

10 ENGLISH FILLERS YOU'LL ACTUALLY USE

From knowing to speaking

Fillers and conversational expressions help us think, clarify ideas, soften statements and keep conversations flowing. Practise using these 10 expressions naturally in your own English.

well · I mean · you know · actually · basically · kind of · like · anyway · so · let me think

EXERCISE 1 — Match the expression to its function

Match each expression (1–10) with its main conversational function (A–J).

Expression	Answer	Function
1. Well	___	A. Simplifying a complicated explanation
2. I mean	___	B. Returning to the main topic
3. You know	___	C. Making a description less strong
4. Actually	___	D. Asking for time to remember or decide
5. Basically	___	E. Clarifying or correcting what you said
6. Kind of	___	F. Starting a considered answer
7. Like	___	G. Introducing an approximate number
8. Anyway	___	H. Appealing to shared understanding
9. So	___	I. Introducing unexpected or corrective information
10. Let me think	___	J. Introducing an explanation or longer answer

EXERCISE 2 — Complete the conversations

Choose the most appropriate expression from the box. Use each expression once.

well · I mean · you know · actually · basically · kind of · like · anyway · so · let me think

1. A: Do you enjoy working from home?

B: _____, I like the flexibility, but sometimes I miss my colleagues.

2. A: What exactly does your company do?

B: _____, we help small businesses manage their finances.

3. A: Do you still live in Rome?

B: _____, I moved to Milan last year.

4. A: How was your first day at your new job?

B: I was _____ nervous, but everyone was really friendly.

5. A: What was the name of that restaurant we went to?

B: _____... Oh, yes! It was called The Green House.

6. A: How long did you wait for the bus?

B: It took, _____, forty minutes. I was so annoyed!

7. A: Why did you decide to learn English?

B: _____, I originally started learning it because I wanted to travel more.

8. A: How was your holiday?

B: It was exhausting. _____, we spent most of our time walking around the city.

9. A: Did you enjoy the concert?

B: It was amazing! _____, that feeling when the whole audience starts singing together?

10. A: What happened after you missed the train?

B: We had to wait another hour. _____, we eventually arrived at the hotel around midnight.

EXERCISE 3 — Make it sound more natural

Rewrite the answers using the expression in brackets. You may need to change the sentence slightly.

1. A: Would you like to move abroad?

B: I'm not sure. I'd miss my family. (well)

2. A: What do you do for a living?

B: I help people improve their English. (basically)

3. A: How was the interview?

B: I was a little nervous. (kind of)

4. A: Do you speak Spanish?

B: No, but I'm learning Italian. (actually)

5. A: How many people attended the event?

B: About fifty people came. (like)

6. A: Did you enjoy the trip?

B: Yes, but it was tiring. We walked nearly twenty kilometres every day. (I mean)

EXERCISE 4 — Continue the conversation

Complete the responses with your own ideas. Use the expression provided and write at least one full sentence.

1. A: How's work or school going?

B: Well, _____

2. A: What do you usually do at weekends?

B: Basically, _____

3. A: Have you ever tried an extreme sport?

B: Actually, _____

4. A: Tell me about a difficult day you've had recently.

B: It was really stressful. I mean, _____

5. A: How did you feel before your last important exam or meeting?

B: I was kind of _____

EXERCISE 5 — Your turn: Speak naturally!

Now put these expressions into practice. Answer the questions aloud, using the suggested fillers.

Don't write your answers first. Give yourself a moment to think, then speak.

Question	Try to use
1. Would you like to live in another country? Why?	Well
2. Why are you learning English?	So
3. What do you do for work or study?	Basically
4. What's something people often assume about you that isn't true?	Actually
5. Describe a recent situation when you felt nervous or uncomfortable.	Kind of / I mean
6. What's one of the best trips you've ever taken?	Let me think
7. Tell a short story about something unexpected that happened to you.	Anyway
8. Describe a feeling or experience that most people can relate to.	You know
9. How long does it usually take you to get ready in the morning?	Like

Final challenge: Choose any two questions and answer them again without looking at the suggested expressions. Use fillers only where they sound natural.

Self-check

- ☐ I used fillers to give myself thinking time.
- ☐ I used expressions to clarify or soften my ideas.
- ☐ I avoided using too many fillers.
- ☐ I answered the questions without writing my answers first.
- ☐ I sounded more natural and less rehearsed.

Remember: Fluency doesn't mean speaking without pauses. It means learning to manage them naturally.