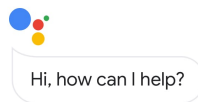


Three ways to supercharge your English listening and speaking!

1. How can Siri help me with my spoken English?



You can practice speaking English out loud and get answers to a range of questions, with **Siri** on Apple devices, or **Google Assistant (GA)** on either Android or Apple devices. “Siri” here is usually meant to include *both* Apple’s Siri and also Google Assistant. There are differences between the two, but they can do largely the same things.

For Apple’s **Siri**: Go to Settings 設定 → Siri & Search (Siri 與搜尋) and choose your desired settings. The app may have you go through a short training process so your device can better adjust to your voice and pronunciation.

It’s actually best if you use **two devices**, e.g. a smartphone and a tablet (Mac laptops also have Siri), and you set the language on one as:

- a. **US English**, to practice speaking and listening in English, and to get information;

Set the language on the other device to:

- b. **Mandarin Chinese**; that way you can ask Siri for translations from Chinese into English. This will save you the trouble of changing the system language back and forth.

For **Google Assistant**, download the Google Assistant app from the Google Play Store (or the Apple App Store) and follow the cues to adjust the settings. GA can handle **two** languages on the same device, and it is very easy to change languages.

To get Siri’s attention, either say, “**Hey Siri**” or **press the home button**. For GA, say “**OK Google**” or “**Hey Google**” or click on the **microphone** icon. You can do a Google search if you need more help setting up Siri or Google Assistant.

Siri often responds to less common requests with a link to a Wikipedia article or other web page; on occasion Siri will say he/she doesn’t understand or can’t perform a certain task at present. You will gradually learn where Siri’s limits are, as well as which things Siri does very well.

Note that your devices are in fact always “listening”; if you have privacy concerns, you need to be aware of this.

Below are some very practical, everyday questions you can ask and requests you can make of Siri. More suggestions at the following link; you can find further questions for Siri with a Google search!

The complete list of Siri commands

<https://www.cnet.com/google-amp/news/the-complete-list-of-siri-commands/>

Questions and requests for daily use:

1. What time is it?
2. Set a timer for 25 minutes. or: How much time is left on the timer?
3. Set an alarm for 6:30am.
4. Turn on (turn off) the flashlight (torch).
5. Find pictures of a monkey wrench.
6. Open YouTube. (or other app)
7. Play some music. or: What's this song? or: "Like" this song. or: Play more like this.
8. Play, pause/stop, skip/next, play previous song. or: After this, play "The Way I Am".
9. What's the date today? or: What date is it today? or: What's today's date? or: What day is it today?
10. What's the weather [like] today? or: What kind of weather do we have today?
11. How much is 36 degrees Celsius in Fahrenheit?
12. What's the temperature now? or: What's the humidity? or: How windy is it today?
13. Is it going to rain today? or: "Do I need an umbrella today?" or: When is sunset tonight?
14. How much is 160 centimeters in feet?
15. How far is it from Taipei to Taichung in kilometers/miles?
16. Define "layover". or: What's a synonym for "pretty"? or: What are some antonyms of "clear"?
17. How do you spell "confident"?
18. How do you say "succulents" in [Mandarin] Chinese? (or other language)
19. What is 421 times 364?
20. How much is 109 divided by 619? (for a percentage)
21. How much is eight thousand New Taiwan dollars in US dollars?
22. What is the square root of 21,609?
23. Open a new Note called "Groceries".
24. Search the App Store for Google Podcasts.
25. Where are you? or: Ping my iPhone. (to help you find your phone, tablet or AirPods)
26. What is the closest restaurant to me?
27. What time is it in California? (for a long-distance video call)
28. Check the flight status of EVA Air flight BR88.
29. When is Chinese New Year this year?
30. How many days are there until Christmas?
31. What's the population of Japan?
32. How many websites are there?
33. What's the most common sound in English?
34. When is Jay Chou's birthday?
35. How long would it take me to walk to the post office?

Some fun interactions with Siri:

36. Tell me a knock-knock joke. (can be repeated endlessly)
Example: Siri: Knock, knock. You: Who's there? Siri: Dwayne. You: Dwayne who?
Siri: Dwayne the bathtub, I'm ddowning!
37. Flip a coin. or: Heads or tails? or: Roll a die. or: Roll two dice.
38. Tell me a joke. (can be repeated)
39. Read me a haiku. (can be repeated)
40. Can you beatbox?
41. Where are you from?
42. When were you born? or: How old are you?
43. What's your favorite movie?
44. Who's your favorite actor?
45. What is zero divided by zero?
46. Which came first, the chicken or the egg?
47. Good-bye! or: I'm off now! or: See you later, Alligator!
48. I'm back! or: I'm home!
49. I'm sad. or: I'm happy. or: I'm nervous. or: I can't get to sleep.
50. Good night.

