

# Speak English With Vanessa

Free PDF Worksheet

## English Vocabulary Masterclass

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*Dear English Learner,*

*Get ready to speak confidently! I recommend reading the worksheet out loud and using the blank space on the last page to answer my challenge question. [Click here to watch the original video](#). Thanks so much for learning English with me!*

*Your teacher,  
Vanessa*

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### 36 Tricky Vocabulary Words

#### Look-Squint-Stare-Glare

1. **To look:** *to see something*

I **look** at my neighbor's house.

2. **To squint:** *to tighten your eyes to see something, usually something far away or small*

I **squint** in his windows.

3. **To stare:** *to look at someone or something without looking away; usually rude*

I **stare** at my neighbor.

4. **To glare:** *to look angrily at someone*

My neighbor **glares** back at me.

## Drink-Swallow-Sip-Chug

5. **To drink:** *to put liquid in your mouth*

Every morning I **drink** tea before I start the day.

6. **To swallow:** *to use your muscles to have liquid go down your throat*

When I **swallow** the tea, I feel the warmth in my body.

7. **To sip:** *to drink just a little bit at one time*

I **sip** the tea because it is still hot.

8. **To chug:** *to drink the whole amount very quickly*

I **chug** the tea because I'm so thirsty and I'm late!

## Eat-Nibble-Gobble Up-Devour

9. **To eat:** *to put food in your mouth*

I want to **eat** a blueberry muffin.

10. **To nibble:** *to eat just small bites*

I'm not very hungry, so I'm just **nibbling** the muffin.

11. **To gobble up:** *to eat big bites quickly*

I can't believe that I **gobbled up** that muffin in three bites!

12. **To devour:** *to really enjoy eating something; usually fast*

These muffins are so good that I'm going to **devour** two more.

### Clean-Tidy Up-Wash-Scrub

13. **To clean:** *to make something not dirty*

We need to **clean** the house today.

14. **To tidy up:** *to pick up items from the ground or from where they don't belong*

First, I should **tidy up** the clothes on the floor.

15. **To wash:** *to clean with soap and water*

I will **wash** the dirty laundry today.

16. **To scrub:** *to use force and energy to clean, usually with a brush or cloth*

My husband **scrubs** the bathroom floor.

### Lay Down-Lounge-Recline-Sprawl Out

17. **To lay down:** *to rest with your body horizontal, usually to sleep*

I'm going to **lay down** for a few minutes and take a quick nap.

\*Note: technically “lay down” is for objects and “lie down” is for people, but in daily conversation, native speakers use “lay down” for both

18. **To lounge:** *to rest with your body horizontal, usually to do a calm activity*

At the end of the day, I like to **lounge** on the couch with a good book.

19. **To recline:** *to rest with your body leaning back in a comfortable chair*

My husband **reclines** in the comfortable chair.

20. **To sprawl out:** *to rest with your arms and legs wide*

My cat **sprawls out** in the sunshine. He seems so peaceful!

### **Dry-Wilted-Parched-Withered**

21. **Dry:** *without water*

This plant has been sitting in the sun for too long. It looks really **dry**.

22. **Wilted:** *to not be strong or firm; usually used for plants*

The leaves on the plant are completely **wilted**.

23. **Parched:** *to be extremely dry and need water desperately*

The soil is **parched** because it has been sitting in the hot sun all day.

24. **Withered**: *dry and shriveled; about to die*

The entire plant is **withered**. I don't think that I can revive it.

### Water-Mist-Spray-Drench

25. **To water**: *to give water to a plant*

I desperately need to **water** this plant.

26. **To mist**: *to spray lightly*

For delicate plants, you can **mist** the leaves every few days.

27. **To spray**: *to use a spray bottle*

I think I'm going to **spray** the entire plant because it's so dry.

28. **To drench**: *to completely cover in water*

I **drench** the plant in water. I hope it's not too much water!

### Breathe-Sigh-Gasp-Pant

29. **To breathe**: *to inhale and exhale air*

On this beautiful spring day, I **breathe** the fresh air.

30. **To sigh:** *to exhale showing joy, relief, sadness, or tiredness*

When I see the flowers blooming, I **sigh** at the beautiful scenery.

31. **To gasp:** *to inhale quickly because of shock or fear*

I **gasp** when I think I see a bear, but it's just a tree stump. Phew!

32. **To pant:** *to breathe quickly and heavily because of hard work*

I **pant** when I push the wheelbarrow up the hill. It's tough work!

### **Learn-Take In-Absorb-Master**

33. **To learn:** *to gain new information*

You are **learning** the differences between these similar words.

34. **To take in:** *to understand something*

Can you **take in** all the different words and remember them?

