain a sustainable pace and use planned pauses instead of fillers.	Repair wording smoothly while preserving listener orientation.
15	Audience adaptation and accent flexibility	Adjust clarity, pace, and lexical density for different listeners.	Remain intelligible across unfamiliar accents and reformulate when a listener struggles.

Thought groups and chunking

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C1 TARGET

Group long sentences into meaningful units for listener processing.

C2 EXTENSION

Use chunk boundaries to clarify hierarchy, contrast, and rhetorical structure.

Core idea

Advanced pronunciation is not accent erasure. It is control of intelligibility, rhythm, prominence, and phrasing.

Notice the effect

Although the plan is expensive / it may save money in the long run.

What matters most / is not speed / but consistency.

Practice

1. Mark thought groups in a 60-word paragraph.
2. Read once with poor chunking and once with meaning-based chunking.
3. Record and compare listener effort.

Production challenge

Deliver a 90-second explanation with deliberate thought groups and no sentence-by-sentence monotony.

Watch for this

Pausing at every comma is not a universal rule; chunk by meaning and speech planning.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Nuclear stress and focus

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C1 TARGET

Place main stress on the most informative word in a thought group.

C2 EXTENSION

Move nuclear stress to correct, contrast, or reframe meaning.

Core idea

English prominence tells listeners where to focus, even when the grammar stays the same.

Notice the effect

I asked for the BLUE file. / I ASKED for the blue file.

She didn't say he STOLE it.

Practice

1. Shift stress across one sentence and describe the meaning change.
2. Underline the focus word in five responses.
3. Correct a misunderstanding using contrastive stress.

Production challenge

Answer ten short questions with stress placed on the new or contrastive information.

Watch for this

Do not stress every content word equally; advanced rhythm depends on hierarchy.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Deaccenting given information

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C1 TARGET

Reduce prominence on repeated or predictable information.

C2 EXTENSION

Use deaccenting to make new information stand out naturally.

Core idea

Speakers often reduce words that are already active in the conversation.

Notice the effect

A: Did you call Maria? B: I TEXTED Maria.

A: What happened to the report? B: I FINISHED the report.

Practice

1. Identify given vs. new information.
2. Read the pairs with focus on the new element.
3. Create three question-answer pairs.

Production challenge

Hold a one-minute conversation while consciously deaccenting repeated nouns and topics.

Watch for this

This is a tendency, not a rigid rule; emotional contrast can re-promote old information.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Intonation for continuation vs. completion

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C1 TARGET

Use pitch movement to signal whether a turn is continuing or complete.

C2 EXTENSION

Use intonation to manage discourse structure, parenthesis, contrast, and stance.

Core idea

Listeners interpret pitch movement together with syntax and context.

Notice the effect

First, we reviewed the data... then we changed the model.

That's the main reason.

Practice

1. Mark where your voice should signal continuation.
2. Record a list with premature falling intonation, then correct it.
3. Use intonation to keep the floor during a multi-part answer.

Production challenge

Give a 2-minute answer with a three-part structure and clear continuation signals.

Watch for this

Intonation varies across speakers and dialects. Aim for communicative contrast, not one 'perfect' melody.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Stance through intonation

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C1 TARGET

Use pitch, stress, and tempo to distinguish certainty, reservation, surprise, and correction.

C2 EXTENSION

Control pragmatic meaning without overacting.

Core idea

The same words can sound sincere, doubtful, impatient, or tentative depending on prosody.

Notice the effect

That's possible.

That's POSSIBLE...

That's possible?

Practice

1. Record one phrase with three stance meanings.
2. Ask a listener what attitude they hear.
3. Pair verbal hedges with matching prosody.

Production challenge

Respond to five debatable claims using a different prosodic stance each time.

Watch for this

Do not assume intonation has identical pragmatic meanings across all dialects and cultures.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Reduction of function words

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C1 TARGET

Reduce common grammatical words naturally while keeping key content clear.

C2 EXTENSION

Control reduction rather than deleting sounds indiscriminately.

