

Speak English With Vanessa

Free PDF Worksheet

20 Difficult English Phrases

Dear English Learner,

Get ready to speak confidently with these English expressions. I recommend reading these sample sentences out loud and using the blank space on the last page to answer my challenge question using the vocabulary. Thanks so much for learning English with me!

*Your teacher,
Vanessa*

Minor inconveniences and disappointments

1. How disappointing.

This loaf of bread has gone stale. **How disappointing.**

My date doesn't look anything like the picture on his profile. **How disappointing.**

2. It's/That's unfortunate.

I thought these were chocolate chip cookies, but they're raisin cookies. **That's unfortunate.**

I went to the dentist and found out I have a cavity. **It's unfortunate.**

3. It's/That's not ideal.

Note: This can be used sarcastically for a really bad situation, not just a minor situation.

I was going to spend the weekend relaxing but my mom wants me to help her clean out her garage. **That's not ideal**, but I'll help her out.

To avoid traffic, I took a shortcut and then got lost for 3 hours. **It was not ideal.**
[sarcastic]

4. It's/That's discouraging.

My date said he would call me, but it's been two weeks since I've heard from him. That's the third time this has happened with a date. **It's discouraging.**

They said they would announce the lottery winners last night, but no one contacted me. **That's discouraging.**

5. 6. 7. Nuts! Crap! Dang it! [*very casual*]

Dang it! I thought I was putting sugar in my tea, but it was actually salt.

Crap! I forgot to set the timer and burnt dinner.

8. Aw, man. [*very casual*]

Aw, man. I ordered a burger and fries, and they gave me a salad instead.

Aw, man, this is my favorite sweater, and there's a tiny hole in it.

9. That sucks. [*very casual*]

My favorite football team lost the championship game. **That sucks.**

I'm sorry you didn't get that promotion you wanted. **That sucks.** I know how hard you worked for it.

10. It's/That's a bummer.

We were going to go to the beach today, but it's raining. **It's a bummer.**

I was going to go visit my friend this weekend, but she got sick and had to cancel. **That's a bummer.**

11. Oh, come on. Seriously?

Oh, come on. Seriously?! I get a flat tire in the middle of nowhere, in the rain?!

Oh, come on. Seriously? I just spilled coffee on my white shirt on the way to the meeting.

12. You've gotta be kidding me.

They said I didn't get the job because I smile too much? **You've gotta be kidding me.**

She broke up with you because she said her cat doesn't like you? **You've gotta be kidding me.**

13. Why, God, whyyy?!

Note: This is used for humor and melodrama, not for serious situations.

I realized halfway through the day that I had a pair of underwear stuck to the back of my sweater. So many people saw it. I'm so embarrassed. **Why, God, whyyy?!**

First, my car wouldn't start. Then, after I got it started, I realized I left my coffee on top of my car when I drove off. **Why, God, whyyy?!**

Serious damage

14. It's/That's too bad.

You lost your job? **That's too bad.**

They broke up? **That's too bad.**

Note: This can be said in a sad tone of voice which means that you are sincerely expressing sympathy OR in a sarcastic tone which means "I want to date him now.")

15. It's/That's a shame.

She was going to be a champion figure skater, but then she broke her leg. **It's a shame.**

He wanted to go to law school, but he could never pass the bar exam, so he gave up.
That's a shame.

16. It's/That's a pity.

It's a pity you have to move away for your new job. I'll miss having you as my neighbor!

You can't have pets in your new apartment? **That's a pity**, I know how much you love your cats.

17. It's/That's awful.

In the same week, I lost my dog, got fired, and my car broke down. **It was awful.**

He asked for a divorce on your anniversary? **That's awful.** I'm so sorry.

18. It's/That's devastating.

Have you seen the footage from the hurricane that hit the coast? **It's devastating.**

I read that the economic collapse is causing violence and unrest in the country. **That's devastating**, especially for people living in rural areas.

19. I'm sorry to hear that.

Note: This is a common phrase for expressing sympathy.

I'm sorry to hear that your grandpa passed away. I know you two were close.

I'm sorry to hear that you lost your job. I know how much your work meant to you.

20. I can't imagine.

I can't imagine how hard it must be to find out you were being lied to.

I can't imagine what you must be going through after losing your loved one.

Vanessa's Challenge Question

Use the space below to write a few sentences answering this question: **Describe the last time you had a bad day. What happened? What did you say, either to yourself or someone else?**

Sample answer: *The other day I turned off my alarm and woke up 5 minutes after I should have left for work! I shouted, "Crap!" and ran to the closet to put my clothes on. When I got in the car, the windshield was covered in ice. While I was scraping it, I kept saying, "Oh, come on, seriously?!!" And to top it off, a slow driver was in front of me the entire way to work. When I got to work, I realized that I had put my shirt on backwards. Why, God, why???"*

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