

Advanced English Coaching Course

Hello and welcome to the course!

I'm really excited to work with you and to give you suggestions on your written and spoken English – and I think you'll really benefit from the personal feedback.

First let me explain a little bit about the format of this course. It consists of 10 lessons – I recommend completing one lesson per week, but you can go at your own pace. Each lesson has a few parts:

- 1) There will be a short **text introducing the theme**, which will serve as a launching point for the writing and speaking assignments.
- 2) The lessons sometimes include some **quizzes/exercises** that will help you practice the vocabulary or grammar in a controlled environment – to help you remember it and understand it better.
- 3) The third part is the **speaking and writing tasks**, which are the main focus of this course. They will be designed to help you use the vocabulary or grammar from the week's lesson. I'll send you my comments/corrections on your tasks, in general, within 3 days after you send them to me.

Throughout this course I'm going to talk to you at my normal, natural speed, without slowing down – so it'll be good practice for your listening – and if you ever have trouble understanding me, you'll have the text to help you.

I'm looking forward to working with you... hope you enjoy the course!

- **Shayna**

Lesson 1 – Personality Adjectives

Welcome to Lesson 1 of the Advanced English Coaching Course! Today we're going to talk about the Chinese zodiac, which is a form of astrology. Astrology is the study of the stars and planets with the belief that they can influence human affairs, personality, and events here on earth.

Don't get astrology confused with astronomy – astronomy is the study of the stars, planets, and other celestial bodies from a purely scientific perspective. Astronomy is a well-established field of science, and astrology – although it has been practiced by many different peoples over the centuries – is something that, today, some people believe in, and other people don't.

The Chinese Zodiac consists of a 12-year cycle, with the belief that your personality is determined by the year in which you were born. Regardless of whether or not you believe this is true, the zodiac descriptions are a great way to learn some more advanced adjectives for describing a person's character and personality – so let's go through the 12 personality types one by one as I explain the meanings of the vocabulary words.

Listening Exercise (Optional)

Want to test your listening?

Print out the next page and take notes as you listen to the audio. Try to write down **one or two strengths/weaknesses** for each personality type according to the Chinese zodiac. You can listen to the audio multiple times if necessary.

Afterwards, check the text for the answers.

	Strengths	Weaknesses
Rat		
Ox		
Tiger		
Rabbit		
Dragon		
Snake		
Horse		
Sheep		
Monkey		
Rooster		
Dog		
Pig		

Year of the Rat: 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996

Strengths: People born in the year of the rat are **diligent** (that means hard-working) and tend to be wealthy (rich). They are **personable** (that means friendly and popular, with a good social life) and **sensible** (they have a good understanding of practical situations).

Weaknesses: They tend to be **greedy** (that means desiring too much money and resources) and **selfish** (meaning they only care about themselves) as well as **stubborn** (meaning they are firm in their beliefs and not easily influenced by others).

Year of the Ox: 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997

Strengths: People born in these years are patient and **cautious** (meaning they are careful and don't like to take risks). They are also **contemplative**, meaning they think a lot before taking action or making a decision, and **tender-hearted** (meaning compassionate – they care about other people).

Weaknesses: They are poor communicators and not especially **charming** (charming means a person who is enchanting and interesting, who captures your attention) – so some might call them boring.

Year of the Tiger: 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998

Strengths: Tigers are considered **tolerant** (meaning they accept other people who are different without judging or criticizing them) and **brave** (which means courageous, without fear).

Weaknesses: They can be **rash** (meaning they act without thinking, sometimes with disastrous results) and **short-tempered**, meaning they get angry easily.

Year of the Rabbit: 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999

Strengths: People born in the year of the rabbit are **humble** (that means not arrogant) and are known for being **hospitable** (welcoming people into their homes).

Weaknesses: Rabbits can be so **reserved** (meaning they are timid, not ambitious) that they may miss out on some opportunities. They often “**have their heads in the clouds**” – meaning they like to escape reality.

Year of the Dragon: 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000

Strengths: Dragons are **lively** and **energetic** (both of these words mean they have a lot of energy), and **optimistic** (meaning they focus on the positive). They are not intimidated by difficulties.

Weaknesses: A tendency to be **arrogant** (having too high an opinion of yourself) and **impatient**, as well as **moody** (that means their emotions change unpredictably).

Year of the Snake: 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001

Strengths: Snakes are considered **wise** (meaning they have profound knowledge and understanding), **passionate** (meaning they put a lot of emotion into their interests and activities), and **determined** (meaning they are highly motivated to accomplish their goals).

Weaknesses: They are **fickle** (indecisive, can't commit to things for the long-term) and **headstrong** – meaning they rely exclusively on themselves, without listening to or considering other people's opinions.

Year of the Horse: 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002

Strengths: People born in the year of the horse are great communicators and love to be **in the spotlight** (that means they enjoy having everyone's attention focused on them). They are also **cheerful** (with a consistently happy attitude) and **perceptive** (meaning they notice small details).

Weaknesses: They are **superficial** (meaning they only focus on the outside appearance) as well as **hot-blooded** (meaning they get angry easily).

Year of the Sheep: 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003

Strengths: People born in these years are **diplomatic** (meaning polite and respectful of other people) and **kind** (that means nice or pleasant), with a special sensitivity to art, beauty, and faith.

Weaknesses: Sheep tend to be **anxious** (meaning they worry too much), **shy** (too quiet, not good in social situations), and **over-sensitive** (meaning their feelings are easily hurt).

Year of the Monkey: 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004

Strengths: Monkeys are **innovative** (meaning creative and good at solving problems), **self-assured** (meaning confident), and **versatile** (meaning they have many different abilities and adapt well to change).

Weaknesses: They are sometimes seen as **eccentric** (a little bit strange), with a tendency to **look down on** others (that means view other people as inferior).

Year of the Rooster: 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005

Strengths: Roosters are **bright** (smart, intelligent) and **capable** (lots of abilities and potential) as well as **punctual** (they arrive on time).

Weaknesses: Because of their high self-confidence, roosters can be **narrow-minded** (meaning they believe they are always right, and don't want to listen to other possibilities) and **vain** (concerned about their outer appearance).

Year of the Dog: 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006

Strengths: The dog is considered “man’s best friend,” and people born in these years are said to be **straightforward** (honest, transparent, with no lies or hidden aspects) and courageous, making them good leaders.

Weaknesses: Their weaknesses include being **irritable** (easily annoyed) and **cynical** (meaning they frequently criticize and disapprove of things).

Year of the Pig: 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007

Strengths: People born in the year of the pig are **sincere** (honest) and **loyal** (meaning they continue strongly in their relationships and commitments).

Weaknesses: Pigs are often **naïve** (that means they trust people too easily), and can sometimes be **impulsive** (making spontaneous decisions without sufficient thought or planning).

Conclusion

OK – that was quite a vocabulary marathon! (If you were doing the listening exercise, you can pause here to check your answers with the text).

I’ve put all the words from this lesson into a table at the end of the document – divided into positive character traits and negative character traits – along with their definitions.

There’s also a column to write a person’s name – so you can write down the name of a person you know who has this characteristic – as well as two quizzes to help you review and remember the words.

Now let’s get to the most important part: the speaking and writing tasks.

Speaking Task

Choose **three adjectives** (two positive, one negative) that you think describe you best – and say why. For each one, give an example of how this characteristic is expressed in your life or personality. For the negative trait, also give an idea of how you can change or improve this aspect of yourself.

You can listen to my own answer to hear an example:

<http://espressoenglish.net/wp-content/uploads/aec/Lesson1-Shayna-Sample-Answer.mp3>

You can record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Write your auto-biography! I already asked you to introduce yourself by e-mail... but now I'd like to hear more of your life story. You can write:

- 1 paragraph about your childhood
- 1 paragraph about your teenage/college years
- 1-2 paragraphs about your adult life

You can see my text for an example: <http://espressoenglish.net/wp-content/uploads/aec/Lesson1-Shayna-Sample-Text.docx>

Try to go into detail – remember that the more you write, the more opportunity I'll have to give you feedback and suggestions!

Then, e-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you back my comments.

**Thanks for listening, and I look forward to receiving
your speaking and writing tasks!**

Positive Personality Traits

Positive Trait	Meaning	Person
diligent	hard-working	
personable	friendly and popular, with a good social life	
sensible	has a good understanding of practical situations	
cautious	careful and don't like to take risks	
contemplative	thinks a lot	
tender-hearted	compassionate, caring about other people	
charming	enchanting and interesting, captures your attention	
tolerant	accept other people who are different without judging or criticizing them	
brave	courageous, without fear	
humble	not arrogant	
hospitable	enjoys welcoming people into their home	
lively / energetic	has a lot of energy	
optimistic	focus on the positive	
wise	has profound knowledge /	

	understanding	
passionate	put a lot of emotion into their interests/activities	
determined	highly motivated to accomplish their goals	
cheerful	consistently happy attitude	
perceptive	notices small details	
diplomatic	respectful, polite	
kind	nice, pleasant	
innovative	creative, good at solving problems	
self-assured	confident	
versatile	flexible, many different abilities and adapts well to change	
bright	intelligent, smart	
capable	lots of abilities and potential	
punctual	arrives on time	
straightforward	honest, transparent, no hidden aspects	
sincere	honest	
loyal	continue strongly in their relationships/commitments	

Positive Personality Adjectives - Quiz

1. When I first met my husband, I found him quite _____. We had a fascinating two-hour conversation.

- a) charming b) innovative c) tender-hearted

2. My mother is always so _____. She doesn't let little problems upset her at all.

- a) cheerful b) perceptive c) versatile

3. He's talented and wealthy, but surprisingly _____ - he never boasts about his success.

- a) bright b) humble c) self-assured

4. I prefer to work with people who are _____ and simply say exactly what they're thinking.

- a) contemplative b) sensible c) straightforward

5. The new intern at the company seems very _____ - I'm confident she'll be able to handle any task we give her.

- a) capable b) punctual c) sincere

6. He didn't give up on his dream of becoming a writer, despite multiple rejections - he's so _____.

- a) bright b) determined c) tolerant

7. Janet is the most _____ person at the company - she's been working here for over 30 years.

a) cautious

b) hospitable

c) loyal

8. You traveled around the world by yourself? Wow, you're really _____.

a) brave

b) lively

c) kind

9. My grandfather is a _____ man, so I always ask him for advice on everything - life, careers, relationships...

a) personable

b) optimistic

c) wise

10. My daughter is very _____ - she can sense what other people are feeling even when they're trying to hide their emotions.

a) diplomatic

b) passionate

c) perceptive

Answers: 1.a / 2.a / 3.b / 4.c / 5.a / 6.b / 7.c / 8.a / 9.c / 10.c

Negative Personality Traits

Negative Trait	Meaning	Person
greedy	too much desire for money / resources	
selfish	only cares about himself/herself	
stubborn / headstrong	relies on self, without listening to / being influenced by others	
rash / impulsive	acts without thinking or planning beforehand	
short-tempered / hot-blooded	gets angry easily	
reserved	timid, quiet, not ambitious	
arrogant	has too high of an opinion about himself/herself	
impatient	not patient	
moody	emotions change unpredictably	
fickle	indecisive, can't commit to things for the long term	
superficial / vain	only concerned about outer appearance	
anxious	worries too much	
shy	too quiet/timid, not good in social situations	

over-sensitive	feelings are easily hurt	
eccentric	a little strange / weird	
narrow-minded	believe they are always right, and don't want to listen to other possibilities	
irritable	easily annoyed	
cynical	frequently criticize and disapprove of things	
naïve	trust people too easily	

Negative Personality Adjectives - Quiz

1. The boss is rather _____. He blows up whenever someone makes a mistake.

- a) impulsive b) narrow-minded c) short-tempered

2. Teenagers are often _____ - one moment they're on top of the world, the next they're in the depths of despair.

- a) cynical b) fickle c) moody

3. Don't be so _____. That guy doesn't want to help you, he just wants to sell you something.

- a) greedy b) naïve c) rash

4. My uncle is the most _____ person I know. Once he's made up his mind, there's no changing it.

- a) selfish b) stubborn c) superficial

5. Many famous people in history were also a little _____, with some strange beliefs or habits.

a) eccentric

b) impulsive

c) vain

6. The CEO of the company gave himself a raise while cutting salaries for the rest of the staff - how can he be so _____?

a) arrogant

b) greedy

c) impatient

7. I don't like hanging out with her because she's so _____. She finds fault with EVERYTHING.

a) cynical

b) headstrong

c) selfish

8. When I was younger, I used to spend thousands of dollars on clothes and cosmetics - I was really quite _____.

a) shy

b) eccentric

c) vain

9. I'm always a bit _____ when I wake up in the morning - which is why I prefer not to socialize before 10.

a) hot-blooded

b) irritable

c) over-sensitive

10. The man behind me in line was really _____ - he even tried to cut ahead of me.

a) anxious

b) greedy

c) impatient

Answers: 1.c / 2.c / 3.b / 4.b / 5.a / 6.b / 7.a / 8.c / 9.b / 10.c

Lesson 2: History's Famous Screw-Ups

Welcome to Lesson 2 of the Advanced English Coaching Course! Today you're going to learn about a few of history's greatest screw-ups. The word "screw-up" is an informal word for "mistake" – usually a disastrous mistake.

Everybody makes mistakes – after all, we have the saying "To err is human." But a few famous screw-ups have actually altered the course of human history in surprising ways. We're going to use these two stories as a launching point for reviewing all of the past tenses in English.

Listening Exercise (Optional)

Listen to the stories and try to answer these questions:

Story 1

- Why weren't the early months of the war going well for the revolutionaries?
- Why weren't the British prepared for Washington's attack?
- Why was the victory important?

Story 2

- What were some medical problems before the discovery of antibiotics?
- What happened when Alexander Fleming got back from vacation?
- What were the results of the development of penicillin?

Note: Vocabulary words in bold are defined at the end of each text.

Screw-Up Story #1 – A Poker Game Saves the United States

By the end of the year 1776, the American Revolutionary War was **in full swing**. The newborn United States had declared its independence from Britain on July 4 of the same year, after a decade of increasing tensions – but the early months of the war had not been going well. The British had captured New York City and pushed the revolutionaries southwest into New Jersey and Pennsylvania. **Morale** among the revolutionaries was low, supplies were limited, and the **harsh** winter weather didn't help.

George Washington, the commander-in-chief of the Continental Army, planned a Christmas attack on the British **troops** encamped in Trenton, New Jersey. Between December 25 and 26, while the British soldiers **were sleeping**, Washington and his men **were crossing** the Delaware River and marching towards Trenton. With the element of surprise on their side, Washington's army won a decisive victory, capturing weapons, supplies, and about a thousand prisoners.

However, this triumph was almost **thwarted** by a spy who actually observed Washington near the river with “a boatload of soldiers.” He sent a note to Colonel Johann Rall, commander of the British troops at Trenton, which said, “Washington is coming on you down the river, he will be here **afore** long.”

But the British soldiers were in a festive mood due to the Christmas holiday, and Colonel Rall was playing poker (or, according to some versions of the story, chess) when he received the message. **Engrossed** in the game, he stuffed the note into his coat pocket without reading it. Rall was later killed during the battle, with the unopened note informing him of the impending attack still in his coat pocket.

If the British had been prepared for the attack, Washington (who would later become the United States' first president) as well as other key leaders could have been killed. The victory at Trenton, though relatively small in scale, was seen as a key turning point in the war because it **boosted** morale and increased **enlistments** in the revolutionary army. The United States eventually won the war and gained independence from British control.

If not for Colonel Rall's poker (or chess) game, it's possible that the United States would not exist as an independent nation today.

