

Lesson 33: A Looming Deadline

Ben and Anna are a boyfriend and girlfriend who live together. Listen to their conversation about tasks and deadlines, and mark the statements below "True" or "False."

Listening Comprehension

True or false according to the dialogue?

1. Ben and Anna have lived together for eight months
2. Anna has already cleaned the bathroom
3. The paper is due tomorrow
4. Anna has no idea what she's going to write about
5. Anna has never wanted to change her habits
6. Anna doesn't like history
7. Ben offers to write the paper for her
8. Ben suggests that she use rewards to motivate herself
9. Anna thinks that system will work for her
10. If she starts her next paper early, Ben will take her out to eat

Conversation Text

Ben: Are you... folding laundry? You *never* fold laundry. In the eight months we've lived together, I've always seen you just **fling** your clothes onto the bed.

Anna: I have a paper to write. Nothing motivates me to do **chores** like an urgent deadline.

Ben: Ah, that explains why the kitchen is **spotless**.

Anna: Just wait until I take on the bathroom.

Ben: You'd rather **scrub** our toilet than write a paper?!

Anna: I'm just **dreading** it so bad.

Ben: When's it due?

Anna: Tomorrow.

Ben: Have you *started*? Tell me you've started...

Anna: Kind of. I mean, I've got an **outline**, but when I try to actually write the darn thing, it's like I get a **mental block**. So I get **antsy** and feel **compelled** to do something productive instead – like clean the house.

Vocabulary

looming = being present in a threatening way

fling = throw casually and carelessly

chores = tasks that must be done around the house

spotless = perfectly clean

scrub = rub something hard in order to clean it

dreading = anticipating with great fear, hate, or reluctance

so bad = (informal) very much

outline = a plan for the main points of the paper

a mental block = your thoughts stop and can't proceed or develop

antsy = impatient and restless, wanting to move or do something

compelled = forced by powerful feelings

Ben: Well, I'm not gonna complain about your cleaning **frenzy**, but... your time's running out, and that paper's not going to write itself.

Anna: I know, I know. I told myself I'd **stay on top of things** this semester. I was going to get started early on all my assignments and not **put them off** to the last minute.

Ben: So what happened?

Anna: I just couldn't **keep up**. My history professor kept **piling on** the homework, and I *hate* history, so I started procrastinating... and now the closer the deadline gets, the more I panic, and the more I avoid doing it.

Ben: It's a **vicious cycle**. But look at it this way – let's say the paper will take you about four hours to write. You could either do it in a single day, **get it over with**, and get on with your life... or you could spend weeks **agonizing** over it and then *still* have to put in four hours, only now your **back is against the wall** and it's even harder to concentrate.

Anna: What you're saying makes so much sense... but it's a little late for that. I wish I'd listened to reason and started weeks ago. But that is not what happened, and now **I'm at the end of my rope!**

Vocabulary

frenzy = period of intense activity

stay on top of things = stay updated on things and complete them on time

put them off = delay, procrastinate

keep up = accompany the progress

piling on = giving a very large amount

a vicious cycle = a situation where one bad thing causes another, and the second bad thing causes even more of the first, etc.

get it over with = finish something unpleasant quickly

agonizing = suffering mental worry or pain about something

your back is against the wall = you're in a difficult situation from which it's impossible to escape

I'm at the end of my rope! = desperate; don't have any more energy or patience

Ben: OK, first of all, step away from the laundry. Just sit down at your desk, and focus on writing the first sentence. Then the first paragraph. Before you know it, you'll have the whole paper written.

Anna: But what about the bathroom? It *is* **filthy**, you know...

Ben: Right, because we haven't cleaned it in weeks – so that means it can wait another day. Here's an idea – how about from now on you try to **bribe** yourself into starting early on your assignments?

Anna: How would I do that?

Ben: Tell yourself that if you get a certain amount of work done by a certain day, then you can **indulge in** something you like. Sushi, maybe.

Anna: I don't know... I'd probably just miss the deadline and have the sushi anyway to reward myself for trying.

Ben: Anna!

Anna: What? I know my weaknesses.

Ben: How about this? Next time you have an assignment, let me know and if you get started early, I'll take you out for sushi as a reward.

Anna: OK, but what can I do for you then?

Ben: You can clean the bathroom **to your heart's content**.

Vocabulary

filthy = extremely dirty

bribe = get something you want by offering a reward/incentive

indulge in = give in to one of your desires

to your heart's content
= as much as you want

Vocabulary Quiz

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

agonizing	dreading	get it over with	scrub
antsy	filthy	keep up	spotless
at the end of my rope	flinging	looming	to my heart's content
compelled	frenzy	put off	

1. Avoiding her isn't going to help matters - you should just apologize and _____.
2. He takes very good care of his car - not only is it in great condition, but it's also _____.
3. It took five hours to _____ all the graffiti off the walls.
4. I've been _____ over whether or not to take the job in Australia. What should I do?
5. My dog was _____ after playing in the muddy puddles.
6. Now that I have my own cell phone, I can chat with my friends _____!
7. The kids always get _____ during long car trips. Maybe we should fly instead.
8. I was _____ the interview, but it actually wasn't so terrible.
9. They were eating peanuts and just _____ the shells onto the sidewalk!
10. When I hear stories of people suffering, I feel _____ to help in whatever way I can.
11. You guys are all more experienced runners, so I'm not sure I can _____ with you.
12. The malls are crowded in December because of the Christmas shopping _____.

Speaking Task

Describe one of your favorite subjects/teachers at school. Why did you like the class so much? What did you learn? Also, talk about one of your least favorite subjects/teachers at school. Why didn't you like the class?

Record your answer at www.speakpipe.com/espressoenglish or send the MP3 to homework@espressoenglish.net for feedback!

Answers

Comprehension Questions

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. False
6. True
7. False
8. True
9. False
10. True

Vocabulary Quiz

1. get it over with
2. spotless
3. scrub
4. agonizing
5. filthy
6. to my heart's content
7. antsy
8. dreading
9. flinging
10. compelled
11. keep up
12. frenzy