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American accent is actually a very broad, general term. US English is used by a broad variety of people across the world, and the US alone is home to hundreds of regional and cultural dialects. We'll be giving you some tips on what is referred to as General American. This is the kind of "neutral" standard speech associated with highly educated Americans and broadcast media. It is the accent you'd expect to hear on the news. For starters, the United States of America is the third largest country in the world, and US English is the most popular form spoken with at least 231 million speakers.Today we're going to unpack the American accent. Keep reading for some simple training in speaking like a native. We'll give you tips on pronunciation, intonation and even a few Americanisms, or common US words, to try. So how do you speak like an American? Let's go through a few typical features of the general American accent that you need to remember. Tip.1: Work on the "r" The American accent is considered a rhotic accent. This means that wherever the letter "r" is written, it is pronounced. Park instead of pahk. Car instead of cah. Many non-native English speakers struggle with rhoticity, so practise your 'r's! To make a good R, open your mouth slightly and relax. Now curl the tip of your tongue back without touching the top of your mouth, and voice! Really hard, right? How to pronounce the "r" Tip 2: Get the "th" right Another tricky, yet common sound in the American vernacular, is th. The, not ze. Thought, not sougth. To make a 'th', rest your tongue between your teeth and voice! Say thick, not sick. 'Th' is sometimes voiced and sometimes devoiced, depending on the rest of the word. R is voiced in there, mother and algorithm. R is devoiced in think, throw, and anthem. Tip 3: Light "L" vs. Dark "L" The final sound we're going to practice is L. Try producing a Dark L. This means the back of the tongue is raised slightly, giving it a rich, "dark" sound. This version of L is more common at the end of words, but in many American accents it is the only form of L. Know the difference between the Light L and the Dark L. In order to produce these sounds correctly, it's important to hear them! Once you've got the individual sounds down, you need to produce them in the correct context. Balance and rhythm are important factors in speaking like a native. Watch your syllable stress - that is, which parts of the word you emphasise more than others. Try reading the following, slowly at first, emphasising the parts in bold: Gina aced her physics exam. I gotta give her props for that! To sound like a native speaker, you can't just speak in the right way, you need to say the right thing. Ace, gotta and give props are all quintessentially US. Listen up! Are you all ears? If you think something's great, try expressing it like an American. Awesome! Tip 4: Remember the vocabulary used You might be familiar with the US vs British spelling amongst the other differences. There are a lot of differences in vocabulary, as well - say Fall instead of Autumn, sneakers instead of trainers, and apartment instead of flat. Americans love to turn nouns into verbs. Vacation, vacuum and lobby are all examples of this. One doesn't just take a vacation, they vacation. Do you own a vacuum, or do you want to vacuum? Try turning some nouns into verbs! Tip 5: Hollywood or Netflix it! Whilst everything we've gone through is useful to know, ultimately the best way to speak like a native is to hear natives speak. The United States, home of course to Hollywood, is one of the most prolific producers of cinema today. For a more neutral, General American accent, settle in and watch Star Wars, the Dark Knight trilogy, or for an old-time classic, try Gone With the Wind. To experience more diverse regional accents the US has to offer, try Fargo, set in Minnesota in the midwest. East Coast? The Godfather presents New York Italian American. For a Southern drawl, cinema classic Forrest Gump is set in Alabama, in the Southeast. You can check some of the best Hollywood movies here. Equipped with these tools - pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary, you'll be mimicking Hollywood celebrities in no time. Start slow, then build up to a natural speed. Before you know it, you'll get the hang of it. Props to you! Written by Claudia Essay questions to practice IELTS writing task 2 for the topic of media and advertising. Some companies sponsor sports as a way to advertise themselves. Some people think it is good, while others think there are disadvantages to this. Discuss both sides and give your opinion. (Reported 2017, Academic Test) Violence in the media promote violence in society. To what extent do you agree? Most people think that the truth should be objective rather than subjective when it comes to the news. Do you think all news is true? What is the function of a newspaper? More and more newspapers and news channels are using photographs to support their news articles and stories. Some people think that photographs are not a reliable source of news while others consider photographs to be irrefutable. Discuss both sides