

Building Speaking Skills

Pronunciation: Thought groups.

When speaking in English, some words get grouped together into thought groups. Listen to the excerpt below and notice where the thought groups (//) are marked.

Margot	Rick, I'm not sure if it's my favourite example, // but I can tell you that it's a really common example // and it's actually things that we've talked about // and I would say the biggest one is performance reviews.// Procrastination from both the person doing it // and the person getting it // and it's definitely one of those things that // people will put off – // I'll get to it later, // it's a big project, // I hope I'll finish it –// It's a really common thing // that people procrastinate on	0:20
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Thought groups make speech easier to understand and nicer to listen to. If you pause in the wrong place, or don't pause at all, it can make your speech more difficult to understand. Now listen to another excerpt and try to mark where the speaker uses thought groups.

(Answers can be found in the appendix.)

Margot	I think there's a number of things that people can do. I think what they can do is they can try to, at the very least, take the next action and so think of that project when it just is so huge and you're overwhelmed, take a step to get you started and to get the ball rolling. And that step may just be a simple, little step. It may be a bit of research, it may be signing off on a document that you had to pass off, but a little step to get you started is a big tip to help with procrastination.	2:59
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Now listen to both excerpts several times and practice saying them with thought groups. You can speak at the same time as the speaker, or, if she is too fast, you can listen and then practice.