

WHADDDAYA SAY?

***Guided Practice
in Relaxed
Spoken English***

NINA WEINSTEIN

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TO THE STUDENT

You have probably noticed that when Americans speak slowly, clearly, and carefully, they are not too hard to understand. When they speak quickly or in a relaxed, informal way, however, it is often very difficult to know what they have said. This happens because of pronunciation changes. If exactly the same words are spoken in "careful" English and then in "relaxed" English, they will usually sound quite different.

Usually, words spoken with relaxed pronunciation are easier and quicker to say (even if they are hard to understand.) EXAMPLES: "What do you want to do?" becomes "**Whaddaya *wanna do?*" and "I don't know what I'm going to do" becomes "I **donno* what I'm **gonna* do." In this book you will learn about these and other relaxed speech patterns. As you work through the book and listen to its tape, you will learn to recognize these pronunciation changes when you hear them. As a result, your ability to understand spoken English will increase noticeably.

You may want to use some of the examples from this book in your own speech in order to give it a more natural sound. If you do, ask your teacher for help. This is necessary because relaxed speech is not used in all situations. It is not acceptable, for example, at any kind of formal function, or when people must repeat something that was not understood. Relaxed speech is very natural and common, however, when people are talking at informal gatherings or meetings, or when they are making "small talk" with friends.

As you use this book, you will notice that many words and phrases are spelled in an unusual way. These "special spellings" are only intended to give you a general idea of how the relaxed speech examples are pronounced. Do not use these "special spellings" in your own writing. They are not acceptable in written English.

To help you remember that relaxed speech is not appropriate for all situations, and to help you remember that the "special spellings" used in this book are not acceptable in written English, we have put an asterisk (*) in front of each relaxed speech example.

TO THE TEACHER

Generally speaking, ESL students learn to understand their teachers (and the tapes they hear in language lab) without too much difficulty. When they are listening to American friends, clerks and shopkeepers, or "the man on the street," however, this situation often changes dramatically. To a large degree this may be explained by the fact that "classroom English" and "the English of the real world" sound different. The careful, clearly articulated (and often slower) language typically heard in class and the "relaxed speech" so commonly heard outside it do not quite match. When students encounter this phenomenon, therefore, a communications breakdown usually occurs: what they expect to hear and what they actually hear are not the same thing. The result is at best frustration and at worst utter mystification.

If relaxed speech were no more than slang or "sloppy diction" (and thus only characteristic of substandard language usage), there would be little cause for concern. The fact is, however, that it is heard when Americans of almost all backgrounds and educational levels speak quickly or in an informal, casual manner. Students will, therefore, encounter relaxed speech often, and should be prepared to deal with it. *Whaddaya Say?* has been written for just that purpose.

Whaddaya Say? is not intended to teach relaxed speech in and of itself. It is *not* intended to be a pronunciation text. Instead, its goal is to help students understand the relationships between carefully articulated English and its more informal, relaxed counterpart. When these relationships become clear and students learn to recognize them in spoken English, they will have acquired a valuable key to understanding. Consequently, their listening comprehension skills will improve markedly.

THE LESSON MATERIALS

The *Whaddaya Say?* text consists of twenty lessons; accompanying cassettes contain a recording of the aural portions of each lesson. Within the text, each lesson presents a different relaxed speech pattern (or *reduced form*) and reviews previously presented material. All the lessons are divided into three parts.

In *Part One* of each lesson, students are expected to listen only; as they listen, they follow in their books the written representations of what they hear. What they hear is pairs of sentences. Both sentences

in each pair contain exactly the same words, but one illustrates carefully articulated pronunciation, while the relaxed speech counterpart is illustrated in the other.

In *Part Two*, students close their books and listen again to the relaxed speech examples that they heard in *Part One*. This time, however, the sentences in “relaxed” pronunciation are given without their carefully articulated counterparts. The students’ task is to “translate” what they hear into careful pronunciation.

In *Part Three*, students open their books and hear a conversation built around the particular relaxed speech pattern treated in the lesson (and also previously presented patterns). At first, they listen only, hearing the conversation with “relaxed” pronunciation. After hearing the conversation at least once, their task is to fill in the blanks in the transcript using the appropriate standard spellings of what they have heard. Each blank or series of blanks corresponds to relaxed speech patterns featured in the conversation. An Answer Key for each conversation is provided at the back of the text.

