

MINI
COURSE

LEARN

100 WAYS

**TO USE 5 COMMON
ENGLISH WORDS**

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100 Ways To Use 5 Common Words

Hi students! Today is the first day of our 5-day mini-course about English words with multiple meanings.

In this mini-course, we're going to look at 5 VERY common words and learn a total of 100 different ways to use them. This will improve your ability to express yourself in English, because you'll discover lots of new ways to use some words you already know.

Here's how the course works: each daily lesson will focus on one word, and I'll teach you various meanings of that word in English, as well as how it's used in some expressions and phrasal verbs.

After you watch the video, make sure to do the exercises so that you can review what you've learned and put it into practice! Practicing is the key to remembering these words and expressions so that you can use them when you speak English.

- **Lesson 1 Video: Multiple meanings of RUN**

Today's word is RUN. This simple word has approximately 645 different definitions and uses – and you might be thinking, “It's impossible to learn them all!” – you're right, and it's not even necessary to memorize all 645 definitions.

You should focus on the most common ones used in daily life – and that's what I'm going to teach you in today's lesson. We'll cover 16 meanings for “run” as well as some common phrasal verbs and idioms.

run = go fast by moving your legs quickly

The first definition of “run” you already know – to go fast by moving your legs quickly.

So I won't spend much time on this one except to say that we can show the direction of running with the preposition used after it:



- **run away (from)** – go away, to increase the distance. The people ran away from the burning building.
- **run off** – go away from me or from the point of reference. Yesterday I saw a rabbit in my yard, but when I got closer, it ran off. Or I could also say “it ran away” – it’s the same. We also sometimes say run off to (a destination). After finishing their homework, my kids ran off to the playground. They went away from me or away from our house and to the playground.
- **run to/towards** – the opposite of run away; to decrease the distance. The little boy ran to his mother after he fell down and scraped his knee. The soccer players ran towards the goal.
- **run around** – run in various directions. My dog barks and runs around the house whenever someone knocks on the door.
- **run after** – to chase/pursue, to follow someone/something. The dog ran after the cat.

Before continuing, let me also show you a few common collocations when talking about running as a sport – we can:

- **“go running”** – I like to go running in the early evening.
- **“run a distance”** – They run two miles every morning.
- **“run a race/marathon”** – She’s training to run a marathon next month.

run = manage

OK, let’s look at another definition of run, and that is to manage something – usually managing a business, company, a campaign, an operation.

For example:

- He **runs** an import/export business.
- I don’t like the way the director **runs** the customer service department.
- We **ran** a successful advertising campaign during the summer.

If we describe something as **well-run**, or say it **runs smoothly or efficiently**, it means it operates and functions well. For example: It was a well-run conference; all the events started on time.

run = operate on a schedule (transportation)

In the area of transportation, we use “run” for operating on a schedule. For example:

- The train **runs** every hour.
- Bus service stops **running** at midnight.
- The public transportation in Germany usually **runs** on time.



If a form of transportation is delayed, we can say it’s “**running late**.”

You can also use this to talk about people’s schedules, when they are doing things later than the anticipated time. For example, “Can we move the meeting from 4 to 5? **I’m running late today**.”

run = function

We also use “run” and “running” with machines – especially car engines – as well as computer programs, to mean they are functioning. For example:

- Oh no! I locked the keys in the car with the engine **running**.
- You should always have antivirus software **running** on your computer.

run = be a candidate for a political position

In politics, to “run for office” means to be a candidate for a political position.

So if you’re running for president, it means you hope to be elected president. Someone can “run for” any position to which they hope to be elected – **run for president** (of a country), **run for governor** (of a state), **run for mayor** (of a city).

run = flow

When talking about liquids, to run means to flow – for the liquid to move in a certain direction. So you could say:

- The little boy had tears **running** down his cheeks.
- My nose is **running** – I need a tissue.
- Who left the faucet **running** in the kitchen sink?

In some places that are more rural or not very developed, there's no running water. The expression **running water** refers to having water easily available in your house, when you simply open a faucet and the water comes out. If there's no running water, then you would need to bring in water from outside in buckets.



run = stretch or extend

“Run” can also be used in the sense of something stretching or extending from one place to another. So I could say:

- The train tracks **run** alongside the river.
- She has a tattoo of a sword **running** down her leg.

run = continue to operate for a time period

The word “run” can also mean “continue to operate for a time period.” For example:

- This internship **runs** from June to August.
- The river cleanup project **ran** from 2012 to 2015.

run = do

“Run” can also be used in the sense of “do” – mostly in the expression “**run errands**,” meaning to do necessary tasks outside the house like going to the supermarket, bank, or post office.

Scientists can also **run a test** or **run an experiment** – this is a less formal way to say do a test/experiment.

run = leave (informal)

One informal meaning of “run” is to leave – when someone says “**I’ve gotta run**” it means “I need to leave” or to I need to go to the next place/commitment on my agenda.

run a fever = body temperature higher than normal

“Run” is also used in a couple different ways in these specific expressions: to **run a fever** means that your body temperature is higher than normal. Run a fever is essentially the same as **have a fever**.



run in the family = be consistent among members of a family

If there’s a characteristic or a disease that **runs in the family**, it means that several people in the same family have this same characteristic or disease.

If a grandmother, mother, and daughter are all artists, you can say that artistic skills run in the family. Or if parents and children both have diabetes, again, that disease runs in the family.

run a red light = pass through a red traffic light instead of stopping

One expression in traffic is to **run a red light**, which is when a car passes through a red traffic light when they were supposed to stop.

This is illegal, and you can get in trouble if the police or a traffic camera catches you running a red light.



run a risk = experience a risk

A very common phrase is when we talk about **running a risk** – this means you are experiencing a risk, some danger. If you smoke, you run the risk of developing lung cancer.

run (noun) = a quick trip

Those were a whole bunch of ways to use “run” as a verb, but it can also be a noun.

One meaning of “run” as a noun is a quick trip. For example:

- I’m going to make **a grocery run** – do you need anything?
- The package will be dropped off during the next **delivery run**.



run (noun) = a sequence of similar events

Finally, a run can be a sequence or series of something – when something keeps happening repeatedly.

Saying you’re having “**a run of bad luck**” means that unlucky things are happening to you frequently and repeatedly. Or a book might have “**a successful run**” if it stays on top of the bestseller list for several months.

Those aren’t the only ways to use “run” – there are a lot more – I’ve simply selected the most common ones that are used pretty frequently in daily life.

Phrasal verbs with RUN

But we’re not done yet! The word “run” is also used in several phrasal verbs. Here are five of them:

- If something **runs out** or if you **run out of** the item, it means it is all used up and there is no more of it. If you run out of milk at home, then you need to go buy more milk. If you’re taking a test where there’s a 1-hour time limit,

and your time runs out, it means the time is finished, and there's no more time available.

- Describing something as **run-down** means it is in bad physical condition because it is old and has been used a lot. This is typically used to describe old houses and buildings that are not well-maintained. You can also describe yourself as feeling run down when you are tired and don't have much energy.
- To **run into** someone means to encounter that person by chance. You didn't plan to meet up with them; it was a coincidence. For example, "I ran into my English teacher at the mall."
- The phrasal verb **run over** is used for when a car hits and drives over something. For example, "I felt so bad that I ran over a squirrel on my way to work this morning."
- The last phrasal verb we'll look at is **run through**. To **run through** some information means to quickly look at or present the main points. On airplanes, the flight attendants run through basic safety information before the plane takes off.



Idioms with RUN

In addition to multiple meanings of the word run, and several phrasal verbs, we also have idioms! There are tons of these, and it's not possible to cover them all in one lesson.

But I'll teach you a few so that you can just get an idea of the types of expressions where we use the word "run."

- Two simple ones are **in the long run** and **in the short run** – these simply mean "in the long term" and "in the short term," talking about distant future and near future. "In the long run" is probably more common. For example, maybe you're going to buy a very expensive mattress. It's hard to spend a lot of money on it, but you know it'll be worth it **in the long**

run because it will improve your sleep and help you feel better for a long time.

- Describing something as a **home run** or saying someone **hit a home run** means it was very successful. This expression comes from the sport of baseball, where a “home run” describes hitting the baseball out of the park and immediately scoring points; it’s like the best thing you can do in that sport. Now we can use it for any action that’s very successful; for example, maybe you’re learning how to cook and your first few dinners don’t turn out very well, but you **hit a home run** with your lasagna – meaning the dish came out great; it was successful.



If something is **running rampant**, it means it is spreading out of control. Right now, as I’m recording this lesson, unfortunately, coronavirus is running rampant in the United States. We usually use this expression for bad things that are out of control – corruption running rampant in a government, or crime running rampant in a city.