35. **To absorb:** *to deeply learn and remember something*

I hope that this PDF will help you **absorb** the new vocabulary.

36. **To master:** *to be proficient*

You are **mastering** these common, tricky words in English. Congratulations!

## 20 Essential English Phrases for Daily Expression

### Asking for Information

These are other ways of asking for information besides the usual “Where is this?” or “What is that?” They are less direct and depending on the context, might be a more formal, less direct way of asking a question.

**Do you happen to know...?**

**Do you have any idea...?**

**\*I'd like to know...**

**\*I'm wondering if...**

*\*These may not sound exactly like a question, but they are!*

### Checking Understanding

When you are having a conversation, especially if you are giving directions or telling a complex story, you want to make sure the person you are talking with understands. No one wants to get to the end of a long conversation and say, “Huh?” These are some phrases you can use to make sure you are understood.

**Do you know what I mean?**

**Are you following?**

**Got it? (Got it!)**

**Are we on the same page?**

### **Polite Interruptions**

We’ve all been there--you’re on a call or in a digital meeting and the signal cuts out or there’s a lot of background noise or you have something important or urgent to add to the conversation. You need to speak up but you don’t want to be rude. Here are some good phrases to use:

**May I have a word?**

**Do you mind if I jump in here?**

**Sorry, I didn’t catch that (“Is it possible to repeat the last point?”)**

*This could also be shortened to just “I’m sorry?” + head turn/tilt toward the speaker*

**Do you mind if I interrupt you?**



## Presenting Information

Imagine you are on a call or virtual meeting with your teacher or your boss. Maybe you are also on your computer, either sharing your screen or looking up information for the meeting. These are some phrases that you may hear or be able to use.

**Give me one second... (to pull up that information)**

**Bear with me for a moment.**

**I am (just) about to... (send over that email)**

**Where were we?** (This is helpful if your presentation is interrupted by a question or some other distraction.)

## How to Avoid Giving Your Opinion

There are a lot of “hot button” issues right now and sometimes you may want to avoid giving a strong opinion on something, especially if it is an inappropriate topic to discuss in the workplace (even if it is a digital workplace). Some of these topics to avoid are politics, religion, and conspiracy theories. Here is how to carefully avoid being drawn into those prickly conversations.

**I couldn't say.**

**I've never given it much thought.**

**Your guess is as good as mine.**

**That's an interesting question.**

## 5 Quick and Easy Phrases for Fluent English

### Gotcha

1. *to show that you understand*

When my friend explained why she didn't want to go on another date with that guy, I nodded and said, "**Gotcha**. That makes sense."

2. *to surprise someone with a joke or trick*

On my husband's birthday, I exclaimed, "Oh no! I forgot to buy you a birthday present!" My husband said, "Oh, I guess that's okay." And I said, "**Gotcha**! I'm just joking. Here's the present."

### Nevermind

*to say “forget about it” or “it doesn’t matter,” especially if something is confusing or you changed your mind*

When I asked my mom to choose between chocolate cake or ice cream for dessert, I said, “**Nevermind**-- why don’t we get both?”

I tried to give my friend directions to the grocery store, but then I said, “**Nevermind**, you should probably use the map on your phone instead.”

### **Gotta go/gotta run**

*to say you have to leave quickly, usually because you are late*

NOTE: In American English “gotta” is pronounced “god-da”

I wish I could stay, but I **gotta go**--catch you later!

It’s already 6 o’clock! I **gotta run**, see you later!

### **No worries/no problem**

*an informal way to say “you’re welcome”*

Hey, thanks for helping me get this project done! -“**No problem**. Happy to help.”

Thanks for letting me borrow your umbrella! -“Yeah, **no worries!**”

### **For real**

*to show surprise in a negative or positive way; a rhetorical question*

The sales person said the computer I want is \$4000. I said, “**For real?!**”

The next store said that the computer is only \$400! I said, “**For real?!** That’s a great deal!”

"I'm pregnant!" - **"For real?!"**

### **Bonus: What's that?**

*a less formal way of saying "excuse me, can you repeat that?"*

NOTE: *Emphasize both words to show that you don't understand; to ask "What is that object?" you should emphasize the word "that" ("What's that?" )*

I didn't understand the question the student asked so I said, **"What's that?"**

The connection on the phone was breaking up and I said, **"What's that? What did you just say?"**

## **Stop Saying "What?"**

### **Casual Alternatives to "What?"**

1. **Sorry?**

*Simply say, "Sorry?" You'll notice that we use "sorry" in front of a lot of these phrases.*

2. **Sorry, what'd you say?**

*This is great to use if you weren't completely paying attention.*

3. **Sorry, can you say that again?**

*Say this if there is a lot of noise and you can't hear what someone is saying.*

4. **What was that?**

*Say this if you catch someone saying something that they didn't want you to hear.*

**5. One more time? = Can you say that one more time?**

*Say this if you have already asked the person to repeat themselves several times.*

## **Regional Alternatives to “What?”**

These 4 are common sayings in parts of the US. These phrases can be used when you don't understand, or when someone says something surprising and you want them to repeat it.