In *Whaddaya Say?*, relaxed speech patterns are graphically represented by what might be called “special spellings” (*gonna, *wanna, *whaddaya, go *da, etc.). These “special spellings” are intended to show, in a general and easily understood way, the particular pronunciation changes being worked with. Each “special spelling” is preceded by an asterisk to remind students that it is not a correct spelling. Although the pronunciations could, of course, have been indicated with more accuracy by means of phonetic transcriptions, this was decided against so as not to burden students (and teachers!) with a set of symbols that would be esoteric at best. Students are not likely to encounter these “special spellings” (or something similar) in anything but comics or very casual notes; therefore, it should naturally be pointed out that they are inappropriate for the writing the students will be required to do.

Many students will want to adopt relaxed pronunciation into their speech. Point out to them that it is not appropriate for all conversational situations. Provide them with guidance about when the use of relaxed speech is and is not appropriate.

Whaddaya Say? may be used with any student who has contact with spoken American English—university students, students in adult school or private language institutes, students in high school ESL programs, tourists, business people, and so on. The text may also be used at almost all levels of instruction—from beginning to advanced. For best results, students should, of course, be familiar with the vocabulary and grammatical content of any given lesson before attempting to work with it.

The amount of time needed to work through *Whaddaya Say?* or any one of its lessons will depend on many factors, including a student’s

general English competency, how well the format of the lessons is understood, and how much "real world English" the student has already been exposed to. As a general rule of thumb, each lesson represents *at least* forty-five minutes of presentation and practice material (for a total of *at least* fifteen hours); considerably more time could, however, be necessary.

SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THE MATERIALS

1. Introduce each *Whaddaya Say?* lesson to students before allowing them to work on it. Be sure the focus of each lesson, the lesson format, and what students are required to do in each part of the lesson are clearly understood. Be sure students realize that the relaxed speech examples they hear are not appropriate in all situations.

2. At this point have students work through *Part One*. Emphasize that students should listen carefully, paying particular attention to the pronunciation differences in the careful and relaxed renderings of each pair of sentences. Be sure students understand that the meaning of both sentences in a pair is the same, but the "feeling" and situations in which the different renderings would be used are different.

EXPANSION: *Part One* can be expanded by having students listen to (and repeat, if desired) *all* the example sentences with careful pronunciation (that is, the left-hand examples); then the same procedure can be followed for all the relaxed pronunciation (right-hand) examples. For added reinforcement, *Part One* can then be worked through again, following the format of the text.

3. Next have students work through *Part Two*. Be sure that they understand their task: to close their books and listen to the relaxed speech examples from *Part One*, then "translate" what they have heard into careful pronunciation. Spend as much time as is necessary with *Part Two*; students should be able to give spontaneous "translations" into careful pronunciation of the relaxed forms that they hear.

EXPANSION: *Part Two* may be expanded by creating additional sentences modeled on those included in *Whaddaya Say?*. As students hear these additional examples, they respond by giving the careful equivalents.

4. Now go on to *Part Three*. Be sure students understand that they will hear a conversation featuring the relaxed speech elements introduced in any given unit plus other elements from previous units. Also be sure students realize that they are to fill in the blanks with the *conventional spellings* of the reduced forms that they will hear. Emphasize that "special spellings" are *not* to be used.

For optimum results, students should listen to the entire dialog all the way through at least once before attempting to fill in any blanks.

It may also be advisable to stop and/or replay the tape after each line of dialog, since filling in the blanks can be quite challenging. Do *not* stop the tape in the middle of lines or utterances, however, since context is very important.

Once students have filled in all the blanks, play the entire conversation again so students may check their answers. Then either go over the answers with the students, have them hand in their books so you can correct their answers, or have them confirm what they have written by consulting the Answer Key at the back of the text.

EXPANSION: *Part Three* may be expanded by creating more sentences modeled after those heard in the conversation. On hearing such additional examples, students respond by "translating" them into careful pronunciation and conventional spelling.

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you \longrightarrow *ya

NOTE: You is not pronounced ***ya** if stressed.

PART I

Listen to the tape. You will hear the pairs of sentences listed below. The first sentence in each pair will be spoken with *careful pronunciation*. The second sentence will be spoken with *relaxed pronunciation*.