- Our final expression today is to **run the gamut**, meaning to cover a wide range of things. We usually say something runs the gamut from A to Z. For example, My tastes in music run the gamut from hip hop to country music. Or, Espresso English courses run the gamut from grammar to pronunciation – meaning we cover a wide range of things that are varied.

Wow, that was a lot of information!

Now it’s time to practice, and there are two good ways to do that.

One is to download the worksheet that comes with this lesson – you’ll find the link below this video – download the worksheet and do the exercise so that you can review everything.

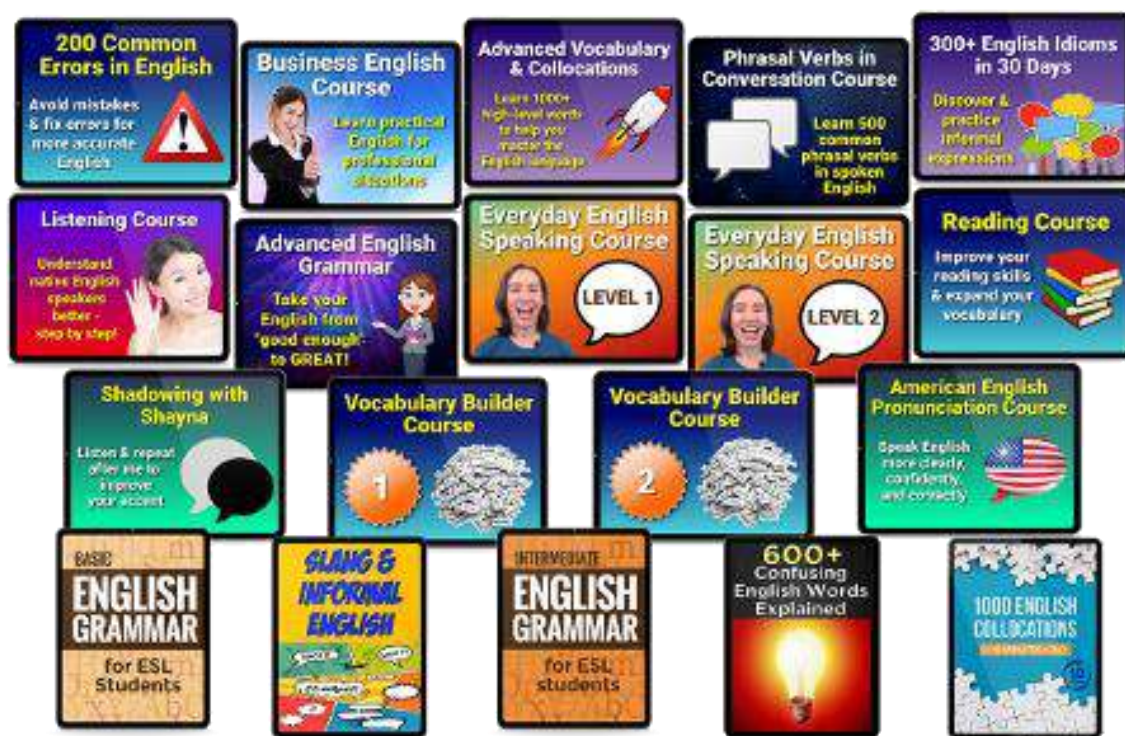
And another excellent way to practice is to create your own example sentences using the word “run” in various ways – and write them down.

Make these sentences things that are true for you – what’s the last food item you ran out of? I recently ran out of bread at home. What’s a company you think is well-run? Describe a time you hit a home run, you did something very successful.

When you use these expressions in sentences that are personalized, it will help you internalize and remember all the different ways to use “run.”

That’s all for day 1 of this mini-course – I hope you enjoyed the video, and I’ll talk to you tomorrow!

Espresso English Courses help you improve ALL areas of your English!



Lesson 1 Practice: RUN

Exercise 1:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression. Careful, two are not used!

a good run	run after	running a fever	running tests
grocery run	run for mayor	running around	running toward
I've gotta run	run in my family	running at once	runs all the way
ran a red light	run off	running down	runs every ten minutes
run a company	run the risk	running late	runs from

1. After biting into the watermelon, he had juice _____ his chin.
2. He almost _____ and got into an accident because he was texting while driving.
3. I _____ that helps non-profits with their fundraising.
4. This afternoon, everyone in the office was _____ frantically trying to meet the 5PM deadline.
5. I tried to _____ the guy who stole my purse, but he was too fast and he got away.
6. If your child is _____, he or she must stay home from school.
7. Knee problems _____ - both my father and his mother have had surgery.
8. My neighbor doesn't have a car, so I make a weekly _____ for her.

9. The company is _____ to make sure there are no major bugs in the software.
10. Our training and certification program _____ January to March every year.
11. She's very well-known in the community, and she might _____ next year.
12. Sorry to keep you waiting - we're _____ and will be with you in about 10 minutes.
13. I can talk for a few more minutes and then _____ to a dentist appointment.
14. The subway _____, so the next one will be at 9:20.
15. Our soccer team had _____ this season - we won our first 9 games.
16. This highway _____ down the coastline.
17. Your phone will be slow down if you have too many apps _____.
18. I left half an hour early for my job interview because I didn't want to _____ of getting stuck in traffic.

Exercise 2:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression.

hit a home run	run out	run the gamut
in the long run	run over	run through
run into	run rampant	run-down

1. Be careful not to _____ that broken glass because then you'll get a flat tire.
2. My graphic design projects _____ from small booklets to giant billboards.
3. I hate when I _____ my ex-boyfriend at a party; it always ruins my night.
4. If you don't treat your customers well, your business will probably fail _____.
5. Make sure you bring enough water so that you don't _____ in the middle of the hike.
6. She really _____ with that article - millions of readers loved it.
7. The gym should buy new equipment; the machines are rather _____.
8. When people post things on social media without checking their sources, it's easy for false information to _____.
9. Before we get started, let me _____ what we covered at last week's meeting.

Answers – Exercise 1:

1. running down
2. ran a red light
3. run a company
4. running around
5. run after
6. running a fever
7. run in my family
8. grocery run
9. running tests
10. runs from
11. run for mayor
12. running late
13. I've gotta run
14. runs every ten minutes
15. a good run
16. runs all the way
17. running at once
18. run the risk

Answers – Exercise 2:

1. run over
2. run the gamut
3. run into
4. in the long run
5. run out
6. hit a home run
7. run-down
8. run rampant
9. run through

Lesson 2: 20 Ways To Use GET

Hello students, and welcome to day 2 of our mini-course on words with multiple meanings!

Yesterday's word was RUN, and today we'll focus on GET. Again – a very common word, but one that is extremely versatile – this means it can be used in lots of different ways.

You already know the basic meaning of GET, but today you're going to learn 20+ more ways to use it. Let's get started:

- [Lesson 2 Video: 20 Ways To Use GET](#)

get = receive

"Get" means receive. You can:

- **get a gift**
- **get an email**
- **get a chance** (meaning to receive an opportunity)
- **get a grade on a test**
- **get an award**
- **get a scholarship**



There are lots of collocations with GET meaning "receive."

get = obtain

A second meaning of get is to obtain. This is a little different from receive – when you receive something, you made no effort – someone else gave it to you. If you get a gift for your birthday, you didn't do anything to receive it.

But when you obtain something, you put in some effort. So you can **get a job** (you applied for the job, maybe you did an interview, and then they offered you the job).

You can **get information**, meaning you go and search for the information so that you have it. You can **get some sleep**, meaning you take the action of going to bed. You can **get results** at work, so you're probably doing tasks in order to obtain results, get results.

get = buy

Get can also mean to buy. You can **get tickets** to a concert. If you see someone wearing a shirt you like, you can say "Where did you **get that shirt?**" meaning where did you buy it.

You can **get something for a good price** or **get a bargain on something**, both of which mean to pay a fair or small amount of money compared to the high value you receive.



For example, you can get a bargain on the [Espresso English Academy at Espresso English](https://www.EspressoEnglish.net), because it's available at a 50% discount – so you can buy it at a good price.

Another place we use "get" to mean "buy" is when we're ordering at a restaurant or coffee shop – it's very common to say "**Can I get a large coffee?**" or "**Can I get some french fries?**" – meaning you want to order, you want to buy that food/drink item.

get = bring

We also use get in the sense of bring. If I'm already in bed and I feel cold, I might ask my husband, "**Can you get me an extra blanket?**" meaning can you bring it to me.

We often say "go get" when someone needs to go somewhere in order to bring back an item. Let's say there's a meeting at work, and there aren't enough chairs

in the meeting room – then, my assistant could **go get more chairs**, meaning she will go and then bring the chairs.