For example: Your friend tells you that she's moving to Japan next month. You can say these phrases to show your shock and that you want her to say it again.

**6. Come again?**

**7. How's that?**

**8. Do what?**

9. **Say what?**

**Professional Alternatives to “What?”**

10. **I’m sorry. I didn’t catch what you said.**

*You can say this when it’s noisy or maybe you weren’t paying attention.*

11. **Can you run that by me again?**

*Say this if what someone said to you was long, confusing or difficult to understand.*

12. **Could you rephrase that for me?**

*Use this phrase if what someone is saying to you is unclear.*

13. **When you say [x] do you mean [y]?**

For example: When you say “the manager,” do you mean “the regional manager”?

*Use this phrase when you want to make sure you understand terms or lingo.*

14. **Could you be more specific?**

*You can say this when someone says something vague.*

15. **Can you elaborate on that?**

*Say this when you need more details or ideas about something that someone is saying.*

16. **I’m sorry, can you repeat that?**

*A clear, polite, professional way to ask someone to repeat what they just said.*

**17. Let me make sure I understand this right...**

*Say this phrase, then repeat what you understand the other person to be saying.*

**18. Just to clarify...**

*Say this phrase, then summarize what you think the other person is saying.*

**Be careful!!**

*These can be polite phrases, but depending on the situation and your tone of voice, it can sound aggressive. Be VERY careful if you use them with a neutral, non-aggressive voice.*

**19. I beg your pardon?**

**20. Excuse me?**

Aggressive example:

*Boss: The company is going through a hard time, so all vacations are cancelled for the next two months.*

Employee: *I beg your pardon?!?!*

## 100 Top Daily Routine Phrases

### Waking Up

**Push snooze:** When I hear my alarm, I immediately **push snooze**.

**Overslept:** Oh no! I accidentally turned my alarm off and I **overslept**!

**Sleep in/sleep late:** I like to **sleep in** on the weekends.

**Jumped out of bed:** I **jumped out of bed** because I overslept.

**Rise and shine:** It's time to **rise and shine**! Wake up!



**Wake up on the wrong side of bed:** I am usually a morning person, but today I **woke up on the wrong side of bed** and was in a bad mood.

**Make the bed:** I **make the bed** every morning as soon as I wake up.

**Wash my face and brush my teeth:** After I make the bed, I go to the bathroom to **wash my face and brush my teeth**.

**Get dressed:** I pick out what I am wearing for the day and **get dressed**.

### **Eating Breakfast/Drinking Coffee, Tea**

**Whip up some breakfast:** I like to **whip up some breakfast** before I start the day.

**Brew the coffee:** I turn the coffee pot on to **brew the coffee**.

**Boil water for tea:** I turn on the kettle to **boil water for tea**.

**Make some juice:** When I have fresh lemons, I **make some juice**.

**Throw some bread in the toaster:** When I want toast for breakfast, I **throw some bread in the toaster**.

**Scramble some eggs:** If I have time, I will **scramble some eggs** for breakfast.

**Scarf down breakfast:** I realize I'm running late for work, so I **scarf down breakfast**.

**Clear the table:** I **clear the table** and put the dirty dishes in the sink.

**Fill up my to-go mug with coffee:** I **fill up my to-go mug with coffee** and head out the door.

*A “to-go mug” can also be called “a tumbler.”*

**Get something on the way:** If I overslept and didn’t have time to make breakfast, I will **get something on the way** to work, maybe stop at my favorite cafe.

## Going to Work/School

**Head to work:** It’s time for me to leave my house and **head to work**.

**Buckle up:** Before I start the car, I **buckle up** my seatbelt.

**Back out of the driveway:** I **back out of the driveway** and pull onto the street.

**Speed up:** Once I am on the highway, I **speed up** and drive faster.

**Slow down:** When I am stuck in traffic, I **slow down** or come to a stop.

**Use the blinker:** When I need to turn, I **use the blinker** to show that I am turning.

**Avoid traffic:** I try to **avoid traffic** on my commute by leaving my house earlier.

**Merge into traffic:** I have to **merge into traffic** to get on the highway.

**Watch out for:** When I’m driving, I **watch out for** school buses and pedestrians.

**Kill two birds with one stone:** I like to **kill two birds with one stone** and listen to Vanessa’s English videos on my commute.