2. How can I turn an ebook into an audio book?

Your digital device can *read aloud* almost any printed text to you, and even turn the pages!

On an Apple device: Go to → Settings 設定 (the Gear icon), tap → Accessibility 輔助使用 (this may be under General 一般在 some versions), then go to → Spoken Content 語音內容. Turn on both → Speak Selection 朗讀所選範圍 and → Speak Screen 朗讀螢幕. (DON'T turn on Speech Controller 語音控制器, Highlight Content 反白內容, or Typing Feedback 輸入回饋 – they are mostly very noisy!)

Next, click on → Voices 聲音, and choose → English 英文, then → English (US) 英文 (美國), then → **Alex (enhanced 高音質)**. Alex is currently the gold standard of synthesized speech – you can even hear him draw a breath before he starts reading a sentence! You can also adjust the → Speaking Rate 朗讀速度 as you prefer, and you can add new words under → Pronunciations 發音. Alex does make some mistakes, but not many, and even his English **intonation** is pretty good! Now go to → Add Language 新增語言 and choose → Chinese (Traditional) 中文 (台灣), then → female 女性, if needed, and then → Mei-Jia 美嘉 for Taiwan Mandarin. Mei-Jia enables you to **listen** to Chinese articles and books in electronic form when you're not free to read with your eyes or when you're just tired.

To hear a whole page read: Starting from the top of the screen, swipe down over the screen with two fingers. To hear a selection, mark 反白 the selection you want to hear, and click on Speak 朗讀; you may also need to choose your desired language, but usually it's automatic, and usually you get the right language.

More information in Chinese here:

<https://support.apple.com/zh-tw/guide/iphone/iph96b214f0/ios>

If it's an online article, click on the **AA** icon at the left of the URL to use the **Reader view 閱讀器模式** if and when it's available – it gets rid of a lot of unwanted formatting and images, and sometimes wards off annoying pop-ups. The Reader view is also good for just regular silent reading!

Other **AA** options are: Translate Website, Hide Toolbar, Request Desktop/Mobile Website, Website Settings, Deactivate ad blockers or Privacy Report, and Show Bottom Tab Bar.

You also have several options, including Look up and Translate, if you mark 反白 a word or phrase.

On an Android device: Go to → Settings 設定 (the Gear icon) and then tap → Accessibility → Select to Speak. Tap the Select to Speak toggle switch to turn on the feature. Select OK to confirm permissions.

Open any app, and then tap → Select to Speak → Play, to hear the phone read the text aloud. You can now listen as your device reads any pdf, text, Word, epub, or other electronic file to you. Tap → Stop to end playback.

You can listen to Alex read to you while doing housework, driving (use an audio cable 音源線 to connect your device to your car's radio), on hikes, and for getting to sleep. And of course for focused English reading and listening practice, including with the Echo Method!

Alternatively, you can just copy-and-paste any text you'd like to hear, paste it into **Google Translate**, and click the speaker icon to **listen** to, **Echo**, or **shadow** the text being read. Click a second time to hear it read more **slowly**, or click on a single word or phrase to hear it read alone.

3. How can I be sure my English sentences are correct and well-formed?

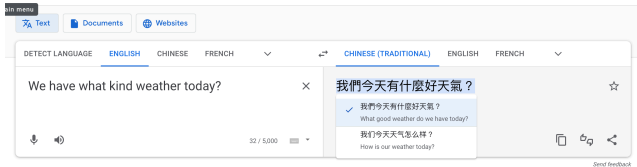
1. Make sure your questions and sentences are **well-formed** and colloquial, and not 「台式英語」! You can check with **Google Translate** to be sure. Translate back and forth a few times between English and Chinese to be really sure your question or sentence is well-formed.

For example, Siri can *understand* “We have what kind weather today?” But this is **not** a well-formed question; Google Translate translates it as 我們今天有什麼好天氣?, which is quite odd in Chinese. But when we click on this, reverse the direction of translation, and maybe delete any unnecessary words like 我們, we get:

“How's the weather today?”

Much better!

In addition, if you click on the proposed translation, it will offer as another option: 我們今天天氣怎麼樣?



and *this* is in fact what we want to express!

Click on this for more options for the same meaning, like “What’s the weather like today?”, which is another good way to ask this question.

2. Ask Chinese Siri: 「今天天氣怎麼樣？」英文怎麼說？

Siri should answer something like: “What’s the weather like today?”, which is correct and colloquial! I personally have found this very, very useful using English Siri to learn correct and more colloquial ways to express things in French, and also in English and Chinese.

See also section 4. below for hints on how to use simplified English novels to help you accumulate and store up lots of good, well-formed English sentences in your brain!