

Lesson 27: Bad Habits

Mandy wants her boyfriend, Toby, to get rid of some bad habits. Listen to their conversation and try to answer these comprehension questions:

- 1. Toby's bad habit is...**
 - a. biting his nails
 - b. chewing on toothpicks
 - c. picking his nose
- 2. Mandy's bad habit is...**
 - a. cracking her knuckles
 - b. chewing her lip
 - c. playing with her hair
- 3. Mandy wants him to stop because...**
 - a. he's going on a job interview
 - b. her friends are coming to visit
 - c. she wants to introduce Toby to her parents
- 4. Toby works as a...**
 - a. construction worker
 - b. farmer
 - c. veterinarian
- 5. Toby also makes a remark about Mandy's...**
 - a. eating habits
 - b. hobbies
 - c. whiny voice
- 6. Toby says that his bad habit...**
 - a. has been with him since childhood
 - b. is something practically everyone does
 - c. isn't so bad when compared to others
- 7. Toby suggests...**
 - a. making a deal to ignore each other's bad habits
 - b. replacing their bad habits with conversation
 - c. that bad habits are necessary to deal with stress.
- 8. Mandy also wants to change Toby's...**
 - a. clothing
 - b. haircut
 - c. way of speaking

Conversation Text

Mandy: Will you stop biting your fingernails? It's so **gross**.

Toby: Hey, Valley Girl, this is Texas, not Los Angeles. Here in Texas a guy can bite his nails.

Mandy: I'm not asking you to get a **manicure** – I just want my boyfriend to have decent-looking hands. Your fingernails have these **ragged edges**... they look like they've been **gnawed on** by a **rodent**.

Toby: Doesn't bother me. Besides, hands were made for workin'. Heck, **ain't** no cow looking at my fingernails when I'm doing the milking.

Mandy: We're not on your farm, Toby, so **get with the program**. Next week my friends from LA are driving here to see me. If they see your **nasty** fingernails they'll think you're a **slob**. Like, for sure.

Toby: Look, I'm a farmer, and darn proud of it. And if I want to bite my fingernails I will. It's not like I chew my bottom lip like you do.

Mandy: What's that supposed to mean?

Toby: Oh, **come down off your high horse**. You're always biting your bottom lip like it's a **juicy steak** or something. What's the matter, the celery stick you ate for breakfast wasn't enough for you?

Mandy: Hey – I don't wanna hear any of your **snide** comments about my weight!

Vocabulary

gross = disgusting

manicure = get your nails professionally cleaned and decorated

ragged edges = the edges of his nails are uneven, as though they were torn

gnawed on = chewed

rodent = rat or other similar animal

ain't = (informal) there isn't

get with the program = follow the rules, do what you're supposed to do

nasty = disgusting

a slob = a dirty, messy person who doesn't take care of themselves

come down off your high horse = don't act so superior

juicy steak = piece of meat that's full of liquid

snide = sarcastic, insulting

Toby: All I'm saying is that you've got your **vices** too – so don't **fuss** about mine.

Mandy: **You're hopeless.** Biting your nails is, like, a habit most people **grow out of** by the time they're ten. **It's about time** you stopped.

Toby: It's about time *you* stopped chewing on your lip. You're doing it right now!

Mandy: Okay! Fine – it's a bad habit. But so is biting your nails.

Toby: Yeah, but there are a lot of worse ones – like **cussing** and chewing tobacco and **hitting the bottle**, like **my old man** does. But I don't do any of those. I just bite my fingernails when I get **aggravated** or stressed, that's all.

Mandy: That's the same reason I chew on my lower lip. I don't even realize I'm doing it.

Toby: Okay, fine, then let's make a deal. Whenever we feel the need to bite a fingernail or chew on a lip, we'll just talk to each other instead. Deal?

Mandy: Deal. I knew there was a reason I liked you. But you still need a **makeover**, farmer boy. **I'll never hear the end of it** if my friends see you in those **grubby overalls**...

Toby: Oh good grief, here we go again.

Vocabulary

vices = terrible habit or addiction

fuss = worry and complain

You're hopeless = there's no hope or possibility of you changing or improving

grow out of = stop doing as you grow up and become more mature

It's about time = this should have happened a long time ago

cussing = swearing, using bad language

hitting the bottle = (slang) drinking alcohol

my old man = (slang) my father

aggravated = very annoyed

makeover = complete change/improvement of your appearance

I'll never hear the end of it = I'll constantly be reminded of by someone

grubby = worn-out and dirty

overalls = a type of pants with straps that go over the shoulders, often worn by farmers ([picture](#))

Vocabulary Quiz

Complete each sentence with a word/expression from the box. Three are not used.

cussing

fussing

get with the program

gnawing on

grow out of

grubby

high horse

hitting the bottle

hopeless

it's about time

makeover

nasty

never hear the end of

slob

vice

1. A lot of kids pick their noses, but they usually _____ it... or at least learn not to do it in public!
2. My best friend roots for a rival sports team. If they win the championship this year, I'll _____ it.
3. He used to be a light drinker, but he started _____ more frequently after his divorce.
4. _____ you called. I've been waiting to hear from you the whole day.
5. I've told my sister over and over to call before coming over, but it's _____ - she doesn't listen to me.
6. My college roommate was a real _____. He'd always leave half-eaten plates of food all over our room.
7. Gas stations always seem to have _____ bathrooms that look like they haven't been cleaned for months.
8. The police were called after the drunk guys at the bar began screaming and _____ at each other.
9. This T-shirt is a bit _____, so I wear it for doing housework and things like that.
10. You've dropped three classes and are failing two more! If you don't _____, you won't graduate on time.
11. Christina got a _____ before her 21st birthday - she bought new clothes and completely changed her hairstyle and color.
12. These shoes have tooth marks in them because our new puppy was _____ them.

Speaking Task

Mandy wants Toby to change his habits in order to make a good impression on her friends. Describe a time when you were concerned about what other people would think about you. What did you do in order to make a good impression? What were the results? Record your answer at www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish or send the MP3 to homework@espressoenglish.net for feedback!

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. a
2. b
3. b
4. b
5. a
6. c
7. b
8. a

Vocabulary Quiz

1. grow out of
2. never hear the end of
3. hitting the bottle
4. it's about time
5. hopeless
6. slob
7. nasty
8. cussing
9. grubby
10. get with the program
11. makeover
12. gnawing on