Vocabulary

in full swing = at the high point of activity

morale = confidence, happiness (usually of a group)

harsh = severe, intense, unpleasant

troops = military units, soldiers

thwarted = prevented from happening

afore = an old word for "before"

engrossed = completely occupied, dedicating complete attention to an activity

boosted = increased

enlistments = people joining the military

Screw-Up Story #2 – A Dirty Dish Saves Millions of Lives

Penicillin – possibly the most important discovery in medical history – resulted from **sloppy** laboratory practices. Before the existence of modern antibiotics, the average life expectancy was only around 50 years. Bacterial infections in cuts or burns were fatal 80% of the time, and **staggering** numbers of people used to die from tuberculosis and pneumonia.

In the year 1928, Sir Alexander Fleming, a Scottish researcher, was searching for a “wonder drug” that would be able to cure all diseases. At the time, no one had managed to discover or invent a chemical that would kill bacteria without **harming** the human body.

One morning in September, Fleming, who was often described as **careless** in the laboratory, returned from a family vacation. Before leaving, he had pushed a number of Petri dishes to the side of the bench so that a colleague could use the workspace while he was away.

Many of the dishes had been contaminated, and Fleming began piling them into a tray of Lysol to be cleaned and disinfected. While cleaning the dishes, Fleming started complaining to a lab assistant about all the extra work he had to do after

getting back from vacation. He pulled out one of the contaminated dishes to show as an example – and noticed something strange. A blue-green **mold** that was growing in the dish had killed the bacteria around it. Fleming, with the help of chemists, isolated the anti-bacterial substance from the mold and developed it for medicinal use – it is known today as penicillin.

During World War II, penicillin saved **countless** lives as well as preventing the **amputation** of many **limbs**. By the time the war ended, U.S. companies were making 650 billion units of penicillin a month.

In the following decades, life expectancy in developed countries has jumped to around 80 years – a revolutionary achievement in the history of humankind. Penicillin is the most widely-used antibiotic in the world to date – and all because of a contaminated, unwashed dish in the laboratory!

Vocabulary

sloppy = disorganized, dirty

staggering = astonishing, surprising (usually in a negative way)

harming = damaging, having negative effects

careless = negligent (the opposite of careful)

mold = a type of fungus

countless = very many, too many to count

amputation = when a part of the body (usually arms, legs, fingers, or toes) needs to be cut off and removed due to irreversible injury or infection

limbs = arms and legs

Grammar: Past Tenses

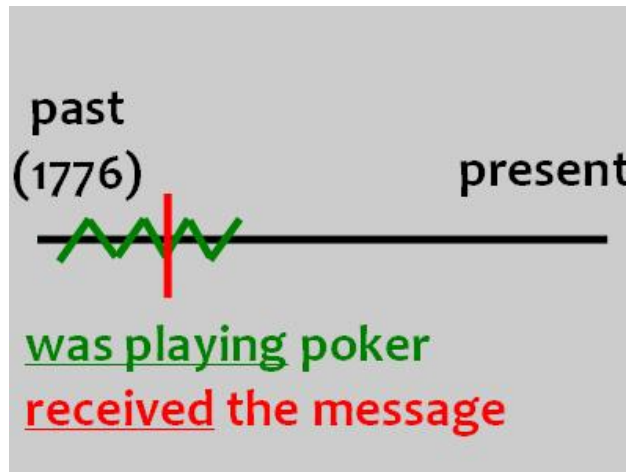
Let's use phrases from these stories to review ALL the past tenses in English, the differences between them, and when to use them.

Past Simple and Past Continuous

You probably already know that the **past simple** is used for single events in the past, and the **past continuous** is used for events that were in progress in the past (but not continuing to the present).

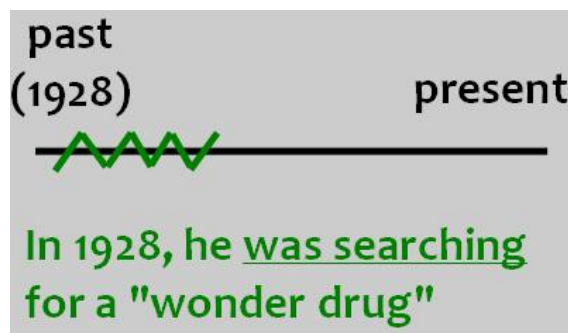
The past simple and past continuous are often used together, for example:

*Colonel Rall **was playing** poker when he **received** the message.*



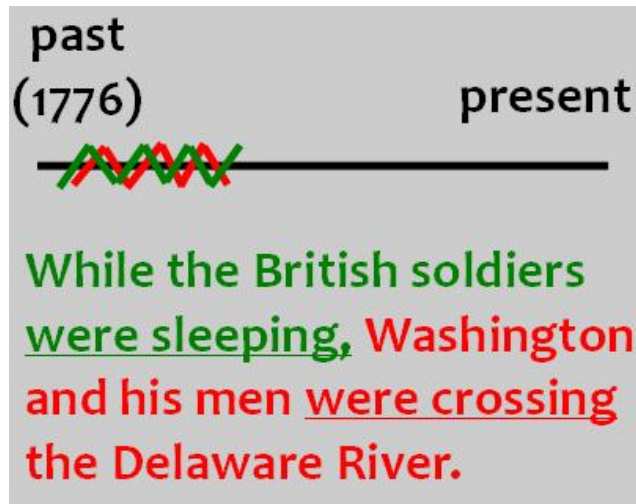
However, it is not always necessary to use past simple and past continuous together. In the second story, we have an example of past continuous alone:

*In the year 1928, Sir Alexander Fleming, a Scottish researcher, **was searching** for a "wonder drug" that would be able to cure all diseases.*



As you can see, you can use the past continuous alone to describe a past situation and say what was happening at that time. It's also possible to use two instances of the past continuous together – for two continuous actions happening simultaneously. You can see this in the sentence,

*While the British soldiers **were sleeping**, Washington and his men **were crossing** the Delaware River.*



For a quick way to practice the **past continuous**, you can answer these questions:

1. What were you doing 15 minutes ago?
2. What were you doing 3 hours ago?
3. What were you doing at this same time yesterday?
4. What were you doing one week ago at this time?
5. What were you doing one year ago at this time?
6. What were you doing a decade ago at this time?

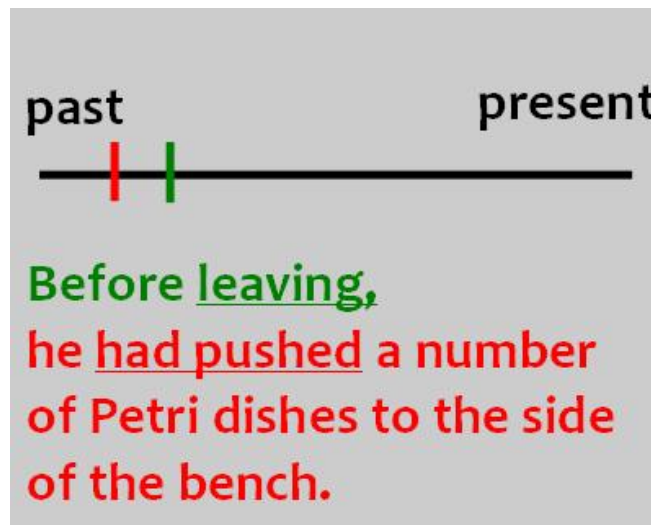
My sample answers:

1. 15 minutes ago, I **was doing** research for this lesson.
2. 3 hours ago, I **was making** lunch.
3. At this same time yesterday, I **was reading** a book.
4. One week ago at this time, I **was responding** to e-mails.
5. One year ago at this time, I **was giving** private English lessons.
6. A decade ago at this time, I was at college. I **was working** as a writing tutor and **living** in a dormitory.

Past Perfect and Past Perfect Continuous

These tenses are used for an event that happened **BEFORE** another event in the past. Let's look at the past perfect with some examples from the stories:

*Before leaving (on vacation), he **had pushed** a number of Petri dishes to the side of the bench...*



Here we have an example of the past perfect used to describe the previous event (pushing a number of dishes to the side of the bench) before the later event (leaving on vacation).

You can also use the past perfect to describe events that happened **before the general time frame of the story** (even though it's not a specific event). Here's an example from the first story:

***By the end of the year 1776**, the American Revolutionary War was in full swing. The newborn United States **had declared** its independence from Britain on July 4 of the same year.*

Even though "end of the year" is not a specific past event (and doesn't use the simple past), we still use the past perfect to describe the event occurring before it.



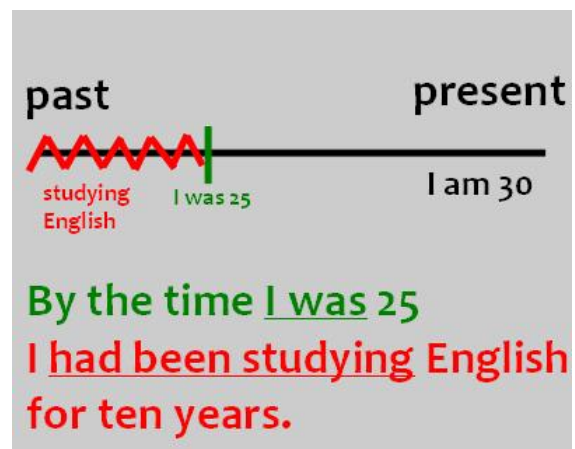
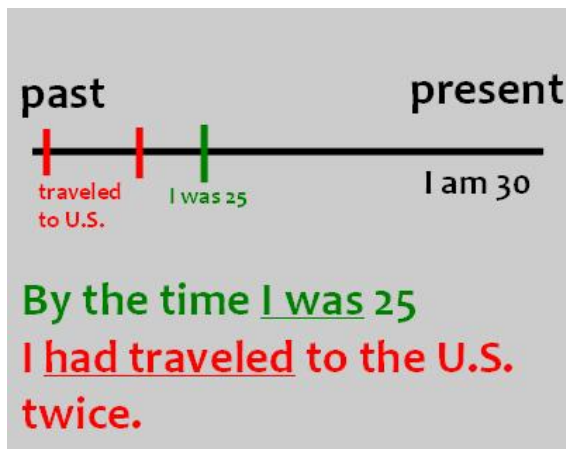
Now let's look at the **past perfect continuous**. You can use this tense in the same situation as the past perfect – for an event that happened before another event in the past – except in this case, the first event is continuous. Here's an example from the text:

*By the end of the year 1776... the early months of the war **had not been going well**.*



Let me use a different example to better illustrate the difference. If I am 30 years old today, I can say...

- By the time I was 25, I **had traveled** to the U.S. twice.
- By the time I was 25, I **had been studying** English for ten years.



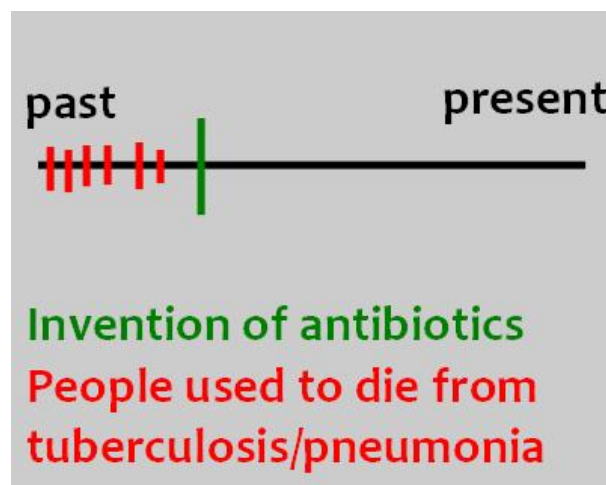
You can see how the **past perfect** is used for single events in the past (before the past “reference point” of being 25 years old) and the **past perfect continuous** is used for a continuous action in the past (also before the past “reference point” of being 25 years old).

Used To / Would

There is another way to talk about the past using **used to** and (more informally) **would**. There’s one example in the second story:

*Before the existence of modern antibiotics... people **used to** die from tuberculosis and pneumonia.*

“Used to” is used for **frequent events** in the past (that do not happen today). You can see that this is different from a past continuous situation, because the events are frequent, but not continuous:



In spoken English, “used to” is sometimes substituted with “would.” Imagine your grandmother talking about life on a farm in the old days:

*When I was a child, we **used to** walk to school. Every day we **would** wake up early to milk the cows, then we **would** eat breakfast and head off to school. We were very creative – we **used to** invent games to play. Kids today don’t do this anymore because they’re always on their computers and cell phones. My family **used to** take one vacation every year; we **would** usually go to the big city...*

You can see that “used to” and “would” are used for habitual frequent actions in the past, which are no longer performed today. (Note: the negative form of “used to” is “didn’t use to”).

Speaking Task

Talk about how you have changed over the years – what are some things that you used to do... but now you don't? What are some things that you *didn't* use to do... but now you do? You can talk about...

- **Your hobbies / activities**

I used to play a lot of sports, but I stopped when I graduated from college.

- **Your likes / dislikes**

I didn't use to like avocado, but now I eat it a lot!

- **Your habits / personality**

I used to be easily offended, but I think I've learned to relax over the years.

- **Your beliefs / values**

I didn't use to be very religious, but ten years ago I had a meaningful spiritual experience that changed my life.

Record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Tell me some stories... I want to hear about your **memories and experiences!**

Choose 3 of these 5 situations and write one paragraph about each:

- A funny memory
- A romantic memory
- A big decision or change in your life
- A mistake or disaster you've experienced
- One major accomplishment or success

Try to include many details about the situation: what the context was, what happened, what you and other people did, what resulted from the actions, etc. As you write, keep the past tenses in mind and do your best to use the correct one in each sentence.

Then, e-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you back my comments.

Past Tenses – Reference Table

Tense	Form	When to use?	Example
Simple Past	<p><i>Regular Verbs: add -ED</i> cleaned / didn't clean</p> <p><i>Irregular Verbs:</i> ex) ate / didn't eat went / didn't go took / didn't take ...etc.</p>	<p>a) Single events in the past</p> <p>b) Events with defined starting and ending points in the past</p>	<p>a) Yesterday I cleaned the house.</p> <p>b) I lived in France from 1998 to 2006.</p>
Past Continuous	was / were studying wasn't / weren't studying	<p>Events in progress at a past moment</p> <p>Two continuous events in progress at the same time in the past</p>	<p>When you called me, I was studying for the test.</p> <p>My husband was watching TV while I was doing the dishes.</p>
Past Perfect	had left hadn't left	Single events that happened BEFORE another event in the past	By the time we got to the station, the train had left .
Past Perfect Continuous	had been dating hadn't been dating	Continuous events that happened BEFORE another event in the past	When they got married, they had been dating for over seven years.
Used to / Would	used to / would go didn't use to go	Single events (or states) that happened frequently in the past, but don't happen now	<p>In my college days, I used to go to the library every day. Now I rarely go.</p> <p>I didn't use to like coffee at all, but now I enjoy an occasional cup.</p>

Quiz – Mixed Past Tenses

1. The evidence from the scene of the accident showed that the driver **was speeding** / **had sped** when he hit the telephone pole.
2. Bob made some great suggestions; he mentioned a number of things I **hadn't considered** / **didn't consider** before.
3. My computer crashed while I **used to put** / **was putting** the finishing touches on the report.
4. The only reason I didn't go to the party was because I **didn't know** / **wasn't knowing** about it.
5. We **had been waiting** / **used to wait** for over three hours to get tickets to the show - and when we got close to the front of the line, they announced that it was sold out.
6. Gasoline **wasn't being** / **didn't use to** be so expensive. I can't believe how much prices have gone up.
7. Last time I checked on the kids, they **did** / **were doing** their homework.
8. By the time I got my camera out of my purse, the bird **flew** / **had flown** away, so I wasn't able to get a picture of it.

9. My father **worked / used to work** in New York City, but he eventually got tired of the commute and switched to a job closer to home.