## Working with Other People

**Excuse me, when you have a moment...: Excuse me, when you have a moment,** can I ask you a question?

**Can you explain it/that?** I'm having trouble understanding the assignment. **Can you explain it?**

**Can you help me with something? Can you help me with something?** I am looking for a book about women in aviation, can you tell me where to look?

**Filling in:** I'm **filling in** for my manager today because she's sick.

**Lead:** Who is going to be the **lead** for this project?

**What can I help you with?** Hi, I heard you were asking for help. **What can I help you with?**

**Bite the bullet:** I think I am going to have to **bite the bullet** and tell my boss I made a mistake on my report.

**Back to the drawing board:** Well, that plan didn't work, so I guess it's **back to the drawing board**.

**Touch base:** Let's **touch base** about the project next week and make sure we're making progress.

**Pull your own weight:** When you work on a group project, you need to **pull your own weight**—one person shouldn't be doing all the work.

## Taking a Break

**Take a smoke break:** My coworkers **take a smoke break** during work, but since I don't smoke, I take a break to sit in the sunshine.

**Get some fresh air:** When I was painting inside my house, I took several breaks and stepped outside to **get some fresh air**.

**Snack break:** Are you hungry? I think it's time for a **snack break**.

**Coffee/tea run:** I'm going on a **coffee/tea run**, do you want anything?

**Take a lap:** I'm falling asleep at my desk, I think I am going to **take a lap** around the office to wake myself up!

**Run some errands:** I need to **run some errands** during my lunch break.

**Take a breather:** It's so hot outside and we've been working so hard. I think we should **take a breather** and rest in the shade.

**Take a minute:** I got that assignment finished, now I am going to **take a minute** before I start the next one.

**Let's hit pause:** Since it's the end of the day, **let's hit pause** before starting any new projects.

**Catch my breath:** This hike is harder than I expected it to be! Let me **catch my breath** before we keep going.

## **Saying Goodbye at Work/School**

**Shut down:** I am **shutting down** for the day.

**Pack up:** Time to **pack up** and go home!

**Let's call it a day:** **Let's call it a day.** We can pick up where we left off tomorrow.

**Alright, that's it:** **Alright, that's it** I think we've done all we can do for the day.

**That's a wrap:** **That's a wrap,** we finished, nice work everyone!

**I'm headed out:** **I'm headed out,** is there anything you need before I go?

**Gotta run:** I've **gotta run,** I'll catch up with you tomorrow.

**I'm outta here:** **I'm outta here,** I've got an appointment to get to.

**See you tomorrow:** Bye, **see you tomorrow!**

**Have a good evening:** Bye everyone, **have a good evening!**

## **Going Out for Dinner with Your Family**

**Let's eat out:** I don't feel like cooking tonight, **let's eat out.**

**Can we get a table on the patio?** It's such a beautiful day. **Can we get a table on the patio?**

**Do you have any specials?** I usually order the grilled chicken and vegetables, but **do you have any specials** today?

**I'd like...please:** **I'd like** the caesar salad and soup of the day, **please.**

**What do you recommend?** I haven't eaten here before. **What do you recommend?**

**Do you want to split ...?** I'm not very hungry. **Do you want to split** a pizza?

**Can I get a ...?** **Can I get a** refill on my drink when you get a chance?

**How is your food? How is your food?** It looks delicious. I think I'll order that next time.

**To-go box:** Can you bring me a **to-go box**? I'll eat this for lunch tomorrow.

**Splurge:** Let's **splurge** and get some dessert!

## Playing with Your Kids

**Roughhouse:** It seems like little (and big) boys always want to **roughhouse** and play hard.

**Eat a snack:** It seems like my kids always want to **eat a snack**.

**Build legos:** Wow, look at that tall **lego** tower you made!

**Go on a bike ride:** It's a beautiful day to **go on a bike ride** down the street.

**Do a puzzle:** Sometimes **doing a puzzle** is a great way to calm down and relax.

**Hit a ball:** It's so satisfying to **hit a baseball**, even if you're playing by yourself.

**Go down the slide:** Nothing is more fun than **going down a slide** into a huge pile of leaves!

**Do chalk:** My kids love to **do chalk** in a shady part of the walkway.

**Pick fruit:** The first thing my son does in the morning is **pick raspberries** in our backyard.

**Take a nap:** Sometimes my son gets so tired that he **takes a nap** in the middle of the floor.

### Relaxing at the End of the Day

**What a day!** I am so happy to finally be home. **What a day!**

**Finish up:** Before I can relax, I need to **finish up** some chores.

**Tidy up:** I spend a few minutes **tidying up**, then I relax on the couch.

**Kick back and relax:** It's time to **kick back and relax**.

**Veg out:** Sometimes, I like to turn on my favorite show and **veg out** for hours at a time.

**Catch up on:** On rainy days, I like to **catch up on** my reading.

**Take your shoes off and stay a while!** Welcome to my home! Please make yourself comfortable. **Take your shoes off and stay a while!**

