

Lesson 41: Dealing with Teenagers

Helen is angry at her teenage son, Thomas, for coming home late. Listen to their conversation and mark the statements below "True" or "False."

Listening Comprehension

True or false according to the conversation?

1. Helen forgot to remind Thomas what time he was supposed to be home
2. Thomas is over an hour late
3. Thomas' punishment is that he can't use the car for the rest of the month
4. Thomas got into an accident and broke his leg
5. It was Thomas' stepfather who suggested the eleven o'clock curfew
6. Thomas got his car from his stepfather
7. The car is still on the side of the road
8. Thomas didn't have his phone with him
9. He hitchhiked to get home
10. Thomas had been texting his girlfriend at 2 AM

Conversation Text

Helen: Was there some part about 'Be home before eleven' that you didn't understand? I thought I was **crystal clear**. In fact, I distinctly remember **double-checking** with you right before you left to be sure that you heard me.

Thomas: Aw, **gimme a break**, mom – it's only 11:20!

Helen: Wrong answer, young man. Now go to your room. You've lost your driving **privileges** for the rest of the month.

Thomas: Really? You're not even going to give me the chance to explain? I might have driven the car into a **ditch**, broken my leg, and had to **crawl** all the way back home – but because I got in after eleven, you'd *still* **chew me out**.

Helen: Nice try. But your leg's not broken and you weren't crawling.

Vocabulary

crystal clear = very clear

double-checking = checking a second time, to make sure of something

gimme a break = don't be so harsh on me (or: that's ridiculous)

privileges = special advantages or benefits

ditch = a long, narrow hole in the ground (such as one alongside a road)

crawl = move on your hands and knees instead of walking upright

chew me out = reprimand, scold

Thomas: There's, like, no other seventeen-year-old on the face of the planet who has an eleven-o'clock **curfew**. Honestly, do I look like I'm ten years old?

Helen: You certainly act like it sometimes. And why on earth would I allow a later curfew when you can't even keep the one we agreed on?

Thomas: *I* never agreed to it. You had that conversation with Hank – it was his brilliant idea. **I didn't even get a say in the matter.**

Helen: You know, **it wouldn't kill you to** talk about your stepfather a little nicer from time to time. Does it ever **cross your mind** how much he sacrifices for you? He's the reason you got a car in the first place.

Thomas: Yeah, but the only reason he gave it to me was because no used car salesman with half a brain would **take it off his hands**. He's had that **piece of crap** since he was my age.

Helen: Just keep talking the way you are and your 'crappy' car will turn into 'no' car.

Vocabulary

curfew = a time before which you must be at home

I didn't even get a say in the matter = I didn't get to express my opinion or contribute to the decision-making

it wouldn't kill you to = a sarcastic way to say "it would be good if you behaved differently"

cross your mind = when a thought comes into your head

take it off his hands = buy or receive it from him

piece of crap = something terrible or in bad condition (slightly offensive)

Thomas: Threats and punishments. That's real mature, mom.

Helen: You know what, **wise guy**? **Hand over** the keys. Right *now*. Let's make that *two* months without going out.

Thomas: Fine. You want 'em? Take 'em. The car's not even in the garage, anyway.

Helen: What do you mean?

Thomas: I *mean* that my tire **blew out** and that **heap of junk** is sitting on the roadside, waiting for the **tow truck**.

Helen: Oh for God's sake, son! Why didn't you call me?

Thomas: Remember last Thursday when you took away my phone?

Helen: But why didn't you borrow one from your friends? And how did you even get home? If you tell me you **hitchhiked** I swear I'm going to have a heart attack.

Vocabulary

wise guy = a person who is acting arrogant and sarcastic, like he knows everything

hand over = give

my tire blew out = the tire (wheel of the car) exploded

heap of junk = a sarcastic way to refer to a car or piece of machinery that isn't functioning well, implying it is a pile of garbage

tow truck = the truck that can take a disabled car to the mechanic

hitchhiked = got a ride from a stranger by standing by the side of the road and signaling to passing cars

Thomas: Okay, *okay*. I **hailed a cab**. Relax.

Helen: Well, that's a relief. But why didn't you tell me that in the first place? Of course I'm not going to **ground you** for getting a **flat tire**!

Thomas: But you're always trying to punish me before you even know all the details! Like when you took my phone away. Do you know *why* I was **texting** at two in the morning? I was helping Bethany with her organic chemistry homework because she's almost failing the class.

Helen: I'm sorry. But how am I supposed to know if you don't tell me these things?

Thomas: If you'll actually listen, then I'll start talking.

Helen: All right. Now go get some sleep – we'll deal with the car in the morning.

Vocabulary

hailed a cab = signaled to a passing taxi to stop and pick me up

ground you = give a punishment where you are forbidden from going out

flat tire = when the car's tire loses its air

texting = sending text messages on a cell phone

Vocabulary Quiz

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

chewed me out	crystal clear	gimme a break	have a say
crawled	double-check	grounded	piece of crap
crossed my mind	flat tire	hand over	texting

1. _____ the money, and I'll give you the information you're looking for.
2. The baby _____ towards the teddy bear on the other side of the room.
3. I bought this blender three days ago and it's already broken. What a _____!
4. How can they give me a huge project today and insist that it needs to be done by tomorrow? _____!
5. If something doesn't add up on the financial spreadsheet, I can have my accountant _____ the numbers.
6. _____ while driving is very dangerous because it distracts you from the road.
7. I accidentally sent a confidential e-mail to the wrong person. My boss _____ for that one!
8. The instructions in the training manual need to be _____ in order to avoid mistakes and misunderstandings.
9. We got a _____ after running over some broken glass in the road.
10. I think university students should _____ in matters of school policy.

Speaking Task

There is a big debate about whether spanking young children (hitting them on their butt as punishment) is appropriate, or unnecessarily violent. What is your opinion? Also talk about what kind of punishments your parents used when you were a child/teenager.

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

Answers

Comprehension Questions

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

Vocabulary Quiz

1. hand over
2. crawled
3. piece of crap
4. gimme a break
5. double-check
6. texting
7. chewed me out
8. crystal clear
9. flat tire
10. have a say