10. Jen and I went to the movies, but she **had already seen / had already been seeing** it, so she knew how it ended.

11. I felt terrible after ignoring her calls, so I **stopped / had stopped** by her house later for a face-to-face chat.

12. I **would really hope / had really been hoping** to get the job, but I just found out they hired someone else.

13. At the restaurant we went to last night, the portions were so big that nobody **finished / was finishing** their meal.

14. My mother **had eaten / used to eat** a lot of red meat, but now she's a vegetarian.

15. Before the training session, none of the employees **had been operating / operated** the machinery correctly.

Answers

1. was speeding

(could also be "had been speeding")

2. hadn't considered

3. was putting

4. didn't know

5. had been waiting

6. didn't use to be

7. were doing

8. had flown

8. used to work

10. had already seen

11. stopped

12. had really been hoping

13. finished

14. used to eat

15. had been operating

Lesson 3: Utopia and Dystopia

Today's lesson is about **utopia** – a perfect society – a concept that has been imagined by many writers and philosophers over the years. You'll learn about two "classic" utopias as well as some examples of **dystopias** (that's the opposite of **utopia**).

Listening Exercise

As you listen, mark these sentences **true or false**:

1. The word "utopia" has a double meaning.
2. The first documented vision of utopia comes from the Bible.
3. In Plato's utopia, each person in society had an identical role.
4. Plato viewed art and poetry as the highest virtue in his utopian society.
5. In Plato's society, children would not know who their parents were.
6. Sir Thomas More envisioned a society in which goods were communally owned.
7. Only slaves are required to work in More's utopia.
8. The citizens of More's utopia do not participate in wars.
9. Sexual crimes have serious consequences in More's ideal society.
10. Dystopias have some of the same features as utopias.
11. The death penalty does not exist in George Orwell's book 1984.
12. Aldous Huxley's novel imagines a dangerous route for scientific progress.
13. The common feature in almost all dystopian stories is that the hero escapes the dysfunctional society in the end.

Lesson Text

It seems to be an irresistible human tendency to dream about utopia – a society that is perfect politically, socially, economically, and culturally. Throughout the centuries, various and sometimes contradictory forms of utopia have been described. Some people have even attempted to put their utopian ideals into practice by forming small communities.

The word “utopia” was **coined** by English author Thomas More, as he was writing his 1516 book describing his vision of a perfect society. The term “utopia” is a **play on words** – derived from Greek, it can mean both “a good place” as well as “no place” – perhaps implying that a completely **flawless** society is impossible to attain.

Although many ancient religions contain visions of a past or present utopia, the first documented description comes from 380 B.C. in the form of Plato’s *Republic*. Plato, a Greek philosopher, described a society in which the people were organized into “gold,” “silver,” “bronze” and “iron” socioeconomic classes.

The “golden class” would be the rulers and decision-makers, possessing great wisdom and receiving training to become “philosopher-kings” who would ensure the fair distribution of resources, thus eliminating **poverty**. The main characteristic of the “silver class” would be courage, as they would be soldiers responsible for guarding and defending the state as well as **enforcing laws**. The majority of the population would fall into the “bronze and iron” categories. They would be the producers, with the primary **virtue** of moderation, so as to work for the good of the collective rather than **amassing** individual wealth.

Plato argued that the union of these three virtues – wisdom, courage, and moderation – would result in the ideal society. To prevent the members of the gold and silver classes from becoming **tyrants**, they were not allowed to own private property; they would be entirely dependent on the bronze and iron classes for their **sustenance**. Also, membership in the classes would not be **hereditary**; each child would be evaluated by the state and assigned according to their character and skills.

In Plato’s utopia, artists and poets were **outlawed**, as the introduction of new ideas could **destabilize** society. Men and women could hold the same positions – and marriage and family would be non-existent. Instead, sexual relations were completely free and no child would be aware of his or her parentage.

Sir Thomas More, writing fifteen centuries later, offers a different **angle**. In his version of utopia, there is no private ownership whatsoever; goods are kept in warehouses and people request what they need. Equality and uniformity are central themes – clothes and houses are simple, and the use of cosmetics and jewelry is discouraged. Meals are eaten in community, and everyone receives the same food.

In More's utopia, there are no lawyers because the laws of society are simple enough for everyone to understand. Agriculture is the primary profession, although there are other trades as well, and every **able-bodied** person must work six hours per day. Slavery is permitted, and each household has two slaves – the slaves being criminals or foreigners captured in wars. Although the citizens of More's utopia are pacifists, they recognize that war is sometimes **inevitable** – still, they try to capture rather than kill their enemies.

More radically differs from Plato in that he holds marriage in extremely high **esteem**. In his ideal society, pre-marital sex and **adultery** are punishable by enforced **celibacy** and enslavement, respectively. Divorce is permitted only in very special circumstances, and considerable priority is placed on the educated selection of a lifelong mate.

While some writers imagine utopian societies, others speculate about dystopias – societies containing fundamental and frightening flaws. Dystopias are often invented to **highlight** current, real-world issues which, **if left unchecked**, could develop into **full-fledged** nightmares for humanity.

Interestingly, the strict laws and social structures found in Plato's and More's utopias also figure prominently in many dystopias. George Orwell's classic book, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (which was written in 1949) presents a **totalitarian** state where war is constant and "Big Brother" (the highest authority in the land) watches and controls its citizens' every move. **Deviation** from the norm can be punished by execution or by psychological reconditioning through torture.

In Aldous Huxley's novel *Brave New World*, the population is separated into distinct classes, each of which is **brainwashed** from birth to fulfill its specific role in society. Any hint of individualism is **squashed**, children are produced artificially, and the birth rate of the lower classes is enhanced by a technique that allows one fertilized egg to produce ninety-six genetically identical clones. Whereas in most utopias the role of science and technology is positive, Huxley shows us a **sinister** side to

scientific progress. Modern movies like *The Matrix* are also dystopias, projecting the possible dangers of technology and the power of mass psychological manipulation.

Almost all dystopias share one common feature – a group of rebels, **outliers**, or members of a secret society who are not under the control of the system. These works of speculative fiction thus reflect the truth that no matter how **heavy-handed** the oppression, the human spirit and desire for freedom is **unconquerable**.

Listening Exercise – Answers

1. T

2. F

3. F

4. F

5. T

6. T

7. F

8. F

9. T

10. T

11. F

12. T

13. F

Vocabulary

coined – invented (we use this word when a new word/term is created)

play on words – when a word or group of words has a double meaning

flawless – perfect; without defects or flaws

poverty – the state of being poor, not having enough money

enforcing laws – applying the laws, making sure that people obey them, and applying punishments for breaking the law

virtue – a morally excellent quality

amassing – accumulating a large quantity of something

tyrants – oppressive rulers who exercise power in a cruel manner

sustenance – maintaining health and life

hereditary – passing from parents to children

outlawed – prohibited by law

destabilize – make it unstable

angle – perspective, opinion

able-bodied – people in good health, without any disabilities

inevitable – cannot be avoided

esteem – respect

adultery – when a married person has sex with someone else

celibacy – not having sex

highlight – call attention to; emphasize

if left unchecked – if nothing is done to stop it

full-fledged – having reached full development or a high point

totalitarian – when the government exercises complete control over every aspect of the citizens' lives

deviation – difference from an established path

brainwashed – psychological programming/manipulation for the person to adopt a specific set of beliefs

squashed – suppressed, eliminated

sinister – suggesting or threatening evil

outliers – a person that is far away from the main group

heavy-handed – oppressive, strong

unconquerable – impossible to conquer, overcome, or defeat

Speaking Task

Talk about 2-3 problems or controversial issues in your country.

- What are the reasons for the problems?
- What are their effects?
- Can you propose possible solutions?

Record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Create your ideal society! Imagine that you have been given an area of land to develop a new country, with an initial population of 50,000 people who have been invited from the international community. How will you organize your society? What kinds of rules and laws will it have?

Here are a few questions to consider in your answer:

- What type of political system will your country have?
- Will there be complete freedom of speech, or will some things be censored or controlled?
- Many people want to become citizens of your country. What will your immigration policy be?
- Will you favor strong government and heavy taxes, or minimal government and few taxes?
- Will military service be mandatory or optional? Can ordinary citizens own guns?
- What kind of punishments for crime will the country have?
- Will your country intervene in international conflicts or problems in other countries, or will you adopt a policy of complete non-interference?
- What will be the balance of laws to maintain order and freedoms for the citizens?

Of course, you don't have to cover ALL of these points – they are just some examples to help you develop your ideas.

E-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you my feedback.

Lesson 4: Movie Reviews

The last lesson was on the rather weighty topic of politics and society – so this week we’re going to take on the “lighter” topic of movies! You’ll learn vocabulary for talking about the major **movie genres** (types of movies) as well as words for praising and criticizing various aspects of films.

Reading Task: Skimming Practice

One essential reading skill that is seldom practiced is **skimming** – the ability to read quickly to get a basic overview of the text. Instead of reading word by word, you just “look over” the text very fast.

Below are 11 descriptions of the major movie genres. Try to **skim** – not read – and match each paragraph with the name of the genre in less than 3 minutes.

Genres:

- Action / Adventure
- Children's / Family
- Comedy
- Documentary
- Drama
- Fantasy
- Horror
- Suspense / Thriller
- Romance
- Sci-fi
- War

1. _____

A genre characterized by futuristic elements and advanced technology, often involving space exploration. Some examples of films within this category involve the invasion of the planet by aliens; others explore how "science gone wrong" can result in a battle of man versus technology. These movies feature the heavy use of special effects.

2. _____

A type of historical fiction in which an armed conflict is the backdrop for the story. Some movies of this type focus on the battles and on political and ideological topics related to the combat. In others, the main story has nothing to do with combat; instead, they explore how the violent setting affects the main characters' lives.

3. _____

Another large genre, this type of film keeps viewers on the edge of their seats wondering what will happen next. There is often a mystery to be solved or a criminal to be caught, and in the end the good guys typically win and life goes back to normal. These films frequently use music (or silence) and camera angles to preserve moments of tension until a sudden outburst of action or violence, which makes you jump.

4. _____

Designed to be appropriate for young audiences, these films are often animated and usually consist of comedies or adventures that involve animals, imaginary beings, and creative and colorful fantasy worlds. Free of violence, sexuality, or offensive language, these films aim to stimulate the imagination and teach helpful lessons through the story.

5. _____

Designed to frighten or shock the viewer with scary stories and disturbing images, these films often feature zombies, evil spirits, horrible creatures, perverse people, or unknown dangers. It is common for them to display explicit gore and other nightmare-inducing visuals.

6. _____

In this type of film, one or more heroes must face a series of challenges as they aim to solve a crisis or defeat a villain. In the course of the story, the hero is usually involved in physical fights, acrobatic stunts, and exciting combat and chase scenes. The focus of these films is on adrenaline, excitement and danger; not as much emphasis is given to the storyline or character development.

7. _____

In this type of film, the absurdity of the characters, dialogue, and scenes is often exaggerated for the sake of entertainment – the primary goal is to make you laugh. Most of these movies simply aim to make the viewer feel better about the ridiculousness of life without delving into more profound topics; however, they may also use humor to provide commentary about a particular aspect of society or culture.

8. _____

The main storyline of these films focuses on a relationship between two (or more) characters who are attracted to each other. They must then navigate the obstacles that make it difficult for them to stay together. Films of this type can be on the light-hearted and funny side, or have a more serious tone.

9. _____

This category, which explores emotions and interpersonal relationships, is one of the broadest cinematic genres. These films often involve one or more characters who are at a crossroads in their lives, exploring the conflicts and realizations that occur as events unfold. They require excellent acting and skillful character development to be moving for the audience.

10. _____

This is a broad category of nonfiction films providing factual information about a person or event. A film of this type may describe a well-researched historical event, trace the life trajectory of an intriguing person, or explore a scientific or cultural phenomenon. Although a purely factual film may sound rather dry, these movies often make use of dramatic elements and storytelling techniques in order to present the information in an engaging and memorable way.

11. _____

This type of film is set in an imaginary world with magical or supernatural characters such as gods, fairies, angels, giants, elves, and other non-human beings. These imaginary universes often have their own histories and laws of nature, where magic and super-powers are possible.

(Answers at the end of this document)

There are also many "sub-genres" – smaller categories within the main ones. For example, the category of "action movies" includes "martial arts" movies and "superhero" movies. A movie that is classified as "drama" can be a "political drama," "medical drama," or "courtroom drama," among others. For an extensive listing of all movie genres and sub-genres, click here: <http://www.allmovie.com/genre/all>

Elements of a Movie

PLOT / DIALOGUE

The **plot** is the story; the sequence of events in the movie. The plot unfolds in a series of **scenes** - each scene is a moment in a particular time/place - and the high point of the movie, or the moment of highest-intensity action, is called the **climax**.

In some movies, the story moves very fast - in this case, you can describe the movie as **fast-paced** (the opposite being **slow-paced** or **sluggish**). Some movies start out fast and exciting, but the story slows down and gets boring in the middle or end. In this case, we say the movie started to **drag** (slow down) or that it **fizzled out** (had a promising beginning, but a disappointing ending). If the movie holds your attention very well from beginning to end, you can say it was **gripping**.

One common technique in movies is to have a **twist** in the plot - that means a sudden, unexpected, surprising turn of events in the story. When performed effectively, a plot twist is an intriguing, pleasant surprise. But if not well-executed, a plot twist can be confusing or **far-fetched** (too unbelievable).

Another aspect of the plot is its originality. If a movie lacks originality, it is sometimes described as **cliché-ridden** - this means it is full of "typical" events or words that you expect because they have been used so many times before. A similar negative word for a movie that doesn't surprise or interest you at all is **predictable**, which means you can guess exactly what is going to happen next.

In movies that focus on interpersonal drama, if the director prepares just the right mixture of emotion, conflict, and resolution, the movie is described as **touching** or **moving** (that means it deeply emotionally affects you). Sometimes a particularly **uplifting** (positive) movie is called "**a feel-good movie**." But if the movie has excessive sentimentality, then it is called **sappy**.

Trying to communicate a moral lesson through the movie can also be hit-or-miss. If done effectively, the movie is described as **powerful** or **thought-provoking**. But if the director tries to drive home his point too hard, then the movie can be called "**preachy**."

Within the story, we have **dialogue** (the direct words/conversations of the characters) and you can also comment on this aspect when reviewing a movie. If the dialog is extremely funny, you can describe it as **hilarious**. If it is funny, but in a more subtle, clever way, you can say it is **witty**.

On the negative side, dialog that is boring can be described as **mundane** or **uninspired**. If the language is gross or offensive (particularly if there is a lot of "potty humor" - jokes about sex and bodily functions) then you can say it is **crude**.

CAST / CHARACTERS

The second major element of a movie is its **cast** - this word refers to the group of actors and actresses who participate in the movie. Each actor or actress "**plays**" a character in the story - for example, "Tom Cruise plays a spy in Mission: Impossible."

The main character in the story is sometimes called the **protagonist**, and the responsibility of playing this character is called the **leading role** or the **lead**. Less important characters in the story are played by supporting actors who have **minor roles**. There is also a word for a very brief appearance of a celebrity in a single scene/moment of a movie - this is called a **cameo**.

In some movies - particularly action movies that feature a strong main character or hero - the hero has a "**sidekick**" - that's like an assistant who helps him/her during the adventures. The evil character or "bad guy" of the story is called the **villain**.

In describing how good or bad the actors and actresses were in the movie, we often say that the acting was either "strong" or "weak." For an especially good job by a particular actor/actress, you can say that he/she gave a **brilliant** or **riveting performance**. "Brilliant," in this case, means excellent - and "riveting" means that it was so fascinating that you couldn't look away from it.

If the acting was very unnatural and not believable, you can say that the acting was **wooden**. On the other extreme, sometimes actors try *too* hard to display the emotions and personality of their character - in this case, you can say the acting was "**overdone**" - it was so dramatic and extreme that it was also unnatural, and not like normal people would behave. Another word used to criticize a character in a movie is describing him/her as "**one-dimensional**" - that means the personality of their character had no complexity or detail.

