

Medically Speaking Rules: Rules for Using Linguistic Elements of Speech

Lynda Katz Wilner and Marjorie Feinstein-Whittaker.
Owings Mill, MD: Successfully Speaking, 2007.

With the large number of healthcare workers in the United States who are nonnative English speakers, clear communication with patients is paramount. This communication is hindered if those who take care of patients—be they doctors, nurses, or medical assistants—cannot be understood. This is where ESL activities can help these workers break pronunciation and communication barriers.

Medically Speaking Rules is a unique resource to help advanced-level nonnative English speakers improve their communication in a healthcare setting. Written by two speech and language pathologists, the book is divided into 27 sections as well as three audio CDs. Whether used with a teacher or independently, it helps learners practice North American English stress and intonation, pronunciation, language usage, and effective communication in a medical setting.

Each section starts with basic rules regarding pronunciation and usage related to certain areas of spoken English (e.g., syllable stress patterns, proper nouns, compound nouns, -s endings).

Learners can then listen to the accompanying CDs to hear the pronunciation of words that are relevant to that section. The majority of the listening and pronunciation practice relates to a medical setting, with sentences such as “She was scheduled for mammography followed by sonography” and “You must wear scrubs, masks, and gloves in the operating room.” Each section contains a few practice exercises along with an answer key so that learners can evaluate themselves. One resource that many learners should find helpful is a two-page “cheat sheet” of pronunciation rules in North American English.

Medically Speaking Rules also has some features not related to pronunciation that will appeal to those working in healthcare. For example, one chapter covers idiomatic expressions (e.g., *white as a sheet*, *hit a nerve*) that could potentially confuse nonnative speakers. Another chapter focuses on effective communication in the work setting and includes tips on communicating clearly with patients and family members and during medical dictation, speeches, and case and poster presentations. This chapter is an espe-

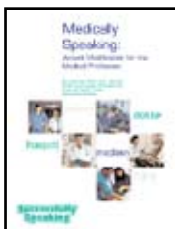
cially nice addition for those who may have to give public presentations.

Medically Speaking Rules is a handy resource for nonnative speakers who are entering the healthcare field in the United States. I probably would not use it in a large class setting, but I would definitely refer to it if I were tutoring a student or small group that needed healthcare-related pronunciation practice. If I had a larger advanced-level class with one or two students working in healthcare, I might select a couple of exercises as needed to use with them.

If necessary, learners can also use *Medically Speaking: Accent Modification for the Medical Profession*, a supplemental resource that focuses even more closely on pronunciation, or *Medically Speaking Inventory: Assessment of Accented Speech*, which provides learners and their teachers with materials to evaluate progress in pronunciation. Both, however, must be purchased separately.

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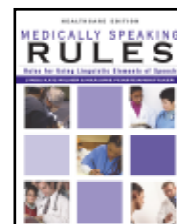
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