Or if someone's injured, you might say “I'll **go get the first aid kit!**” meaning you'll bring it.

get = arrive

Informally, we use “get” to mean arrive. For example: I usually **get home from work** around 6:00 – meaning arrive at home.

You can use “get” when talking about arriving from travel – If we take the next available flight, we'll **get to New York** on Monday morning.

When asking for directions, you could say “**How can I get to the train station?**” – how can I go there, how can I arrive there.



get = become

Get also means become. You can **get angry, get excited, get tired, get sick, get older, and get lost**.

Something can **get better** or **get worse**, meaning it is becoming better or worse.

We also use it for changes in marital status: two people can **get engaged** (meaning they plan to marry each other), **get married**, and **get divorced**.

You can also **get dressed**, meaning to put on your clothes, and **get ready**, meaning to prepare yourself.

When you **get drunk** it means you become intoxicated with too much alcohol, and when you **get used to** something it means you become accustomed to it.

All these expressions use “get” in the sense of becoming, changing status.



get = understand (informal)

Another informal use of “get” is to understand. If you say “**I don’t get it,**” it means “I don’t understand.”

You can also say “I don’t get...” followed by a question word and the topic you don’t understand, for example:

- **I don’t get why** they broke up; they seemed to have a perfect relationship.
- **I don’t get how** to use this computer program.
- Or if someone tells a joke, and you didn’t understand what’s funny about it, you could say you **didn’t get the joke**.

get to do something = have a special opportunity

If you get to do something, it means you have a good/special opportunity, for example:

- If my kids finish all their homework, they **get to watch a movie** before bed.
- He’s upset because he didn’t **get to take a vacation** last year.

have got to do something = have an obligation; should do it

On the other hand, if you have got to do something, it means you need to do it, you have an obligation to do it, or you should do it. This typically sounds like “gotta” in informal spoken English. Here are some examples of “gotta” referring to obligations:

- **I’ve gotta** pick up my kids from school.
- If you borrow books from the library, **you’ve gotta** return them.
- That movie is awesome – **you’ve gotta** see it! (you should, a strong recommendation)



get someone to do something = persuade/convince the person to do it

When you get someone to do something, it means you persuade/convince the person to do it.

- After a lot of discussion, I finally **got him to agree** with me.
- It's hard to **get my kids to help** with housework.

get something done = cause it to happen

Finally, when you get something done, it means you make or cause it to happen. Sometimes this means doing it yourself, and other times it means you cause someone else to do it for you. For example:

- I like to **get all my housework done** by noon. (This means I finished it myself)
- My car has broken down – I need to **get it fixed**. (This means I will probably take it to a mechanic and they will fix it)



Phrasal verbs with GET

GET is also used in a ton of phrasal verbs... and even many of these phrasal verbs ALSO have multiple meanings! Here's just a sample of a few common phrasal verbs with get.

To **get along with** someone means to have a good relationship with them, without conflict. Or we could say the opposite, **not get along with** someone, meaning two people don't like each other or have conflict/tension in their relationship.

- I'm glad I **get along with** all my coworkers.

- I **don't get along with** one of my cousins; I find her so annoying.

The phrasal verb **get around** is used for managing to go places, physically. If you have a broken leg, you would find it difficult to get around on crutches. Some cities, like London, have an extensive public transportation system, so it's easy to get around, to manage to go from place to place.



Next, we have **get back**. This can mean to return to a place – for example, I'm going shopping at a bunch of stores, and I'm not sure what time I'll get back.

There's another meaning for this phrasal verb, and that is when we say **get back at someone**, it means to take revenge; to do something to hurt a person who hurt us in the past.

The expression **get over** means to recover emotionally from a difficult experience. If someone you love dies, it would take you a long time to get over it.

Another way to use this expression is as a command, telling someone "Get over it!" – we do this when the person is continuing to be sad/upset over something minor or silly, and we want them to stop obsessing about a minor problem.

When it comes to transportation, we **get into / get out of** cars, and **get on / get onto / get off** trains, buses, planes, bicycles, and motorcycles.



Idioms with GET

To finish up this lesson, let's look at a couple idioms with get. The word get is used in hundreds of idioms... so this is just a small taste. If you'd like to focus more on idioms, you can join my [300+ Idioms Course](https://www.EspressoEnglish.net/300+IdiomsCourse) for a lot more expressions.

Our first idiom is to **get wind of something**, which means to learn about or hear about some secret, usually indirectly. Let's say a teenager is planning to have a party while his parents are out of the house – but then his parents **get wind of it**, they learn about this secret, when they see a comment he made on social media. They discovered the secret in an indirect way.



When a celebrity or famous person is involved in a divorce, they often try to keep the details private because when the media **gets wind of it**, then they will publish all the information about it.

Another idiom is to **get your act together**. This means to take action to become well-organized and better-prepared. For example, let's say your friend Maria has started and stopped studying English many times in the past, never really taking it seriously. She could decide to **get her act together** by committing to an English course and establishing a regular schedule for studying. She has taken action to be better organized.

One very informal expression you might hear in TV shows or casual conversations is **"Get a load of this!"** – we say that when we want to call someone's attention to something that seems especially notable or interesting. If you see a luxury car you know is worth \$100,000, you could say to your friend, "Get a load of that car!" because you want your friend to notice it.

Sometimes people also say "Get a load of this" when they are about to share some scandalous information; for example – "Get a load of this – our college professor was fired because he was flirting with one of his students."

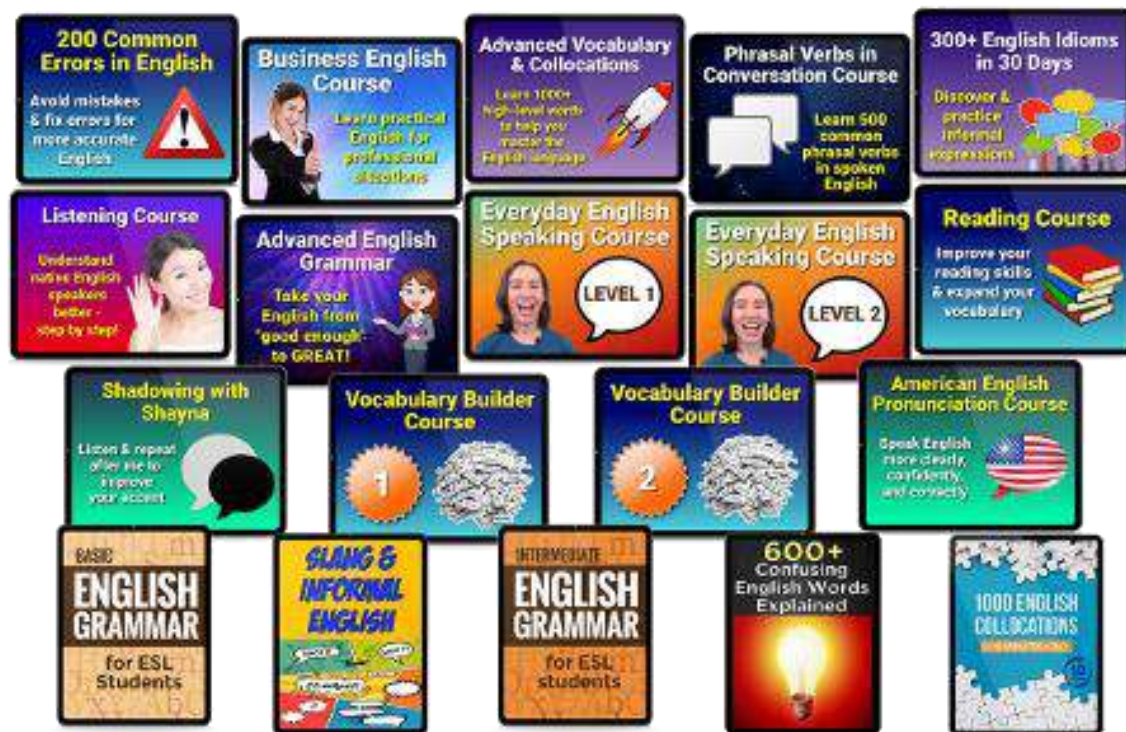
Sometimes when you're doing a task, you enter a state where you really have all your energy focused on it, you're totally concentrating on it, and as a result you are working or learning very smoothly and efficiently. Entering this state of concentration is called **getting in the groove**.

Sometimes when I'm writing English lessons, I **get in the groove** and the ideas come very easily to my mind because I'm so focused and fully immersed in the task. Or maybe you like to do a big cleaning of your house once a month, you take the whole day to **get in the groove** and fully clean your house from top to bottom.



I hope my lessons can help you **get in the groove** when it comes to studying English – my goal with Espresso English is to help you learn in a way that's easy, efficient, and fun. That's all for today – make sure to tune in for tomorrow's video on words with multiple meanings.