SETTING / STUNTS / SPECIAL EFFECTS / SOUNDTRACK

Finally, we have the visual and audio elements of the film - the setting, special effects, and soundtrack. The **setting** refers to both the location and the time period of the story. To describe the setting, we typically say, "The film is set in...[18th-century Japan]" or "The story takes place in...[New York City]."

The **soundtrack** is the music used in the film. Sometimes it consists of songs that are already popular, and other times it is composed specifically for the movie.

Stunts are amazing acrobatic movements performed in fight and action sequences. Many actors or actresses have a "**stunt double**" - a professionally-trained person who looks like him/her, who performs these difficult and dangerous actions. This person is called a stunt man or stunt woman. Nowadays, movie producers can also use computers to create **special effects**.

If the visual aspects of the movie are good, we can describe the special effects as **stunning** or **spectacular**, as well as a host of other adjectives (magnificent, amazing, awesome, etc.) Sometimes the special effects are a little TOO exaggerated for some movie-goers' tastes, and in this case they are described as **ridiculous** or **over-the-top**. If the quality of the special effects was bad, you can describe them as **cheap** (or **cheap-looking**), **shoddy**, or **unconvincing**.

OVERALL SUCCESS/FAILURE OF A MOVIE

If a movie was extremely popular and sold an enormous number of tickets, it is called a **blockbuster** or a **hit**. To say that the quality of a movie is excellent (without commenting on its popularity), you can call it a **masterpiece** - and a movie that has been consistently enjoyed by many people over many years is considered a **classic**.

On the other hand, if a movie had a lot of **buzz** or **hype** (publicity aiming to increase everyone's excitement), but turned out to be terrible, you can describe it as a **disaster** or a **flop**.

Speaking Task

Tell me about the last TV show or movie you watched (excluding the news). What was it about? Describe the program or story. What did you think? Did you enjoy it? Why or why not?

Record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EsspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Describe one of your all-time favorite movies!

- Give an overview of the plot
- Write a little bit about the main character(s)
- What major themes or lessons does the movie deal with?
- Why do you like it?

E-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you my feedback.

Note: If you don't watch much TV or see many movies, you can also do both these tasks about books you have read or plays you have seen in the theater.

Answers to Skimming Exercise

1. Sci-Fi
2. War
3. Suspense / Thriller
4. Children's / Family
5. Horror
6. Action / Adventure
7. Comedy
8. Romance
9. Drama
10. Documentary
11. Fantasy

Lesson 5: Vocabulary Expander

Many students at the upper-intermediate or advanced level would like to expand their vocabulary. At this level, you probably have all the words necessary to have a conversation, to understand native speakers, and to get around in an English-speaking country – but perhaps you would like to make your speaking and writing more sophisticated, with more complex layers of meaning.

This lesson will introduce you to a number of new alternatives for “simple” words in English. Some of them are synonyms (with the same meaning) and others have slight differences in their connotations and the ways in which they are used.

Other ways to say...

Look

We have a division between words used when you look at something for a short time, and words used when you look at something for a long time.

If you **glance** at someone/something, it means you look at them quickly for a short time. For example, “I didn’t have time to read the newspaper today – I just **glanced** at the headlines.”

The word **glimpse** is similar – to look at something/someone quickly for a short time, but usually implies that you got an *incomplete* view of the person/object. It’s also used in the expression “catch a glimpse.” For example, “There are a number of trees right outside my window, but sometimes I can catch a glimpse of the ocean.”

To **peek** or **peep** means to look at something secretly. You might catch your kids “peeping” at you when you’re trying to wrap their Christmas presents – they are curious about the presents, but they don’t want you to notice that they are watching.

If you look at something for a long time, with steady intention and without looking away, you are **staring** at it. “I can’t stand people who stare at their cell phones while talking to me.”

To look at someone or something intensely and with anger is to **glare** – for example, you might glare at your best friend if they make an annoying comment about you in front of other people.

To look at something with surprise/amazement (or mindlessly) – often with your mouth open – is to **gape** or **gawk**. When there is an accident, passers-by frequently stop and “gawk” at the situation.

Finally, we have the words **gaze** and **contemplate**, meaning to look at something for a long time with a romantic or thoughtful feeling. You might gaze at a beautiful sunset, for example.

Walk / Run

Why walk when there are so many more interesting words to use for this action? You can **stroll**, **saunter**, or **mosey** – that means to walk in a casual, relaxed way. On a summer afternoon, you might “stroll” through the park, without needing to hurry.

Walking faster and with more intention is called **striding** or **marching** – if you’re not happy with the customer service in a store, you might stride to the manager’s office to make a complaint.

If you’re drunk, very tired, or otherwise unstable, you would **stagger** or **totter** – that means to walk while almost losing your balance and falling.

If you were trying to walk very quietly, you would **creep** or **tiptoe** – these words mean to walk silently and carefully, so as not to disturb someone. “I tiptoed out of the room so as not to wake up the baby.”

Someone who is walking arrogantly, aiming to show off and impress other people, is **strutting** or **parading**. Maybe your co-worker was recently promoted, and now he’s strutting around the office giving everyone else orders.

For running – usually running very fast – we can use the verbs **sprint**, **dash**, **race**, or **bolt**. “I sprinted to the station to catch the last train before it left.”

Talk

We have different words for the volume of speech as well as its content.

To **yell, scream, shout, or shriek** is to speak very loudly, for example, “The soccer coach shouted instructions to the players on the field.”

Muttering, murmuring, and mumbling mean to speak in a quiet voice, without opening your mouth much. You usually do this when you don’t necessarily want other people to overhear you. “Murmur” is more neutral, “mutter” usually means you are saying something negative, and “mumble” usually means you have low self-confidence.

And to **whisper** is to speak extremely quietly – you should whisper to another person while watching a movie, so that you don’t disturb the other people in the audience.

Now let’s look at the content of what’s being said. Instead of always saying “He said” or “She said,” you can use these more descriptive words:

- **Boast / Brag** – To talk arrogantly about something. “James is constantly bragging about all the athletic awards he won in college.”
- **Complain / Whine / Grumble** – To comment on the negative aspects of something. “Sheila’s always whining about how awful her husband is. I don’t know why she doesn’t just leave him, if she’s so unhappy.”
- **Promise / Pledge / Swear / Vow** – To make a commitment to do something (the last two words are the strongest). “He swore to get revenge on his business partner, who had stolen from the company.”
- **Mention / Comment** – To say something briefly, without talking about it for a long time. “She mentioned that she would be traveling next month.”
- **Beg / Implore** – To ask someone insistently with a lot of emotion. “My best friend begged me not to tell anyone her secret.”
- **Chatting / Gabbing** – These words describe an informal conversation: “On Sunday nights, I like to hang out with my neighbors, chatting about the latest TV shows.”

Laughing and Crying

To suddenly start laughing very hard is to **crack up** – “The whole class cracked up when the teacher spilled her coffee all over her desk.” To laugh mildly (not intensely) is often described as **chuckling**, and to laugh with short, repetitive sounds is called **giggling** (this word is often used for girls’ laughter).

If you laugh and try to hide it – this is called **snickering** – especially if you are laughing about someone else. “I snickered when I noticed that the boss had a big piece of spinach stuck in his teeth.”

A person who is laughing very hard and very loudly is **howling** or **roaring** with laughter – and someone who can’t stop laughing can be described as being “**in stitches**.” – “The comedian was hilarious. He had the audience in stitches the entire night.”

On the opposite end of the spectrum, a person who is crying very hard can be said to be **sobbing** or **weeping**. “Sobbing” usually means you are making sounds of distress or pain, whereas “weeping” is a quieter expression of sadness. **Bawling, howling,** and **wailing** can also be used for very LOUD crying, without restraint. These words are often used when a baby is crying very loudly.

When you become so overwhelmed with emotion that you have difficulty speaking, and you might start crying, this is called getting “**choked up**.” If a person suddenly starts crying, we say they “**burst into tears**.”

Eat / Drink

If a person eats fast and greedily, we say they **devour, gobble down, or wolf down** their food. A slang word used for this type of eating is “**inhale**” – for example, “My son inhaled his dinner and ran out the door to meet his friends” – it implies that the person ate as fast as simply taking a breath!

When you’re eating something especially delicious or fancy, you can say you **feasted on** the food. “In Argentina, we feasted on some of the best steak I’ve ever tasted.”

If a person is eating very little, then they are **nibbling** or **picking at** their food. The verb “nibble” implies taking very small bites, and the expression “picking at” food usually means that the person has no appetite or doesn’t want to eat.

Finally, eating casually is described as **snacking on** or **munching on** the food item: you **munch on** popcorn while watching a movie.

Drinking something very fast can be described as **gulping down** or **guzzling down** the beverage. The opposite of that is **sipping**, which means to drink very slowly in small portions. You would **sip** a glass of fine wine, and it might take you an hour to finish it.

Connotations

As you can see, the English language is especially rich in vocabulary, and often has many words for the same or a similar concept – but many of them have different **connotations**.

A connotation is a particular emotion or association that the word brings to your mind. Connotations can be positive, negative, or neutral – and the selection of one word over another can give a particular tone to your text or communicate additional meaning “between the lines.”

For example, if you are describing a person who is confident, direct and not afraid to go after what he wants, you can say he is “**assertive**” (this implies his confidence/directness is a good quality, and shows initiative) or that he is “**pushy**” (this implies that his confidence/directness is a bad quality, because it is annoying).

Consider the various shades of meaning for synonyms of the word “thin,” which is the opposite of “fat.” The word “thin” has a neutral connotation. However, you can also describe someone as:

- **Skinny** – This implies that they are *too* thin, or underweight. For example, your mother might say, “You should eat more – you’re too skinny!”
- **Scrawny** – This implies a lack of muscle. A girl might say about a guy, “I’m not really attracted to him – he’s so scrawny. I prefer athletic guys.”
- **Wiry / lean** – This means thin *and* muscular; probably someone who does a lot of physical activity and is strong, but their muscles aren’t big or bulky.
- **Slim** – Thin with a positive connotation. For example, if you’re trying to lose weight, you might ask a thin friend what her secret is to staying so slim.
- **Slender / svelte** – Thin and graceful/beautiful. “Svelte” adds an extra touch of being fashionable/sexy.
- **Petite** – Thin and short
- **Lanky** – Thin and tall
- **Gaunt** – Thin and bony, as if the person is undernourished (so their bones start to appear)

Connotations can be hard to master, because they are often determined by culture and common use. Often, the only way to really learn them is by hearing how native speakers tend to use them and understanding the meaning intended.

Consider these three sentences:

- That hotel was a real **bargain!** We stayed for two whole weeks for less than \$500.
- I'm looking for an **inexpensive** hotel in Barcelona. Do you have any recommendations?
- We stayed in a **cheap** hotel next to the highway. It was noisy, the air conditioner was broken, and they ran out of coffee at breakfast.

“A bargain,” “inexpensive,” and “cheap” all mean essentially the same thing – not costing very much money. But you can understand from the context that “a bargain” is described as a great thing, “inexpensive” is neutral, and “cheap” is used as a criticism of the hotel’s low quality.

Here are a few examples of words that seem to mean the same thing, but one has a positive connotation and one has a negative connotation:

Definition	Positive	Negative
A person who doesn't spend much money	frugal	stingy, tightfisted
A person who works a lot	hard-working, dedicated	workaholic
To influence someone	persuade	brainwash, manipulate
Describing someone who is inquisitive	curious	nosy
Not common/typical	unique, unusual	strange, weird
Smell	aroma, fragrance, scent	stench, stink, odor
Discuss a controversial topic with others	debate	argue
Not easy	challenging	difficult
Someone who is careful about details	meticulous	nitpicking
Someone who acts younger than their age	youthful, young at heart	immature, juvenile
Someone who doesn't change their mind easily	firm, resolute	stubborn
Someone who is overweight	plump, curvy	fat

A small smile	grin	smirk
Someone who avoids taking risks	prudent	cowardly
A person who is relaxed	laid-back	lazy
Anticipating a future event	eager (you are excited for the event to happen)	anxious (you are worried about the future event)
Someone who doesn't plan or think much about the future	spontaneous, carefree	reckless, irresponsible
Ask someone to do something	request	demand

Speaking Task

Describe one person you really **admire** (and why) and one person you **dislike** or don't get along with (and why). Try to not only describe their personalities, but also give at least one example of their behavior.

Record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EsspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Write two descriptions of your life (or of a situation you experienced in the past). In one of them, focus on the bright side and use words with positive connotations; in the other, describe the same situations using words with negative connotations. (See my example text.)

When possible, try to use a more descriptive word instead of a "simple" word. You can use thesaurus.com to find alternatives for words. It's natural, in this type of exercise, that you'll pick the "wrong" word and make mistakes with the connotations – but don't worry about it, because you'll learn from the corrections!

E-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you my feedback.

Lesson 6: Hypothetical Situations

Some of the most complicated structures in English are used when we talk about hypothetical situations – things we are wishing or imagining were different. In this lesson, you'll learn all the details of the correct verb tenses to use for these types of situations.

We're going to start out with a poem – “The Road Not Taken,” by Robert Frost – to get you thinking about this topic. I've included some vocabulary definitions and explanations in the poem.

Poem: “The Road Not Taken”

Two roads **diverged** in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the **undergrowth**;

diverged = separated, went in different directions

undergrowth = low-growing plants and trees, as found in a forest (“wood”)

The poet is looking at a fork in the road – two roads separating and going in different directions in a forest. Because it's impossible to travel down both roads, he first looks down one road as far as he can, until it curves away into the forest.

Then took the other, as just as **fair**,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted **wear**;

Though as for that the passing there

Had **worn** them really about the same,

fair = in this context, means "beautiful" or "visually pleasant"

wear/worn = in this context, means how much the path has already been used

Both of the roads are about equally attractive, and both have been approximately equally used by other travelers in the past – although the second road has a little more grass than the first, indicating that it may have been less used.

And both that morning equally lay

In leaves no step had **trodden** black.

Oh, I kept the first for another day!

Yet knowing how way leads on to way,

I doubted if I should ever come back.

trodden = past participle of "tread," meaning to walk on top of

Both paths are covered with leaves that have not been disturbed or stepped on, meaning that no travelers have walked there recently. The poet decided to take the second path, and he knows that he probably won't come back to this point, since his journey will continue forward.

I shall be telling this with a **sigh**

Somewhere **ages and ages hence**:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—

I took the one less traveled by,

And that has made all the difference.

sigh = a long, deep, exhalation, which can be made with a feeling of tiredness, sadness, relief, longing, or another strong emotion.

ages and ages hence = many, many years in the future

The selection of the “less traveled” (i.e. unconventional, less popular) path has made a big difference in the poet’s life.

What are some moments in your life when you have made a choice that significantly affected future events? Think about it... you’ll use this in the writing task!

Let’s get into the grammar details.

Hypothetical Future

To imagine things in the future, we typically use a structure called the **first conditional**. For example:

- If it’s sunny tomorrow, I’ll go to the park.
- If it rains tomorrow, I’ll stay home.

There are two parts to this sentence: the CONDITION (if...) and the RESULT we imagine if the condition is true (I’ll...). Note that we can also switch the two parts of the sentence and say: “I’ll go to the park if it’s sunny tomorrow.”

- Condition: if + present
- Result: will/won’t + verb (base form)

Some students make the mistake of using “will” in both the condition and the result:

- If it will rain tomorrow, I will stay home.

But it’s only necessary to use “will” in the result – even though both events (raining and staying home) are technically in the future.

Hypothetical Present

There are two major ways to imagine that the present was different: **I wish** and the **second conditional**.

