

50 Illustrated English Expressions

Hello!

English has a lot of informal expressions that native speakers use in daily life, which can be confusing for learners. It's good to learn new phrases and expressions in context, because this makes them much easier to understand and remember.

That's why I created this short e-book to illustrate 50 common expressions used by native English speakers. It will help you learn new phrases and how to use them in various situations. (Note: each comic is separate; they are not related to each other in a single story).

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Best wishes,

Shayna Oliveira

Teacher at Espresso English





rough day = a very difficult and unpleasant day. Another similar expression is replying “That’s rough” when someone tells you about difficulties, obstacles, and things that are hard to endure.

on the verge of + ____ing = very close to taking some action. In this case, the man is so frustrated with his job that he is very close to quitting (leaving his job)

You’re kidding = you are joking, you are not serious. We often say this in response to something that is so surprising/shocking that we wonder if it is really true.

How come? = an informal way to say “Why?”

Don’t get me wrong = Don’t misunderstand me. We often say this informal expression when we are talking about something that could give the wrong impression, and we want to clarify things.

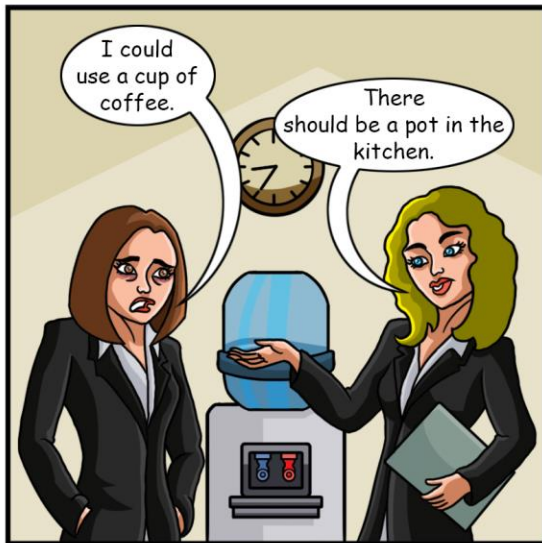
hands-down = definitely, unquestionably, without a doubt



wrap up = finish, bring to an end/completion

working behind the scenes = working in roles that are helpful, but not very public or visible

give them a hand = clap hands for them, give them applause, in thanks/recognition for their good work



I could use (something) = this thing would be very useful to me right now

that's more like it = this situation is much better than the bad/unsatisfactory situation before



packed = informal way to say EXTREMELY full of activity

pull that off = manage to do something very difficult

I was short on time = I had very little time

get down to business = start working seriously, without procrastinating or wasting time or effort

an all-nighter = a time when I stayed awake the entire night



worried sick = extremely worried (about anything, not just medical problems)

He's stable = this expression is used when someone in a hospital is in OK condition and not having an emergency at the moment

not out of the woods yet = the problems or difficult times are not yet finished



I learned that the hard way = if you do something “the hard way,” it means you do it through bad/difficult experiences.

Look on the bright side = consider the positive aspect of this bad situation

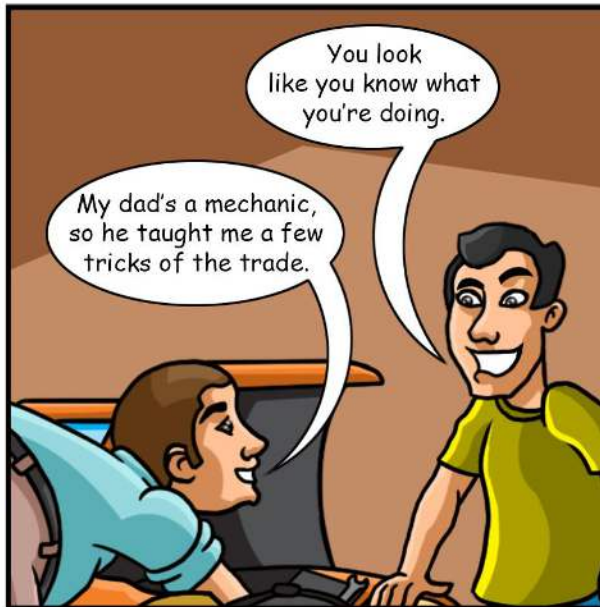


I can't make up my mind = I can't decide

major in = study primarily at university. Your main concentration of study is called your "major." It can also be used as a verb, ex) I majored in biology.

overthink = think too much. The prefix over- can be used for an action that is done to excess, more than is appropriate/necessary.

go with your gut = follow your intuition / deep natural feelings



I can't believe = I'm extremely surprised

my car died = my car stopped functioning. The word "died" is used informally for machines that stop working.

tricks of the trade = special skills or knowledge of a profession

hit the road = start traveling



What are you up to?

= What are you currently doing / planning to do?