CAREFUL (SLOW) PRONUNCIATION

1. Do you need exact change for these machines?
2. Yes, you need two quarters.
3. Do you have any change?
4. No, but I need some, too. If you give me a dollar, I'll get some.
5. Here's a dollar. Where do you get the change?
6. You get it at the store next door.
7. Oh. Will you buy me some soap, too? I'll give you some more money.
8. Sure. Will you watch my clothes while I'm gone?
9. Of course. Will you be back soon?
10. Yes, I'll see you in just a few minutes.

RELAXED (FAST) PRONUNCIATION

1. Do *ya need exact change for these machines?
2. Yes, *ya need two quarters.
3. Do you have any change?
4. No, but I need some, too. If *ya give me a dollar, I'll get some.
5. Here's a dollar. Where do *ya get the change?
6. *Ya get it at the store next door.
7. Oh. Will *ya buy me some soap, too? I'll give *ya some more money.
8. Sure. Will *ya watch my clothes while I'm gone?
9. Of course. Will *ya be back soon?
10. Yes, I'll see *ya in just a few minutes.

PART II

Close your book. Listen to the tape. You will hear the 10 sentences with relaxed pronunciation that you heard in Part I. After you hear each sentence, say the same thing, but use *careful pronunciation*.



PART III

Open your book. Listen to the tape. You will hear a conversation. In it, the speakers will use relaxed pronunciation. As you listen, fill in the blanks with the words you would hear if the speakers were using *careful pronunciation*. Replay the tape as necessary.

AT THE LAUNDROMAT

TONY: "How do _____ work these washing machines?"
(1)

SANDY: "First, _____ put in the clothes. Then _____ put in
(2) (3)
the soap. Then _____ put in the exact change."
(4)

TONY: "What change do _____ need?"
(5)

SANDY: "_____ need two quarters."
(6)

TONY: "Then what?"

SANDY: "_____ decide what temperature _____ want."
(7) (8)

TONY: "OK. Then what?"

SANDY: "Then _____ push in the money."
(9)

TONY: "Is that everything _____ do?"
(10)

SANDY: "That's everything. Then _____ just wait until the clothes
(11)
are finished."

TONY: "Thanks. I'm glad _____ came by when _____ did."
(12) (13)

2

What do you What are you	→ *Whaddaya
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NOTE: A related form, ***whadda**, is used when *What do* is followed by either *we* or *they*. Example: "***Whadda we need?**", "**Whadda they want?**"

PART I

Listen to the tape. You will hear the pairs of sentences listed below. The first sentence in each pair will be spoken with *careful pronunciation*. The second sentence will be spoken with *relaxed pronunciation*.

CAREFUL (SLOW) PRONUNCIATION

1. What do you want?
2. What do you think?
3. What do we need?
4. What are you doing?
5. What are you thinking?
6. What are you watching?
7. What are you drinking?
8. What do they do after work?
9. What do you do after school?
10. What do they think we should do?

RELAXED (FAST) PRONUNCIATION

1. *Whaddaya want?
2. *Whaddaya think?
3. *Whadda we need?
4. *Whaddaya doing?
5. *Whaddaya thinking?
6. *Whaddaya watching?
7. *Whaddaya drinking?
8. *Whadda they do after work?
9. *Whaddaya do after school?
10. *Whadda they think we should do?

PART II

Close your book. Listen to the tape. You will hear the 10 sentences with relaxed pronunciation that you heard in Part I. After you hear each sentence, say the same thing, but use *careful pronunciation*.



PART III

Open your book. You will **hear** a conversation. In it, the speakers will use relaxed pronunciation. As you listen, fill in the blanks with the words you would hear if the speakers were using careful pronunciation. Replay the tape as necessary.

WEEKEND PLANS

DAVID: “ _____ (1) _____ (2) _____ (3) doing this Saturday?”

TOM: “Nothing special. _____ (4) _____ (5) _____ (6) have in mind?”

DAVID: "A big picnic. _____ think?"
(7) (8) (9)

TOM: "It sounds like fun! Who do _____ think we should go
(10)
with?"

DAVID: "Well, how about Debra, Mark, Jan, and Jan's sister?"

TOM: "Fine. _____ we need to bring?"
(11) (12)

DAVID: "Lots of everything! _____
(13) (14) (15)
want?"

TOM: "Hmm. _____ they like to eat?"
(16) (17)

DAVID: "Oh, all the usual things. Chicken, potato salad, fruit,
cookies . . . _____ know, talking about food is making
(18)
me hungry."

TOM: "Me, too! _____ say to going for
(19) (20) (21)
hamburger?"

DAVID: "_____ you think? Let's go!"
(22) (23)