To express a desire for the present situation to be different, we can use **I wish + simple past**:

- I wish I **had** a car. It's so inconvenient to get around by public transportation.
- I wish my husband **didn't snore** so much; it's impossible to get any sleep.
- I wish you **lived** closer to me. It would be nice to see you more often!

Don't be fooled by the past tense – we are NOT actually talking about the past. Instead, we are wishing that the present situation was different.

A slightly more dramatic way to imagine that the present was different is to use **if only + simple past** – this structure is usually used as an exclamation:

- It's going to take me an hour to get there by bus. **If only I had a car!**

I wish + simple past is used for *situations*. When we want a different *action* to be happening than at present, we can use **I wish + past continuous**:

- I hate the cold weather. I **wish I was lying** on a beach in the tropics right now.
- I **wish it wasn't raining**.

There's one final use of "wish" in the present: **I wish + would**. This is used to emphasize your dissatisfaction with the present situation, and express a definite desire for the situation to change in the future:

- I'm trying to study – I **wish you'd be** quiet.
- I **wish my father would stop** smoking – I'm worried about his health.
- My mother **wishes I would help** out around the house a little more.

What's the difference between "I wish + simple past" and "I wish + would"?

Well, "I wish + simple past" can be used for things that you want to be different, but it's impossible or unlikely to change:

- I **wish I was** taller.
(but it's impossible for me to get taller)
- I **wish my boss didn't** yell so much.
(but it's very unlikely that he will change his management style)

On the other hand, "I wish + would" is used for things that you really hope will change, and there is a real possibility of the change happening:

- I'm trying to study – I **wish you'd be** quiet.
(after I say this, it's likely that you will begin to be quiet)
- I **wish my father would stop** smoking.
(it's possible for him to stop, and I really want this to happen)

Exercise: What are 4 things you wish were different about yourself or your life (but that probably will not change)? Use "I wish + simple past":

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Exercise: What are four things you wish were different about yourself or your life (and it's possible/likely that they can change)? Use "I wish + would" in your answers:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

The other way to talk about an imaginary present situation is using a structure called the **second conditional**:

- If I were rich, I'd buy a boat.
(I am not rich at the moment, but I am imagining I was)
- If the teacher spoke more slowly, we'd understand her better.
(the teacher speaks fast, but we are imagining this was different)
- If you didn't eat so much fast food, you'd be healthier.
(you DO eat lots of fast food, but I'm imagining this was different)

Again, we can switch the condition and result, for example: “I’d buy a boat if I were rich.”

The structure for the second conditional is:

- **CONDITION: if + past simple**
- **RESULT: would/might/could + verb (base form)**

Again, remember that we are still not talking about the past... we are imagining a hypothetical, impossible, or unreal situation in the present.

Hypothetical Past

There are two ways to talk about hypothetical past situations. The simplest one is to say **I wish + past perfect**:

- I was late for work today. I **wish I had woken** up 15 minutes earlier.
- I **wish I hadn’t eaten** that seafood stew yesterday – it made me sick.
- Oh, hi – I wasn’t expecting you. I **wish you’d called** before coming over.

This is used to express regret (such as for eating that seafood stew) or actions you wanted to be different (such as wishing your friend had called before arriving at your house).

Exercise: What are four things you wish had/hadn’t happened in the past?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

Now let’s take things one step further – imagining the hypothetical result if the past situation had been different:

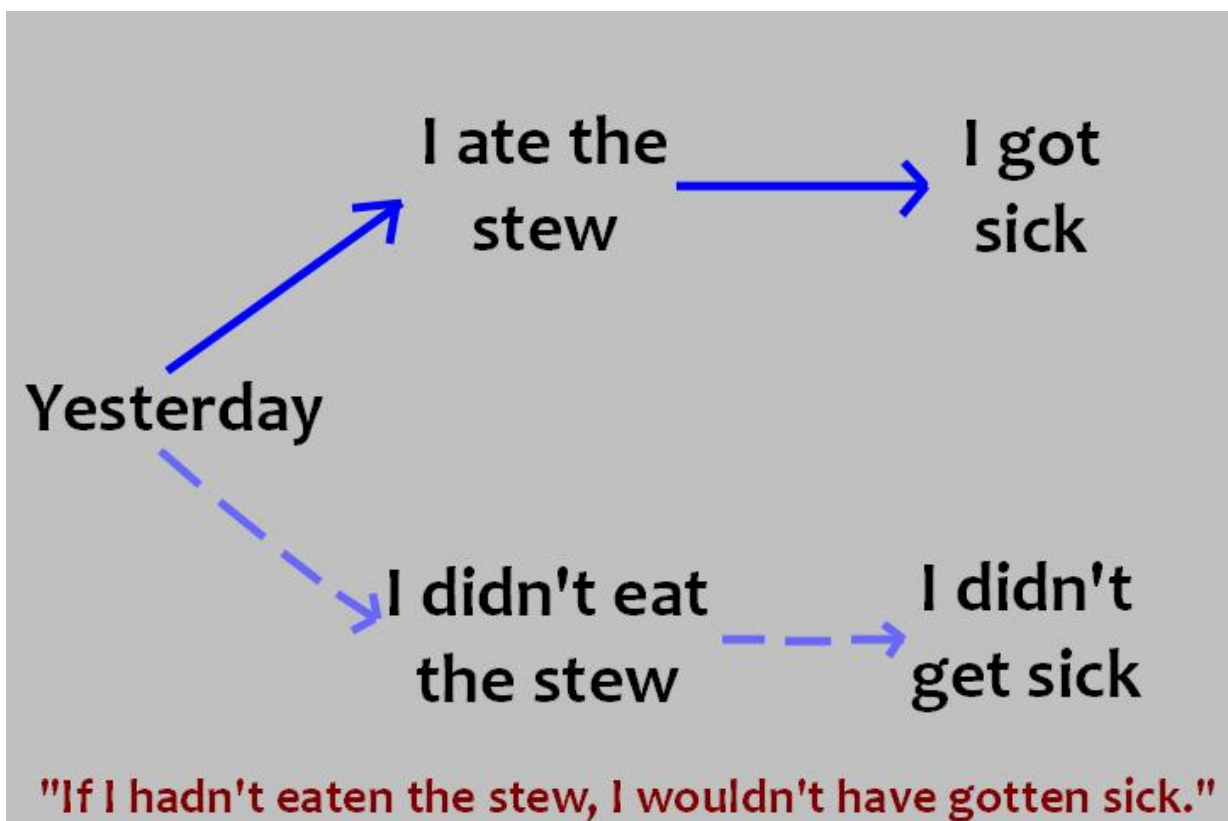
- If I had woken up 15 minutes earlier, I would have arrived on time.
- If I hadn’t eaten that seafood stew yesterday, I wouldn’t have gotten sick.
- If you’d called before coming over, I could have prepared some food.

This structure is called the **third conditional**. As you can see, it contains a CONDITION and a RESULT:

- Condition: If + past perfect
“**If I had woken** up 15 minutes earlier...”
- Result: would/could/might + present perfect
“...I **would have arrived** on time.”

Like the other conditionals, you can reverse the condition and result: “I would have arrived on time if I’d woken up 15 minutes earlier.”

Sometimes it’s helpful to see a visual illustration – it’s like the two roads in the poem. The top path is what really happened, and the bottom path is the imaginary situation we are thinking and talking about:



Speaking Task

What would you do if you had a billion dollars?

Would you spend it all on yourself, or give it away to family or to charity? Would you retire and travel the world... or use it to set up a company or organization, and keep working? Would you enjoy your elite status, or would you prefer to stay out of the media spotlight?

Let your imagination run wild! Be creative and think about all the possibilities for your billion dollars. You can use **I would...** **I could...** and/or **I might...** in your answer. (These are **second conditional** sentences – imagining the present was different).

Record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EsspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Think about those significant “crossroads” you have experienced, which have affected the course of your life. Then imagine how your life would have been different if you had made a different decision at the time, and write about it.

Of course, it’s impossible to know *exactly* what would have happened – but try to imagine! Use **third conditional** sentences in your text.

Here are a few examples from my own life:

- **If I had gone** to graduate school, I **would have moved** to California to study at the University of Santa Cruz.
- **If I hadn’t learned** Portuguese in college, I **wouldn’t have been** able to communicate with my Brazilian husband.

E-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I’ll review it and send you my feedback.

Lesson 7: Verbs + TO or -ING with a Change in Meaning

As you know, when we have two verbs in a row in English, the second verb can take either the TO form or the -ING form, depending on the first verb. There is no rule to know which verbs are followed by TO and which verbs are followed by -ING, but I'm including a table of verbs at the end of this lesson for your reference.

Some verbs can be followed by either TO or -ING with no difference in meaning. For example:

- I love to swim. = I love swimming.

Other verbs that can be followed by both forms include **begin, continue, like, prefer, and start.**

However, there are a handful of verbs for which the meaning changes depending on whether the second verb is in the TO form or the -ING form – and that's what we're going to study in today's lesson.

I've written a dialog to show seven of these verbs in action. Listen to and read the conversation and notice how each verb is used – then read the explanation of the differences.

Dialog

Hi Cathy! How was your weekend?

Well, it was... interesting, to say the least.

Do tell!

I convinced Jim to take Friday afternoon off so we could take a little weekend getaway to our beach house – remember it? You've been there.

Right, that's the place where you had a big New Year's bash a few years ago. I'll never **forget** Mary **dancing** on top of your brand-new living room table - until it collapsed!

Don't remind me! Whatever happened to Mary, by the way? I **remember** her **saying** she was looking for work, but I haven't heard from her in a while. I've been **meaning to give** her a call, but I've been so busy.

Oh, she finished her degree and **went on to get** a job at the New York Times.

No kidding! Good for her. So anyway - we left after lunch on Friday and got there around 5, only to find that Jim had **forgotten to bring** the key.

Ouch! How did that happen?

It's usually on his keychain, but he had taken it off to make an extra copy for our son, and just didn't **remember to put** it back on.

So what did you do?

Jim **tried to pick** the lock for over an hour - I kept telling him it wouldn't work, but he just grunted and **went on trying**.

He probably didn't want to admit defeat - since that would **mean driving** 5 hours back to your house to get the key!

Not necessarily - he then changed tactics and **tried prying** open one of the windows. It took some effort, but he managed to do it.

Aha - so you got in.

Yes, but that's not the end of the story. Twenty minutes later there was a knock at the door - it was the police.

The police?!

Yup. It turns out our new next-door neighbor, who we hadn't met yet, saw Jim breaking in through the window and thought he was a robber. Jim tried to explain that we were the owners of the house, but of course we didn't have the documents handy, so the police said, "We **regret to inform** you that we'll need to take you into custody until this can be sorted out." What could we do? We **stopped arguing** with them and went to the police station.

And then what happened?

We called our son and asked him to bring the title to the house. He set off right away, but his car started having mechanical problems and he had to **stop to get** it fixed – and the mechanic said it would only be ready on Saturday at noon.

What a nightmare! So you spent the night at the police station?

Yes – and it gets worse.

Not possible.

After our son arrived and we were able to prove ourselves to be the rightful owners of the house, we drove back there – only to find that we had left that window open, and...

...don't tell me. You'd been robbed.

Bingo. They took everything that wasn't nailed down – so we spent the rest of the day at the police station, giving a report of all the stolen items. Needless to say, I really **regret taking** that trip!

Changes in Meaning

Verb #1 – Forget

Use **forget + to + verb** for a task you need or want to do:

- Jim had **forgotten to bring** the key.
- We **forgot to close** the window of the beach house.
- Don't **forget to go** to the bank tomorrow.

Use **forget + -ING** for an experience in the past. This is usually used in the form “I'll never forget _____ing” – for a very memorable experience.

- I'll never **forget Mary dancing** on top of the table.
- We'll never **forget spending** three weeks in Tahiti on our honeymoon.
- My son will never **forget winning** first place in the karate tournament – it was a huge accomplishment.

Verb #2 – Remember

This is very similar to **forget**.

Use **remember + to + verb** for a task:

- Please **remember to turn** off the lights when you leave.
- Jim didn't **remember to put** the key back on his keychain.
- Thankfully I **remembered to bring** my umbrella – it rained all weekend.

Use **remember + -ing** for an experience in the past:

- I **remember** Mary **saying** she was looking for work.
- Where are my sunglasses? I **remember putting** them on this table.
- He doesn't **remember receiving** your letter – could you send it again?

Verb #3 – Go on

When we say someone **went on to do** something, it's in the context of something they did later in life (usually something positive):

- Mary finished her degree and **went on to get** a job at the New York Times.
- After becoming famous as a singer, he **went on to start** an acting career.
- My daughter was lazy as a teenager, but then she **went on to become** a very responsible adult.

Went on + -ing means “continued.”

- Jim **went on attempting** to pick the lock even though I told him it wouldn't work.
- I told him I needed to get off the phone, but he just **went on talking** for another 20 minutes.
- You shouldn't **go on thinking** about your mistakes – just forget them and move on with your life.

Verb #4 – Mean

Mean + to + verb is used for intentions:

- I've been **meaning** (intending) **to call** Mary, but I've been too busy.

- Oops – I **meant to say** the company was founded in 1894, not 1984.
- They’re saving up money – I think they **mean to buy** a house next year.

Mean + -ing is used when something will result in something else being necessary:

- If we can’t pick the lock, that **means driving** 5 hours back to get the key.
(failure to pick the lock will result in the need to drive 5 hours back)
- Taking that job **means moving** to another country.
(if you take that job, the result is that you need to move to another country)
- When I became a vegetarian, it **meant giving up** hamburgers.

Verb #5 – Regret

Regret + to + verb is typically used with “inform” or (less commonly) “announce” – it is a polite or formal way to give unpleasant news:

- We **regret to inform** you that the deadline has already passed for applications to this position.
- We **regret to announce** that this year’s festival has been canceled.

Regret + -ing form is used when you regret a past action; you wish you had not done it:

- Cathy **regrets taking** the trip to the beach house.
- I **regret dropping** out of college – I wish I had finished my degree.
- We **regret having** moved to this city; it’s a rather boring place.

You can use **regret + -ing** or **regret + having + past participle**, as in the last example.

Verb #6 – Stop

This time I’m going to switch the order and talk about **stop + -ing** first!

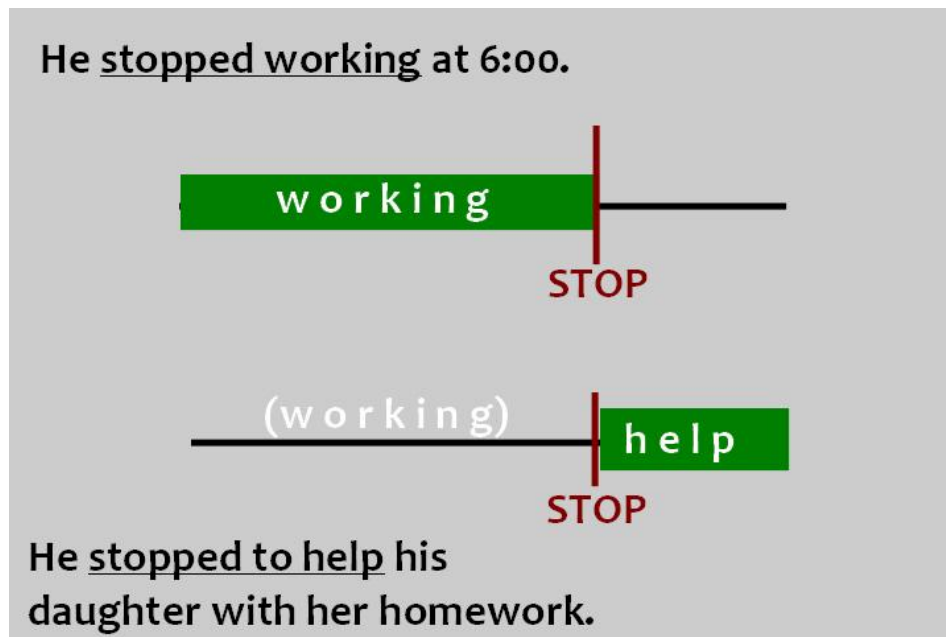
Use **stop + ing** to talk about an activity you were doing, but then stopped:

- Cathy and Jim **stopped arguing** with the police.
- **Stop looking** at your cell phone when I’m trying to talk to you!
- I **stopped smoking** two years ago.

