**Getting the hang of it (Words and phrases for getting used to things)**

by Kate Woodford

Getting used to things is a part of life. We all deal with situations, tasks or tools that are new to us. At first, they may seem difficult or strange. With time or practice, they become familiar and normal.  In this blog, we look at the language for expressing this idea.

Starting with single words, if you familiarize yourself with something that you don’t know about, you intentionally learn about it, usually to prepare for something: *I need to familiarize myself with the new software.* If you acclimatize, you become familiar with different weather or surroundings so that you are able to deal with them: *More time will be needed for the troops to acclimatize to the desert conditions.*

Several idioms exist in this area. Some convey the idea of getting used to a new situation or getting used to your role in that new situation. For example, if you **get** or **find** your **bearings**, you succeed in learning about a new situation, especially learning where things are: *It takes a while to get your bearings when you start a new job.* If you *(informal)* [get into the swing of it](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/get-into-the-swing-of-it-things?q=get%2Binto%2Bthe%2Bswing%2Bof%2Bit%252Fthings)or [get into the swing of things](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/get-into-the-swing-of-it-things?q=get%2Binto%2Bthe%2Bswing%2Bof%2Bit%252Fthings), you start to understand and enjoy a new situation and feel confident about your role in it: *I hadn’t worked in an office for years so it took me a while to get back into the swing of it.* If you *(UK)* [get into your stride](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/get-into-your-stride) / *(US)* [hit your stride](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/get-into-your-stride), after a little time you become confident doing something new: *Let’s wait till she’s got into her stride before we ask her to manage that project.*

If you *(informal)* [get the hang of](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/get-the-hang-of-something) a task, you learn how to do it. This is often said of tasks that are not simple or obvious: *It’s a slightly tricky system but you’ll soon get the hang of it.* If a task is [second nature](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/second-nature) to you, you are now so familiar with it that you do it easily, without thinking much about it: *I’ve been driving so long, it’s second nature to me now.*

There is also the phrasal verb [settle in/into](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/settle-in). If you settle in or settle into a new place, such as a house, job or school, you start to feel happy there: *Once we’ve settled in, we’ll invite them over for dinner.*/ *He settled into the company quite quickly.*

Finally, we sometimes find it impossible to get used to new ways of doing things, having done things differently for a long time. For this, we might say [you can’t teach an old dog new tricks.](https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/you-can-t-teach-an-old-dog-new-tricks?q=you%2Bcan%2527t%2Bteach%2Ban%2Bold%2Bdog%2Bnew%2Btricks) What is the equivalent in your language?