**Put your feet up:** I know you've had a long week. **Put your feet up** and I'll bring you a snack.

**Rest/relax and recuperate (R&R):** I am so thankful we have a long weekend coming up. I am ready for some **R & R**.

**Wind down:** I like to **wind down** with a cup of hot tea and a book.

**Chill:** I don't usually make plans during the week, I like to come home and just **chill**.

## Going to Bed Routine

**Lock the doors:** I always check and make sure I **lock the doors** at night.

**Turn off the lights:** I go through the house and **turn off the lights**.

**Read bedtime stories:** I **read bedtime stories** to my boys before they go to sleep.

**Tuck in the kids:** After bedtime stories, I **tuck them in** and tell them goodnight.

**Tiptoe to the bedroom:** I don't want to wake the kids, so I quietly **tiptoe to the bedroom**.

**Take a shower:** I need to **take a shower** before I go to bed.

**Brush my teeth:** I **brush my teeth**, spit, and rinse with water.

**Put on pajamas:** I **put on pajamas** and put today's clothes in the dirty laundry hamper.

**Double-check my alarm:** I don't want to oversleep tomorrow, so I **double-check my alarm**.

**Hit the hay:** Finally, it's time to **hit the hay** and go to sleep.



**Drift off to sleep:** It isn't long before I **drift off to sleep**.

## 15 English Phrases You Need to Know

1. **To swing by:** *to make a short visit*

\*Same as: to drop by, to stop by

Maybe you can just **swing by** the park and pick me up?

I need to **swing by** the grocery store to grab some things for dinner.

2. **We'll see:** *this phrase means that someone will have to wait for the final answer; sometimes people will say this to get out of answering a question directly*

Are we going to the store later? -I need to finish up this work and then **we'll see**.

Can we go get ice cream after the movie? –**We'll see**.

3. **I'll get back to you:** *to talk to someone again, to give them information you didn't have before*

Can I come over for dinner tonight? -I'm not at home right now, but I'll **get back to you** this afternoon.

I would love to help you out this weekend but I need to check my schedule and make sure I'm free. **I'll get back to you**.

4. **Let's go for it! /I'm so glad we went for it:** *to enthusiastically strive to do or achieve something*

I just have a good feeling about it. **Let's go for it!**

We weren't sure about skydiving but I'm so glad **we went for it**—it was so much fun!

5. **To take a breather:** *to pause or take a break*

Going to the river was a good choice. It was nice to **take a breather**.

Whew! This hike is harder than I thought it would be. I need to **take a breather**.

6. **I'll do it in a sec:** *a short period of time (sec = second)*

Can we listen to some music? -Yeah, I'll **do it in a sec** when we get to a stop.

Don't worry about the laundry, I'll **do it in a sec** when I am done with my work.

7. **Just the three of us:** *a way of saying "all of us, but there's only three of us"*

Are any of our friends coming? -No, it's **just the three of us**.

Why are we sitting at this huge table? It's **just the three of us**, we don't need all this room.

8. **Off they went:** *someone or something left suddenly*

It didn't matter that he hadn't seen those friends for a few weeks. When we got to the park, **off they went!**

The dogs saw the squirrel and **off they went**, running and barking.

9. **Show me how it's done:** *to show someone how to do something*

I was going to do a yoga video, but my kids wanted to **show me how it's done**.

Oh, you think you can dance? Well, then **show me how it's done**.

10. **A new phase in life:** *when you experience a change in life, something you have to adjust to*

With Theo in kindergarten, it's just **a new phase in life**.

Moving into a new house and new jobs is just **a new phase in life**—you'll get used to it in no time!

11. **To your heart's content:** *as much as you want*

\*The grammar of this phrase is a little odd: just substitute “as much as you want”

You can pick apples **to your heart's content**!

In the summer, all I want to do is eat watermelon **to my heart's content**.

12. **You never know:** *you can never be certain, it's impossible to predict*

Did that squirrel pick those for me? -**You never know**...

You should always be kind to strangers because **you never know** what they're going through.

13. **Take it easy:** *to do something calmly or to relax*

It's been a busy week. Let's just **take it easy** this weekend.

I hurt my foot, so the doctor told me to **take it easy** until it heals.

14. **I thought it was a good idea:** *in this example, the emphasis means that you thought something was a good idea, but it really wasn't*

\*This is an example of how emphasis can show the real meaning.