Use **stop + to + verb** when you stop a *different* activity (which is not mentioned) to DO the second verb. For example:

- Jim and Cathy's son **stopped to get** his car fixed.
(technically, he stopped *driving* in order to get his car fixed – although we don't mention driving in the sentence; it is understood from the context)
- My exercise class is really intense; I always have to **stop to drink** some water.
(you stop *exercising* in order to drink water)
- Bob was working on the computer, but he **stopped to help** his daughter with her homework.
(he stopped *working* in order to do the second action: to help)

Maybe seeing it visually will help:



Verb #7 – Try

Try is one of the most interesting verbs. When you say someone **tried to do** something, it implies that they weren't successful:

- Jim **tried to pick** the lock of the beach house, but he couldn't do it.
- I **tried to read** the novel, but I found it boring.
- We **tried to call** you, but your cell phone was turned off.

When you say **tried + -ing**, it simply means they attempted – and that attempt could be successful or not:

- Jim **tried prying** open the window – and succeeded!
- I couldn't figure out what was wrong with my computer, but I **tried restarting** it, and that seems to have fixed the problem.
- I **tried reading** the novel, but I found it boring.
- We **tried calling** you, but your cell phone was turned off.

This difference only applies when using **tried** (the verb in the past). When you use **try** in the present or future, then **try to** and **try + ing** are more or less the same... although “try to” has more of the sense of “make an effort, even though it’s difficult” and “try + -ing” has more of the sense of “I recommend doing this experiment, to see if it will work.”

- **I'll try to open the window.**
= The window may be difficult to open; perhaps I am not strong enough to do it, but I will make an attempt.
- **I'll try opening the window.**
= if it's too hot in here, I'll open the window to see if that will make it cooler – but the window itself is not difficult to open. I'm trying opening the window as an experiment to see if it will solve a problem – making the room cooler.

Speaking Task

This is an easy one – simply say a sentence or two about each situation, starting by completing each of the following phrases:

- Recently, I've forgotten to _____ (a task you've forgotten)
- I'll always remember _____ing (a special memory)
- I need to remember to _____ (a task on your to-do list)
- My childhood best friend went on to _____ (what he/she did in life)
- I've been meaning to _____ (something you intend to do, but haven't done yet)
- I regret _____ing (something you wish you hadn't done)

- I wish (a person) would stop _____ing (an annoying habit that someone else has)

If you can, try to speak spontaneously – without planning out what to say beforehand!

Record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Tell me about times that:

- You tried really hard to do something, and **succeeded**
- You tried really hard to do something, and **failed**

Describe both experiences, and write about what lessons you learned from them. Are you a person who takes failure in stride (= easily accepts it), or does it really bother you?

E-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you my feedback.

Verbs followed by TO

Verb	Example Sentence
afford	Now that I have a better job, I can finally afford to buy a new car.
agree	I agreed to help her move to a new apartment.
aim	We're aiming to finish this project by Friday.
arrange	Let's arrange to meet up at the restaurant.
ask	He asked to leave early.
attempt	I'm attempting to fix the refrigerator.
beg	My son begged me to take him to the park.
choose/decide	I chose/decided not to go to graduate school.
expect	I expect you to clean your room every week.
fail	The teacher failed to cover all the material in the textbook.
happen	If it happens to rain , we can have the party inside.
have	My tooth hurts - I have to see the dentist.
hope	I hope to travel in December.
long	I'm longing to go to Paris; I haven't been there in years!
need	We need to paint the house - it looks awful.
offer	I offered to carry her suitcase.
plan	They're planning to homeschool their kids.
prepare	I'm preparing to give a presentation at the conference.
pretend	My son pretended to be sick so he wouldn't have to go to school.
proceed	The doctor took a blood sample and then proceeded to lecture me about my diet.
promise	He promised to call me as soon as he arrived.
refuse	I tried to talk to her, but she refused to listen .
seem	The copy machine seems to be broken.
strive	He's striving to lose ten pounds before the wedding.
struggle	The injured animal struggled to survive .
swear	You swore not to tell anyone my secret.
tend	It tends to be pretty chilly here in October.
threaten	That country is threatening to launch nuclear missiles.
wait	I'm waiting to find out if I got the job.
would like	I'd like to learn how to sew.

Verbs followed by -ING

Verb	Example Sentence
admit	He admitted lying about where he'd been.
appreciate	I appreciated having more time to work on this.
avoid	You should avoid walking home alone after 10 PM.
consider	I'm considering studying in Canada next year.
deny	My husband denied eating the last piece of cake.
dislike/detest/despise/can't stand	I can't stand/dislike/detest/despise waiting in line.
dread	I'm dreading having to tell him the bad news.
enjoy	I enjoy having a cold beer on a hot summer day.
finish	Let me know when you finish using the computer.
imagine	Could you imagine marrying a man like that?
involve	This job involves sitting in front of a computer all day.
keep (= continue)	My ex-boyfriend keeps calling me – I wish he'd stop.
mind / don't mind	I don't mind picking you up – it's no trouble at all.
miss	Now that I live in a tropical country, I miss skiing in the wintertime.
practice	She practices playing the piano every day.
quit	You need to quit smoking .
recall	I don't recall meeting him.
recommend/suggest	The psychologist recommended/suggested reading this book.
resent	He resents having to pay child support to his ex-wife.
resist	When I see something wrong, I can't resist commenting on it.
resume	She resumed working after our conversation.

Lesson 8:

Noun-Verb Vocabulary Expander

One of the easiest ways to expand your vocabulary is by learning new and different uses for words that you already know – and that’s what we’re going to do in this lesson. Specifically, we’re going to study words that function as both nouns AND verbs – yet their meanings may be quite different.

There are a number of words in English that are both nouns and verbs, with essentially the same meaning. For example:

- The rebels **attacked** the government building.
(attack = verb)
- Twenty people were killed in the **attack**.
(attack = noun)

As you can see, the verb form of “attack” refers to the action, and the noun form of “attack” refers to the event; the incident when that action happened. Here are a few more examples of words that are both nouns and verbs with related meanings:

- I’m **renting** an apartment. The **rent** is \$800 per month.
- He never **answers** his e-mails. I’m still waiting for an **answer** to a message I sent three weeks ago.
- I have so many **hopes** and dreams. I’m **hoping** I can accomplish at least one of my major goals this year.
- It’s a very long **drive**, so we should start **driving** early in the morning.

However, there are also a number of words in which the meanings of the noun form and the verb form are not so directly related. Consider this example:

- The boxer **hit** his opponent in the ribs.
hit (verb) = punch, make a violent impact
- The movie *Titanic* was a big **hit** among teenage girls.
hit (noun) = a big success, something popular

Often, one of the forms is more informal – as is the case with “hit” referring to something popular or successful.

In this lesson you're going to learn 10 verbs that appear to be nouns, and 10 nouns that appear to be verbs. You probably already know the "typical" definition of each word, but now you'll discover a new way to use them.

This lesson takes the form of two quizzes. You'll see an example sentence containing the word, and you need to make your best guess about what the word means in that situation. Although you might get the answers wrong, this is important because it helps you train your ability to understand new English words (or common words used in new ways) from the context.

Quiz #1 – Nouns that look like verbs

1. My son was pretty upset that he didn't make the elite soccer team, but I reminded him that he could have another **go** at it next season.

go =

- a) sport
- b) attempt
- c) coach

2. The startup wanted me to design their website for free in exchange for a **cut** of future profits... I didn't take the job.

cut =

- a) portion
- b) discount
- c) guarantee

3. At that store, you can buy the washing machine at 70% off the normal price, but the **catch** is that it doesn't come with a warranty – so if it breaks, you need to pay for the repairs yourself.

catch =

- a) hidden disadvantage

- b) reason for not doing something
- c) agreement between seller and buyer

4. The government is considering new gun control laws in the **wake** of the recent school shooting.

wake =

- a) time after; result
- b) controversy
- c) positive outcome

5. Although the university as a whole isn't particularly famous, its theater program is a real **draw** for students interested in launching acting careers.

draw =

- a) creative idea
- b) intensive training
- c) something that attracts people

6. Saturday morning English classes are exhausting – they're four solid hours without a **break**.

break =

- a) official time to end an activity
- b) pause or interval
- c) easy activity

7. I know you don't like your food too spicy, so I only used a couple **drops** of hot pepper sauce.

drops =

- a) varieties

- b) cups
- c) small units of liquid

8. Make sure you cover the food at the picnic to keep the **flies** off it.

fly =

- a) dirt
- b) type of insect
- c) bacteria

9. Helen was nervous about the final move in her routine at the gymnastics competition, but she **nailed** it and scored a 9.7.

nailed =

- a) changed her attitude
- b) eliminated the difficult part
- c) performed successfully

10. I managed to **stuff** everything I needed for a five-day trip into a backpack, so that I wouldn't have to check any luggage on the flight.

stuff =

- a) compress into a small space
- b) include more items than necessary
- c) organize neatly

Answers & Explanation – Quiz #1

1. My son was pretty upset that he didn't make the elite soccer team, but I reminded him that he could have another **go** at it next season.

go = b) attempt

“Go” as a noun is used in the expression “have a go,” which means to make an attempt.

2. The startup wanted me to design their website for free in exchange for a **cut** of future profits... I didn't take the job.

cut = **a) portion**

The noun form of “cut” has two meanings. In this context, it means a portion of money. Another example is when you buy a flight through a travel agency, the travel agent receives a “cut” of the profits (such as a 15% commission).

Another way to use “cut” as a noun is as a **reduction**. For example, the company is making **cuts** in all the departments' budgets.

3. At that store, you can buy the washing machine at 70% off the normal price, but the **catch** is that it doesn't come with a warranty – so if it breaks, you need to pay for the repairs yourself.

catch = **a) hidden disadvantage**

A very common phrase spoken when considering an opportunity that seems too good to be true is, “**What's the catch?**” – for example, if your friend wants to sell you a car for only \$200, you would ask, “What's the catch?” because you'd be suspicious that there was some hidden problem with the car... or that your friend expected you to do some big favor in return.

4. The government is considering new gun control laws in the **wake** of the recent school shooting.

wake = **a) time after; result**

“In the wake of” means “as a result of” or “in the time shortly after” an event or situation. If the president of a company is caught doing something wrong, he might resign **in the wake of** the scandal.

Another common expression with “wake” is when an event leaves some result (usually a bad one) “in its wake” (that is, after it passes). For example, a tornado leaves destruction **in its wake**. A war might leave many orphans **in its wake**.

The noun “wake” is also used for the disturbance of water that follows a boat:



[Image source](#)

After the boat passes, it leaves this disturbance of water after it, as a result.

5. Although the university as a whole isn't particularly famous, its theater program is a real **draw** for students interested in launching acting careers.

draw = **c) something that attracts people**

Although you might know the definition of the verb “draw” as creating a picture with pen, pencil, marker, etc. there is another meaning – to attract people. It can be used as either a noun or a verb with this meaning:

- The famous band will **draw** large crowds to the festival.
- We should get that band to play at the festival – it will be a big **draw**.

6. Saturday morning English classes are exhausting – they’re four solid hours without a **break**.

break = **b) pause or interval**

It’s common to say “Let’s take a 10-minute break” when you want to pause an activity (like a meeting or class) for a short time. People also talk about taking a “coffee break” or “cigarette break” when you pause to have some coffee or smoke a cigarette.

7. I know you don’t like your food too spicy, so I only used a couple **drops** of hot pepper sauce.

drops = **c) small units of liquid**

This is pretty self-explanatory:

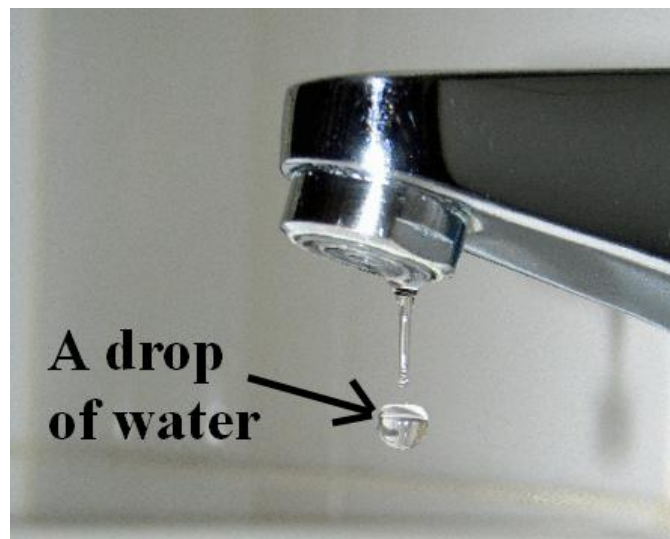


Image source: [Chris 73](#) / [Wikimedia Commons](#)

It can be used for any liquid (not just water) – a drop of sauce, a drop of blood, a drop of paint, etc. The related verb is **drip** – so, in the picture above, you could say that the faucet is **dripping**.

8. Make sure you cover the food at the picnic to keep the **flies** off it.

A **fly** is a specific type of insect:



9. Helen was nervous about the final move in her routine at the gymnastics competition, but she **nailed** it and scored a 9.7.

nailed = **c) performed successfully**

“Nail” as a noun can refer to one of these two things:



Image source: [Carlos Porto, FreeDigitalPhotos.net](http://CarlosPorto.FreeDigitalPhotos.net)

“Nail” as a verb is an informal way to say that a person did **VERY well** on an exam or performance – like a hammer hitting a nail perfectly in the right place.

10. I managed to **stuff** everything I needed for a five-day trip into a backpack, so that I wouldn’t have to check any luggage on the flight.

stuff = **a) compress into a small space**

“Stuff” as a noun is an informal word for things/possessions in general (“My teenage daughter leaves her stuff all over the floor of her room – I wish she would put it away!”)

“Stuff” as a verb is used when you push or compress an item or items into a space that is smaller than necessary to contain it.

Quiz #2 – Verbs that look like nouns

1. We’re going to need to **table** the discussion about our website redesign; there are far more pressing issues that need our attention.

table =

- a) prolong
- b) initiate
- c) postpone

2. The investigation of the crime was delayed after it was discovered that the evidence had been **doctored**.

doctored =

- a) eliminated
- b) falsified or changed
- c) invented to deceive someone

3. Ever since her husband was diagnosed with cancer, Mary has had to **shoulder** all the work and family responsibilities.

shoulder =

- a) accept help from others
- b) delay
- c) take on

4. I’m trying to **picture** my father taking a dance class and I just can’t do it – he wouldn’t dance if you paid him!

picture =

- a) convince
- b) imagine
- c) invite

5. My legs were **caked** with mud after I rode my bike through the woods.

caked =

- a) wet
- b) covered
- c) protected

6. I don't like the way that lawyers try to **milk** their clients for every last dollar.

milk =

- a) get as much as possible out of a situation
- b) deceive a person in an unprofessional way
- c) charge outrageously expensive prices

7. We **store** extra office supplies in the basement – feel free to grab paper, pens, or whatnot if you run out.

store =

- a) sell
- b) throw away
- c) keep in reserve

8. After work, I'm **heading** to the gym. I should be home around 8.

heading =

- a) going
- b) exercising
- c) stopping quickly at a place

9. The actor's sudden divorce from his supermodel wife is **fueling** speculation that he might be gay.

fueling =

- a) confirming
- b) creating
- c) stimulating, encouraging

10. The school is adopting stricter rules in an effort to **curb** cheating on exams.

curb =

- a) restrain, prevent from increasing
- b) make something impossible
- c) punish wrongdoing

Answers & Explanation – Quiz #2

1. We're going to need to **table** the discussion about our website redesign; there are far more pressing issues that need our attention.

table = **c) postpone**

"Table" as a verb is typically used in the context of postponing a discussion item during a meeting, or postponing consideration of a proposed law.