Espresso English Courses help you improve ALL areas of your English!



Lesson 2 Practice: GET

Exercise 1: Complete each sentence with the correct expression.

don't get	get results	got excited
get a gift	get to meet	got home
get everything done	go get	got these vegetables
get him to change	got engaged	gotta take

1. I _____ really late after the party - you were already asleep.
2. When you _____, you should thank the person who gave it to you.
3. My brother _____ when he found out he'd won free tickets to a concert.
4. That TV show is really stupid. I _____ why everyone likes it.
5. I heard you _____ recently - congratulations! When's the wedding?
6. We have such a busy schedule that it's hard to _____.
7. He's very stubborn; once he decides to do something, no one can _____ his mind.
8. What a mess. I'll _____ some paper towels to clean it up.
9. You've been studying for six hours straight - you've _____ a break!
10. I _____ from a local farm.
11. The winner of this contest will _____ their favorite movie stars in person!
12. This strategy is very effective, so I'm sure it will _____.

Exercise 2:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression. Careful, two are not used!

get a load of	get in the groove	got on
get along with	get into	got out of
get around	got my act together	got over
get back	got off	got wind of

1. I was very disappointed that I wasn't accepted to that college, but I _____ it.
2. After the accident, I _____ the car to inspect the damage.
3. Here's a map to help you _____ the amusement park.
4. I don't _____ my roommate, so I'm looking to move out soon.
5. _____ that TV - it's so big it wouldn't even fit in my living room!
6. I used to drink and do drugs, but I _____ once I got married and had kids.
7. She's on a business trip; she'll _____ tomorrow.
8. The employees are all worried about their jobs because they _____ the fact that the company's not doing well.
9. We missed our stop, so we _____ the train at the next one.
10. I don't do my best work in the morning, but late at night I can really _____.

Answers – Exercise 1:

1. got home
2. get a gift
3. got excited
4. don't get
5. got engaged
6. get everything done
7. get him to change
8. go get
9. gotta take
10. got these vegetables
11. get to meet
12. get results

Answers – Exercise 2:

10. got over
11. got out of
12. get around
13. get along with
14. get a load of
15. got my act together
16. get back
17. got wind of
18. got off
19. get in the groove

Lesson 3: 20 Ways To Use BREAK

Hi students! It's day 3 of our mini-course all about words with multiple meanings, and our word today is BREAK. Get ready to learn lots of different ways to use this word in English.

- [Lesson 3 Video: Ways To Use BREAK](#)

break = damage and separate into pieces

The basic and most common definition is to damage something and separate it into pieces. Yesterday I was washing the dishes and I accidentally dropped a glass, and it broke. If you break your arm or break your leg, it means the bone has separated into pieces – ouch!



You can break something by accident, as in the example of dropping a glass, or you can break it on purpose – if I have a big chocolate bar I want to give to three kids, I would break the chocolate into three pieces.

break = something stops working

We also use break when something stops working, stops being functional, even if it's not physically in pieces. If your printer keeps showing an error message, and it won't print, you could say the printer is broken.

break = do something contrary to an agreement/rule

If you **break the law**, **break a promise**, **break an agreement**, or **break the rules**, it means you do something that is contrary to, against that law, promise, agreement, or rule, or fails to follow the agreement.

If the speed limit is 35 mph and you are driving at 50 mph, you are **breaking the law**. If you promised your



friend you'd help him move to a new apartment, but then you didn't, you **broke your promise** because you failed to do what you promised. In soccer, touching the ball with your hands is **breaking the rules** of the sport (unless you're the goalkeeper).

break = stop activity for a short time

We also use **break** to mean "stop for a short time" – for example, in the middle of an all-day meeting, the boss might say "Let's break for lunch" – let's stop the meeting briefly for lunch.

It's probably more common to use the noun form, by saying "Let's take a break." We sometimes describe what the stop/pause is for – you can talk about **a coffee break, a bathroom break, a smoking/cigarette break, a lunch break**. These all describe brief pauses or stops in the middle of an activity, in order to eat, drink, go to the bathroom, or smoke.

break = interrupt (and sometimes stop permanently)

Similarly, break can also mean to interrupt something, and sometimes stop it permanently. If you **break a habit**, it means you stop doing something you previously did often. If I eat a lot of fast food, I need to break that habit if I want to become healthier.

So remember – "take a break" is a temporary pause, but if you break a habit, hopefully you stop the habit permanently.

Other expressions that use "break" in the sense of "interrupt" are when it's quiet, but then something **breaks the silence**. Like if everyone in a meeting is quiet and thinking about how to solve a problem, and then someone says, "I have an idea," that comment would break the silence, interrupt the silence.

Another expression is to **break your train of thought** – this is used when you're thinking deeply about a topic and concentrating hard on it, but then something happens to distract you. If I'm focusing on developing a new lesson, but then my

cell phone rings, it would break my train of thought, and if I answer the phone call, I might have a hard time getting back to what I was thinking about.

Finally, if someone is falling, hopefully there is something to **break the fall**, interrupt the fall before that person hits the ground. When people are training to be in the circus, and doing dangerous acrobatics high in the air, there is a net underneath to **break the fall**, so if they do fall down, their fall would be interrupted before they hit the ground.

break = weaken, hurt, destroy something not physical

Break can also mean to weaken, hurt, or destroy something – usually something that's not physical.

If someone **breaks your heart**, it means they hurt you very badly emotionally. Maybe a boyfriend or girlfriend who you really loved, decided to end the relationship unexpectedly – that would break your heart.



If something **breaks your spirit**, that's different – it means it destroys your confidence and self-esteem. Let's say some parents are always telling their child negative things like "You're so stupid," it would break the child's spirit.

Another example is to **break power** – sometimes governments make laws to **break the power** of large corporations, meaning to weaken or destroy the power of those companies.

If something **breaks your resolve**, it means it weakens/destroys your decision or determination to do something. Let's say I really want to be a doctor, but then I read an article about how doctors are always really stressed, that might break my resolve (destroy my determination) to become a doctor.

break = reveal news, make something known

When talking about the context of news, **break** can mean to reveal something to the public. Saying “**the scandal broke**” means that the scandal was made known publicly.

We also have the expression **breaking news**, which means the most recent news that is being published very soon after it happened.

In a similar way of **break** meaning “to make something known,” we have a specific expression **break the news to somebody**, which means to inform them of bad news. Let’s say I see my neighbor’s dog escape from their house and get hit by a car – I will then have to go **break the news** to my neighbor that unfortunately their dog is injured or dead.

break = run or escape

Break can also be used to mean running or escaping.

To **break free from** something is to escape it, to manage to get free from it. For example, after many years of counseling, my uncle finally **broke free from** his addiction to gambling.



We can also talk about a **prison break**, meaning when prisoners escape from the prison.

And then there’s an expression **make a break for it**, which means to suddenly run very quickly. If I find a big spider in my bathroom, I’ll **make a break for** the door! Or if I let go of my daughter’s hand in the supermarket, she’ll **make a break for** the candy aisle – meaning she’ll run there.

break = beginning

When talking about nature, we have a few different expressions with the word **break**.

When we say **the break of day, the break of dawn, or daybreak**, we are talking about the very beginning of the day, when the sun first comes up.

If we say **a storm broke**, it means the storm begins.

We can also say an ocean **wave breaks** when it reaches its highest point and then starts to collapse down.

break = separation in relationships

When it comes to relationships, **break** often means a separation. The phrasal verb **break up** is used when a romantic relationship ends and the two partners separate. John and his girlfriend broke up last week.

We also have the expression **make a clean break**, which emphasizes that the separation is complete so that you can start fresh. Maybe you had some bad experiences in your city, and you move to a new place so you can **make a clean break** with your past – completely separate from it, without continuing to be involved in anything from your past.



voice breaks = voice changes tone

A few quick and specific expressions to finish up this part of the lesson:

If someone's **voice breaks**, it means that it changes tone because of strong emotion. If your friend is talking about a recent tragedy that affected them personally, their voice might break – their speaking would be interrupted or would sound a little different, because of their strong sadness.

We also use this expression in another way – when a boy is around 13 or 14 years old, his **voice breaks** – it changes to have a deeper tone, so he sounds less like a child and more like a man.

break a large bill = exchange it for smaller bills

If your friend asks “Hey, can you **break a 20?**” – he is talking about money, and asking if you have smaller bills (like \$5 or \$10) to exchange for his \$20 bill. Maybe he wants to buy a \$2 item from a vending machine, and he doesn’t want to put a whole \$20 bill in there, so he asks if you have smaller bills to break his \$20 bill.

a big break = a sudden opportunity for success

When you hear someone talking about a **big break**, this is an informal way to talk about a sudden opportunity or quick success, especially when it comes to a career.

