

Irish Songs to Learn English [B2]

L'accento irlandese ha una qualità vocale gioiata e festosa che rende l'inglese musicale. Non c'è quindi modo migliore di esercitarsi con la grammatica e il vocabolario che con una selezione di musica irlandese.

Everyone is familiar with the [impromptu trad music](#) seisiún (session) held in many Irish pubs, but since Dublin band U2's massive success in the 80s, the country's rock and pop music has travelled around the globe. It is a great resource for improving your English with examples of all uses of grammar and a wide range of vocabulary. It is also a way to immerse yourself in the fascinating culture of Ireland. We list ten of the most popular songs below, so grab your headphones and take a musical trip to the Emerald Isle.

IRISH SONGS TO LEARN ENGLISH

[Hailing from](#) Dundalk, north of Dublin, this quartet of three sisters and a brother had their biggest hit in 2000 with a song largely composed of imperatives. Lexically simple and entirely in the present (simple and continuous), it also uses the modal 'can'. I cannot lie From you I cannot hide And I'm losing the [will](#) to try Can't hide it (can't hide it) Can't fight it (can't fight it) So go on, go on Come on, leave me [breathless](#) Tempt me, [tease](#) me Until I can't [deny](#) this Loving feeling (loving feeling) Make me [long](#) for your kiss Go on (go on), go on (go on) Yeah, come on, yeah The Dublin-born singer-songwriter is best known for her 1990 [cover](#) of a Prince song, which [topped](#) the [charts](#) all over the world. It opens with a present perfect + 'since' clause, with four examples of the modal 'can' in the first verse. It's been seven hours and fifteen days Since you took your love away I go out every night and sleep all day Since you took your love away Since you been gone I can do whatever I want I can see [whomever](#) I choose I can eat my dinner in a [fancy](#) restaurant But nothing I said nothing can take away these blues 'Cause nothing compares Nothing compares to you This is a traditional Irish story song recounting the [misadventures](#) of a [highway man](#), beginning with a perfect example of the past continuous form. Its [enduring](#) appeal was

enhanced when Dublin rockers Thin Lizzy adapted it as a rock song in 1972, and it was later rerecorded by American superstars Metallica. As I was a goin' over the far famed Kerry mountains I met with captain Farrell and his money he was counting I first produced me pistol and I then produced me rapier Saying stand and deliver for I am the bold deceiver Musha-ring dumma-do-damma-da Whack for the daddy-o Whack for the daddy-o The Belfast native's early hit is one of the defining songs of the 60s. Using vocabulary of movement to describe happy times spent with his girlfriend, it begins with a past simple question and introduces the chorus with the 'used to' form. Hey, where did we go? Days when the rains came Down in the hollow Playin' a new game Laughin' and a-runnin', hey, hey Skippin' and a-jumpin' In the misty mornin' fog with Our, our hearts a-thumping and you My brown-eyed girl And you, my brown-eyed girl Do you remember when we used to sing? Sha-la-la, la-la, la-la, la-la, la-la tee-da Just like that Sha-la-la, la-la, la-la, la-la, la-la tee-da, la-tee-da Hailing from Wicklow, south of Dublin, this singer-songwriter exploded onto the international scene in 2013 with his debut single, a love song mired in religious discrimination. It uses the 'should have' + past participle form to express regret. My lover's got humour She's the giggle at a funeral Knows everybody's disapproval They should've worshipped her sooner If the heavens ever did speak She's the last true mouthpiece Every Sunday's getting more bleak A fresh poison each week We were born sick You heard them say it My church offers no absolutes She tells me, "Worship in the bedroom" The only heaven I'll be sent to Is when I'm alone with you I was born sick But I love it Command me to be well A-a-a-a-a-a, amen, amen, amen Take me to church I'll worship like a dog at the shrine of your lies I'll tell you my sins, and you can sharpen your knife Offer me that deathless death Good God, let me give you my life Ireland's most famous musical sons deserve an article all to themselves, with fifteen studio albums to date. Their 1987 hit I Still Haven't Found What I'm Looking For is ideal for the present perfect, and 1991's One opens with a series of question forms in the present continuous, simple and future, also using the intensifier 'too'. Is it getting better Or do you feel the same? Will it make it easier on you now You got someone to blame? You say, one love, one life When it's one need in the night One love, we get to share it Leaves you, baby, if you don't care for it Did I disappoint you? Or leave a bad taste in your mouth? You act

