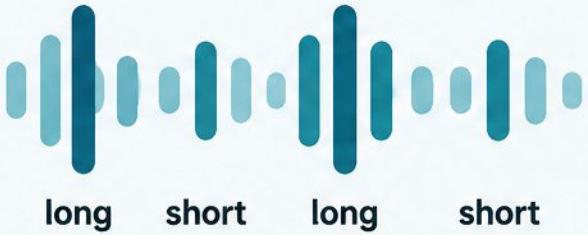
Understanding Numbers, Dates, and Times in Spoken English

- One misheard number can cause a missed appointment or wrong payment
- Three skills: hearing numbers, saying them clearly, repairing misunderstandings
- A2–B1 trouble spots: 13/30, 14/40, 15/50, dates like 3/4
- Times that confuse: quarter to vs. quarter past
- Roadmap: teen/ty stress, prices, phone numbers, times, dates, call strategies



Why Numbers Are Hard to Hear in English

- English is stress-timed: some syllables are long, others short



- Teen numbers stress the second syllable: thirTEEN, fourTEEN



- Tens stress the first syllable: THIRty, FORty, FIFty



- Stress shifts before a noun: THIRteen dollars



- Tens often use a soft flapped /d/: thirty, forty, fifty

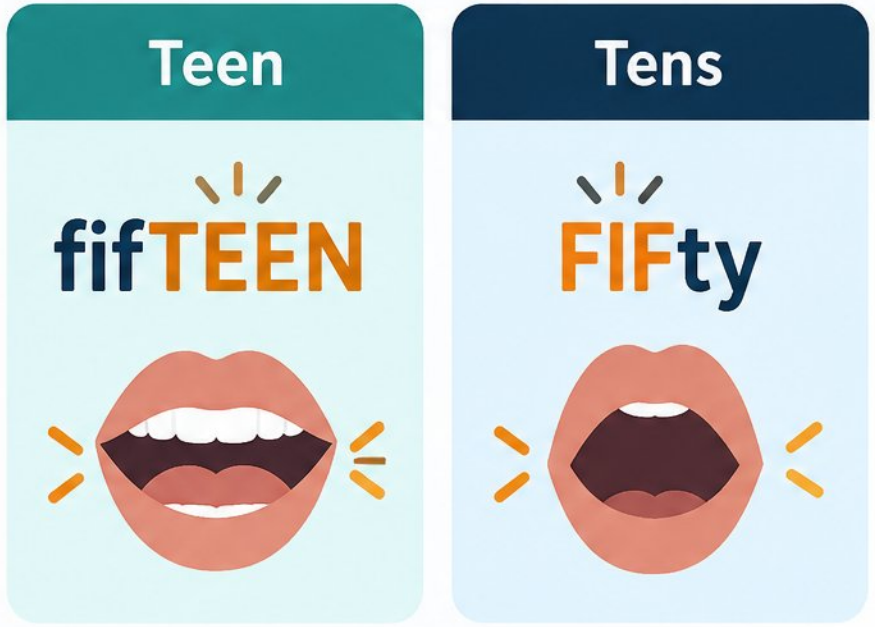


- Even native speakers confirm numbers, especially on the phone



Core Patterns: Saying Numbers Clearly

- Teen numbers: stress the end — thirTEEN, fourTEEN, fifTEEN
- Tens: stress the start, short finish — THIRty, FORty, FIFty
- Exaggerate when confusion is possible: fifTEEN, not FIFty
- Chunk long numbers: four / seven / two
- Practice aloud: thirteen/thirty, fourteen/forty, fifteen/fifty





Listening for Prices, Quantities, and Phone Numbers

1. Prices are two numbers: $4.99 is four ninety-nine
2. Under a dollar, say cents only: ninety-nine cents
3. Decimals use point, digit by digit: three point one four
4. Phone numbers: group digits, say oh or zero, and double seven
5. Ask: Did you say four ninety-nine or four nineteen?



Telling Time: Two Common Systems

Digital Reading



4:30

Past/to System



half past four (4:30)

- **Digital reading:** four thirty, nine twenty, seven forty-five
- **Past/to system:** quarter past four (4:15), half past four (4:30)
- **Quarter to five** (4:45), twenty to five (4:40)
- **Watch out:** quarter to eight is 7:45, not 8:15
- **o'clock only at the hour:** ten o'clock, NOT quarter past ten o'clock
- **Same hour known? Drop it:** "It's only ten past"

Telling Time: US and UK Differences



- UK prefers **past**; US often uses **after**: ten past six / ten after six
- Before the hour, both use **to**; some Americans say **of** or **till**: twenty **of** eight
- **Half past** is common everywhere, but British '**half five**' means 5:30
- Americans rarely say **half after** — use **half past** instead
- Confirm: Did you say **half past** four or quarter past four?



