

LEARN ENGLISH WITH MUSIC

Blinding Lights

The Weeknd

COMPLETE LEARNING WORKBOOK

Go beyond the song

Night-time imagery, emotional dependence and precise contrasts for natural conversational English.

21 verified learning cards / Level B1-B2 / guided practice

SECTION 00

Your learning journey

Watch first, explore second, practise from memory and finish with the complete card library.

1 WATCH	Follow the official lyric video and synced cards.
2 EXPLORE	Study language, extended vocabulary, culture and sound.
3 PRACTISE	Complete the guided challenges without looking back.
4 REVIEW	Use the final 21-card library by category.

Three sources of value

Song language gives you patterns to reuse. **Extended vocabulary** helps you discuss the themes and music. **Context** helps you understand cultural references and form your own interpretation.

Official lyrics

[Open the official lyric video](#)

Listen, read and return to the workbook whenever you want to explore a language point in greater depth.

SECTION 01

Map the song

Follow the double meanings: sight also means understanding, drowning also means emotional overload, and a physical journey carries an emotional search.

STAGE	LEARNING LENS
Late-night call	Isolation and a request for connection
Empty city	Las Vegas becomes an emotional landscape
Chorus	Light, touch and sleeplessness converge
Return journey	Driving language turns urgency into motion

Listening challenge

For each stage, write one word for the sound and one for the speaker's emotional position. Then explain which language choice helped create that impression.

SECTION 02

Language Lab

Move beyond the quick cards: compare structures, notice register and learn how to avoid common mistakes.

LANGUAGE POINT	GO DEEPER	USE IT WELL
try to, trying to and tryna	Try to introduces an attempted action. Trying to is the continuous form; tryna is only an informal representation of compressed speech.	Write trying to in standard English and treat tryna as listening knowledge.
on my own vs by myself	Both can mean alone or without help. On my own often foregrounds independence or lack of support; by myself may simply identify who was present.	I built it on my own emphasises achievement; I was sitting by myself describes the scene.
show someone how to	Show takes a person before an embedded how to-clause: show me how to use it. Explain can take the topic, but normally needs to before the person.	Say explain the system to me, not explain me the system.
don't have to vs mustn't	Don't have to removes necessity; mustn't imposes prohibition. The negative changes more than polarity - it changes the kind of obligation.	You don't have to come means optional; you mustn't come means forbidden.
turn on	With devices, turn on means activate. With people, it can mean excite sexually; turn on someone can also mean suddenly attack them.	Check the object and context before reusing this phrasal verb.
no one, nobody and none	No one and nobody refer to people and take a singular verb. None can replace a noun phrase and may refer to people or things.	No one is here. None of the lights are working.
see, look and watch	See is perception, look at is directed attention and watch is sustained attention to movement or change.	I saw the sign, looked at the map and watched the traffic.
can't ... until	The negative main clause continues up to a boundary. Until identifies the point at which the action becomes possible.	I can't decide until I have the figures. Do not replace until with by in this pattern.
let someone do something	Let takes an object plus a bare infinitive. Allow normally takes object plus to-infinitive.	Let me go; allow me to go. Never write let me to go.

SECTION 03

Extended vocabulary: go beyond the lyrics

This bonus language expands what you can say about the narrative, emotion, performance and production.

blinding	adjective	So bright that it temporarily stops you from seeing clearly. <i>The oncoming headlights were blinding on the dark motorway.</i>
to race	verb	To drive, run or move as fast as possible, often against time. <i>He raced across town to catch the last train.</i>
restless	adjective	Unable to relax, rest or stay still, especially at night. <i>She felt restless and kept checking her phone all evening.</i>
insomnia	noun	The condition of being unable to fall asleep, even when tired. <i>Stress from work has given him insomnia this month.</i>
neon	noun / adjective	The bright, glowing artificial light typical of city signs at night. <i>The diner's neon sign flickered pink against the wet street.</i>
to chase	verb	To run or drive after someone or something in order to catch them. <i>The dog chased the ball all the way down the beach.</i>
skyline	noun	The outline of tall buildings and towers seen against the sky. <i>You can see the whole city skyline from the rooftop bar.</i>
adrenaline	noun	A hormone the body releases in moments of excitement, fear or danger, causing a rush of energy. <i>The adrenaline kicked in the second the roller coaster dropped.</i>
infatuated	adjective	Feeling an intense, often irrational passion for someone. <i>He was completely infatuated with her after just one date.</i>
headlights	noun	The bright lights on the front of a car that light the road ahead. <i>I flashed my headlights to warn the other driver.</i>
downtown	noun / adverb	The central, usually busiest, area of a city. <i>We're meeting for dinner downtown at eight.</i>
to speed	verb	To drive faster than is safe or allowed. <i>He got a ticket for speeding on the highway.</i>

SECTION 04

Idioms and expressive English

Use these additional expressions to discuss the song's situations and themes in natural English.