and give your opinion. The majority of news being reported is bad news such as wars, famines, accidents and crime. Why do you think that is? Do you think the news should be a balance of both good and bad news? In the last few decades there have been more and more cases of famous people being hounded by the press. Some people think that famous people in the media have no right privacy. To what extent do you agree? People in the lime light have a responsibility to set an example for others by their good behaviour. Do you agree? With the development of the media online, there is no future for the radio. To what extent do you agree? Some people believe that what children watch on television influences their behaviour. Others say that amount of time spent watching television influences their behaviour. Discuss both views and give own opinion. (Reported in 2017) Companies spend millions each year on advertising online, in magazines and on billboards. These adverts can encourage people to buy goods that they do not really need. What are the positive and negative affects of consumerism? One of the prime times for advertising on TV is when children get back from school. Some people think that advertisements aimed at children should not be allowed. What is your opinion? Many people buy products that they do not really need and replace old products with new ones unnecessarily. Why do people buy things they do not really need? Do you think this is a good thing? Many people think that fast food companies should not be allowed to advertise while others believe that all companies should have the right to advertise. What is your opinion? Reported essay questions are from students who have taken their IELTS test. These questions may vary slightly in wording from the original question. All IELTS Essay Questions Over 100 IELTS Essay Questions The world's favourite fruit could disappear forever in 10 years' timeThe banana is among the world's oldest crops. Agricultural scientists believe that the first edible banana was discovered around ten thousand years ago. It has been at an evolutionary standstill ever since it was first propagated in the jungles of South-East Asia at the end of the last ice age. Normally the wild banana, a giant jungle herb called Musa acuminata, contains a mass of hard seeds that make the fruit virtually inedible. But now and then, hunter-gatherers must have discovered rare mutant plants that produced seedless, edible fruits. Geneticists now know that the vast majority of these soft-fruited I plants resulted from genetic accidents that gave their cells three copies of each chromosome instead of the usual two. This imbalance prevents seeds and pollen from developing normally, rendering the mutant plants sterile. And that is why some scientists believe the world's most popular fruit could be doomed. It lacks the genetic diversity to fight off pests and diseases that are invading the banana plantations of Central America and the smallholdings of Africa and Asia alike. In some ways, the banana today resembles the potato before blight brought famine to Ireland a century and a half ago. But "it holds a lesson for other crops, too," says Emile Frison, top banana at the International Network for the Improvement of Banana and Plantain in Montpellier, France. "The state of the banana," Frison warns, "can teach a broader lesson: the increasing standardisation of food crops round the world is threatening their ability to adapt and survive." The first Stone Age plant breeders cultivated these sterile freaks by replanting cuttings from their stems. And the descendants of those original cuttings are the bananas we still eat today. Each is a virtual clone, almost devoid of genetic diversity. And that uniformity makes it ripe for disease like no other crop on Earth. Traditional varieties of sexually reproducing crops have always had a much broader genetic base, and the genes will recombine in new arrangements in each generation. This gives them much greater flexibility in evolving responses to disease - and far more genetic resources to draw on in the face of an attack. But that advantage is fading fast, as growers increasingly plant the same few, high-yielding varieties. Plant breeders work feverishly to maintain resistance in these standardised crops. Should these efforts falter, yields of even the most productive crop could swiftly crash. "When some pest or disease comes along, severe epidemics can occur," says Geoff Hawtin, director of the Rome-based International Plant Genetic Resources Institute.The banana is an excellent case in point. Until the 1950s, one variety, the Gros Michel, dominated the world's commercial banana business. Found by French botanists in Asia in the 1820s, the Gros Michel was by all accounts a fine banana, richer and sweeter than today's standard banana and without the latter's bitter aftertaste when green. But it was vulnerable to a soil fungus that produced a wilt known as Panama disease. "Once the fungus gets into the soil, it remains there for many years. There is nothing farmers can do. Even chemical spraying won't get rid of it," says Rodomiro Ortiz, director of the International Institute for Tropical