**I thought it was a good idea** to walk to the concert, but it was so dark on the way home. I scared myself!

**I thought it was a good idea** to buy Christmas presents early. But then I forgot about them and bought way too many presents!

15. **To save the rest for later:** *to prevent waste or loss of something by keeping it*

Let's eat a little piece tonight and **save the rest for later**.

I got \$100 for my birthday. I bought myself some jewelry I wanted but I think I'll **save the rest** of the money **for later**, when I really want something.

# Level Up Your Vocabulary

## Level Up Your English with these Common Idioms

1. The conversation was **confusing**. → He was **all over the map**.  
*a conversation that doesn't stay on topic*
2. I am **learning about** these English idioms. → I am trying to **get the hang of it**.  
*to try to learn something new*
3. Summer is **almost over**. → **Before you know it**, it'll be fall!  
*will happen soon or almost immediately*
4. Wow, they **really like** each other! → They seem **head over heels** for each other!  
*to be in love*
5. **Let me know if** your plans change. → **Keep me posted**. / **Keep me in the loop**.  
*when you want to get updates*
6. The students **didn't get in trouble**. → The teacher **let them off the hook**.  
*when you don't hold someone responsible for their bad behavior*
7. I'm having a **pretty good** day today. → **So far, so good**.  
*things are going well for now (and maybe could get worse soon)*

TIP: "So far, so good" is used with a smile because you're joking that everything is going well now, but it won't be going well forever,

8. Oh hey, I was **just talking about you**! → **Speak of the devil**!  
*when you were talking about someone who walks in the room*

TIP: Use this phrase in casual, friendly settings. You're not calling someone bad or evil, but you will probably need to explain what you just said about that person.

9. That's true, **I agree**. → **You could say that again**.

*when you agree with someone*

TIP: If someone says it to you, they are not telling you to repeat yourself.

10. I **can't believe** it. / I **don't understand** it. → I'm still trying to **wrap my brain/head around it**.

*when you are trying to understand or process information*

TIP: Sometimes we use this for really tragic situations that are difficult to comprehend. For example: When you see pictures of a tragic event in another country, you can say, "**It's hard for me to wrap my brain around it.**"

11. It's **not that hard** to figure out. → **It's not rocket science**.

*something isn't complicated*

TIP: This is better to say when *you* are involved in figuring out a situation. It can be a bit rude to simply tell someone else that a task is so simple, why can't they figure it out?

12. I'm **finished** with work. → I think I'm gonna **call it a day**. / **Let's call it a day**.

*to say you're finished working for the day*

TIP: This is a way of declaring the end of a task or the end of the work day. You will hear it a lot in business and office culture.

13. When someone is rude to a child, it is so **irritating/annoying** to me. → It really **ruffles my feathers** when I see someone being rude to a child.

*when something bothers you*

## Top 11 Weird Phrasal Verbs in English

**To squirrel away:** *to save something in a hidden place*

I bought some Christmas presents in September and **squirreled** them **away** until December.

He **squirrels away** his money in a hole in the ground.

Note: Why is this about squirrels? Squirrels hide nuts during the summer and fall so that they have food during the winter. This phrasal verb has the same idea: hiding something for later.

**To scarf down:** *to eat something quickly*

I only had 30 minutes to eat, so I **scarfed down** my lunch.

I woke up late so I had **to scarf down** my breakfast while I blow-dried my hair.

**To beef up:** *to increase or improve something*

I wanted **to beef up** my waffles, so I added dark chocolate and fresh berries.

The security was **beefed up** for the presidential address.

**To butt in:** *to interrupt a conversation or activity*

The annoying guy at the party kept **butting in** to talk about himself. Ugh!

Sorry **to butt in**, but can you tell me where the restroom is?

Note: You could use this as a way of informally apologizing for interrupting. You are acknowledging that you are, in fact, the one butting in, but you apologize, so it's no big



deal. It's usually a one-off, don't keep saying this in conversation or you will be like that first guy!

**To bite off (more than you can chew):** *to over-commit or take on more than you can handle*

I think I **bit off more than I can chew** when I agreed to babysit twin toddlers!

My mom realized she **bit off more than she could chew** when she offered to throw the surprise party.

**Note:** Have you ever taken a big bite of something that you had a really hard time chewing up and swallowing? This is used to describe that similar feeling of, "Uh oh. This is going to be really tough, but if I work really hard, I think I can get through it!" Sometimes, it's too much, so you have to give up (spit it out) so you don't choke.

**To chicken out:** *to decide not to do something out of fear*

I was going to go sky-diving, but I **chickened out** when it came time to jump.