2. The investigation of the crime was delayed after it was discovered that the evidence had been **doctored**.

doctored = **b) falsified or changed**

When some official information – such as evidence in a criminal investigation, sales figures, results of scientific research, etc. – is purposefully adjusted or changed by

somebody in order to influence the results, we say the information has been “doctored.”

3. Ever since her husband was diagnosed with cancer, Mary has had to **shoulder** all the work and family responsibilities.

shoulder = **c) take on**

We usually talk about “shouldering” either responsibilities or blame. It means to take on or to “carry” the responsibilities or blame – like you would carry a heavy burden on your shoulder.

4. I’m trying to **picture** my father taking a dance class and I just can’t do it – he wouldn’t dance if you paid him!

picture = **b) imagine**

To “picture” as a verb means to imagine, to create a mental picture of some situation.

5. My legs were **caked** with mud after I rode my bike through the woods.

caked = **b) covered**

To be “caked” in a substance means to be covered in thick layers of it.

6. I don’t like the way that lawyers try to **milk** their clients for every last dollar.

milk = **a) get as much as possible out of a situation**

“Milk” as a verb is used for the action of getting milk out of a cow:



Collectie Willem van de Poll, via [Nationaal Archief](#)

When you milk a cow, you keep going until there is no more milk to be extracted.

In the same way, if you “milk” a situation, it means you **try to take as much advantage of it as possible**. It is not necessarily always related to money. For example, a person who becomes unexpectedly famous from an internet video can try to “milk” their fame (use it to maximum capacity) in order to get additional opportunities or stay in the spotlight.

7. We **store** extra office supplies in the basement – feel free to grab paper, pens, or whatnot if you run out.

store = **c) keep in reserve**

The verb “store” means to put objects that you are not currently using in a place where you can access them later, when they are needed.

8. After work, I’m **heading** to the gym. I should be home around 8.

heading = **a) going**

“Head” as a verb is an informal way to say “go” and is used with “to + destination,” as in the example – “I’m heading to the gym.” If you’re leaving a place, you can say “I’m heading out.”

9. The actor’s sudden divorce from his supermodel wife is **fueling** speculation that he might be gay.

fueling = **c) stimulating, encouraging**

Just like fuel (n.) provides power for a vehicle or machine, the verb “fuel” is used when something stimulates or encourages speculation, debate, rumors, demand, opposition, etc.

10. The school is adopting stricter rules in an effort to **curb** cheating on exams.

curb = **a) restrain; prevent from increasing**

The noun form of “curb” refers to this barrier on the side of a street:



Image: [Richard Drdul](#)

In a similar way, “curb” as a verb means to implement some sort of barrier to restrain or reduce some activity, or prevent the activity from increasing out of control. For example, if you are saving up to take a big vacation, then you need to curb your spending in daily life.

Speaking Task

Since this lesson didn't have a specific unifying theme, I'll let you select your topic for the speaking and writing tasks.

Here are some topic suggestions for the speaking task – choose one and send me your speaking sample:

- Tell me about your favorite holiday – what is it? How is it celebrated? Do you have any special traditions or memories from this holiday?
- Talk about the city/town where you live – describe the place and the people. What do you like and dislike about living there?
- What are three of your possessions that you couldn't live without? Tell me how each one is essential to your life and daily routine.

Record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EsspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

You can also choose your own topic for the writing task. I'm including here a list of ten controversial statements. Pick **one** to write about – state whether you agree or disagree (or partially agree/disagree), and give reasons for your opinion. Imagine that you are writing to someone who takes the opposite view from yours, and try to convince them that you are right.

- We are becoming too dependent on computers.
- A woman's place is in the home.
- Using animals in medical research helps people.
- You can't have a happy family life and a successful career at the same time.
- War is never an option for solving international disputes.
- We do not really need religion.
- Euthanasia should be legal. (Euthanasia is choosing to end your own life with the help of medical professionals)
- *Real* education happens outside the classroom.

- Violent movies, TV shows, and video games contribute to violent crimes.
- Money should be taken from the rich and redistributed to the poor.

E-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you my feedback.

Lesson 9:

Inversion and Cleft Sentences

In this lesson you're going to learn some advanced sentence structures that are used to emphasize or highlight particular pieces of information. These structures are also good for making your speaking and writing more sophisticated, going beyond the "basic" sentences and creating more interesting ones.

We're going to learn these sentence structures in the context of talking about **religion**. Listen to and read these two women's stories about their spiritual journeys, and look carefully at the sentences in bold, considering how the structure of the sentence affects its message. Then, read the explanation about these advanced sentence structures to learn how to form them and when to use them.

Story #1

"I was raised in a very conservative Christian family. We read the Bible every day and went to church every week. **Under no circumstances could my sister and I listen to secular music or watch popular movies;** my parents wanted to protect us from bad influences. **Not until I moved out and went to college did I understand how sheltered my upbringing had truly been.** As I met people of other faiths, I became more open to considering other perspectives.

A friend of mine who's into New Age spirituality invited me to a meditation circle and it was amazing. **Never before had I felt so at peace with myself and with the universe.** Unfortunately, when I brought up my experience with my parents, it didn't go over so well. **Not only did they refuse to listen, but also they threatened to stop paying my tuition unless I go back to church.** Now I'm torn between wanting to explore my spirituality and wanting to maintain a good relationship with my family. It's a really tough situation. **Seldom have I felt so conflicted."**

Inversion

You probably already know that in English, the word order is different in questions and statements. When asking a question, we put the **auxiliary verb** *before* the **subject**:

- **Does he** live in the city?
He doesn't live in the city.
- **Can she** swim?
She can swim.
- **Have you** finished the work?
I've finished the work.
- **Should we** buy a new TV?
We should buy a new TV.

But there's another situation that requires an "inversion" of the typical word order – in sentences and phrases beginning with the following expressions:

- **Never / Never before**
I had never felt so at peace with myself and the universe.
Never before had **I** felt so at peace with myself and the universe.
- **Not only... but also**
They refused to listen and also threatened to stop paying my tuition.
Not only **did they** refuse to listen, but they also threatened to stop paying my tuition.
- **Not until**
After I moved out, **I** understood how sheltered my upbringing had truly been.
Not until I moved out **did I** understand how sheltered my upbringing had truly been.
- **No sooner**
Right after **I** cleaned the kitchen, my son spilled juice all over the floor.
No sooner **did I** clean the kitchen than my son spilled juice all over the floor.
- **At no time**
The president was not aware of the corruption at any time.
At no time **was the president** aware of the corruption.
- **Under no circumstances**
My sister and I couldn't listen to secular music or watch popular movies.

Under no circumstances **could my sister and I** listen to secular music or watch popular movies.

- **Rarely; seldom; hardly; scarcely; little; only when; only after**

Pamela rarely offers to help.

Rarely **does Pamela** offer to help.

I have seldom felt so conflicted.

Seldom **have I** felt so conflicted.

After he left the house, **he** realized he'd forgotten his wallet.

Only after he left the house **did he** realize he'd forgotten his wallet.

Notice that when there is no auxiliary verb in the original sentence, we actually ADD the auxiliary verb **do** or **did** in the inverted sentence:

Pamela rarely offers to help → Rarely **does Pamela** offer to help.

Right after **I** cleaned the kitchen... → No sooner **did I** clean the kitchen...

When to use this structure?

When you want to emphasize the negative expression at the beginning of the sentence. For example, when we compare:

I had never **felt so at peace** with myself and the universe before.

Never before had I felt so at peace with myself and the universe.

The first sentence focuses more on the feeling of peace, whereas the second sentence focuses more on the fact that she had NEVER had this feeling before.

Here's another example:

After I moved out, **I understood** how sheltered my upbringing had truly been.

Not until I moved out did I understand how sheltered my upbringing had truly been.

The first sentence focuses more on the new understanding. The second sentence places more emphasis on the length of time preceding the move, before arriving at this new understanding.

The phrase “**not only... but also...**” functions to emphasize the second phrase as better or worse than the first:

They refused to listen and also threatened to stop paying my tuition.

In this sentence, both “refusing to listen” and “threatening to stop paying tuition” are treated as EQUAL

Not only did they refuse to listen, but they also **threatened to stop paying my tuition.**

In this sentence, “refusing to listen” is the less bad action, and “threatened to stop paying my tuition” is the MUCH worse action.

You can also use “not only... but also...” for two good things, where the second one is better:

Not only did my husband make lunch, but he also **washed the dishes and did the laundry without being asked!**

The latter actions (washing dishes and doing laundry without being asked) are even better and more impressive than the first action (making lunch).

Story #2

“Both my parents are agnostics, so growing up, I didn’t have much exposure to religion at all. I figured that gods, spirits, and angels were just imaginary beings, with no significant connection to real life. **It was a co-worker of mine who first showed me how faith can genuinely impact and transform one’s life.** She was Jewish, and she seemed to have a strength of character that remained constant despite life’s difficulties. **What also impressed me was the way she could talk about her religion without being pushy.**

I started researching Judaism and I liked what I was learning – especially the practical applications. In Judaism, **it’s a person’s actions that matter most, not just abstract ‘beliefs.’** I decided to join a class at a local synagogue. I’m sure it’ll be interesting from an intellectual perspective, but **what I’m really looking forward**

to is joining a community of people who are actively working to transform themselves and the world.”

Cleft Sentences with It and What

A “**cleft sentence**” is an alternative structure that can also be used to call attention to a specific part of the sentence. There are two main types of cleft sentences:

1) Cleft Sentences beginning with IT

Structure:

It + (form of verb “to be”) + **subject** + relative clause starting with that/who

Examples:

A co-worker of mine first showed me how faith can genuinely impact and transform one’s life.

It was **a co-worker of mine** who first showed me how faith can genuinely impact and transform one’s life.

John received the promotion.

It was **John** who received the promotion.

I can’t stand the cold weather.

It’s **the cold weather** that I can’t stand.

When to use this type of sentence?

We often use it to shift the focus, such as when the other person is mistaken or is focusing on a different piece of information. For example:

“Religion is just a bunch of crazy **ideas.**”

“Actually, in Judaism it’s **a person’s actions that matter most**, not just abstract ‘beliefs.’”

“I heard the director was planning to make **Mark** the new Director of Human Resources.”

“In fact, it was **John** who received the promotion. Mark’s planning to move across the country, so he won’t be continuing his career with this company.”

“How come you don’t like Canada? Is it **a big culture shock?**”

“No, it’s **the cold weather** that I can’t stand.”

You can see that in the first example, the cleft sentence changes the focus from religious ideas to action. In the second example, the cleft sentence corrects the information about the person who was promoted from Mark to John; in the third example, the cleft sentence changes the focus from the culture to the weather.

The cleft sentence can be formed in several different ways, depending on what you want to emphasize. For example:

Normal Sentence: My brother got his Master’s Degree in England.

Possible Cleft Sentence #1:

“Didn’t your sister do her post-graduate work overseas?”

“No, it was **my brother** who got his Master’s Degree in England.”

Possible Cleft Sentence #2:

“Your brother must be really smart, getting a Ph.D. at one of the best universities in England!”

“Actually, it was **a Master’s Degree** that my brother got in England.”

Possible Cleft Sentence #3:

“Your brother studied at New York University, didn’t he?”

“He did his undergraduate work at NYU, but it was **in England** that he got his Master’s Degree.”

2) Cleft Sentences beginning with WHAT

Structure:

What + less important part + **form of the verb “to be”** + **[part to be emphasized]**

Normal: We really need a good night’s sleep.

Cleft: **What** we really need **is a good night’s sleep.**

Normal: I wanted to buy a pair of sunglasses.

Cleft: **What** I wanted to buy **was a pair of sunglasses.**

Normal: His extensive knowledge about the topic impressed me.

Cleft: **What** impressed me **was his extensive knowledge about the topic.**

Normal: I’m really looking forward to joining the community.

Cleft: **What** I’m really looking forward to **is joining the community.**

Similarly to the cleft sentences beginning with IT, we can cleft sentences beginning with WHAT to shift the focus. Consider these examples:

“Glad you arrived safely! Are you hungry? Do you want to go out to eat?”

“No thanks. **What** we really need **is a good night’s sleep.**”

(it changes the focus from eating to sleeping)

“**What** I wanted to buy **was a pair of sunglasses,** but the store was having a big sale so I ended up buying two purses and three necklaces!”

(the cleft sentence highlights the contrast between what she had intended to buy and what she actually bought)

“Although he’s quite young, **what** impressed me **was his extensive knowledge about the topic.**”

(the cleft sentence calls attention to a positive point – his knowledge – to contrast the possible negative point of the person being young)

“I decided to join a class at a local synagogue. I’m sure it’ll be interesting from an intellectual perspective, but **what I’m really looking forward to is joining a community of people who are actively working to transform themselves and the world.**”

(the cleft sentence narrows the focus – both the intellectual and community aspects will be good, but she’s ESPECIALLY looking forward to the community aspect)

Speaking Task

Tell me about your own religious or philosophical beliefs. Here are some questions to consider. You don’t need to try to answer them all... after all, these are deep questions!

- Do you believe in God (or gods)? Why or why not?
- What do you think happens after death?
- How does your religion / beliefs affect your daily life?
- Have you ever explored or attended an event of a different religion? How was the experience?
- Are there any problems with your religion or belief system – or doubts that you have?

Record your answer at <https://www.speakpipe.com/EspressoEnglish> or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Write about an experience or event that transformed your life or changed your perspective. It can be religious or non-religious. Use at least **three sentences** with the structures we learned in this lesson:

- Inversion, beginning with one of the expressions in the list
- Cleft sentence beginning with “It”
- Cleft sentence beginning with “What”

E-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I’ll review it and send you my feedback.

