

Introduction to thought groups

(source: Focus on Pronunciation, Linda Lane, 2005)

- One way to sound more fluent is to link the words in a thought group together:

I don't understand / what you said.

~Thought groups help the listener identify the parts of a sentence; they help the speaker because the pause can be used to plan what you want to say next.

- Length of thought groups

~There are no set rules for deciding what the thought groups are, and there are often many options. Compare:

If you want to sound more fluent, / link your words together.

If you want / to sound more fluent, / link your words together.

If you want to get ahead, / dress for success.

If you want / to get ahead, / dress for success.

~In general, however, we pause at punctuation marks (commas, periods, semicolons, question marks, etc.) and grammatical units - prepositional phrases like "in the morning" & verb phrases like "to get ahead" - are grouped together.

~Most experts agree that when you are learning a language, it is better to use shorter thought groups because the pause can help you plan your next phrase & think of the correct vocabulary and forms.

Practice saying the sentences below, paying careful attention to link the words in each thought group together. 🧠

1. Stonehenge / is a prehistoric monument / built of massive stone pillars.
2. The Great Wall of China / runs east and west / through Northern China.
3. The pyramids of Egypt / served as tombs / for kings and queens.
4. Mount Fuji, / the highest mountain in Japan, / is an active volcano.