Core idea

Natural connected speech often weakens articles, auxiliaries, prepositions, and conjunctions.

Notice the effect

I CAN do it -> I can DO it.

We HAVE to leave.

A cup OF tea.

Practice

1. Mark content vs. function words in ten sentences.
2. Read once with every word equally strong, then with reductions.
3. Record whether intelligibility remains high.

Production challenge

Deliver a prepared paragraph with natural reductions and clear content-word prominence.

Watch for this

Reduction is not mumbling. If the listener cannot recover the grammar, you reduced too far.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Linking and resyllabification

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C1 TARGET

Link consonant-vowel and vowel-vowel boundaries smoothly.

C2 EXTENSION

Use linking to maintain rhythm at higher speaking speeds without losing clarity.

Core idea

Word boundaries in spelling do not always match perceptual boundaries in speech.

Notice the effect

pick_it_up

go_out

turn_it_off

Practice

1. Mark likely links in a paragraph.
2. Practice slowly, then increase speed.
3. Contrast linked speech with a word-by-word version.

Production challenge

Read a 100-word passage with clear thought groups and at least ten natural links.

Watch for this

Do not add intrusive sounds mechanically; linking patterns vary by accent.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Assimilation and elision in careful vs. fast speech

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C1 TARGET

Recognize common sound changes in connected speech.

C2 EXTENSION

Control style: understand reductions even when you choose not to produce the strongest forms.

Core idea

Advanced listening benefits from recognizing why familiar words sound different in fast speech.

Notice the effect

next day -> nex(t) day

ten people -> tem people (in some speech)

want to -> wanna (informal, not universal)

Practice

1. Identify deleted or changed sounds in recordings you already use.
2. Practice a careful and a casual version.
3. Label forms inappropriate for formal speaking.

Production challenge

Give a casual 60-second story and a formal 60-second summary, changing reduction level appropriately.

Watch for this

Do not teach every casual reduction as a target. Comprehension is often more important than imitation.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Consonant cluster control

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C1 TARGET

Maintain intelligibility in complex onset and final clusters.

C2 EXTENSION

Use strategic simplification only where it does not erase grammatical meaning.

Core idea

Final clusters often carry tense or plural information; losing them can change grammar.

Notice the effect

asked

worlds

strengths

sixths

Practice

1. Break clusters into articulatory steps.
2. Contrast singular/plural and present/past pairs.
3. Record at slow, medium, and natural speed.

Production challenge

Read a technical paragraph containing at least ten difficult clusters while preserving endings.

Watch for this

Native speakers may simplify clusters too, but grammatical endings must remain recoverable.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Vowel reduction and schwa

NOTICE

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C1 TARGET

Use schwa in unstressed syllables and function words where natural.

C2 EXTENSION

Maintain lexical contrasts while reducing unstressed material efficiently.

Core idea

English rhythm depends partly on strong and weak syllables, not equal syllable timing.

Notice the effect

PHOtograph / phoTOGraphy

CAN / can

TO / to

Practice

1. Mark stressed syllables in word families.
2. Reduce unstressed vowels without changing the word identity.
3. Compare dictionary stress marks with your recording.

Production challenge

Deliver a paragraph containing several multi-syllable academic words with correct stress and reduction.

Watch for this

Schwa is common, not mandatory in every accent or every careful pronunciation.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Word stress in advanced morphology

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C1 TARGET

Predict and verify stress in derived academic vocabulary.

C2 EXTENSION

Use stress shifts to distinguish word families fluently.

Core idea

Suffixes can preserve, attract, or shift stress depending on the word pattern.

Notice the effect

PHOtograph / phoTOGraphy / photoGRAPHic

ANalyze / aNALysis / anaLYTical

Practice

1. Build a stress-marked word-family table.
2. Say each family in short phrases, not isolation.
3. Check uncertain stress in a reputable dictionary.

Production challenge

Use ten advanced derived words in a 90-second talk with stable stress.

Watch for this

Rules have exceptions. Verification beats overgeneralization.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Rhythm in long noun phrases

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C1 TARGET

Keep head nouns and key modifiers perceptually clear in dense phrases.