Let’s say there’s an actress who has only had minor parts for many years, but she gets a **big break** when she’s given the leading role in a major movie. This is a sudden great opportunity, and it implies that she will have continued success after it.



Phrasal verbs with BREAK

Let’s turn our focus to phrasal verbs with the word break. I already mentioned **break up** meaning to end a romantic relationship, and now we’ll learn some more.

If a machine **breaks down**, it means it stops functioning. We often use this for cars – my car broke down on the highway and I had to get it towed.

We can also say a person **breaks down** or **has a breakdown** – this means they have a sudden failure of their health – sometimes physically, but more often mentally/emotionally; they suddenly get very upset or very depressed. A new mom of triplets (that’s 3 babies) might get so stressed by all the responsibility that she has a breakdown – so maybe she stops eating and she gets very anxious.

To **break through** means to make a quick advance, especially through an obstacle. You'll often hear this in the noun form when talking about a **breakthrough**. If scientists are trying to develop some new technology and they make a breakthrough, it means they have suddenly gotten past the challenges, and made great new progress.

We use the phrasal verb **break out** when a bad skin problem suddenly appears – your face might break out in a rash (red, irritated skin) or pimples (small bumps from clogged pores). It's also common to talk about fights or violence breaking out when they suddenly appear.

When a robber forcefully enters a house or business, usually in order to steal something this is called **breaking in**. Or you could say he's **breaking into** the building.

Let's finish up with a few idioms! The first one is **break the bank** – this means to be very expensive, almost like it will use up all your money. If you're shopping for a new refrigerator, you could tell the salesperson, "I'm looking for a fridge that's reliable, but won't break the bank" – meaning it won't cost a ton of money.

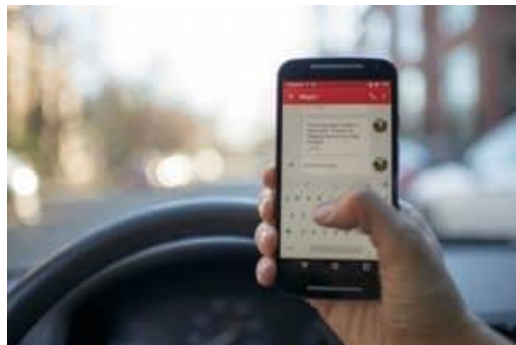


To **break rank/ranks** means to do something differently than other members of a group. If all the teachers in a school use textbooks to teach, and one teacher decides to use games instead, that teacher is **breaking rank** because they are acting differently from the group. If everyone in my family is an engineer and I decide to become a painter instead, I'm **breaking rank**. Breaking rank can be a good thing, a bad thing, or a neutral thing.

Finally, a very common expression is to **give someone a break**. This actually has a few different meanings. One is to be more flexible/understanding and less strict/demanding, or to give someone another chance. If a student failed to turn in an assignment because they had computer problems, the teacher might **give him a break** and allow him to turn it in late. The teacher is being flexible with the rules and allowing an exception or another chance.

When someone says **Gimme a break!** as an exclamation, this usually means either “stop annoying me!” or “that’s ridiculous!” or “I don’t believe it!” Let me give you some examples.

If my friend is texting me hundreds of times a day, and expects me to reply instantly all the time, I might tell her, “Gimme a break!” to mean “Stop bothering me with all these texts!”



Let’s say in my job I normally work with 10 clients per month, and now my boss wants me to take 20 clients per month. I might complain to my husband, “He’s doubling my workload. Gimme a break!” to mean “that’s ridiculous!”

Imagine my teenage son always sleeps in until noon on the weekends. He then tells me he’s planning on waking up at 6am to exercise. I might say, “You’ll wake up that early? Gimme a break!” to mean “I don’t believe it!”

Whew – those were a lot of definitions and expressions, and it’s time for me to take a break. I suggest you take a break, too – get some water, get some coffee – and then come back and try the practice exercise so that you can review what you learned today. Bye for now!

Espresso English Courses help you improve ALL areas of your English!



Lesson 3 Practice: BREAK

Exercise 1:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression. Careful – three aren't used!

big break	break the habit	breaks a promise	storm broke
break a 50	break the news	breaks my heart	story broke
break free from	break the power	broken	take a break
break my resolve	break the silence	made a break for	voice broke
break of dawn	break the TV	make a clean break	water break

13. After a very intense first year of college, I wanted to _____ so I took a semester off.

14. As soon as the 3-hour meeting was over, I _____ the bathroom.

15. Her _____ as she expressed deep gratitude to all the people who had believed in her and helped her succeed.

16. I don't try to stay friends with my ex-boyfriends; I prefer to _____.

17. The factory tried to hide the enormous amount of pollution it was generating, but there were lots of protests after the _____.

18. If someone _____ to me, I have a very hard time trusting them again.

19. I'm determined to lose weight, so I never buy cookies because seeing them in the house would _____.

20. My parents always put a lot of pressure on me; it took me a long time to _____ their expectations.

21. Sorry, we can't _____. But you could pay by credit card.

22. Stop throwing that football around the living room - you might _____.

23. The doctor had to _____ to the patient that he would most likely never walk again.

24. He worked in low-paying journalism jobs for many years, and his _____ came when he got hired by the BBC.

25. The soccer coach called for a _____ after 30 minutes of practice.

26. Ugh, chewing on your nails is so gross. You really need to _____.

27. When we go camping, the birds always wake me up at the _____.

28. I raised my son to be an honest person, but he was arrested for stealing from his company. It _____.

29. This video camera is _____ - it's recording video, but no sound.

Exercise 2:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression. Careful, two are not used!

breakthrough	broke out	didn't break the bank
broke away	broke rank	gave me a break
broke down	broke up	was broke
broke into		

11. I was having a hard time concentrating at work while my mother was in the hospital, so my boss _____ and let me take the week off.
12. She _____ with her fiancé after catching him kissing another woman.
13. My son had a fever for two days, and then I called the pediatrician when a rash _____ on his chest.
14. Sarah was raised in a very religious family, in which no one ever questioned the traditions or _____.
15. I'm so happy with this guitar I got. It's well-made, it has a great sound, and it _____.
16. Someone _____ my car and stole my wallet last night.
17. The discovery of these artifacts was a real _____ in understanding the ancient Chinese culture.
18. I was working 80 hours a week for months on end - eventually I _____ because I couldn't take it anymore.

Answers – Exercise 1:

1. take a break
2. made a break for
3. voice broke
4. make a clean break
5. story broke
6. breaks a promise
7. break my resolve
8. break free from
9. break a 50
10. break the TV
11. break the news
12. big break
13. water break
14. break the habit
15. break of dawn
16. breaks my heart
17. broken

Answers – Exercise 2:

20. gave me a break
21. broke up
22. broke out
23. broke rank
24. didn't break the bank
25. broke into
26. breakthrough
27. broke down

Lesson 4: 20 Ways To Use CUT

Hi there! It's lesson 4 of our mini-course on words with multiple meanings, and we're going to focus on the word CUT. Today you'll learn 20 ways to use it – from different definitions, to phrasal verbs, to idioms.

- [Lesson 4 Video: 20 Ways To Use CUT](#)

cut = separate into pieces using something sharp

The basic meaning of CUT, which you already know, is to separate into pieces by using something sharp.

So you can **cut a piece of paper with scissors**, you can **cut hair** to make it shorter, **cut a cake with a knife**, and so on. In this case “cut” is a verb describing the action of separating by using something sharp.



cut = injury when your skin is separated by something sharp

The word “cut” also functions as a noun to refer to the injury you receive when your skin is separated by something sharp.

You can describe a cut in your skin as a **deep cut** or a **nasty cut** if it's major, and a **small cut** or **minor cut** if it's a little one.

When you get a tiny cut from the edge of a piece of paper, that's specifically called a “**paper cut**” – and it hurts a lot!



cut = reduce

Getting back to “cut” being used as a verb, cut can also mean to reduce. This is often used with money. If a store **cuts prices**, it means it reduces its prices. If the

government **cuts taxes**, it reduces taxes. If your company needs to **cut costs**, it means it needs to reduce the amount of money it is spending.

Informally, we often use the phrasal verbs “**cut down**” and “**cut back**” to talk about reducing things other than money – especially food. If you want to be healthier, you should cut down on sugary and fatty foods. Or maybe you’re drinking too much beer, and you decide to cut back – to reduce the amount of beer you drink.



cut = remove or delete

“Cut” can also mean to remove or delete completely, and this is most often used when talking about text, plays, and movies or TV shows.