Agriculture in Ibadan, Nigeria. So plantation owners played a running game, abandoning infested fields and moving to "clean" land - until they ran out of clean land in the 1950s and had to abandon the Gros Michel. Its successor, and still the reigning commercial king, is the Cavendish banana, a 19th-century British discovery from southern China. The Cavendish is resistant to Panama disease and, as a result, it literally saved the international banana industry. During the 1960s, it replaced the Gros Michel on supermarket shelves. If you buy a banana today, it is almost certainly a Cavendish. But even so, it is a minority in the world's banana crop.Half a billion people in Asia and Africa depend on bananas. Bananas provide the largest source of calories and are eaten daily. Its name is synonymous with food. But the day of reckoning may be coming for the Cavendish and its indigenous kin. Another fungal disease, black Sigatoka, has become a global epidemic since its first appearance in Fiji in 1963. Left to itself, black Sigatoka - which causes brown wounds on leaves and premature fruit ripening - cuts fruit yields by 50 to 70 per cent and reduces the productive lifetime of banana plants from 30 years to as little as 2 or 3. Commercial growers keep black Sigatoka at bay by a massive chemical assault. Forty spraysings of fungicide a year is typical. But despite the fungicides, diseases such as black Sigatoka are getting more and more difficult to control. "As soon as you bring in a new fungicide, they develop resistance," says Frison. "One thing we can be sure of is that black Sigatoka won't lose in this battle." Poor farmers, who cannot afford chemicals, have it even worse. They can do little more than watch their plants die. "Most of the banana fields in Amazonia have already been destroyed by the disease," says Luadir Gasparotto, Brazil's leading banana pathologist with the government research agency EMBRAPA. Production is likely to fall by 70 per cent as the disease spreads, he predicts. The only option will be to find a new variety.But how? Almost all edible varieties are susceptible to the diseases, so growers cannot simply change to a different banana. With most crops, such a threat would unleash an army of breeders, scouring the world for resistant relatives whose traits they can breed into commercial varieties. Not so with the banana. Because all edible varieties are sterile, bringing in new genetic traits to help cope with pests and diseases is nearly impossible. Nearly, but not totally. Very rarely, a sterile banana will experience a genetic accident that allows an almost normal seed to develop, giving breeders a tiny window for improvement. Breeders at the Honduran Foundation of Agricultural Research have tried to exploit this to create disease-resistant varieties. Further back-crossing with wild bananas yielded a new seedless banana resistant to both black Sigatoka and Panama disease.Neither Western supermarket consumers nor peasant growers like the new hybrid. Some accuse it of tasting more like an apple than a banana. Not surprisingly, the majority of plant breeders have till now turned their backs on the banana and got to work on easier plants. And commercial banana companies are now washing their hands of the whole breeding effort, preferring to fund a search for new fungicides instead. "We supported a breeding programme for 40 years, but it wasn't able to develop an alternative to the Cavendish. It was very expensive and we got nothing back," says Ronald Romero, head of research at Chiquita, one of the Big Three companies that dominate the international banana trade.Last year, a global consortium of scientists led by Frison announced plans to sequence the banana genome within five years. It would be the first edible fruit to be sequenced. Well, almost edible. The group will actually be sequencing inedible wild bananas from East Asia because many of these are resistant to black Sigatoka. If they can pinpoint the genes that help these wild varieties to resist black Sigatoka, the protective genes could be introduced into laboratory tissue cultures of cells from edible varieties. These could then be propagated into new disease-resistant plants and passed on to farmers.It sounds promising, but the big banana companies have, until now, refused to get involved in GM research for fear of alienating their customers. "Biotechnology is extremely expensive and there are serious questions about consumer acceptance," says David McLaughlin, Chiquita's senior director for environ- mental affairs. With scant funding from the companies, the banana genome researchers are focusing on the other end of the spectrum. Even if they can identify the crucial genes, they will be a long way from developing new varieties that smallholders will find suitable and affordable. But whatever biotechnology's academic interest, it is the only hope for the banana. Without it, banana production worldwide will head into a tailspin. We may even see the extinction of the banana as both a lifesaver for hungry and impoverished Africans and the most popular product on the world's supermarket shelves.

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