My friend said she would sing karaoke, but when it was her turn, she **chickened out**.

**To clam up:** *to say nothing*

The bank robber **clammed up** when the detective asked where he hid the money.

My sister **clammed up** when I asked her what happened to my favorite dress.

**Note:** Just like the marine animal, when you clam up, you close up and shut your mouth.

**To monkey around with:** *to try to play with or repair a device that you have no true knowledge about*

I was **monkeying around with** the new TV and now I can't figure out how to turn it off.

My brother was **monkeying around with** our dad's new tools and he accidentally broke them.

Note: Have you ever watched monkeys try to use tools or other things that humans use? They probably don't understand how to use them correctly so maybe they just punch buttons or bang, smash or throw something.

**To flip out:** *to become very mad or lose control of your emotions*

Mom is going **to flip out** when she realizes we forgot about the party!

I **flipped out** when I realized my team was going to the championship!

Note: This isn't always negative, it can also be positive! It just depends on the context and tone.

**To freak out:** *when someone becomes irrationally upset or angry, sometimes to the point of confusion.*

Don't **freak out**...there's a spider on your head.

When I had the opportunity to meet my favorite celebrity, I **freaked out**!

Note: Similar to "flip out," this one isn't always negative and just depends on the context and tone.

**To gross out:** *to be disgusted with someone or something*

I was so **grossed out** when my cat threw up in my shoe.

My brother was always trying to find new ways **to gross me out**.

**To lighten up:** *when a conversation is changed or a person changes to become less serious; can also be used as a statement on its own as a lighthearted form of encouragement*

The conversation was getting too serious so I **lightened it up** with a joke.

Hey, **lighten up**! Things could always be worse.

Note: When using this in the second form, make sure the situation is appropriate.

**To pull through:** *to recover from an injury or illness*

I hurt my knee while running, but I'll **pull through**--it's nothing major.

I heard you got the flu--I hope you **pull through** and feel better soon!

**To punch-out:** *to record the time you leave the workplace using a special clock or app*

Don't forget to **punch-out** before you leave the office!

I am so ready to **punch-out** for the week.

**To rip off:** *something that is overpriced or someone who cheats or steals*

The outfit I ordered is so small a doll could wear it. What a **rip off**!

Be aware of con men who try to **rip you off** with tricks and schemes.

**To screw up:** *to make a mistake or do something really bad*

As soon as I realized I **screwed up** the recipe, I tried to fix it so the meal wasn't ruined.

If you **screw up**, it is best to admit the mistake and take responsibility.

**To space out:** *to daydream or not pay attention*

I **spaced out** during class, then the teacher called on me and I didn't know what to say.

The politician's speech was long and boring so most of the audience fell asleep or **spaced out**.

**To stick around:** *to stay in a place or with a person for a period of time*

I wanted **to stick around** after the concert in hopes of meeting the musicians.

I didn't know anyone else at the party, so I decided **to stick around** my friend.

**To straighten out:** *to put something in order; also to make something straight*

We had a work meeting **to straighten out** the details of the proposal.

I was sitting for too long--I need **to straighten out** my legs and stretch.

**To wrap up:** *to cover something with paper; also to finish something*

I need to **wrap up** this gift before the party.

Let's **wrap up** this English lesson!

## 20 Difficult English Phrases

### 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.**

5-7. **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.

## 10 Essential Advanced English Phrases

### 1. **Nothing wrong with:** *a consoling way to say that something is fine*

Don't listen to those bullies. There's **nothing wrong with** your haircut.

There's **nothing wrong with** not following every fashion trend.

### 2. **A man of few words:** *a person who doesn't speak much*

My grandfather is **a man of few words**, so when he speaks, I give him my full attention.

My boss is **a man of few words**, so when he gave me a compliment, I felt really proud.

### 3. **The be-all and end-all:** *considered to be essential or ultimate*

Some people think that money is the **be-all and end-all** in life.

I thought that the actor was the **be-all end-all** until I realized he was rude to his manager.

### 4. **To hit close to home:** *to affect you deeply and emotionally*

That factory collapse **hit close to home** for me.

The movie about a sick grandmother **hit close to home** for me because my grandmother recently passed away.

**5. To last:** *enduring or existing for an extended period of time*

You should eat some brownies now, they're so good, they **won't last**!

I didn't expect the snow **to last**, but it hasn't melted yet.

**6. What goes on:** *what happens or happened, maybe behind the scenes;  
to demand an explanation*

I want to see **what goes on** in the jury room, but lawyers aren't allowed in.

I asked my son, "**What is going on** here?" when I caught him playing instead of taking a nap.