C2 EXTENSION

Use prominence to guide listeners through compressed professional and academic language.

Core idea

Dense noun phrases can become unintelligible if every word receives equal weight.

Notice the effect

a HIGH-risk PATient safety REVIEW

the NEW customer SUPPORT platform

Practice

1. Underline the head noun.
2. Mark one primary and one secondary stress.
3. Expand the noun phrase into a clause, then compress it again.

Production challenge

Explain five dense noun phrases from your field so a non-specialist can follow them.

Watch for this

Written density does not automatically work in speech. Sometimes unpack the phrase instead.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Contrastive stress for correction and diplomacy

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C1 TARGET

Use stress to correct details without sounding unnecessarily aggressive.

C2 EXTENSION

Combine verbal softening with precise prosodic contrast.

Core idea

Correction often requires prominence on the element that differs from the listener's assumption.

Notice the effect

I meant TUESday, not THURSday.

It's a POSSIBILITY, not a prediction.

Practice

1. Correct five facts with contrastive stress.
2. Add a polite verbal frame.
3. Record a harsh version and a diplomatic version.

Production challenge

Role-play a professional correction where the words stay polite and the stress makes the contrast unmistakable.

Watch for this

Excessive stress can sound confrontational. Match vocal force to the social situation.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Pace, pausing, and repair

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C1 TARGET

Maintain a sustainable pace and use planned pauses instead of fillers.

C2 EXTENSION

Repair wording smoothly while preserving listener orientation.

Core idea

C1-C2 fluency is not maximum speed. It is efficient delivery with manageable planning pauses.

Notice the effect

What I mean is...

Let me rephrase that.

More precisely,...

Practice

1. Record one minute at your natural pace.
2. Count fillers and silent pauses.
3. Replace two fillers with a purposeful pause or repair phrase.

Production challenge

Give a two-minute unprepared answer and make at least one explicit, smooth self-repair.

Watch for this

Speaking too fast can reduce intelligibility and make advanced grammar less usable.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

Audience adaptation and accent flexibility

NOTICE

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C1 TARGET

Adjust clarity, pace, and lexical density for different listeners.

C2 EXTENSION

Remain intelligible across unfamiliar accents and reformulate when a listener struggles.

Core idea

Advanced pronunciation includes listener awareness, not just speaker production.

Notice the effect

specialist audience vs. international general audience

phone call vs. presentation vs. casual conversation

Practice

1. Deliver the same explanation to two imagined audiences.
2. Change pace, chunk length, and terminology.
3. Practice asking for and confirming understanding.

Production challenge

Record two versions of a 90-second explanation for different audiences and compare delivery choices.

Watch for this

There is no single target 'native' accent required for advanced proficiency. Intelligibility and flexible control matter more.

Self-check: Can I explain why my final version is better, not merely say that it sounds better?

30-Day Practice Plan - Days 1-15

Each unit receives two days: first for controlled noticing, then for independent production. Keep a correction log; advanced progress comes from repeated repair of your own recurring patterns.

Day	Focus	Mode	Output
1	Thought groups and chunking	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
2	Thought groups and chunking	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
3	Nuclear stress and focus	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
4	Nuclear stress and focus	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
5	Deaccenting given information	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
6	Deaccenting given information	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
7	Intonation for continuation vs. completion	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
8	Intonation for continuation vs. completion	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
9	Stance through intonation	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
10	Stance through intonation	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
11	Reduction of function words	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
12	Reduction of function words	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
13	Linking and resyllabification	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
14	Linking and resyllabification	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
15	Assimilation and elision in careful vs. fast speech	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.

Retrieval rule

Before opening the guide, write or say what you remember from the previous unit. Retrieval before review is a stronger test than rereading.

30-Day Practice Plan - Days 16-30

Each unit receives two days: first for controlled noticing, then for independent production. Keep a correction log; advanced progress comes from repeated repair of your own recurring patterns.