If I’m editing an article and I see a paragraph that would be confusing to the reader, I might **cut that paragraph** – delete it completely. Or the producers of a movie might decide to **cut a scene** that doesn’t contribute to the story line – they would remove or delete that scene.

cut = a part of something

The word “cut” as a noun can mean a part of something. For example, when talking about **a cut of meat** – that means meat from a specific part of the animal. A few examples of different cuts of beef are ribs, tenderloin, and flank steak. There are many different cuts of meat and they vary from country to country.



Another place “cut” means part is when talking about “**a cut of the profits**” meaning a part or portion of the profits. A company that has salespeople might offer them a 10% cut of the profits in order to motivate them to make more sales – that means they would receive a 10% part or portion of the profits.

cut = handle something successfully (informal)

One informal use of “cut” is to be able to manage or handle something successfully, and this is most frequently used in the negative expression saying that something “doesn’t cut it” or “can’t cut it.”

For example, “He was a pretty good student in high school, but **he couldn’t cut it** in college.” – meaning he couldn’t handle the college classes successfully. Or maybe there’s a new employee who is not doing her work very well – she’ll lose her job soon if **she doesn’t cut it**.

cut = hurt someone’s feelings

“Cut” can also mean to hurt someone’s feelings – usually hurting someone’s feelings with words or comments. If your ex-boyfriend said something really mean to you, you could say “**His comment cut me deeply**” – meaning it hurt your feelings badly.

Two more ways to express this are saying that the comment “**cut me to the quick**” or “**cut me to the bone**” – again, these mean that the comment hurt your feelings a LOT.

This use also appears in the expression “**a cutting remark**” – meaning a statement that hurts feelings.

If your mother loves you, but you tell her something like “You’ve never really cared about me” – that would be a cutting remark.



cut in line = enter the line in front of other people

Let’s finish with three more quick and specific uses of “cut” – one is to “cut in line.”

There’s a line of people waiting for something – like waiting to go on a ride at the amusement park – and if someone **cuts in line**, it means that instead of going to

the correct place at the end of the line to wait their turn, they enter in the middle of the line, in front of other people who have been waiting longer. Cutting in line is considered rude and unacceptable behavior.

cut class = not attend class

If a student “cuts class,” it means they do not attend a class in which they are supposed to be present. Maybe a rebellious teenager would **cut class in order to go shopping** with her friends instead. She’s supposed to be in class, but she cuts class – she doesn’t go.



cut a check = a company writes a check

Finally, you’ll sometimes hear the expression “cut a check” which means to write or fill out a check, a piece of paper that you can deposit in the bank to get money.

For example, if you spent some money while on a business trip, and then you show your receipts to the company, **the company will often cut a check** (write a check) to compensate you for those expenses. It’s typically a company or business that “cuts a check,” if an individual person does it, we usually say “write a check.”

Phrasal verbs with CUT

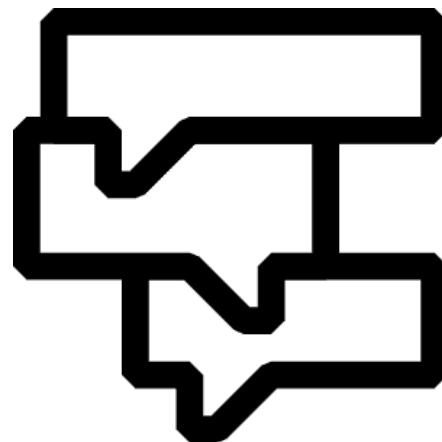
All right, let’s move on to some phrasal verbs. You already learned that cut back and cut down are both used for reducing – cut down on fast food, cut back on expenses – but there are several more.

A very common one is **cut off**, and this has several meanings. First is the literal meaning to separate something from something else, by cutting – you would cut tags off of new clothes, or cut the top off a carrot. But cut off can also mean to

turn off or stop supplying. If you don't pay your electric bill, then the company will **cut off your electricity**. It will turn it off or stop providing it.

Or let's say there are parents who are paying for their son's college education and also giving him spending money, but the son is partying a lot and not taking his studies seriously – the parents might choose to **cut him off, stop supplying him with money**.

In the context of conversation, cut someone off means to interrupt them while talking – for example, I was trying to explain the situation, but **my manager kept cutting me off** – he kept interrupting by talking in the middle of my explanation.



The phrasal verb **cut in** also means to interrupt in a conversation. Maybe I'm trying to have a talk with my friend, but my little sister always tries to cut in – she tries to enter the conversation.

What's the difference between "cut off" and "cut in" meaning to interrupt?

"Cut in" has more of the sense of entering a conversation by interrupting, because the person wants to **participate and be included...** and "cut someone off" has more of the sense of interrupting in order to **stop another person from saying something** or finishing their sentence.

To **cut across** means to go through an area so as to make your trip shorter. For example, if you're on a bike, then instead of following the road around the park, you could cut across the park – go through it – in order to get home faster. A route that is a shorter one and saves time can be called a shortcut.



Now let's look at **cut out** – this is also used in several different ways. Cut out means to physically remove, so you can cut shapes out of paper. If you cut somebody out of your life, it means you completely stop having a relationship with them; you remove them from your life. If your parents were abusive, then you might choose to cut them out of your life by refusing to see them or have any contact with them.

We also have the expression **“Cut it out!”** which means “Stop doing that!” If your kids are being loud and noisy while you're trying to read a book, you could say “Cut it out!” or “If you kids don't cut it out, I'm going to send you to your rooms.”

And finally you can say you're **“not cut out for something”** or **“not cut out to do something”** – this means you don't have the type of skills/personality for that job or lifestyle.

So if you feel sick when you see blood, you could say “I'm not cut out for a career in medicine.” If you can't stand kids, you could say “I'm not cut out to be a parent” – again, it means that job or that lifestyle wouldn't suit you; you wouldn't be good at it or enjoy it.



Idioms with CUT

OK, let's finish our lesson with some idioms.

Sometimes you'll hear something being described as **“a cut above”** everything else – this means it is superior to other things in its category. Maybe there are 10 candidates for a job, but one is a cut above the rest because she has an advanced degree – she is better than, or superior to, the others.

One thing you probably shouldn't do is **cut corners** – that means to save money or effort by doing things in a cheaper or quicker way, which leads to a result or

product of lower quality. Maybe you're building a table for a customer and you cut corners by using the cheapest wood – but then the table is weak and breaks easily.

Or if you're writing an important article and you cut corners by just checking the facts briefly, without doing detailed research – that could result in errors in the article, because you cut corners – you took the easier way to save time/effort.

Another common expression is to **cut your losses**. This describes when you've already put a lot of time, money, and effort into a project, but it's not making progress – so you decide to stop. Deciding to stop is cutting your losses.



Maybe you tried to start a business, and you spent \$10,000 and two years buying supplies and advertising your products, but there aren't a lot of sales – so you cut your losses; you stop working on or investing in this failing project before you lose any MORE time or money.

One phrase you might hear in everyday English is, "That's cutting it close." To **cut it close** means to do something very close to the time limit, so you are in danger of missing it. For example, if you're traveling and you have a connection – you need to get off one airplane and transfer to another one – and you only have 15 minutes to make the connection, that's cutting it close. You have very little time to get on the second plane before it leaves.

What does it mean when you're talking and someone asks you to "**cut to the chase**"? It means they want you to hurry up and get to the point fast. If you cut to the chase, you don't talk about extra details or do any polite introductory conversation – you just go right to the main point.

Let's say your manager, who is very busy, calls a meeting of the team at work. He starts the meeting by saying – "I'll cut to the chase – we're not getting good results and we need to improve." He didn't make any introductory comments, he

didn't say a bunch of other things before, he went directly to the main point. That's what it means to cut to the chase.

I try to cut to the chase in my English lessons – get directly to the most important information, without a lot of extra stuff.

Our final expression is to **“have your work cut out for you.”** This means you have a large and difficult task to do. It can be used for any task – tasks at your job, projects at school, responsibilities at home, and so on.

Imagine you buy a house that is 100 years old, and it's in pretty bad condition. You're planning to renovate it – to repair it and make it new – but you have your work cut out for you – meaning the task is very big and challenging.



I would also say you have your work cut out for you when it comes to learning all these definitions – it's not an easy task! But I hope the examples in this lesson have helped. Make sure to do the exercise so that you can practice. Thanks for watching, and I'll see you in the next lesson.

Espresso English Courses help you improve ALL areas of your English!



Lesson 4 Practice: CUT

Exercise 1:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression. Careful – two aren't used!

a cut of	cut class	cut it in half
an old cut	cut down on	cut me deeply
couldn't cut it	cut expenses	cut that sentence
cut a check	cut in line	cut to

1. Hey, I was already here and it's my turn next - you can't _____!
2. I _____ in New York City, so I moved back to a small town.
3. Several people sued the company for damage caused by their products, and the CEO just _____ to settle each case.
4. If you don't want the whole sandwich, you can _____ and save the rest for later.
5. I'm trying to _____ screen time; I don't want to have my face in my phone all day.
6. My best friend is normally so kind and gentle, so her angry words _____.
7. That scar on my hand is from _____ - an accident in the kitchen.
8. You might want to _____ from your cover letter because it's not really relevant to the topic.
9. I used to stay up too late and then _____ in the morning because I wanted to sleep in.
10. _____ We're trying to _____ so we can save up for a nice vacation next year.