Religion Vocabulary

Here’s a quick vocabulary reference for the major world religions:

Name of Religion / Practitioner	Name of Deity, Leaders, and/or Sacred Books	Basic Beliefs	Traditional Practices
Religion: Christianity Practitioner: Christian Note: There are multiple forms of Christianity; the major two branches are Catholicism (practitioner = Catholic) and Protestantism (practitioner = Protestant)	Deity: God / Jesus / Holy Spirit (also called the Trinity) Leader: The Pope, cardinal, priest (in Catholicism), pastor (in Protestantism) Sacred Books: The Bible	All humans have sinned (done bad things) but the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ provides salvation . After death, believers in Jesus go to heaven and unbelievers go to hell .	Prayer, Bible study, baptism, Eucharist (communion), attending church services (called mass in Catholicism)

<p>Religion: Islam</p> <p>Practitioner: Muslim</p>	<p>Deity: God (Allah)</p> <p>Leader: imam</p> <p>Sacred Books: The Koran</p>	<p>There is one God, and humans must submit to the will of God to go to Paradise after death.</p>	<p>Faith, prayer, alms (giving money to charity), pilgrimage (making a special trip to a holy place), fasting (not eating food). No alcohol or pork (meat from pigs)</p>
<p>Religion: Hinduism</p> <p>Practitioner: Hindu</p>	<p>Three main gods: Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva, as well as many gods and goddesses</p> <p>Sacred Books: The Vedas, Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, Ramayana, and others</p>	<p>Humans are enslaved by illusion, but can escape this illusion by reincarnation (the soul is born again into another life/body) until achieving enlightenment.</p>	<p>Yoga, meditation, worship, devotion to a god or goddess, living according to one's purpose</p>
<p>Religion: Atheism / Agnosticism</p> <p>Practitioner: Atheist / Agnostic</p>	<p>No deity, religious leaders, or sacred books</p>	<p>There is no God and no life after death; truth is found through science</p>	<p>None</p>
<p>Religion: Buddhism</p> <p>Practitioner: Buddhist</p>	<p>No specific deity, although the founder is the Buddha</p>	<p>Humans should avoid suffering and attachment to worldly things; try to achieve nirvana (perfect peace / happiness)</p>	<p>Meditation, mantras (chants)</p>
<p>Religion: Judaism</p> <p>Practitioner: Jew (noun), Jewish</p>	<p>Deity: God</p> <p>Leader: Rabbi</p> <p>Sacred Books: The Bible (Old Testament</p>	<p>There is only one God; humans must obey God's commandments and live ethically</p>	<p>Circumcision of boys at birth, prayer, attending synagogue or temple, follow the dietary laws</p>

(adjective)	only) and Talmud (traditional writings)		described in the Bible (no pork or shellfish), holidays
Religion: Shinto Practitioner: Shintoist	Deity: Many gods/sprits called the <i>kami</i> Sacred Books: No central text, although there are many books of stories and history	Humans are naturally pure, and can keep away evil through purification rituals and by devotion to the <i>kami</i>	Purification rituals, worship and offerings to <i>kami</i> at home and at shrines
Religion: New Age Practitioner: (no specific term)	Deity: The Divine is an impersonal life force that is present in all things Sacred Books: No central text, but often draws from other religious books, as well as the writings of new age authors	No unified belief system; it is a form of spirituality without dogmas (strict rules). Humans can attain higher levels of consciousness and peace through various spiritual and mystical practices.	Astrology; mysticism; use of crystals; yoga; tarot readings; holistic/alternative medicine; psychic abilities; angelic communications; amulets; fortune-telling

Lesson 10: Reported Speech – Advanced Details

We use “reported speech” to talk about what somebody said in the past.

For example:

- **Direct Speech:**
Sally (yesterday): “I’m tired.”
- **Reported Speech:**
Sally said she was tired.
- **Direct Speech:**
John (last week): “I’ve finished my final exams.”
- **Reported Speech:**
Last week, John said he’d finished his final exams.

This is one of the most complicated aspects of English, as there are many details to remember. Today you’re going to learn them all – and practice them with some exercises.

Part 1: Verb Backshift & Special Cases

The first rule of reported speech is that the main verb “**backshifts**” – it changes to another tense further in the past.

In the examples above, the simple present (“I’m tired.”) changes to the simple past (“she **was** tired”) and the present perfect (“I’ve finished”) changes to the past perfect (“he’d finished”).

Look at the table to see how each tense changes:

Direct Speech		Reported Speech
present simple "I'm hungry."	→	past simple She said she was hungry.
present continuous "We're eating dinner."	→	past continuous They said they were eating dinner.
past simple "I saw the movie."	→	past perfect He said he'd seen the movie. He said he hadn't called her yet.
present perfect "I haven't called her yet."		
past continuous "I was thinking about taking a trip."	→	past perfect continuous She said she'd been thinking about taking a trip.
can "I can't hear you."	→	could He said he couldn't hear me.
will "My secretary will send the documents."	→	would She said her secretary would send the documents.

NO backshift is necessary when the original verb is **could, might, would, should**, or in the **past perfect**:

- Gary: "**Could** you help me?" → Gary asked if I **could** help him.
- Nora: "I **might** quit my job." → Nora said she **might** quit her job.
- Jill: "I **would** love to visit China." → Jill said she **would** love to visit China.

- Arthur: “I **had never been** so depressed.” →
Arthur said he **had never been** so depressed.

Special Cases: General truths and situations that still exist

There are two cases in which you don’t need to backshift in reported speech.

One is when talking about a **general truth**:

- Teacher: “The earth **revolves** around the sun.”
The teacher explained that the earth **revolves** around the sun.
- Kevin: “The capital of the U.S. **is** Washington D.C.”
Kevin said that the capital of the U.S. **is** Washington D.C.
- Martha: “William Shakespeare **died** in the year 1616.”
Martha pointed out that Shakespeare **died** in the year 1616.

The backshift is **optional** for situations that still exist or still continue to the present moment:

- Linda: “I work in a bank.”
Linda said she **works** in a bank.
Linda said she **worked** in a bank.

If Linda continues to work in a bank in the present, we can say either “works” or “worked” in the reported speech – both are correct.

Here’s another example:

- Mary: “My brother **is** taking English classes twice a week.”
Mary said her brother **is / was** taking English classes twice a week.

If her brother continues to take English classes in the present, we can use “is” or “was” in the reported speech – both are correct.

Now, if Mary’s brother has STOPPED attending English classes in the time since she made that statement, then we must backshift and add a phrase indicating that the situation existed at a time that Mary made the statement in the past:

- **At the time**, Mary said her brother **was** taking English classes twice a week.
- **A few months ago**, Mary said her brother **was** taking English classes twice a week.

Other words to use besides “said”

Remember that there are many other words you can use instead of “said” when reporting speech, such as **mentioned, pointed out, told (me/you/him/her/us/them), replied, responded, declared, stated, explained,** and others.

Quick Quiz: Verb Backshift & Special Cases

Choose the right verb to complete each reported statement:

1. Larry: “I’m going to buy some flowers for Anna.”

Larry said he _____ some flowers for Anna.

- a) should buy
- b) was going to buy
- c) is buying

2. Liz and Sam: “We’ll help you!”

Liz and Sam said they _____ me.

- a) would help
- b) could help
- c) helped

3. Tom: “I want a hamburger.”

Tom said he _____ a hamburger.

- a) wanted
- b) had wanted

c) might want

4. Mark: "We shouldn't procrastinate so much."

Mark pointed out that we _____ so much.

- a) couldn't
- b) won't
- c) shouldn't

5. Becky: "I've been married for ten years."

(the next day): Becky told us _____ for ten years.

- a) she's been married
- b) she'd married
- c) she was being married

6. Rob: "My kids can swim pretty well."

Rob said his kids _____ swim pretty well.

2 possible options:

- a) will/shall
- b) could/can
- c) do/have

7. Frank: "My grandparents aren't interested in computers."

Frank claimed his grandparents _____ interested in computers.

2 possible options:

- a) aren't / weren't
- b) can't / couldn't
- c) might not / shouldn't

8. Lilly: "I was hoping you'd get the promotion."

Lilly said she _____ I'd get the promotion.

- a) hoped
- b) will be hoping
- c) had been hoping

9. Melissa: "Bill and I got lost in Philadelphia."

Melissa told me that she and Bill _____ lost in Philadelphia.

- a) had gotten
- b) would get
- c) were getting

10. Me: "This idea is so crazy, it just might work."

I told him the idea _____ so crazy, it just _____.

- a) is / would have worked
- b) was / might
- c) has been / could

Answers at the end of this document

Part 2: Changing Place & Time

Sometimes we need to change other words in the reported speech as well, depending on place and time differences from the original statement.

For example, if Sally lives in Toronto, and her brother is visiting her:

- Sally: "My brother is **here**."
- *If we are in Toronto, we can say:*
Sally said her brother is **here**.
- *If we are **NOT** in Toronto, we must say:*
Sally said her brother is **there**.
Sally said her brother is **in Toronto**.

If we make the reported statement in the same place as the original statement, then there is no need to change "here" to "there" – but if we are in a different place, then we need to use "there" or else say the name of the place specifically: "in Toronto."

Here's another example:

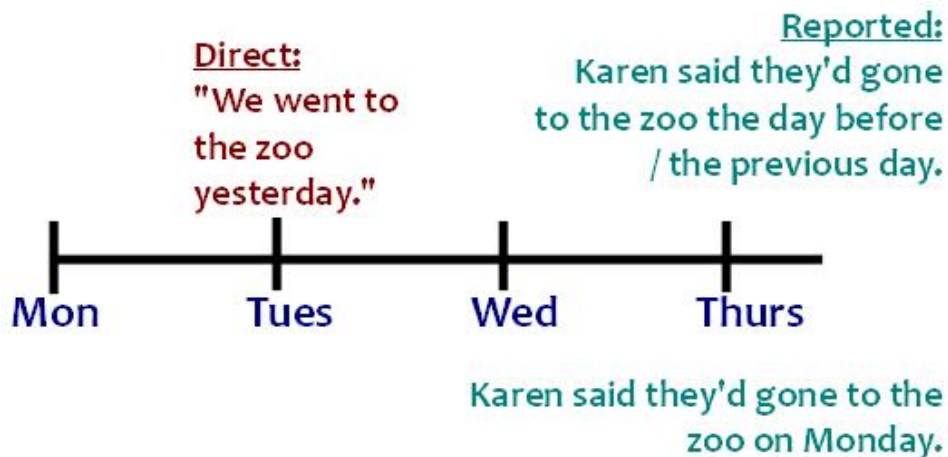
- Pedro (in a restaurant): "They have great salads here."

- *If we are in the same restaurant:*
Pedro said they have great salads **here**.
- *If we are NOT in that restaurant:*
Pedro said they have great salads **there**.
Pedro said they have great salads **at the Olive Garden**.

A similar thing happens with “this” and “these,” because they are words used for something immediately visible or present with the speaker at that time. When reporting the speech, we need to specify the object:

- Sandra (looking at a dress in a store): “I love **this** dress!”
Reported speech: Sandra said she loved **the blue dress she saw in H&M**.
- Jim: “**These** shoes are pretty expensive.”
Reported speech: Jim said **the shoes being sold at the fair** were pretty expensive.

Changes are also needed when the original statement contains a word related to time. For example, imagine that on Tuesday, Karen says, “We went to the zoo yesterday.” At that time, “yesterday” = Monday.



However, if you're speaking on Thursday, you can't say “Karen said they'd gone to the zoo yesterday” – because on Thursday, “yesterday” = Wednesday. So we change “yesterday” to “the day before” or “the previous day.” Alternatively, we can specify: “Karen said they'd gone to the zoo on Monday.”

Direct speech	Reported Speech
<p>now</p> <p>“I can’t talk now – I’m busy.”</p>	<p>then / at that time / at the time</p> <p>He said he couldn’t talk at that time – he was busy.</p>
<p>today</p> <p>“I’m looking after my neighbor’s kids today.”</p>	<p>that day, on Monday</p> <p>She said she was looking after her neighbor’s kids that day.</p>
<p>tonight</p> <p>(on Monday): “There’s no English class tonight.”</p>	<p>that night, last night, on Monday night</p> <p>My classmate told me there was no English class on Monday night.</p>
<p>tomorrow</p> <p>“We’re leaving for Italy tomorrow.”</p>	<p>the next/following day, on Monday, today</p> <p>They said they were leaving for Italy the next day.</p>
<p>yesterday</p> <p>“I spoke to her yesterday.”</p>	<p>the day before/the previous day, on Monday</p> <p>John said he’d spoken to her the day before.</p>
<p>last night</p> <p>“Ben drank too much last night.”</p>	<p>the night before/the previous night, on Monday night</p> <p>Elena said Ben had drunk too much the previous night.</p>
<p>this week</p> <p>“The conference is taking place this week.”</p>	<p>that week, last week</p> <p>Pam said the conference was taking place that week.</p>
<p>last month</p> <p>“The company made record sales last month.”</p>	<p>the month before/the previous month, in May</p> <p>Joe reported that the company had made record sales in May.</p>

next year “I’m planning to go to college next year. ”	the following year Tim told me he was planning on going to college the following year.
five minutes ago “Tara left the office five minutes ago. ”	five minutes before/five minutes earlier Fred explained that Tara had left the office five minutes earlier.

Part 3: Reported Questions

The tense of the main verb in reported questions follows the same “backshift” rules as in reported statements:

- Jim: “**Are** you doing anything Friday night?”
Jim asked if I **was** doing anything on Friday night.

Present continuous (are doing) → Past continuous (was doing)

- Rachel: “**Have** you ever gone skiing?”
Rachel asked if I **had** ever gone skiing.

Present perfect (have gone) → Past perfect (had gone)

- Nancy: “Where did you buy your computer?”
Nancy wanted to know where I **’d bought** my computer.

Simple past (did buy) → Past perfect (had bought)

- Julia: “**Can** you read Russian? If so, **will** you help me translate this document?”
Julia asked if I **could** read Russian and if I **would** help her translate a document.

Can / will → Could / would

- Steve: “How many kids do you **have**?”
Steve asked me how many kids I **have**.

Present (have) → present (have)

No backshift needed because the situation (number of kids) continues to the present moment.

Special Rules for Reported Questions

There are three main things to remember for reported questions:

1. **Do / Does / Did are NOT used in reported questions.**

“Where **did** you buy your computer?”

~~She wanted to know where did I buy my computer.~~

She wanted to know where I’d bought my computer.

“How many kids **do** you have?”

~~He asked me how many kids do I have.~~

He asked me how many kids I have.

“**Does** your mother like to travel?”

~~They asked me does my mother like to travel.~~

They asked me if my mother likes to travel.

This is one of the most common errors when reporting questions.

2. **In yes/no questions, use “if” or “whether” in the reported question.**

“Do you want anything to drink?” (answer: yes / no)

The waitress asked **if** I wanted anything to drink.

“Have you ever eaten sushi?” (answer: yes / no)

Janine asked **whether** I’d ever eaten sushi.

“Did you catch your flight?” (answer: yes / no)

The travel agent wanted to know **if** I’d caught my flight.

Again, notice that the auxiliary verbs “do” and “did” are not used in the reported question.

3. In questions with the verb “to be,” the word order is subject + verb

Notice the change in word order between the direct and reported question:

“**Is he** from Mexico?”

Tiffany asked if **he was** from Mexico.

“**Was she** angry?”

John asked if **she was** angry.

“**Are these your shoes?**”

Wanda asked if the white **shoes were** mine.

“**Were you** born in Australia?”

He wanted to know if **I was** born in Australia.

Quick Exercise:

Make a list of the last three questions someone asked you, and the last three questions you asked someone else. If it helps you, write the original question in direct speech before transforming it into reported speech.

Here are mine:

1. **My husband asked me where the scissors were.**
 (“Where are the scissors?”)
2. **A student wanted to know if he could pay for a course with PayPal.**
 (“Can I pay for the course with PayPal?”)
3. **My mother asked me how I was doing.**
 (“How are you doing?”)
4. **I asked my husband what time the Brazil-England soccer game was on TV.**
 (“What time is the game on?”)
5. **I asked my teacher if there would be class on the weekend.**
 (“Will there be class this weekend?”)
6. **I asked my best friend if she had seen the new *Star Trek* movie.**
 (“Have you seen the new *Star Trek* movie?”)

Speaking Task

Tell me about the last conversation you had. Who did you talk to? What did you say? What did the other person say? Record your answer at www.speakpipe.com/EspressoEnglish or just e-mail me the mp3 or video.

Writing Task

Describe a speech, an interview, or a scene from a movie that you remember well. Use reported speech to tell what each person said.

If you can't remember a particular speech/interview/scene well enough, then look for a new one! You can go to YouTube and search for an interview with a well-known person (example: "Steve Jobs interview") – watch the video, then describe the person's words in your writing task using reported speech.

Ex) *"When I **hire** somebody really senior, competence is the ante. They **have** to be really smart. But the real issue for me is, **are they going** to fall in love with Apple?"*

Steve Jobs said that the people he **hired had** to be really smart. He also considered whether or not **they were going** to fall in love with Apple.

E-mail me your text at help@espressoenglish.net – and I'll review it and send you my feedback.

Answers: Quiz

- | | | | | |
|------|------|------|------|-------|
| 1) b | 2) a | 3) a | 4) c | 5) a |
| 6) b | 7) a | 8) c | 9) a | 10) b |