Day	Focus	Mode	Output
16	Assimilation and elision in careful vs. fast speech	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
17	Consonant cluster control	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
18	Consonant cluster control	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
19	Vowel reduction and schwa	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
20	Vowel reduction and schwa	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
21	Word stress in advanced morphology	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
22	Word stress in advanced morphology	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
23	Rhythm in long noun phrases	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
24	Rhythm in long noun phrases	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
25	Contrastive stress for correction and diplomacy	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
26	Contrastive stress for correction and diplomacy	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
27	Pace, pausing, and repair	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
28	Pace, pausing, and repair	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.
29	Audience adaptation and accent flexibility	Notice + imitate	Analyze 3 examples and create 2 controlled imitations.
30	Audience adaptation and accent flexibility	Retrieve + produce	Produce a 60-90 sec response or 150-word text; revise once.

Retrieval rule

Before opening the guide, write or say what you remember from the previous unit. Retrieval before review is a stronger test than rereading.

Advanced Quick Reference

Use this page as a fast review before writing, speaking, or editing.

Feature	Advanced question to ask
Thought group	Where should the listener process one unit of meaning?
Prominence	Which word carries the main new or contrastive information?
Reduction	Which grammatical words can be weaker without losing clarity?
Linking	Where can words connect smoothly at natural speed?
Intonation	Does pitch signal continuation, completion, stance, or correction?
Pace	Am I speaking fast enough for flow but slow enough for precision?
Repair	Can I rephrase without losing the listener?
Audience	Should I slow down, unpack a dense phrase, or reduce idiom for this listener?

Advanced English is not maximum complexity. It is maximum control.

Final Performance Assessment

This is a learning check, not an official CEFR certification. Use it to identify where your advanced control is stable and where you still depend on conscious effort.

Task A - Prepared

Create a 3-minute spoken response or 300-word text using at least five features from this guide. Revise once.

Task B - Unprepared

Answer a new prompt for 2 minutes or write 180 words in 12 minutes. Then identify three choices you would improve.

Mastery checklist

- I can chunk long speech into listener-friendly thought groups.
- I can place main stress on new or contrastive information.
- I can use reductions and linking without sacrificing intelligibility.
- I can recognize common fast-speech changes even when I do not produce all of them.
- I can manage pace, pausing, and self-repair in unprepared speech.
- I can adapt delivery to audience, setting, and communication channel.

Dimension	1 - Developing	2 - Reliable C1 control	3 - Flexible C2-like control
Accuracy	Frequent repair is needed.	Errors are occasional and rarely obscure meaning.	Control is sustained even with complex or compressed language.
Choice	Uses a safe default.	Chooses from several effective options.	Chooses deliberately for nuance, tone, rhythm, or implication.
Reformulation	Gets stuck when wording fails.	Repairs effectively after a pause.	Recasts smoothly and precisely with minimal disruption.
Transfer	Uses features only in practiced topics.	Transfers them across familiar advanced contexts.	Transfers them naturally across unfamiliar and high-pressure contexts.

Next step

Do not repeat every unit. Repeat the three units that caused the most hesitation, then retest with a new topic.

Alignment and Further Study

This workbook uses CEFR as a proficiency framework rather than as a checklist of mandatory language items.

- **Council of Europe:** Common European Framework of Reference for Languages - Companion Volume (2020).
- **English Profile:** research on grammar, vocabulary, and learner language across CEFR levels.
- **Cambridge English:** C1 Advanced and C2 Proficiency handbooks and sample materials.
- **Corpus-informed dictionaries:** use reputable learner and general dictionaries to verify collocation, register, frequency, pronunciation, and usage labels.
- **Style references:** compare conventions across professional, academic, journalistic, and organizational style guides when punctuation or capitalization varies.

Evidence habit

At C1-C2, dictionary definitions alone are not enough. Check authentic examples, collocations, grammar patterns, register labels, and how a phrase behaves across different contexts.

Digital Nutrients study principle

Notice -> retrieve -> produce -> revise -> transfer. The goal is not to sound complicated. The goal is to express the exact meaning you intend, in language appropriate for the audience and situation.