

Links

The Y + Vowel Link

To link means to connect. Words are often linked together in natural spoken English. There are several types of linking. In this lesson, we will focus on the Y + **Vowel Link**. Listen to the following phrases:

1. he is 2. I am 3. they are 4. the boy is

Can you guess what the underlined words have in common? How about the words following the underlined words?

All the underlined words end with an “ee” sound as in “eat” (ē/iy) and the words which come after begin with a vowel (a, e, i, o, u).

“he” ends with “ee”, “is” begins with “i”
“I” ends with “ai”, “am” begins with “a”
“they” ends with “ei”, “are” begins with “a”
“boy” ends with “oye”, “is” begins with “i”

When we link a word that ends with “ee, ai, ei, oye” to another word which begins with any vowel sound, we add a “Y” sound between them:

CD 1,
Tr. 2

1. he Yis 2. I Yam 3. they Yare 4. the boy Yis

The “Y” sound helps us glide more smoothly from “ee” to the next vowel. Notice that when you make the “ee” sound, your jaw is tense (heeeeeee). Can you feel the tension? Through the Y link, you release all that tension. Try again and feel the tension of the “ee” sound and then the release of the Y link—heeeeeeee (tensed) Yis (relaxed).

This tension and release can also be seen in the intonation. Notice that on the “ee” sound, the intonation is up but on the next vowel sound, it tends to drop so you can think of the Y link as a soft, relaxed, downward glide or pull. This is very important because if you push the Y link, it will be too strong and it will not sound natural:

heeee leeeee theyeeeeeee the boyeeee
Yis Yam Yare Yis

Let’s try some more. First, slowly say the phrases below *without* the Y link (put a short stop between the first and second words). The intonation is up / down. Then say them *with* the Y link and maintain the up / down intonation. You will hear how much smoother they sound with the Y link. Notice the tension and release in your jaw.

CD 1,
Tr. 3

1. be able / be Yable
2. be asked / be Yasked
3. see Alex / see YAlex
4. nearly everyone / nearly Yeveryone
5. money is / money Yis
6. they accused / they Yaccused
7. busy Americans / busy YAmericans
8. daily exercise / daily Yexercise
9. by appointment / by Yappointment
10. Sally Anderson / Sally YAnderson

Now let’s try some complete sentences. Don’t forget the up / down intonation.

CD 1,
Tr. 4

1. You’ll be Yable to do so much more than before.
2. She’ll be Yasked several questions.
3. Did you see YAlex today?
4. Nearly Yeveryone pays bank fees.
5. Having money Yis great.
6. They Yaccused Lee.
7. Many busy YAmericans use the Internet for shopping.
8. Our daily Yexercise usually starts no later than 7:00 a.m.
9. The Yonly way to see Dana is by Yappointment.
10. Sally YAnderson came by to see you.

Now let's practice with short conversations. First underline all the Y links. Then practice the conversations slowly. When you feel comfortable with all the Y links, increase the speed to sound more natural.

CD 1,
Tr. 5 A: She'll be asked several questions.
B: Will she be able to respond correctly?
A: I *really* hope so.

CD 1,
Tr. 6 C: Did you see Alex?
D: Of course. Nearly everyone saw him.
C: Do you think he'll be able to forget what happened?
D: No way. You never forget something like that.

CD 1,
Tr. 7 E: These days, so many busy Americans use the Internet for shopping.
F: Not me. I get my daily exercise by walking to the mall.

CD 1,
Tr. 8 G: Please let me apologize for being late.
H: Apology accepted. Now get started.
G: O.K., what's the plan?
H: Start by assembling those book shelves.
G: Sure.

CD 1,
Tr. 9 I: Hi, I'm Sally Anderson. I'm here to see Dana.
J: I'm sorry but your name doesn't seem to be on my list.
I: I just have to see her for one minute.
J: Well, the only way to see Dana is by appointment.

CD 1,
Tr. 10 K: How could we have been so careless with so much money?
L: Well, I asked nearly everyone who was here. They all
think Lee took the cash sometime during the party.
K: They accused Lee of taking the money? I am speechless.

Reading: follow these four steps to help you read the story at the bottom of the page.

1. Before reading the following story, find the Y links, underline them, and practice them slowly.
2. When you feel comfortable saying them, start connecting two or three sentences but keep your reading pace slow.
3. After having read the paragraph in groups of two or three sentences, try slowly reading the whole thing, always paying attention to the Y links.
4. Finally, increase your speed to sound more natural but don't lose your clarity.

CD 1,
Tr. 11

from **Cinderella** (as told by Michael Forman)

There once lived a man who married twice and his second wife was the most snotty and unkind woman in the world. She already had two daughters who were just as nasty as their mother.

5 The man's first wife had given him a daughter of his own before she died, and she was a lovely and sweet-natured girl.

The new wife began to show how unkind she could be. She absolutely could not bear her step-daughter's good qualities because it made her own daughters seem even worse than they actually were.

10 So she impelled her step-daughter to do all the hard work around the house. She had to wash all the windows, scrub the stairs, polish every inch of the floor, chop the wood, and cook and serve all the meals, then wash and put away all the dishes. Her sisters didn't have to lift a finger. They often just sat around all day in their fine dresses doing nothing, and went to parties in the evening. However, they grew more ugly as their hearts were bitter, and this
15 made their faces sour...