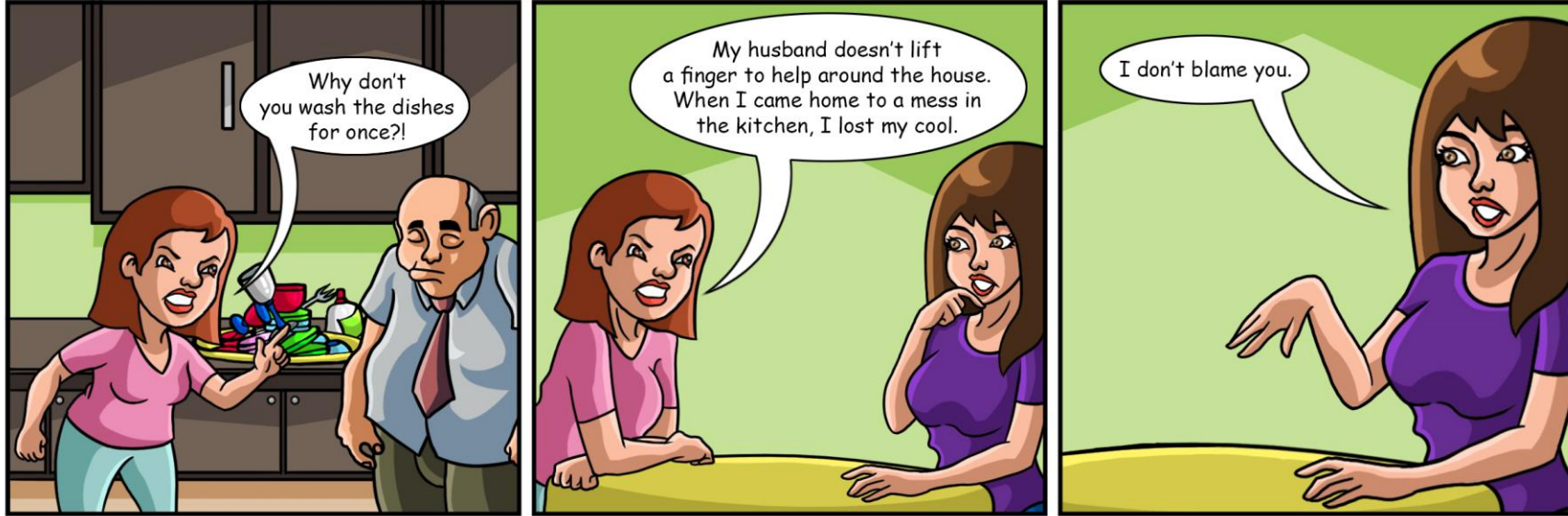
I'm game! = I'm willing to do that!

You can also say "I'm down!"

at the crack of dawn

= very early in the morning, when the sun is beginning to rise

ready to roll = ready to start



...for once = we use this expression when someone normally does NOT do that task. Ex) if Bob is always late, but arrives early one time, we could say “Hey, Bob came early for once” – implying that he normally is not early.

doesn't lift a finger = doesn't do anything to help, usually because of laziness

I lost my cool = I got very angry

I don't blame you = I can understand why you did that (bad thing); it was reasonable considering the situation



Can I have a bite? =
Can I taste some of
this food?

Be my guest. = You
have permission.
She could also say,
"Go ahead" or
"Sure."

I'm not crazy about
= I don't like very
much

**Whatever floats
your boat** = do what
makes you happy
(even if I wouldn't
do the same)



Where the heck... = adding "the heck" to questions makes them "stronger," like you are angry or very surprised about the topic.

leftover = refers to food that was made previously but not eaten, and saved for later

Don't play dumb! = Don't pretend like you don't know what I'm talking about!

Chill out, dude = "Chill out" means "relax"; "dude" is a slang word for a man

I swear = a very strong way to say "I promise" or "I say this is true"



it was a breeze = it was extremely easy

winded = have difficulty breathing because of intense exercise. Another way to say this is to be "out of breath."

I bet = I'm almost certain

sore = describes when your muscles are painful, usually because of previous exercise



I'll keep an eye out = I'll pay attention to potentially see (what you're looking for)

I'm positive = I'm very certain

bound to = will probably/definitely happen

turn up = appear

sooner or later = in some time – maybe less time (sooner) or more time (later)



Oh my gosh = an expression of surprise/shock

it slipped my mind = I forgot about it

RSVP = reply to an invitation to confirm if you will go or not

able to make it = able to come/attend



comfy = comfortable

working out = doing exercise

I picked them up = an informal way to say "I bought them"

bucks = dollars

That's a steal! = that's an extremely good price / very cheap



Do you have a minute? = a polite way to ask if someone has time to talk to you

now's not a good time = a polite way to say you're not available at the moment

I'll drop by = I'll come for a short/informal visit

After my divorce, I was hitting the bar every night to drown my sorrows.



I was living on the streets. I hit rock bottom.



When I got arrested after a bar fight, it was a real wakeup call.



That was the moment I decided to turn my life around.



hitting the bar = an informal way to say “going to the bar”

drown my sorrows = deal with problems by drinking lots of alcohol

hit rock bottom = reached the lowest point (in life)

a wakeup call = an event that made me pay attention to the dangers/problems

turn my life around = completely change my life



on the horizon =
coming soon in the
future

Oops! = say this
when there is a
minor mistake or
small accident

grab = take with your
hand

I could hardly = it
was difficult for me
to

keep a straight face
= avoid laughing or
smiling



I dare you = I challenge you to do something difficult / brave

out of my league = too high-status or beautiful for an average person like me

strike up a conversation = start a conversation

hit it off = like each other and get along well immediately



We'd better = we should do this, otherwise something bad will happen

get a move on = hurry, act fast

rush hour = time of day when many cars are on the street because people are going to work/home

you never know = it's impossible to be certain about

Thanks for reading!

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