like you never had love And you want me to go without Well it's too late tonight **To drag** the past out into the light We're one but we're not the same We get to carry each other, carry each other One! Although they formed in London, no list of Irish music would be complete without this hugely influential trad-punk band, **fronted** by Shane McGowan. His poetic lyrics deal with the country's **long** history of emigration and its sense of isolation, most famously on this **now-evergreen** 1987 Christmas song. Using the past simple and continuous, it recounts a festive season spent far from home, and also features the 'could have' + past participle form for past possibilities. I could have been someone Well so could anyone You took my dreams from me When I first found you I kept them with me babe I put them with my own Can't make it all alone I've built my dreams around you The boys of the **NYPD choir** Still singing Galway Bay And the bells are ringing out For Christmas Day Irish boybands Boyzone (**fronted** by Ronan Keating) and Westlife became massively popular in the 1990s, recording mostly **covers**. This song featured in the movie Notting Hill and focuses on the idiom 'no matter', meaning '**regardless**'. No matter what they tell us No matter what they do No matter what they teach us What we believe is true No matter what they call us However they attack No matter where they take us We'll find our own way back If you've ever watched Ireland participating in a sporting event, you have probably heard the supporters singing this. The 1979 ballad uses narrative tenses to tell the fictional story of a man sent to a penal colony in Australia for stealing food for his family during the Great **Famine** of the 1840s. By a lonely prison wall I heard a young girl calling "Michael, they have taken you away For you stole Trevelyan's corn So the young might see the **morn** Now a prison ship **lies** waiting in the bay" **Low lie** the fields of Athenry Where once we watched the small free birds fly Our love was on the wing we had dreams and songs to sing It's so lonely 'round the fields of Athenry Considered by many to be the first heavy metal band, this Dublin trio led by local icon Phil Lynott **released** this **staple** of Irish rock in 1976. The opening verse sets the scene for a fun-filled reunion, with a variety of tenses including the past perfect. Guess who just got back today Them wild-eyed boys that had been away Haven't changed, had much to say But man, I still think them **cats** are crazy They were askin' if you were around How you was, where you could be found Told them you were livin' downtown

Drivin' all the old men crazyThe boys are back in town, the boys are back in town I said, the boys are back in town, the boys are back in town The boys are back in town, the boys are back in town

Glossary

- **produced** = mostrare
- **rapier** = stocco, broccio
- **shrine** = santuario
- **lies** = giacere
- **breathless** = senza fiato
- **cover** = versión
- **stand** = rimanere in piedi, stare in piedi
- **deliver** = consegnare
- **deserve** = meritare
- **Famine** = carestia
- **worshipped** = adorare
- **Hailing from** = essere originario di
- **misadventures** = disavventure
- **enduring** = duraturo, durevole
- **trad music** = musica tradizionale
- **charts** = classifiche
- **sins** = peccati
- **fronted** = guidare
- **staple** = base, principale
- **deceiver** = imbrogliatore
- **Skippin'** = saltare
- **morn** = domani (abbr. morning)
- **to blame** = colpare
- **NYPD** = acronimo di New York Police Department
- **topped** = essere in vetta
- **bold** = coraggioso, audace
- **mouthpiece** = portavoce
- **choir** = coro
- **impromptu** = improvvisato
- **misty** = nebbioso
- **a-thumping** = palpitare
- **fancy** = di lusso, costoso
- **To drag** = trascinare

- **deny** = negare
- **enhanced** = aumentare
- **bleak** = squallido
- **Drivin' all the old men crazy** = impazzire
- **will** = volontà
- **chorus** = ritornello
- **Low lie** = passare inosservati
- **cats** = tipi
- **whomever** = chiunque
- **hollow** = buca
- **long** = bramare
- **highway man** = bandito, brigante
- **giggle** = risatina
- **sharpen** = affilare
- **tease** = tentare
- **mired in** = bloccato in, impantanato in
- **released** = pubblicare
- **Whack for the daddy-o** = una bevanda per il compagno
- **now-evergreen** = sempreverde
- **regardless'** = in ogni caso, a prescindere