to hit the road	extension	To start a journey, especially by car. <i>It's getting late - we should hit the road before traffic gets worse.</i>
in the blink of an eye	extension	Very suddenly, in an extremely short amount of time. <i>The lights changed and the car was gone in the blink of an eye.</i>
to burn rubber	extension	To drive off very fast, accelerating hard and suddenly. <i>The second the light turned green, he burned rubber down the avenue.</i>
to be blinded by love	extension	To be so infatuated with someone that you cannot see their flaws or the situation clearly. <i>Her friends warned her, but she was completely blinded by love.</i>
to see someone in a new light	extension	To suddenly understand or perceive someone differently, usually more positively. <i>After the trip together, I saw my colleague in a completely new light.</i>

Make the language yours

Complete the exercises later in the workbook to check meaning, structure and register.

SECTION 05

Pronunciation as performance

A sung voice is not a neutral accent sample. Listen for concrete features, then compare theatrical delivery with everyday speech.

Canadian Raising	Canadian English famously raises the starting point of the diphthongs in words like 'about' and 'nightlife' before a voiceless consonant - the vowel begins higher and further back than in most American accents. It's subtle, not the cartoon 'aboot', but a trained ear can hear it in Tesfaye's vowels.
The flapped T (shared with American English)	Like American speakers, Canadians turn a 't' between vowels into a quick, soft 'd' sound - 'lighting' or 'city' lean toward 'lyeding' and 'siddy'. It's one of the reasons Canadian and American accents are so easily confused.
The cot-caught merger	Canadian English doesn't distinguish the vowel in pairs like 'stalking' and 'stocking' - both use the same low back vowel, unlike in many British or Irish accents where the two are kept clearly apart.
A breathy falsetto that smooths the accent	The Weeknd delivers much of this song in a high, airy falsetto, which naturally blurs final consonants and glides between syllables. That's an R&B; vocal technique, not a dialect feature - but it makes individual words harder to isolate than in his lower, chest-voice verses.

Three-pass shadowing

1. Tap only the stressed beats.
2. Reproduce the phrase slowly and clearly.
3. Contrast a natural spoken version with the musical performance.

SECTION 06

Context and creative choices

Discover the cultural and creative decisions that shaped the song, then listen again with this context in mind.

The Weeknd - the stage name of Toronto-born Abel Tesfaye - released 'Blinding Lights' on 29 November 2019 through XO and Republic Records, as the second single from his fourth studio album, *After Hours* (2020). He wrote and produced it together with Swedish hitmaker Max Martin and his longtime collaborator Oscar Holter, with additional writing credits shared with Belly and DaHeala.

Musically, the track is a full embrace of 1980s synth-pop. Critics and journalists immediately pointed to echoes of a-ha's 'Take On Me' and Michael Sembello's 'Maniac' in its driving, gated drums and glossy synthesizer lines, much of it built around the sound of the Roland Juno-60, a synthesizer that defined the decade's pop production.

Commercially, it became The Weeknd's biggest song to date, reaching number one in more than thirty countries, including a ten-week run atop the German chart and an eight-week run in the UK. In the United States, it hit number one on the Billboard Hot 100 in April 2020 and went on to break Imagine Dragons' 'Radioactive' record for the longest run inside the chart's top ten, eventually spending 90 weeks there. In November 2021, Billboard named it the number-one song in the entire history of the Hot 100 chart, and by April 2022 it had also been certified Diamond by the RIAA and become the most-streamed song ever on Spotify.

That success made one particular gap impossible to ignore: when nominations for the 63rd Annual Grammy Awards were announced in November 2020, 'Blinding Lights' and its parent album received no nominations at all. The Weeknd called the decision 'corrupt' on social media, and the public backlash contributed to the Recording Academy later reforming how its nomination review committees worked.

The music video, directed by Anton Tammi, continues the bloodied, red-suited narrative Tesfaye began in Tammi's earlier video for 'Heartless.' Shot over four nights on Fremont Street in Las Vegas and in downtown Los Angeles, wrapping around 6 a.m. each time, it channels the neon chaos of *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*, *Casino* and *Joker* - fitting touchstones for an artist who had just made his film debut in *Uncut Gems*.

For learners, it's a useful entry point into Canadian English: a clear, flap-heavy accent close to General American, delivered here through The Weeknd's breathy falsetto and a lyric built almost entirely from short, high-frequency words about night, speed and obsession.

SECTION 07

Practice zone

Complete every activity without looking back, then use the answer key to correct your work independently.

A. Complete the sentences

1. I've been ____ call you all evening. (trying to / tryna to)
2. She showed me how ____ the settings. (change / to change)
3. You don't ____ bring anything; it is optional. (have to / mustn't)
4. Please call me ____ when you arrive. (back / over)

B. Choose the precise meaning

5. It is prohibited: **You don't have to enter / You mustn't enter.**
6. Direct your eyes briefly: **look at / watch.**
7. Return a telephone call: **call back / call off.**
8. Begin a journey: **hit the road / miss the boat.**

C. Correct the error

9. She explained me the problem.
10. Let me to check the address.
11. Nobody are around.
12. I can't finish it by you send the file.