Approximate Times and Scheduling Language

Approximate time phrases:
at eight, by eight, around eight, eightish, about eight

AM and PM:
nine a.m., three p.m.; also noon and midnight

24-hour clock:
seventeen hundred, seventeen forty-five; common in travel and international contexts

Appointment talk:
Let's meet at ten fifteen / a quarter after ten

Natural scheduling phrases:
Shall we say nine o'clock? / What about Thursday morning? / I can't make it then



Dates: Month-Day vs. Day-Month

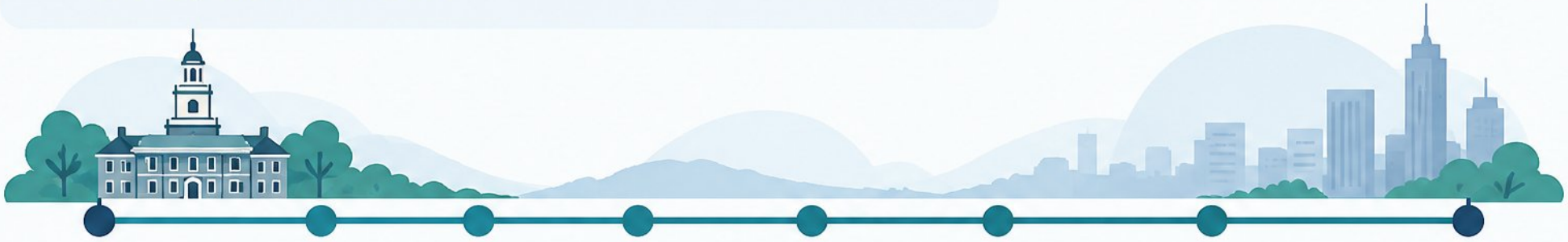
1. **US spoken pattern:**
   March third, May twenty-fourth, July fourth
2. **UK spoken pattern:**
   the third of March, the twenty-fourth of May
3. **Spoken dates use ordinal numbers:**
   fourth, not four; third, not three
4. **Written numbers are risky:**
   3/4 = March 4th (US) or 3rd of April (UK)
5. **Spell out the month:**
   April 3 or 3 April, never just 3/4
6. **Clarify when unsure:**
   Do you mean March third or April third?



Years, Decades, and Ordinal Numbers

- **Years before 2000:** nineteen ninety-nine, seventeen seventy-six, eighteen oh five
- **Whole centuries:** seventeen hundred, eighteen hundred
- **2000–2009:** two thousand five (US); two thousand and five (UK)
- **2010 and later:** twenty twenty-six is now the natural form
- **Decades and centuries:** the nineties, the twenty-tens, the twenty-first century
- **Ordinals for dates:** first, second, third, twelfth, twenty-first, thirtieth





Practical Strategies for Calls and Appointments



Before the call:

write down key numbers, dates, and times



During the call:

echo details — "Let me just read that back to you"



Repair phrases:

"Was that fifteen or fifty?"

"Say that again more slowly?"



After the call:

summarize by message so both sides can correct errors



Clear communication works both ways



Practice Lab: Hear It, Say It, Check It



- Minimal-pair drill: 13/30, 14/40, 15/50, 16/60; aim for 80%+ accuracy
- Number dictation at natural speed: prices, phone numbers, times, dates, years
- Role-play: book an appointment, confirm a payment, reschedule a meeting
- Self-record and give peer feedback on stressed syllables and rhythm
- Error log: note which numbers, dates, or times you mishear most

Common Traps and How to Avoid Them



Trap: mixing quarter past and quarter to

Fix: count 15 minutes on a clock



Trap: hearing fourteen as forty

Fix: listen for the stress pattern



Trap: noting the first price, not the final total

Fix: confirm totals



Trap: assuming 3/4 is universal

Fix: spell out the month in writing



Trap: 9/11 = September 11th (US) or November 9th (UK)

Fix: say the date in words



Trap: replying to six o'clock when it changed to half past six

Fix: read back the final time

Quick Reference: A Cheat Sheet for Numbers, Dates, and Times

Stress rule

- Stress rule: teen = second syllable (thirTEEN); tens = first syllable (THIRty)

Prices

- Prices: say two numbers, not decimals; $4.99 = four ninety-nine

Phone numbers

- Phone numbers: group digits, oh or zero for 0, double for repeated digits

Times

- Times: quarter past four = 4:15; quarter to five = 4:45

Dates

- Dates: US = March third; UK = the third of March; avoid 3/4 in writing

Years

- Years: nineteen ninety-nine; twenty twenty-six; the twenty-first century

Top repair phrases

- Did you say...? / Let me read that back



Your Action Plan and Final Check

Final check: audio quiz with teens/tens, prices, numbers, times, dates

- Score yourself; note which category needs more practice

- Action plan: practise three real situations this week

- Say prices aloud while shopping; read the time aloud

- Key takeaway: confirm, repeat back, never guess important numbers



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