

**SPEECH BY DR YAACOB IBRAHIM, MINISTER FOR INFORMATION,  
COMMUNICATIONS AND THE ARTS, AT THE LAUNCH OF THE  
SPEAK GOOD ENGLISH MOVEMENT 2012, ON THURSDAY 27  
SEPTEMBER 2012, AT 3PM AT FOOD FOR THOUGHT, SINGAPORE  
BOTANIC GARDENS**

Mr Goh Eck Kheng, Chairman of the Speak Good English Movement

Distinguished guests

Ladies and gentlemen

Good afternoon.

The Speak Good English Movement is now in its 13<sup>th</sup> year. During its early years, it focused on building awareness of the importance of speaking good English. Today, more Singaporeans are aware of the economic value and the importance of being able to speak English well. English is the language of business in Singapore and in the world. It is also the language that bridges Singapore's multi-racial groups in common spaces like the workplace, places of leisure and schools.

2 This year, the Movement's message is to 'Make Good English Stick'. Many of us use Post-it notes in our daily lives as reminders. Similar to how we use the Post-it notes, the Movement hopes that these sticky pieces of paper will serve as visible reminders to us to make it a habit of always speaking Standard English.

## **How to start?**

3 Earlier this year, some Singaporeans were each given sticky notes and asked to interpret the messages that were written on them. Let me share these four messages with you:

1. “Make an effort to start”. Make the effort to start learning and improving by reading as much as we can. It could be as simple as reading the newspapers at home, or visiting the libraries where there is a wide collection of books and magazines. Use these resources to learn new words and study how thoughts are expressed and communicated.
2. “Stretch yourself”. Make the effort to improve your proficiency. I encourage you to visit the Speak Good English Movement’s website and utilise their resources. Sign up for their monthly e-newsletter and ‘like’ them on Facebook for bite-sized tips and fun facts about English every day. Just by learning one grammar rule or how to pronounce a word a day will improve our English standard significantly.
3. “Practice, practice, practice.” Practise speaking good English wherever and whenever we can. The more we use the language, the more confident we are in using it.

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4. “Never underestimate your own power”. Learning is for everyone, young or old. The Movement’s reputable language partners also run free workshops at the libraries. These workshops cover different topics, from grammar to pronunciation, which I am told are very popular. Sign up at the SGEM website with your friends, colleagues and family, then turn up for these workshops so that you pick up something while spending time together with someone you care.

4 Very soon, you will be able to read these messages yourself as the new posters are unveiled on buses and in other public areas such as bus stops and our public libraries.

**Why speak Standard English?**

5 I would also like to take this opportunity to urge those who can speak Standard English to do so as much as possible, especially with people who will benefit from having role models of good spoken English. In this way, we will contribute to an environment where good English is heard and spoken all the time. Your ability to speak well has given you an advantage or even created new opportunities for you. Help your friends, colleagues and family members to improve by constantly and

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consciously speaking well, so that they too can reap the benefits of speaking good English.

6 Speaking good English does not equate to using big words. While it is important to have good vocabulary, speaking well is about the ability to communicate our thoughts, ideas and feelings well enough so that others can understand us. With this in mind, the Speak Good English Movement's partners have created programmes and resources that introduce broader vocabulary and positive language that we can use in nurturing our children.

**How to improve your English?**

7 This year, the Speak Good English Movement has partnered the British Council to develop a self-assessment quiz. By answering 30 questions, you will be able to have a better idea on how proficient you are in English. So please visit the Movement's website and try this quiz as a first step towards self improvement.

8 Next, visit the SGEM website where you can access various useful resources, such as a pronunciation guide, tips on conversational

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English, and even podcasts to help improve you English. You can also sign up for free workshops at our public libraries via the SGEM website.

**Conclusion**

9 There is a saying ‘Use it or lose it.’ So every time you see a sticky note, remember the Movement’s message to ‘Make Good English Stick’.

10 Before I conclude, I would like to thank the partners for their support for this year’s Speak Good English Movement, especially 3M who has generously sponsored all the sticky notes for this year’s campaign, and venue sponsor, Food For Thought. It is now my pleasure to launch the Speak Good English Movement 2012. Thank you.

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