SECTION 08

Answer key

Check each answer and return to the Language Lab when a form or distinction is still unclear.

1. 1. trying to
2. 2. to change
3. 3. have to
4. 4. back
5. 5. You mustn't enter
6. 6. look at
7. 7. call back
8. 8. hit the road
9. 9. She explained the problem to me
10. 10. Let me check the address
11. 11. Nobody is around
12. 12. I can't finish it until you send the file

Review again

Cover the answers and repeat the activities after a few days. A delayed second attempt is a better test of learning than immediate rereading.

SECTION 09

Complete 21-card library

Use this compact summary for quick revision or return to the video cue when you want to hear a point again.

Vocabulary / 2 cards

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 1:12

Drowning as an emotional metaphor

Drowning literally means being unable to breathe under water. Figuratively, it means being overwhelmed: drowning in work, debt, grief or the night.

VOCABULARY / VIDEO 2:10

Call back: return a phone call

Call someone back means telephone them after an earlier call or attempted contact. It is separable: call me back, not call back me.

Grammar / 8 cards

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:34

Show someone how to + verb

The pattern show + person + how to + verb introduces instruction or guidance: show me how to love, show us how to start, show her how to use it.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:38

Don't have to is not mustn't

Don't have to means there is no necessity. Mustn't means something is prohibited. This contrast is essential: you don't have to do much is permission, not a ban.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 0:54

No one is around to + verb

Around can mean present or nearby. No one's around to judge me means nobody is there and available to perform that action.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:06

Can't ... until: a limiting time clause

Can't + verb + until marks the condition that must be reached first. Compare I can't sleep until you call with I won't leave until you arrive.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:14

When I am like this

Like this points to a current state or manner. When introduces the situation in which the following statement is true: when I'm like this, I need quiet.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 1:16

The one I trust: a hidden relative pronoun

The one I trust contains a defining relative clause with an omitted object pronoun: the one (that) I trust. The pronoun can disappear because it is the object, not the subject.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:16

Let + object + base verb

Let is followed by an object and the base form without to: let you go, let me explain. Will never adds a strong future refusal or promise.

GRAMMAR / VIDEO 2:54

Until sets the condition again

The returning until-clause still marks the point that must be reached before sleep becomes possible. Repetition reinforces the time relationship, not a new tense.

Idioms / 4 cards

IDIOM / VIDEO 0:30

On my own: alone or independently

On my own can mean alone or without help. Context decides whether it suggests loneliness, independence or both.

IDIOM / VIDEO 0:40

Turn someone on: meaning and register

Turn someone on can mean excite or sexually attract someone; turn a device on means activate it. The human meaning is intimate and requires careful register.

IDIOM / VIDEO 0:58

See clearly: sight and judgement

See clearly can describe physical vision or accurate understanding. The song deliberately connects emotional confusion with the visual world of lights and darkness.

IDIOM / VIDEO 1:40

Hit the road and overdrive

Hit the road means leave or begin a journey. Overdrive is a high driving gear and, figuratively, a state of extreme activity: the campaign went into overdrive.

Culture / 4 cards

CULTURE / VIDEO 0:52

Sin City: a nickname for Las Vegas

Sin City is a well-known nickname for Las Vegas, associated with casinos, nightlife and excess. The reference places the speaker in a bright but emotionally empty city.

CULTURE / VIDEO 1:02

Blinding lights: image, not a fixed idiom

Blinding lights literally suggests lights intense enough to impair vision. Here the image also supports emotional disorientation, but the phrase is not a standard dictionary idiom.

CULTURE / VIDEO 1:38

Dawn after the neon night

The image of sunlight filling the sky contrasts with the artificial lights of the city. This shift from neon night to dawn gives the narrative a temporary sense of direction.

CULTURE / VIDEO 3:10

The outro leaves the speaker inside the loop

The final return to light and touch does not resolve the dependence. Repetition makes the emotional cycle feel ongoing rather than completed.

Pronunciation / 3 cards

PHONETICS / VIDEO 0:28

Tryna: recognising compressed speech

Tryna represents trying to in very informal speech and lyric writing. Learn to recognise it when listening, but write trying to in neutral or formal contexts.

PHONETICS / VIDEO 2:14

Could never: weak forms around the stressed message

In fluent delivery, could is often reduced while never and the final content word carry more weight. Practise a clear spoken version before imitating the sung rhythm.

PHONETICS / VIDEO 2:32

Repeated chorus, clearer prediction

Because the words are now familiar, use the later chorus to notice reductions around the strongly stressed nouns and verbs rather than trying to decode every syllable.

Keep learning

[Return to the synced learning experience.](#)