**7. On either ends of the spectrum:** *a way of contrasting two things*

My husband's taste in movies is **on the other side of the spectrum** from mine.

We are **on either side of the spectrum**.

My friend loves going to loud parties, but I am **on the opposite end of the spectrum**.

**8. To perfect something:** *to improve or master something*

My dad is always **perfecting** his apple pie recipe.

My son learned a new song and he's trying **to perfect** it, so he sings it all the time.

I want **to perfect** my English.

*Note: When we use "perfect" as a verb, the emphasis is on the end of the word:*

*perFECT*

**9. To see if:** *to try and do something; to inquire*

I wanted **to see if** the roads were cleared of snow, so I slowly drove through my neighborhood.

I wanted **to see if** you were interested in ordering pizza?

**10. There's no such thing:** *something isn't believed to be true*

**There's no such thing** as a free lunch.

I used to think that **there's no such thing** as a sea monster.

## Quiz Time!

*See the answers on final page, after the challenge question*

1. The writing is small, so I have to \_\_\_\_\_ to read it.
  - a. sip
  - b. squint
  - c. nibble
  
2. My dog likes to \_\_\_\_\_ on the couch and sleep.
  - a. sprawl
  - b. wither
  - c. absorb
  
3. I was going to ask you for a favor, but \_\_\_\_\_—I see that you're busy.
  - a. for real
  - b. nevermind
  - c. gotta go
  
4. I wish I could stay and talk, but I \_\_\_\_\_.
  - a. gotta go
  - b. no worries
  - c. couldn't say
  
5. I didn't hear what you said, \_\_\_\_\_?
  - a. no worries
  - b. do you have any idea
  - c. can you repeat that

6. Wake up, it's time to \_\_\_\_\_!
- a. show me how it's done
  - b. rise and shine
  - c. take it easy
7. She is in a really bad mood today. I think she \_\_\_\_\_.
- a. woke up on the wrong side of the bed
  - b. is withered
  - c. has to run
8. I am going to \_\_\_\_\_ some lunch.
- a. stare at
  - b. bite off more than I can chew
  - c. whip up
9. When you walk in the woods, you need to \_\_\_\_\_ poisonous snakes.
- a. watch out for
  - b. stare at
  - c. squirrel away
10. I like to \_\_\_\_\_ and listen to podcasts while I do chores around the house.
- a. run some errands
  - b. kill two birds with one stone
  - c. stick around

11. I have to \_\_\_\_\_ today, like going to the grocery store, the bank, and the post office.

- a. kill two birds with one stone
- b. stick around
- c. run some errands

12. I had to stop at the top of the mountain to \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. catch my breath
- b. hit close to home
- c. lighten up

13. This place is a mess, can you help me \_\_\_\_\_?

- a. sprawl out
- b. tidy up
- c. get the hang of it

14. I need to \_\_\_\_\_ the grocery store on my way home from work.

- a. swing by
- b. tidy up
- c. squirrel away

15. We've been working really hard, I think we should \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. run some errands
- b. take a breather
- c. roughhouse

16. I like to \_\_\_\_\_ extra money when I can.

- a. whip up
- b. squirrel away
- c. nibble

17. Learning something new can be hard, but soon you'll \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. wake up on the wrong side of the bed
- b. run some errands
- c. get the hang of it

18. He was going to ask her out on a date, but then he \_\_\_\_\_ because he was scared.

- a. chickened out
- b. squirreled away
- c. killed two birds with one stone

19. In order to \_\_\_\_\_ your English, you need to practice every day.

- a. last
- b. whip up
- c. perfect

20. When the teacher called on her, she \_\_\_\_\_.

- a. sprawled out
- b. clammed up



c. squinted

## Vanessa's Challenge Question

Use the space below to write a few sentences answering this question: **Tell me about your daily routine.**

Sample answer: *My dog wakes me up every morning, so there is no risk of oversleeping! When I get out of bed, I go to the kitchen to brew the coffee, then I get dressed. Since I work from home, when it's time to head to work, I just walk into my office and turn on my computer. I catch up on email, then spend a few hours on my projects. I typically shut down around 4pm, then my husband and I spend some time winding down over dinner.*

**Don't wait to become a fluent English speaker.**

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### Quiz Answers:

1. b. squint
2. a. sprawl
3. b. nevermind
4. a. gotta go
5. c. can you repeat that
6. b. rise and shine
7. a. woke up on the wrong side of the bed
8. c. whip up
9. a. watch out for
10. b. kill two birds with one stone
11. c. run some errands
12. a. catch my breath
13. b. tidy up
14. a. swing by
15. c. roughhouse
16. b. squirrel away
17. c. get the hang of it
18. a. chickened out
19. c. perfect
20. b. clammed up