Exercise 2:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression. Careful, one is not used!

a cut above	cut in	cut my losses
cut across	cut it close	cut out for
cut back	cut it out	cut to the chase
cut corners	cut me off	have my work cut out for

1. I can't stop myself - when I hear someone saying something wrong, I have to _____ and correct it.
2. The guys who installed our plumbing definitely _____ - it's only been a month and there are already a few leaks.
3. I prepared my presentation at 5am on the day I had to give it - so I _____, but I got it done!
4. The bartender saw that I was drunk, so he _____ and refused to serve me any more cocktails.
5. My neighbors in the house on the corner put up a fence so that people wouldn't _____ their yard to get to the bus stop.
6. She's very shy, so I don't think she's _____ a job in telemarketing.
7. The boss keeps reminding me of the deadline even though I'm fully aware of it and the project is on track - I wish he'd _____.
8. I'd tried to train my new employee for a year, but he still wasn't getting the hang of the job - so I finally _____ and fired him.
9. These organic vegetables from a local farm are really delicious - they're definitely _____ what you buy in the supermarket.

10. I'm trying to organize 20+ years of files. It's thousands of documents, so I definitely _____ me.

11. I don't need to hear all the context - just _____ and tell me exactly what happened.

Answers – Exercise 1:

1. cut in line
2. couldn't cut it
3. cut a check
4. cut it in half
5. cut down on
6. cut me deeply
7. an old cut
8. cut that sentence
9. cut class
10. cut expenses

Answers – Exercise 2:

28. cut in
29. cut corners
30. cut it close
31. cut me off
32. cut across
33. cut out for
34. cut it out
35. cut my losses
36. a cut above
37. have my work cut out for
38. cut to the chase

Lesson 5: 20 Ways To Use SET

Hello students! Today is the final day of our mini-course on words with multiple meanings – I hope you’ve been enjoying it.

If you like my teaching style and you want to learn more, I suggest you [check out my courses](#).

Our multiple-meaning word of the day is SET.

- [Lesson 5 Video: 20 Ways TO Use SET](#)

set = physically put something in a position

The basic meaning is to physically put something in a position – you can **set a book on a table**, **set some boxes next to a desk**, and so on.

Now in everyday English, it’s more common to use “put” – put a book on a table, and put some boxes next to a desk. But there are three places where we **always** use set, and not “put,” to refer to putting things in position.

One is in the expression “**set the table**” – this means to prepare a table for a meal by putting plates, napkins, forks, knives, spoons, and glasses on it.



Another one is when **a doctor sets a bone or sets a fracture** – this is when you break a bone, and the two parts are out of place, so the doctor needs to set the fracture, meaning to put the parts of the bone into place, into alignment, so that they heal properly.

And the third one is when talking about jewelry, usually about **a stone being set in a surrounding** of metal or other stones. For example, this diamond is set (meaning placed, put, located) in a gold band.



set = put something into a certain state

Set can also mean to put something into a certain state.

A common example of this is to **set something on fire** or to **set fire to something** – you are putting it into the state of burning. If you throw a cigarette into a pile of leaves, it would probably set the leaves on fire. If someone sets fire to a house or building on purpose, that's a crime (it's called arson).



Another expression is to **set someone/something free**, meaning to make it free when it was currently trapped or restricted. Maybe you manage to catch a mouse inside your house, but instead of killing it you set it free outside.

Another expression is to **set something in motion**, which means to start a process and make it begin to move forward. For example, after being elected, politicians try to set their plans in motion – put them into a state of moving forward.

set = adjust controls on a device

We also use “set” for adjusting controls on a device – to **set an alarm** means to program your clock, watch, or cell phone to sound an alarm at a certain time. I usually set my alarm for 7:30 am because that's when I like to get up.

Some houses or apartments have a thermostat to control the temperature – if you **set the thermostat** to 70 degrees, you are adjusting the controls so that the system will maintain the house at that temperature.

On your phone or computer, you'll often find a section called “Settings” – this is where you can adjust the basic configurations of the device.



set = decide on a date/price

“Set” can be used for deciding on something, most typically a date – when two people plan to get married, they would **set a date for the wedding**. They’d decide that the wedding will be on July 10th, for example.

Sometimes “set” is also used for deciding on a rate or a price. A store might **set the price** of a new product at \$50 – meaning they have decided to sell it at that price.

set = establish

A similar but slightly different use of set is to establish. We see this in the following examples:

- **set a record:** meaning to establish a record. She set a record for the fastest time swimming across the river
- **set a precedent:** means to establish an example that will serve as a reference for later cases. If my daughter is crying and screaming for some candy and I give it to her, I am setting a precedent and she’ll learn that she can get what she wants by crying and screaming – so she will use this strategy for future cases.
- **set the agenda for a meeting or conference:** decide on the topics that will be addressed, as well as the schedule for covering them
- **set a good/bad example:** an example of good or bad behavior that others will imitate. A teacher would try to set a good example for the kids in her classroom by always being kind, so that the students would hopefully imitate that behavior. If she yelled and cursed, that would be setting a bad example.



set (adjective) = fixed or established

“Set” as a verb can mean “to establish,” and “set” as an adjective can describe something that is already fixed or established.

For example, a factory would have **a set procedure** for operating the machines. It has an established procedure that does not typically change.

One idiom using “set” in this manner of being firmly fixed/established is saying “**he’s set in his ways**” – this describes someone who is NOT flexible, who is not open to change and new perspectives. Instead, he’s set in his ways – he’s firmly fixed/established in his current perspective and habits.

set (adjective) = ready

“Set” can also mean “ready.” We typically use this in the expression “**all set.**”

For example, if you’ve prepared some paperwork for new employees who will be starting their jobs tomorrow, and your boss asks you about it, you could say “it’s all set” – it’s ready.

Or if you’re going to watch a movie at home, and your boyfriend first has to make popcorn and get a blanket and some drinks – once he is done preparing, he might say “All set” meaning he is ready for the movie to start.

set (noun) = a group of similar things

“Set” as a noun can mean a group of things, usually a group of things that are all the same, similar, or that are all in one category. We call this **a set of keys** – those are all the same. Or maybe you buy your father **a set of tools** for Christmas – different types, but all in the category of tools.



set = physical place where scenes are filmed

When talking about TV shows, movies, and plays in the theater, “set” has two meanings.

As a noun, the “set” is the place where scenes of the show, movie, or play are acted and filmed. Producers of shows and plays create a set using real or fake objects to give the impression of being in an area. So the “set” is this physical group of objects and furniture and buildings, used in TV or theater productions.



set = imagined location / time period of a scene

We can also use “set” as a verb to refer to the overall place and time where the story takes place.

For example, we can say the film is set in 17th-century England, meaning the story happens in the 17th century, in the country of England. Or the show is set in modern-day Chicago, meaning the location of the events is Chicago in the present time.

set = when the sun goes down below the horizon

One simple and specific meaning of set that you probably already know is when the sun goes down below the horizon.

You could say “in the summer, **the sun sets** at 8 pm.” The event of this happening is called **sunset** (all one word). For example, the beach party continued after sunset.



Phrasal verbs with SET

Let's move on to phrasal verbs with set.

Set apart means to make something separate, noticeable, and distinct from all the others. If you're considering various study programs, and only one of them includes some interesting travel, you could say the travel is what sets this program apart from the others. It makes you notice how it's distinct.

Set aside means something different – to set something aside means to put something on the side because you are not using it at the moment, or you will use it later. This could be done physically, for example, I set aside the hammer and reached for the screwdriver. I put the hammer to one side because I'm not using it right now.



Or it could be non-physical, for example, I'm **setting aside 5% of my paycheck** every month because I'm saving up for a new bike. I'm putting 5% of my paycheck to the side and not using it right now because I'll use that money later to buy a bike.

We can also say things like "We need to **set aside our differences** and work together," meaning we need to leave our different opinions to the side so that we can focus on cooperating.

If something **sets you back**, it means it delays you or prevents the process from moving forward. For example, if you are trying to finish a project and you need some information from a co-worker, but that person is on vacation and not responding to emails, that would set back the project – delay it.

The noun form, **setback** (all one word) can be used to talk about an event or obstacle that prevents progress. If a professional soccer player breaks his leg, that

would be a setback in his career, it would stop his career from growing until his leg healed.

The phrasal verb **“set off”** can mean to begin a journey. For example, “We set off on the hike around 8am” – meaning we started hiking.

“Set off” is also used when something causes/triggers an event, especially an alarm or explosion. If a basketball hits a parked car, it might **set off the car alarm**. Or a terrorist might **set off a bomb** – cause it to explode.



Saying something **“sets you off”** is an informal way to say it makes you “explode” with anger. For example, “I didn’t mind his criticism of my work, but when he insulted my character, that really set me off” – it made me so angry that maybe I yelled or cursed at him.

A very common phrasal verb is **“set up.”** This most often means to assemble something or put it in a standing position so it’s ready to use.

When you go camping, you set up a tent. After you knock down bowling pins, a machine sets them up – puts them in a standing position. A third-grade teacher might set up an activity for the kids in her class – meaning she assembles the supplies and prepares the objects by putting them in place so they’re ready to use.



Idioms with SET

As always, we’ll finish with some interesting idioms.

If you **set your sights on something**, it means you really want to do it and you make it your goal. I could say my daughter has set her sights on attending the best university in the country.

Another way to talk about an intense desire is to say you **have your heart set** on the object or goal. For example, I have my heart set on traveling to Paris for our anniversary.

Or you could say you're **dead set** on it, you're very determined to do it – I'm dead set on improving my English, so I signed up for three courses.

To **set the stage for something** means to prepare for that thing to happen, or make it more likely that the thing will happen.

You could say, "My parents' different religious views set the stage for their divorce" – so they had different opinions on religion, and this prepared the way or contributed to their divorce happening. Or the invention of smart phones set the stage for our culture of always being connected.

"Set foot in" a place is simply an informal way to talk about entering that place. It's often, although not always, used in the negative form. For example, "I got food poisoning at that restaurant – I'll never set foot in it again!"

If something is **"not set in stone,"** it means it's not confirmed or final. Let's say you're going on vacation and you have a few ideas about activities to do, but you're not 100% committed to them. You could say your plans for the trip aren't set in stone because they are not totally finalized; there's still flexibility to change them.

Our final expression today is **"set the record straight"** and this means to correct a false fact or misunderstanding.

Let's imagine you win a smaller amount of money in the lottery, like \$1,000. But then you hear some of your friends commenting that you must be a millionaire. You could say "Let me set the record straight – I'm not a millionaire, I only won \$1,000." You are correcting the false belief that you're now super rich; you're setting the record straight.



We've now reached the end of this mini-course – can you believe it?

In just 5 days you've learned over 100 different ways to use the words run, get, break, cut, and set. I know it's a lot of information to take in, so I'd recommend reviewing all the lessons to remind yourself of all the meanings.

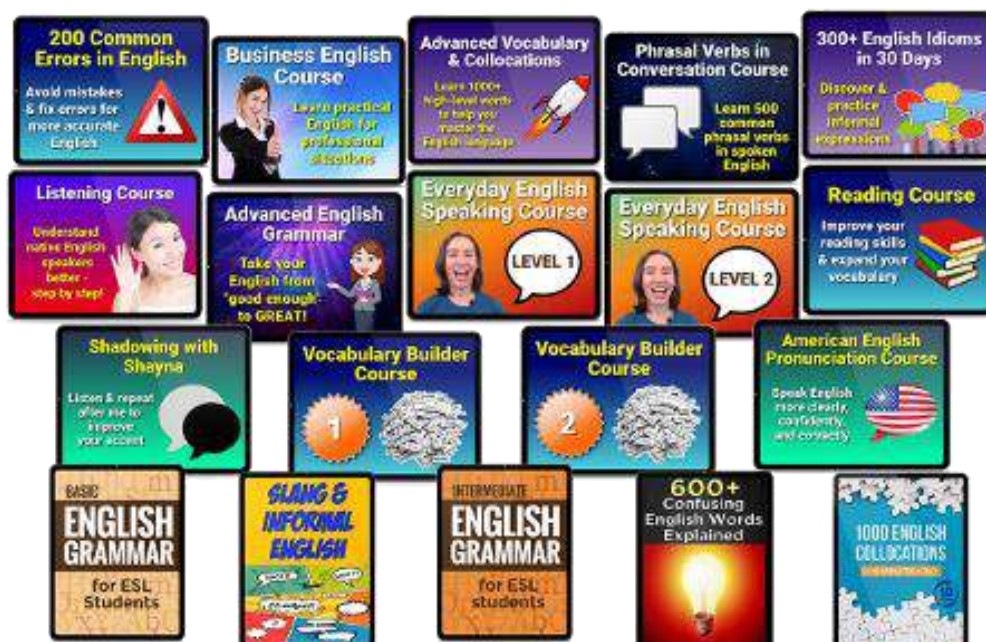
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I hope you enjoyed this mini-course. Thanks for joining me!

Espresso English Courses help you improve ALL areas of your English!



Lesson 5 Practice: SET

Exercise 1:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression.

all set	set in the future	set reminders
set a date	set it free	set role
set a good example	set it in motion	set the table
set fire	set of silverware	sunset

1. I always _____ on my digital calendar so that I don't forget about appointments.
2. We have some friends coming over for dinner, so you'll need to _____ for six people.
3. They still haven't _____ for the conference, so nobody can make travel arrangements yet.
4. Lightning struck a tree, which then _____ to the whole forest.
5. No one in the company has a _____ - everyone just sort of works on whatever they want.
6. The fish I caught was too small for a meal, so I _____.
7. I like science fiction movies that are _____.
8. There were several reasons my business failed, but the rising price of rent was what _____.
9. They gave us a really fancy _____ for our wedding.
10. We try to _____ for our kids by eating lots of fruits and vegetables, not junk food.

11. I have my sunglasses, towel, book, water bottle, and sunscreen - I think I'm _____ to go to the beach.
12. _____ There aren't any street lights in my neighborhood, so it gets really dark after _____.

Exercise 2:

Complete each sentence with the correct expression. Careful, two are not used!

dead set	set in his ways	set out
set aside	set in stone	set the record straight
set foot in	set it apart	set the stage
set him off	set me back	set up

1. After I asked him three times, he finally _____ his book and listened to me.
2. He's very ambitious; he's _____ on becoming president of the country someday.
3. My kids typically follow a schedule, but it's not _____ - sometimes we do spontaneous things.
4. I loved that hotel - the amazing breakfast buffet really _____ from everywhere else we've stayed.
5. John says he won't _____ his sister's house again after she treated him rudely the last time.

6. My dad helped me _____ the tables and chairs for our family reunion in the park.
7. The persistent economic problems in the country _____ for weeks of protests.
8. They were making so many outrageous claims about my home country that I just had to _____.
9. Whatever you do, don't mention his favorite sports team losing the championship... that'll _____.
10. I failed a few classes and had to repeat them, so that _____ a little bit in college.

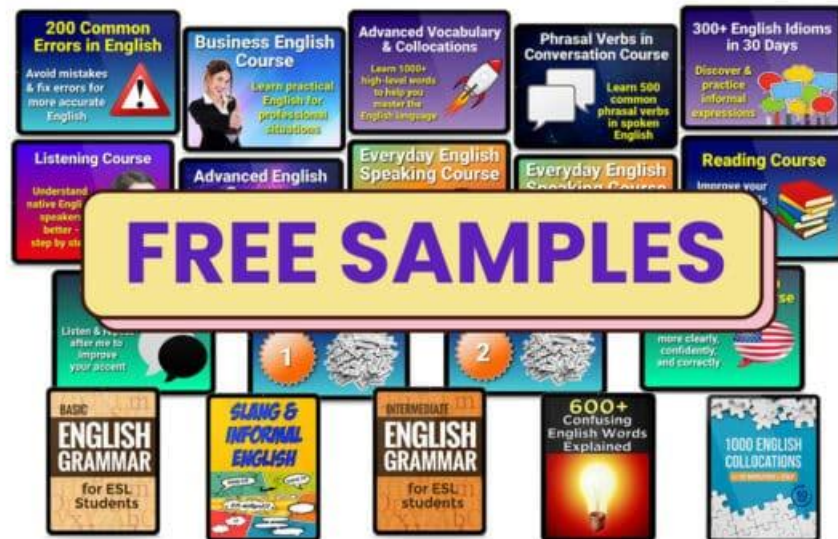
Answers – Exercise 1:

1. set reminders
2. set the table
3. set a date
4. set fire
5. set role
6. set it free
7. set in the future
8. set it in motion
9. set of silverware
10. set a good example
11. all set
12. sunset

Answers – Exercise 2:

39. set aside
40. dead set
41. set in stone
42. set it apart
43. set foot in
44. set up
45. set the stage
46. set the record straight
47. set him off
48. set me back

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